

■ What is the General Service Conference?

That question can be answered on a number of levels. Most familiarly, it is the Fellowship's annual business meeting, when Conference members—delegates from 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada, alcoholic and nonalcoholic trustees, directors of A.A. World Services and the A.A. Grapevine, and staff members of the General Service Office and the Grapevine—meet for a busy week of committee meetings, presentations, and workshops, which culminates in the approval of a number of Advisory Actions to guide the Fellowship during the coming years.

The Conference structure is also A.A.'s primary vehicle of communication, which operates all year long through the general service structure: group general service representatives, district committees, area assemblies, the board of trustees and its two operating corporations, and the work of G.S.O. and the Grapevine. As soon as the annual meeting comes to a close, delegates begin reporting back to the groups, and members begin expressing the concerns that may need Conference discussion and action in the future.

Most importantly, as the Conference Charter says, "The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of world services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The

Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous." On July 3, 1955, at the 20th Anniversary Convention in St. Louis, A.A.'s founding members turned over to the movement as a whole the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. Since its first trial meeting in 1950, the Conference has proved to be a worthy successor to our founders and a reliable guide in good times and bad.

■ Conference Approval: A Lengthy, Careful, and Necessary Process

When the 55th General Service Conference convenes in April, several of its standing committee agendas will call for approving or developing new and revised pieces of literature. The Literature Committee will look at proposed revisions of three pamphlets, as well as one idea for a new one. The Correctional Facilities, Public Information, and Report and Charter committees also have literature items on their agendas. At the end of the week, the Conference may recommend that some projects be carried to the next stage of development, that some not be pursued any further, and that some be approved. Those that are approved by the full Conference carry the words "This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature."

This phrase means that a pamphlet or book reflects the widest possible spectrum of A.A. experience and that it maintains the integrity of the A.A. message. Achieving those goals requires a lengthy (two years or more), painstaking, even laborious process.

It begins with a need widely expressed by the Fellowship. Sometimes, the call for a new piece of literature will be heard from many directions, as were requests for a fourth edition of the Big Book. At other times, though, the idea will start small, possibly with only one member or one group sending a request to the General Service Office. Since the ideas of a few do not necessarily reflect the needs of a majority of members, these requests rarely reach the agenda of a Conference committee right away. Instead, they follow a tried and true path through the service structure, designed to widen the group conscience with every step and ensure that by the time a proposal reaches the Conference body, a significant number of members believe it should be considered by the entire Fellowship.

See You in Toronto



A.A.'s 70TH BIRTHDAY

June 30 - July 3, 2005

(See page 5)

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A member who sees a need for a new pamphlet or book often takes it to his or her home group for discussion. If the group decides it has merit, the G.S.R. forwards the request to the district meeting for discussion, and if the district is in favor, the D.C.M. forwards it to the area assembly for even wider consideration. From there, the area delegate sends it on to the General Service Office, and the G.S.O. staff forwards it to the appropriate trustees' committee. Eventually, the item may be placed on the agenda of a Conference committee.

In order to become an Advisory Action, any committee recommendation must pass the Conference with “substantial unanimity”—defined as a two-thirds majority. To reach substantial unanimity, floor discussion may take a very short time or go on for hours. Ideally, all Conference members, whether or not they agree with the final decision, will be satisfied that they have been heard and a genuine consensus has been reached. *The A.A. Service Manual* describes how it happens: “Before a vote is taken, plenty of time is allotted for full discussion, including questions about the background of a recommendation and the committee's reasons for coming to its conclusions. . . . Discussions, both in general sessions and during committee meetings, can at times be hot and heavy, but Conference members always try to reach a group conscience and to make decisions in the best interests of the Fellowship. After the vote, the Conference chairperson calls for minority opinions—and occasionally, a well-reasoned minority opinion can result in another vote, reversing the first decision.”

Once the Conference has voted for approval, the project is turned over to the G.S.O. publications department for final editing, type-setting, design, and printing. The publications department is an integral part of the process at every stage, working with the G.S.O. staff to prepare material for distribution to Conference members, overseeing any preliminary editing that might need to be done, finding writers when needed (A.A. members with solid sobriety and strong professional experience), working

with them to prepare manuscripts, and implementing any changes suggested by the Conference.

Sometimes, a book or pamphlet can take a long time to come to fruition. Take as an example the pamphlet “Can A.A. Help Me, Too?” for African-American alcoholics, approved by the Conference in 2001. The idea came up originally in 1970, with a proposal for a cartoon book for black alcoholics, but its time had not come, and it was turned down by the Conference. The need came to the fore again in the 1990s, and in 1998 a proposal for “a pamphlet directed to the Black/African American alcoholic” came from a group, went through the district and area assembly, was passed on to the General Service Office by the delegate, and placed on the Conference agenda. The 1999 Conference recommended that a draft be prepared and brought to the 2000 Conference for consideration.

The trustees' Literature Committee appointed a subcommittee to work on the project, and a call for stories by black alcoholics went out to all Conference members. Meanwhile, the pamphlet engendered some lively discussion—and while the majority of groups were in favor, there was also some strong opposition from members who felt that publication of such a pamphlet would set black alcoholics apart, rather than making them “a part of” A.A. Others, however, pointed out that the goal was to inform and attract still-suffering black alcoholics who needed to know that African Americans were sober, active members of the Fellowship.

By the end of 1999, the subcommittee had received 34 stories and selected 14 to pass on to the G.S.O. publications department for editing. Because of the time needed to collect the stories, it was not possible to have a draft ready for the 2000 Conference, which received a progress report. After input from the Conference, the editing proceeded, and in addition to numerous revisions, two new stories were added. The final draft went to the 2001 Conference, which approved the Literature Committee's recommendation for publication.

Conference approval means that a piece of literature carries the A.A. message and represents a good cross section of the Fellowship. Equally significant, though, is what it does *not* mean. It does not imply criticism or disapproval of any other publications, whether published by A.A. or outside the Fellowship. For example, many intergroups and central offices publish material (such as meeting lists and other informational leaflets) for local members. These publications are genuine A.A. literature, because they provide a necessary service to members and reflect the experience of A.A.s in the local community. Service material published by G.S.O.—informational pieces and guidelines—do not go through Conference approval, though they contain shared experience from a good cross section of the Fellowship and often incorporate excerpts from Conference-approved publications. And because it would be impossible to put each issue of periodicals such as *Box 4-5-9*, other G.S.O. bulletins, or the A.A. Grapevine

through a two-year procedure, these too are not Conference approved, though the Conference has long recognized them as A.A. literature.

Telling A.A. members what to read and not to read is clearly not the business of the Conference. But when new members search out the group literature table at their first meeting, when middle-timers have questions, when old-timers want to widen their knowledge and understanding, the words “This is A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature” on a piece of literature assures them that the message has been the result of several group conscience decisions—the “ultimate authority” for A.A. literature.

■ Book Price Increase and Service Charge

On July 1, 2005, the price of all books, with the exception of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, will increase by \$1.00. This increase applies to books of all languages and formats, including hardcover, softcover, large-print, and booklets. The various formats of the Big Book will remain as currently priced.

The A.A. World Services Board also approved the implementation of a service charge on orders. The service charge will be 10% on all orders, with a minimum charge of \$3.00. Orders of \$250 or more will be exempt from the service charge.

Both of these measures, along with a broad cost-cutting plan at the General Service Office, will go a long way in helping the trustees maintain a Prudent Reserve.

■ A.A.’s Traditions Preclude Involvement In General Relief Aid

The tsunami that engulfed coastline communities on both sides of the Indian Ocean prompted inquiries to the General Service Office in New York regarding what Alcoholics Anonymous would be doing to aid in the relief effort. During past natural catastrophes, some A.A. members and groups have been eager to help out in the name of the Fellowship.

A.A.’s involvement in these situations, though, is limited and very specific. The Fellowship of A.A. exists solely to help those who want to stop drinking. Alcoholics Anonymous, as spelled out in the Traditions, does not involve itself in outside causes.

Experience has shown, too, that the local A.A. structure usually steps in to help in the wake of natural disasters in their parts of the world. This is what occurred in the Asia Oceania Zone after the tsunami hit, as the General Service Offices in Australia and New Zealand

made contact with A.A. groups in Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Meanwhile, G.S.O. New York sent offers of support to the Australian and New Zealand General Service Offices, and also to the G.S.O. of South Africa for affected groups in the Sub-Saharan Zone.

In the past, the General Service Office in New York has always been ready to respond to requests to replace literature lost when an intergroup or central office was destroyed in a storm or flood.

And, of course, while A.A. is precluded from involvement in general relief efforts, individual A.A. members are certainly free to do—or donate—whatever they wish.

■ Sober Soldiers

The Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM) desk each week receives five to 10 e-mails, calls or letters from A.A. members wishing to send A.A. literature or write letters to A.A. members in the military. Though these generous offers are sincerely appreciated, G.S.O. is unable to provide names and contact information of A.A.s in the military, nor can we coordinate contributions overseas.

There are several reasons for this. The first and most basic is that each inquiry that G.S.O. receives from a sober soldier is treated as confidential and anonymous. Sober servicemen and women frequently remind us that they operate under strict security precautions, and that their mail is sometimes opened and examined before it reaches them.

Soldiers in remote parts of the world, though, are not cut off from the Fellowship. There currently are five A.A. meetings for soldiers in Iraq, two in Baghdad, and one each in Balad, Tikrit, and Mosul. There are several Loners in Afghanistan. The sober soldiers have their own network and a tradition of being of service to one another. The *LIM* desk helps these members reach each other by providing up-to-date contact, group, and meeting information. Individual contact information is provided only to the sober soldier and cannot be given to other A.A. members due to anonymity and confidentiality.

Since G.S.O. cannot accept contributions designated for specific projects of any kind, it has had to turn down offers by A.A. groups of funds earmarked for the sober soldiers. Thanks to generous contributions from A.A. members in the U.S. and Canada, though, G.S.O. is able to respond to direct requests for help from sober soldiers and other Loners. The *LIM* desk offers these Loners membership in *LIM* as well as A.A. literature for their personal use. Some A.A. members overseas have received A.A. literature to start new A.A. meetings.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, if you know of an A.A. member, military or civilian, moving overseas, you may wish to suggest that they contact the *LIM* desk at G.S.O. to learn about the services available to them.

■ International News

Cambodian Innovation

A.A. members in Cambodia are taking a novel approach to making English-speaking meetings available in areas where there often are too few people to form viable groups. Their solution: three meetings held simultaneously in three cities, connected via teleconferencing, with Phnom Penh as the center.

An A.A. member showing up at one of the two outlying meeting places, Battambang, for instance, a city about 250 miles north of Phnom Penh, need no longer worry that they will find themselves alone. That A.A. member simply phones into the meeting taking place in Phnom Penh. Likewise for the other location, Sihanoukville, which is about 150 miles south of Phnom Penh.

The meetings in the three locations—which share the same name, the Conscious Connection Group—follow identical formats. On Tuesdays at 8 p.m., it's a Big Book meeting, and on Thursdays at noon it's a *Daily Reflections* meeting. Everyone is literally on the same page. Usually, people in the remote areas will wait until announcements and the reading is complete before phoning in for the discussion part of the meeting.

"It has been working great," says Wayne W., an American living in Cambodia for almost five years. "At any given meeting five people is a lot, so this is making a difference. We are hearing from new people," he says.

The teleconferencing meetings are open to anyone, anywhere. It is just a matter of calling in. "Someone once joined the meeting who was phoning from a taxi cab," says Wayne. The calls are relatively inexpensive, at about six cents U.S. per minute. The group in Phnom Penh pays about \$17 per month for a six-line phone set-up to allow for teleconferencing. Those speaking are heard via speaker phone.

This innovative approach also is helping the meetings in the two remote cities gain some footing. As Wayne puts it, "in Sihanoukville, there had been nothing forever." Now though, there are three or four A.A.s showing up regularly for the two meetings a week.

The phone-in meetings began in March 2004 and were started by the A.A. members in Phnom Penh, including Wayne. The other A.A. group in that city is the Phnom Penh Group, which holds three meetings a week.

New Translations

Big Books in Zulu and Latvian are making their debut this spring. The Zulu translation was done in South Africa, where most of the nine million people who speak that language are found. A.A.s in Latvia, a small country on the Baltic Sea with a population of 2.4 million, did the Big Book translation into that country's language.

A translation of the Big Book into Hebrew is underway with help of A.A. members in Tel Aviv.

■ Résumés for Trustees

Election due Jan. 1, 2006

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees—from the Pacific and Eastern Canada regions—will be nominated at the General Service Conference in April 2006. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2006, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new Pacific regional trustee will succeed Phyllis H., of Lacey, Washington; the next trustee from Eastern Canada will follow Robert P., of St.-Jérôme, Quebec.

A sound A.A. background is a basic qualification for Class B trustees. Ten years of continuous sobriety is desirable but not mandatory. Candidates should be active in both local and area A.A. affairs; and, because trustees serve the entire Fellowship, they require the background and the willingness to make decisions on matters of broad policy that affect A.A. as a whole.

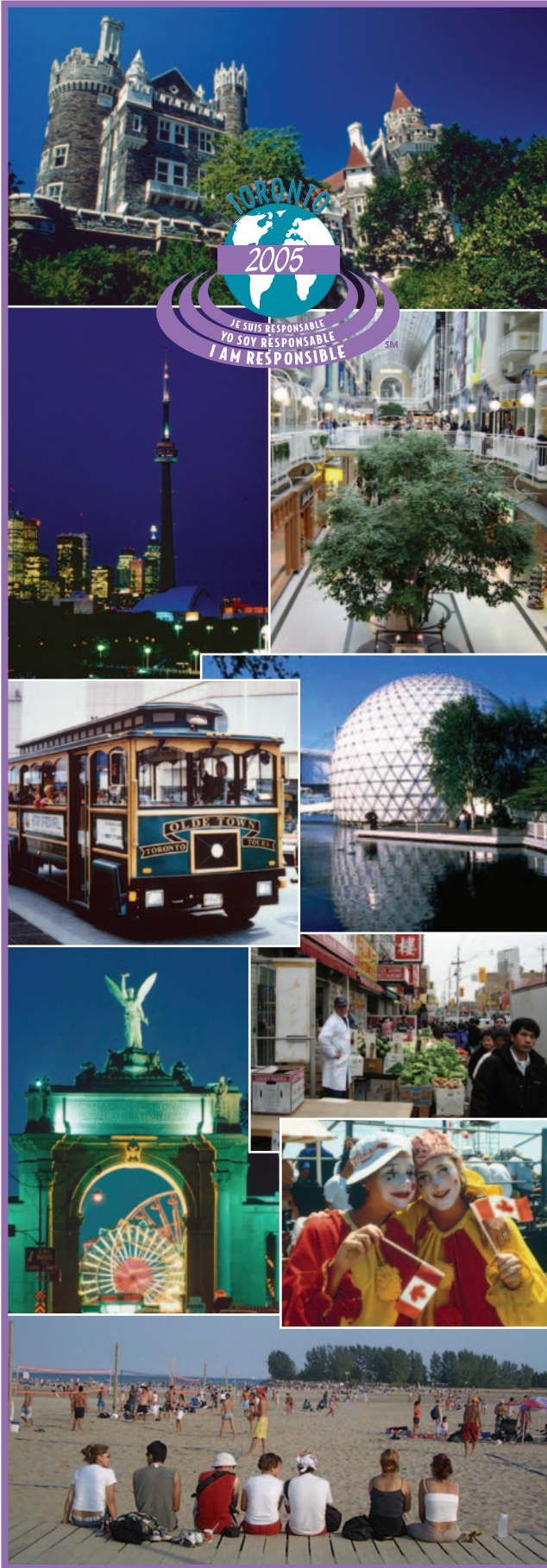
It is also important that trustee candidates understand the commitment of time required. Trustees are expected to attend three quarterly board weekends, with meetings often scheduled from Thursday afternoon through Monday morning, and the General Service Conference, which lasts for one week. Often trustees are asked to attend a Regional Forum weekend. In addition, regional trustees are usually asked to serve two years on either the A.A.W.S. or Grapevine Corporate Boards, which meet more frequently than the General Service Board.

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

■ Opening for an A.A.W.S.

Nontrustee Director

A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) has started its search to fill a vacancy for a nontrustee director, which will open following the 2006 General Service Conference. Interested A.A. members are encouraged to submit a résumé. Basic qualifications for this position are: a minimum of seven years of continuous sobriety; a sound business or professional background is preferably, but not limited to, the following areas—finance, management, publishing, legal, or information technology; the ability to work with others; availability to attend the eight regular meetings a year of the A.A.W.S. Board, plus three weekend meetings of trustees' committees (to which corporate board directors are appointed), and the Conference, for one week in April. In addition, directors may be called upon to attend subcommittee or other meetings and to represent A.A.W.S. at Regional Forums or other A.A. functions. In seeking applications for all vacancies in A.A., the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons, which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. Résumés should be sent to Joe Dennan, Secretary, A.A.W.S., Inc., at the General Service Office, by July 15, 2005.



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Toronto—“The World Within a City™”

As the excitement builds for the 12th International Convention, June 30 through July 3, 2005, local A.A. members are preparing to stretch their hands out to the thousands of visitors who will descend on Toronto for the celebration of Alcoholics Anonymous’s 70th Anniversary.

It is on the shoulders of the local host committee that the responsibility for the smooth functioning of this incredible gathering rests. Barry W., past Area 83 delegate, chairs the Toronto Host Core Committee and he is joined by co-chairs Kathleen M. and Peter N. The three meet regularly to create a group conscience that guides all host volunteer planning. Radiating out from the Host Committees’ Core group like spokes from the hub of a giant wheel are no fewer than 17 subcommittees. Their sole purpose is to extend a personal welcome at every point of the convention—all transportation hubs, hotels/motels, convention center and the Roger’s Centre Stadium (formerly the SkyDome) to name a few—and assist guests who have language and other special needs. In bright red shirts with black slacks or shorts, several thousand volunteers will extend the hand of A.A. and say “Welcome to Toronto.”

Toronto, the largest city in Canada, presents many interesting sites and things to do. As luck would have it, we will be there on Canada Day, July 1 (as we did in Montreal for A.A.’s 50th Anniversary), when the city will be alive with festivities, concerts, fireworks and more. The Friday night Big Meeting will let out at 9:30 p.m. for those who want to head lakeside for the fireworks.

It is a city of many ethnic neighborhoods, great for dining and shopping—there is Chinatown, Little Italy (College St.); Greektown (on Danforth St.), Little Poland and the Portugal Village.

Tours abound—to Niagara Falls, around the harbour and by helicopter. There are also cycling and walking tours, literary and ghost tours.

The temperature in July is around 77° F (or 32° C)—so you may want to enjoy Toronto’s many beaches and parks, or a boat ride on Lake Ontario. Among the many museums are the Children’s Own Museum, Toronto Police Museum or the Hockey Hall of Fame. One of the most popular places to visit is Casa Loma (top photo at left), a majestic castle estate complete with secret passages, towers and an 800-foot tunnel.

The name Toronto derives from the Huron Indian word meaning “meeting place,” and for centuries, because of its protected harbor, it was used as such by Native American Indians and later by French traders. In 1965, A.A.’s 30th Anniversary met in Toronto. Now, 40 years later we are returning to the site where A.A.’s Responsibility Statement was born. And, of course, the theme of A.A.’s 70th Anniversary is “I Am Responsible.”

■ Choosing the Site City for The International Convention

As preparations for the International Convention in Toronto reach their final stages, it is worth noting that planning for these events takes years. The involved process of choosing the site city, though, is the first order of business.

It is already decided that A.A.'s biggest meeting will be held in San Antonio in 2010 and Atlanta in 2015.

For a city to be considered the area encompassing it must agree to form a host committee that will provide approximately 4,000 A.A. volunteers.

The city itself must be home to a domed stadium that seats at least 55,000. A town with only an open stadium can be considered if historically there is no more than a minimal chance of rain on the days in July when the Convention meets. A city must have a convention center with a minimum of 250,000 gross square feet, and theater-style seating capacity for thousands in its meeting rooms. There also must be at least 15,000 hotel rooms that will definitely be available at the time of the Convention and are located within 25 to 30 miles of the Convention site.

One stricture is that no town that has been the site of either of the two previous Conventions can be in contention. Also, an attempt is made to rotate the site throughout the regions of the U.S. and Canada Conference structure.

In preparation for the 2010 Convention, the General Service Office in New York five years ago mailed out site-selection guidelines and bid questionnaires to all delegates. G.S.O. then sent bid questionnaires to Convention Bureaus of prospective cities in delegate areas that agreed to provide a host committee.

Cities that meet the criteria and respond satisfactorily to the bid questionnaires are invited to make a presentation to the International Convention Site Selection Committee. This committee is made up of one Conference delegate from each of the regions, plus the members of the trustees' Committee on Regional Forums/International Conventions. A site-inspection team visits the few cities that make the final cut. It was in October 2001 that San Antonio got the nod for the 2010 Convention.

■ Regional & Special Forums—Coming Soon to Your Neighborhood

The weekend of May 20-22, the Northeast Region will host a Regional Forum at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine.

August 19-22 a Special Forum will travel to the following cities in Alaska: Anchorage, Homer, Fairbanks and Juneau.

Forums provide an opportunity for A.A. members, groups and area representatives in a particular area to share together and enhance communication with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. Special Forums are designed for remote, sparsely populated or urban areas, as well as communities where it is difficult to carry the A.A. message.

■ ICYPAA Nears Five Decades of Reaching Out To Young Alcoholics

With the membership it serves young and getting younger—ranging today from about 14 to 35—the International Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) shows staying power: On Labor Day weekend (Sept. 1-4, 2005) it will hold its 48th conference in New Orleans at the Sheraton Hotel, and members are expected to gather from the U.S./Canada and other countries as well.

According to delegate Keith H., of Oahu, Hawaii, who served as chair of the ICYPAA advisory council from 1995-2002: "One year we had 16 people from Japan—they filled a whole table. It was exciting to see them identify with other young people, and there didn't seem to be much of a language barrier."

Young People's Groups (YPGs) began appearing as early as 1945 in Los Angeles, Cleveland and Philadelphia and now can be found all across North America. In 1957, a group of young U.S./Canada A.A.s started ICYPAA to provide a setting for a yearly celebration of sobriety among young people in A.A. Two years later, at the Fellowship's 25th Anniversary Convention in Long Beach, California, Bill W. noted that the age of new members was much lower than when he and Dr. Bob founded A.A. in 1935. In a letter to ICYPAA, dated June 15, 1969, Bill wrote, "...in recent years I have found nothing for greater inspiration than the knowledge that A.A. of tomorrow will be safe, and certainly magnificent, in the keeping of you who are the younger generation of A.A. today."

Since the inception of ICYPAA, growing numbers of people who at first did not think of themselves as "young people" have become regular attendees at both the international conference and at young people's groups. Keith, who came to A.A. at 16, then slipped before corking the bottle at 19 in December 1990, remembers that "at the YPGs, like my Bad Brains home group, there were people I could relate to, and none of them were telling me, 'You're too young to be an alcoholic.'" Keith is quick to point out that he does not limit his participation to young people's groups. "I go to many different groups," he says, "and they have enriched my sobriety in more ways than I can count."

Young people's groups try to make the newcomer understand that 20-plus years of drinking coupled with

loss of family, friends and financial stability are not necessary for one to be ready for sobriety. Young people's groups bring the newcomer into the mainstream of A.A. recovery, service and unity through the Steps, Traditions and Concepts of World Service. Newcomers are shown by people their own age that using A.A. principles in their daily lives and getting involved in service can lead to a lasting and comfortable sobriety. "In my home group," Keith says, "we're constantly looking for more and better ways to carry the message. In a group inventory we'll ask questions such as: Is the group attracting people from different backgrounds? At our meetings are we seeing a good cross-section of our community? Usually we come up short, and that's when we try to change our ways."

From time to time the General Service Office is asked if ICYPAA and young people's groups are "part of A.A." The answer is definitely yes. ICYPAA and its attendees are committed to reaching out to newcomers—no alcoholic is ever turned away, regardless of age—and to involvement in all facets of A.A. service. In most local A.A. meeting directories, young people's meetings are listed along with others, though in some areas asterisks may identify them as YPGs. Members of these groups often can be found serving at the national, state, area and group levels. ICYPAA conventions and conferences are vital A.A. activities and as such are listed in the *Box 4-5-9* "Calendar of Events."

Writing in the October 1989 Grapevine about her early experience in A.A. as an 18-year-old, Robin F. of Los Angeles echoes the feelings of young people everywhere, then and now: "I know one thing for certain: No young person ever needs to hear that she has gotten sober before she had to hurt; she has hurt plenty. She needs to hear what every newcomer does who comes into the Fellowship: 'Welcome. This is A.A., where the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.'"

■ Business Meetings: Where the Group Conscience Happens

Group unity is not a destination, it's a journey that is happening all the time, and nowhere more vividly than in business meetings, often called group conscience meetings. "If we called them business meetings at our group," an East Coast A.A. recently joked, "nobody would show up."

Because each group is autonomous, formats vary. But the collective experience of A.A. shows that business meetings, which usually are held on a monthly or quarterly basis, offer an optimum setting in which big and little issues—from how to help a drunk newcomer to whose turn it is to make the coffee—can be aired and reconciled and a group consensus reached. Some groups hold specially scheduled group conscience, or inventory-taking meetings, especially when confronted with a thorny issue about which there are strong conflicting views.

The goal is to reach an informed group conscience—a term implying that any vital information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes on an issue. Not always understood, the group conscience as expressed in Tradition Two is a basic and powerful principle that makes it possible for people of diverse backgrounds and temperament to rise above personal ambition and unite in one common purpose—to stay sober and help the still-suffering alcoholic. In the words of our Declaration of Unity, "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."

The pamphlet "The A.A. Group"—used by groups around the U.S. and Canada as a guide on how to start a group and help it function—points out that "on sensitive issues the group works slowly, discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles above personalities [in the spirit of Tradition Twelve], the membership is wary of dominant opinions; its voice is heard when a well-informed group comes to a decision. The result rests on more than a 'yes' or 'no' count—precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience." (p. 35)

Business meetings usually are scheduled before or after the group's regular meeting, and members are given reasonable notice. During this time, announcements may be made at the regular A.A. meetings; if a group has a bulletin board, posting a notice about the business meeting can be helpful.

Then there are those instances when a group feels it necessary to call for an impromptu group conscience either before or during an A.A. meeting. Decisions to open a closed meeting or to ask a disruptive person to leave are examples of the situations that can trigger a call for an immediate group conscience. Numerous groups have developed guidelines for dealing with some of the more common situations that can arise.

Business meetings tend to be informal, but custom varies from group to group. Some have tried observing Robert's Rules of Order, only to find that many members are inexperienced in parliamentary procedures and feel too intimidated to speak up. To ensure that everyone present has a chance to share their views, some groups allow each member to speak only twice on each topic—and for a limited amount of time.

Sometimes a decision made by the most ideal of group conscience procedures misses its mark. The A.A. visionaries who came before us anticipated this; they wrote reassuringly in Warranty Four that "when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, 'Well, we had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!'" (The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, p. 69)

C.P.C.

■ A.A. Info Booths Carry the Message To Professionals

Through the combined efforts of the General Service Office in New York and local C.P.C. committees in the U.S. and Canada, A.A. was on the scene at 54 meetings of professionals in 2004.

A.A. exhibited for the first time in 1956, and now sets up information booths at the major meetings of a number of professional groups, including those for clergy, corrections, education, medicine, nursing, therapy, public health, and social work. The aim is to inform those working in these fields of the ways A.A. can be a resource to them. A.A. is aiming to exhibit at 60 events this year, among them the American Correctional Association's annual meeting, Canadian Counseling Association Convention, and the National Association of School Nurses.

"I feel what we are doing makes a difference," says Dave R., the C.P.C. chair for the Greater Toronto Area, who estimates that he has participated in staffing A.A. booths at more than 20 events. "We are reminding people that A.A. is available, and we are getting the literature out there," he says.

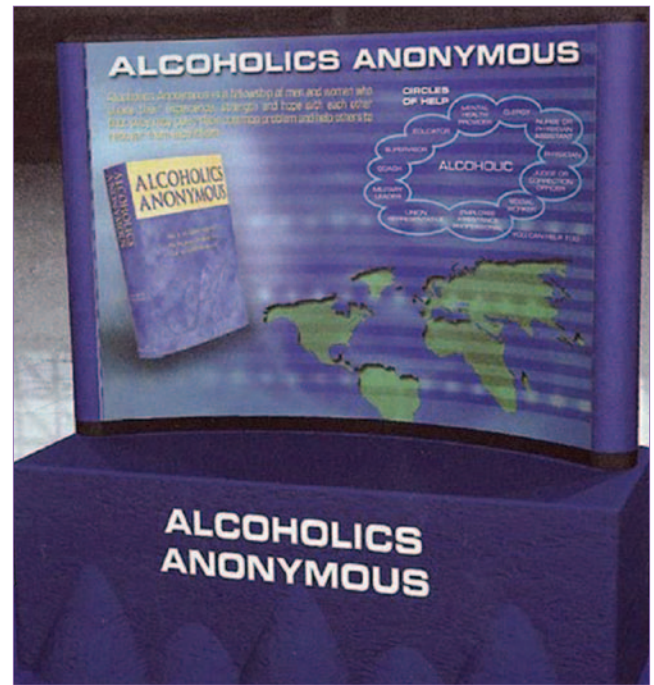
Dave likes to take newcomers along to give them a broader perspective on the Fellowship. "They are amazed by how respected A.A. is. These professionals at the meetings go out of their way to tell us things like 'you guys are the best.' Doctors say, 'A.A. does what we can't.' The feedback is incredible."

Dave helped coordinate the A.A. exhibit at the meeting of the Canadian Association of Family Physicians last fall. The exhibit booth itself—shipped by G.S.O.—arrived at the Toronto Intergroup Office, where Dave picked it up and delivered it to the site of the meeting. The booth is compactly contained in a hard case fitted with wheels. It can be rolled around, and it folds out to create the booth.

"It's very handy," says Dave, who also gives it high marks for looking professional and attractive. "I think that's important. We want to present Alcoholics Anonymous as well as we can." In line with this, he says, volunteers "come dressed professionally." For an event like the meeting of the Canadian physicians, Dave helped line up nine A.A. members to staff the booth in shifts over three days.

At the end of a meeting, one of the A.A. volunteers will fill out an evaluation form, which is sent to the General Service Office.

Evaluators are also asked to note the number of atten-



A.A.'s portable exhibit booth – a vehicle for disseminating information about the Fellowship – will be on site this year at upwards of 60 major meetings of professional groups.

dees who asked to be put on the mailing list for *About A.A.* (the newsletter sent by G.S.O. to professionals), and whether the amount and type of literature included with the exhibit was suitable.

A.A. has been exhibiting annually with some organizations for many years. Suggestions for new events at which to exhibit come from various sources, including trustees, delegates, C.P.C. committees, and other interested A.A. members. Coordinators of professional meetings sometimes invite A.A. to set up a booth.

Well in advance of a meeting, G.S.O. phones the local C.P.C. chair to get the ball rolling. G.S.O. pays to rent and furnish a booth, providing tables, chairs, and even the carpeting and a wastebasket. G.S.O. also arranges for delivery of literature, the amount and type of which is tailored for each event. A conference of teachers, for instance, would be supplied with ample material for younger people. The local C.P.C. committee inherits any leftover literature.

Some A.A. members over the years have raised concerns that exhibits are contrary to the Fellowship's prescription against promotion. A clarifying Advisory Action at the 1973 General Service Conference, though, reaffirmed that providing professionals with information through exhibits in no way violates the Traditions.

Exhibits have proven an efficient vehicle for disseminating information about the Fellowship. The A.A. volunteers also benefit. "It is absolutely incredible what it does for my sobriety," says Dave.

■ Reaching Professionals Online

A.A. has long recognized the value of making contact with professionals as a way of reaching the still-suffering alcoholic. Now some A.A. members are doing that service via the Internet. The Web site posted by Area 72, Western Washington State, for example, last year added a section for professionals.

According to Karen R., the Cooperation With the Professional Community chair for the area, "I felt strongly that we had an obligation to get information onto the Web site, so we could use this awesome tool to reach out to professionals."

A link on the home page (www.area72aa.org) leads to a page headed, "If you are a professional looking for information about A.A." Those in medicine, the clergy or corrections, to name a few of the fields targeted by C.P.C. efforts, are invited to request material about A.A., including meeting schedules.

Professionals also can request that an A.A. member take them to an open meeting, or they can arrange to have an A.A. member deliver a personal presentation of how A.A. can serve as a resource to them and their fellow staff members.

The Web page, which contains an e-mail link for contacting a representative of the local C.P.C. committee, has generated about a dozen e-mails, at least four of which were C.P.C. related. (Some have come from A.A. members looking for general information.)

A pastor new to a congregation that had several problem drinkers e-mailed a request for assistance. In response, a couple of A.A. members visited the pastor to talk about the Fellowship. The pastor subsequently asked for racks of A.A. literature for his church, a request that has been forwarded to the local Public Information Committee.

Corrections

■ Adolescents Welcoming Message of Recovery

Adolescents housed in a maximum security facility in Manchester, New Hampshire, are showing themselves surprisingly receptive to A.A.'s message of recovery.

"There were seven or eight kids at the first meeting back in November 2002, and they were very enthusiastic," says Karen S., an A.A. member active in this service. The original plan was for a couple of meetings a month at the Youth Development Center (YDC), carried in by a handful of local A.A. members.

"After the first couple of meetings, though, the kids asked us to come in more often," Karen remembers. In response, the number of meetings was increased, with upwards of 20 A.A. members covering them every month.

One of the 12-to-16-year-olds housed at the YDC says the meetings help "me think more clearly. It makes me not want to go down that road." They also say they appreciate that the A.A. members who bring in the meetings do it as volunteers. "They have good stories that relate to some of mine," as another of the kids says.

It took the local Corrections Committee about a year to put everything in order to bring in meetings. One stumbling block was the YDC's previous experience with A.A. In the 1990s, individual A.A.s brought meetings into the YDC on a sporadic basis, a hit-or-miss approach that ultimately petered out. "Those other A.A. members had done it on their own, without using our service structure," says Dave R., co-chair of Area 43's Corrections Committee. "When those people stopped showing up, the meetings stopped with them."

That experience made the YDC administration wary of embarking on a program that would prove less than a hundred percent reliable. "I spent the next year going through red tape trying to get the administrators to allow us to do this," says Dave.

Finally, though, everything was in place for the A.A. volunteers working with Area 43's Corrections Committee to get the program underway.

The YDC holds about 100 adolescents, called residents, who are housed in four "cottages," each with a different level of security. One cottage houses girls. The adolescents are sent to YDC for a wide range of offenses, from chronic truancy and petty crime to violent assaults and even murder.

The A.A. meetings, which are held in all four cottages, have each evolved in response to the desires of the inmates. "Four or five months after the start of the program, the kids were choosing the format," says Karen. "The boys liked hearing qualifications, so we arranged for speakers. The girls told us they were sick of stories and wanted Step meetings. It's been fluid, though, it changes," she says.

Because the A.A. volunteers entering the YDC have submitted to its vetting process—including a criminal background check—no staff member needs to be present during the meetings.

Karen explained that the A.A.s take every opportunity to convey to the kids that the meeting belongs to them as much as to anyone and that the A.A. members coming in are not in charge. "We go in peer to peer, and do whatever we can to let them know they are on equal ground with us," she says.

"We tell them that we are not there to tell them not to drink. We tell them that if they get to a point in their lives—and they may be there now—that they think drinking is causing them problems and they want to stop, the people in A.A. will help them."

Though some of the kids at the YDC might have difficul-

ty identifying with the now-sober and seemingly upright A.A. members, Karen says that has not been a big obstacle.

“When they realize we had attitude, too, they can relate,” says Karen, who got sober when she was a teenager and now has 15 years in A.A. In her story she points out that when she stopped drinking, she stopped getting arrested. To this, one of the boys said: “That right? I think I need to go to A.A.”

It is also helpful when they can see that life doesn’t stop in sobriety, she says. “I mentioned I went to a Phish concert,” referring to the rock band. On hearing this, one of the residents exclaimed, “No way! You have to be messed up to hear Phish.”

The crimes that landed these adolescents in the facility were sometimes alcohol-related, and a small number of those incarcerated at the YDC had had sober time in A.A. Their trip to YDC usually was the end result of their picking up drinking again.

Some of the adolescents come to the meetings, which are all open, out of curiosity or to avoid early bedtimes. Often, if they have not become drinkers themselves, they come from families where alcoholism is a problem. “We welcome all who are interested, but we try to keep the focus on alcoholism—just like a regular open A.A. meeting,” says Karen.

Two or three A.A.s participate at each meeting, except those at East cottage, where the meetings are bigger and attendance is mandatory. For these meetings, seven or eight A.A.s will show up.

Some of those who had their first exposure to A.A. at the YDC continue attending meetings after their release. Both Karen and Dave report seeing former YDC residents at meetings in Manchester. “They have gotten sponsors, they are working the program,” says Dave.

Joan Ryan, a nonalcoholic coordinator at the facility, says: “Our statistics show that some of the kids released who would normally have come back to YDC have not. Follow-up has shown that one of the main reasons is that they have continued to go to A.A. meetings after their release.”

At some point over the past year, the adolescents were asked what they liked best about the Alcoholics Anonymous meetings they were attending at the facility. In addition to being impressed that the A.A. members doing this service do it willingly and without pay, the kids said the meetings help them reflect on their lives, on what led them to a place like the YDC. A few pointed to the value of the example being set by the sober, functioning A.A.s living productive lives. “It gives us the courage to change,” one said.

One girl currently incarcerated at the YDC says: “If someone is thinking about starting a meeting at a place like this in another state, tell them to do it. Tell them there is somebody there that really wants to stop drinking. Not everybody will want to hear the message, but someone will, and if it helps just one person it’s worth it.”

P.I.

■ Anonymity Letter to the Media

Each year, beginning in 1949, the trustees’ Public Information Committee sends its annual Anonymity Letter to the Media.

The simple letter thanks members of the media—news reporters; radio; television and on-line editors and producers; photo directors; and talk show hosts—for the support they have always afforded Alcoholics Anonymous in regard to protecting the anonymity of A.A. members, and asks for their continued cooperation. The letter goes on to request that when presenting A.A. members first names only be used, and that pictures in which their faces may be recognized not be used. It further explains that: “Anonymity lies at the heart of our Fellowship and assures our members that their recovery will be private. Often, the active alcoholic will avoid any source of help which might reveal his or her identity.”

This February approximately 10,000 Anonymity Letters were mailed to a media list covering the U.S. and Canada (including Spanish media in the U.S. and the French media in Quebec). The letter is also posted on G.S.O.’s Web site.

Despite the saturation coverage of the Anonymity Letter, and the vigilance of A.A. groups and individual members everywhere, anonymity breaks do happen—a number of them at the hands of well-meaning celebrities eager “to help other alcoholics like me.” What is done about such breaks and the dozens of others that occur yearly? As mail received by the General Service Office reveals, members have expressed continuing concern about such violations of the Eleventh Tradition (“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.”), which the Fellowship’s co-founder Bill W. called “the key to A.A.’s spiritual survival.”

When a specific anonymity break occurs, A.A. members frequently ask G.S.O. to send a letter to the publication or broadcast station involved. But it has long been the consensus of A.A.’s General Service Conference that responsibility for protecting the Tradition of Anonymity at the public level, and for responding to anonymity breaks in the media, rests with the individuals, groups and service committees within the Fellowship. So when there is an anonymity break at the public level, the P.I. desk at G.S.O. writes to the appropriate area delegate, passing along the basic facts, and suggesting that the delegate or another trusted servant make contact with the member. Only if the delegate so requests does G.S.O. write the actual letter.

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.

April

- 1-3—*Cherry Hill, New Jersey*. Area 45 General Service Convention 2005. Write: Ch., Box 1602, Merchantville, New Jersey 08109; Website: www.snjaa.org
- 1-3—*Columbus, Indiana*. 2005 Indiana State Convention. Write: Ch., 18272 Migro Lane, Goshen, IN 46526
- 1-3—*Mashpee, Massachusetts*. 8th Annual Cape Cod Pockets of Enthusiasm. Write: Ch., Box 773, Mashpee, MA 02649
- 1-3—*Nashua, New Hampshire*. 39th N.H. Area 43 Convention. Write: Ch., 1330 Hooksett Rd., Hooksett, NH 03106; Website: www.nhaa.net
- 1-3—*Springfield, Illinois*. 24th Annual 2005 Southern Illinois Spring Conference "I Am Responsible." Write: Ch., Box 7202, Springfield, IL 62791-7202
- 2-3—*Nisswa, Minnesota*. Area 35 Spring Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 514, Cold Spring, MN 56320
- 8-10—*Cape May, New Jersey*. Southeastern Pennsylvania Intergroup Association Roundup. Write: Ch., 444 N. 3rd St., Suite 3E, Philadelphia, PA 19123
- 8-10—*Goodyear, Arizona*. 15th Annual West Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 5495, Sun City West, AZ 85376
- 8-10—*Merrillville, Indiana*. 12th Annual Calumet Area Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 180, Wheeler, IN 46393; Website: www.calumetarearoundup.com
- 8-10—*Montgomery, Alabama*. Alabama/Northwest Florida Area 1 Assembly. Write: Ch., 1314 Stanford Rd., Dothan, AL 36305
- 8-10—*Westwego, Louisiana*. "Serenity in the Swamp" Campout. Write: Ch., 1028 Market St., Metairie, LA 70003; E-mail: serenityitswamp@bellsouth.net
- 9-10—*Alma, Québec, Canada*. Congres Alma District 89-14. Write: Ch., 2365 Ave Du Pont Sud Alma, Quebec G8B 5V2, Canada
- 15-17—*Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada*. 55th Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 453 Dauphin, MB R7N 2U3, Canada.
- 15-17—*Erie, Pennsylvania*. Erie Spring Conference. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Erie, PA 16512.

- 15-17—*San Jose, California*. San Jose Sober and Free 2005. Write: Ch., Box 4707, San Jose, CA 95150; Website: www.soberandfree.org
- 15-17—*Santurce, Puerto Rico*. Convencion Area de Puerto Rico 2005. Write: Ch., Calle 10 H 11 Reparto Marquez, Arecibo, P.R. 00612
- 22-24—*Chipley, Florida*. 10th Annual Chipley Country Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 314, Graceville, FL 32440
- 22-24—*Fairmont, Minnesota*. The 11th Annual Sunlight of the Spirit Weekend. Write: Ch., 1516 N. 5th St., Mankato, MN 56001.
- 22-24—*Rialto, California*. 2do Congreso Del Inland Empire. Write: Ch., 649 E. Foothill Blvd. #B, Rialto, CA 92376
- 23-25—*Waterloo, Iowa*. Metro Anniversary. Write: Ch., 4122 Lafayette Rd., Evansdale, IA 50707
- 29-1—*Canandaigua, New York*. 20th Annual Conference of the Lakes. Write: Ch., Box 982, Canandaigua, NY 14424
- 29-1—*Marietta, Georgia*. 15th Marietta Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 675452, Marietta, GA 30006; Website: www.marietaroundup.org
- 29-1—*San Ana, California*. 24th Annual Southern California Hospital and Institutional Conference. Write: Ch., 3505 S. Olive St., San Ana, CA 92707; Website: www.aahandi.org
- 30-1—*Victoriaville, Québec, Canada*. Congres 88-03 Bois Francs. Write: Ch., 663 Gamache St., Victoriaville QC G6P 6R8, Canada

May

- 6-8—*Grand Rapids, Minnesota*. Iron Range Get-together. Write: Ch., Box 65, Goodland, MN 55742

- 6-8—*Grants Pass, Oregon*. 30th Anniversary Rogue Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1741, Grants Pass, OR 97528; Website: www.rogueroundup.com
- 6-8—*Newbury, Ohio*. 76th Punderson Park Conference. Write: Ch., Box 570, Newbury, OH 44065
- 6-8—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. 63rd Laurel Highland's Conference. Write: Ch., 1470 Blossom Hill Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234
- 6-8—*Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Roundup. Write: Ch., 207 Bentley Drive, Regina, Sask. S4N 5C4, Canada.
- 6-8—*Saarbrücken, Germany*. 2005 International German Language Convention. Write: Ch., Querstrasse 14, 66399 Mandelbachtal, Germany
- 6-8—*St. Petersburg, Florida*. Young At Heart Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 76422, St. Petersburg, FL 33704; Website: www.youngatheartroundup.com
- 6-8—*Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada*. 39th Annual Northwestern Ontario Area 85 Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 10073, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 4V5, Canada
- 13-15—*Monroe, Louisiana*. Northeast Louisiana Round-Up. Write: Ch., 1668 Gourd Bayou Rd., Monroe, LA 71202
- 13-15—*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*. Oklahoma State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 1162, Edmond, OK 73083.
- 13-15—*Rhineland, Wisconsin*. Area 74 2005 Spring Conference. Write: Ch., Box 1241, Eagle River, WI 54521.
- 19-22—*Peloponnese, Greece*. 11th International Convention. Write: Ch., Box 86002, 18503 Elekrikos Stathmos Piraeus, Greece

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the *Box 4-5-9* Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. three 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 us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 200 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____



20-21—Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
 Springathon 2005. Write: Ch., 211 Bronson Ave, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H1, Canada

20-22—Louisville, Kentucky, 15th Falls City Convention. Write: Ch., 2076 Sherwood Ave. #2, Louisville, KY 40205

20-22—Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. 45th Annual Delaware State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 446, Nassau, DE 19968; E-mail: area12convention2005@earthlink.net

20-22—Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. 30th Yukon Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 31612, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 6L2, Canada;

26-29—Palm Springs, California. Desert Pow Wow. Write: Ch., Box 10128, Pam Desert, CA 92255

27-28—Magog, Québec, Canada. Open Door. Write: Ch., 177 Victoria, Magog, QC J1X 2J7, Canada

27-28—Magog, Québec, Canada. 24th Bilingual Townshippers Roundup. Write: Ch., 1501 Montecho Rd., Sutton, QC J0E 2K0, Canada

27-29—Bloomington, Minnesota. Gopher State Roundup XXXII. Write: Ch., Box 65295, St. Paul, MN 55165.

27-29—Covington, Louisiana. South East Louisiana Spring Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 4150, Covington, LA 70433

27-29—East Syracuse, New York. The 54th Central New York Area 47 Convention. Write: Ch., Box 67 North, Syracuse, NY 13212

27-29—Kimberling, Missouri. 1st Annual Unity Weeknd. Write: Ch., 58 South Granny Lane, Reeds Spring, MO 65737

27-30—Daytona Beach, Florida. 15th Daytona Spring Conference. Write: Ch., Box 951903, Lake Mary, FL 32795

27-30—Harker Heights, TX. Memorial Weeknd Campout. Write: Ch., 10725 FM 2086 Box 900, Temple, TX 76501.

June

3-5—Farmington, New Mexico. 2005 Area 46 New Mexico State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 475, Flora Vista, NM 87415

3-5—Hot Springs, Arkansas. 3rd Annual Tri-Lakes Convention. Write: Ch., 1719 Cedarhurst Dr., Benton, AR 72015-3168

3-5—New Orleans, Louisiana. 37th Big Deep Independence St., Metairie, LA 70006; Website: www.aa-neworleans.org

10-12—Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Calgary's 24th Annual Gratitude Round-up. Write: Ch., #2 4015 1st Street S.E., Calgary, AB T2G 4X7, Canada

10-12—Clear Lake, Iowa. Area 24 Spring Conference. Write: Ch., Box 135, Forest City, IA 50436

10-12—Vernon, British Columbia, Canada. 33rd Vernon Roundup. Write: Ch., 3614 21 Ave, Vernon, BC V1T 1H6, Canada

10-12—Springfield, Missouri. 15th Annual Heart of the Ozarks Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1607, Springfield, MO 65801

10-12—Tallahassee, Florida. 2nd Annual Founders Day Florida Style. Write: Ch., Box 16076, Tallahassee, FL 32308; Website: www.foundersdayfl.org

17-19—Cache Creek, British Columbia, Canada. Cache Creek / Ashcroft 30th Annual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 558, Cache Creek, BC V0K 1H0, Canada

17-19—Casper, Wyoming. 30th Annual June Jamboore. Write: Ch., 531 So. Forrest Dr., Casper, WY 82604

17-19—Richmond, Virginia. Primary-Purpose Conference. Write: Ch., Box 5646, Middlethian, VA 23112

30-3—Toronto, Canada. In the Military Ice Breakers/Dry Dock Groups and Others. Write: Ch., 5452 Park Ave., Garden Grove, CA 92845-2450

July

1-3—Sept-Îles, Québec, Canada. 26th Congress District 89-10. Write: Ch., C.P. 1242, Sept-Îles, QC G4R 4X7, Canada

8-10—Huntington, West Virginia. WV Area 73 53rd Annual State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 2862, Huntington, WV 25728

8-10—Mankato, Minnesota. Southern Minnesota Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 146, Mankato, MN 56002

8-10—Montgomery, Alabama. Alabama/Northwest Florida Area 1 Assembly. Write: Ch., 1314 Stanford Rd., Dothan, AL 36305

22-24—Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The 30th Annual Windsor-Essex Convention. Write: Ch., Box 1502, Stn. A, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6R5, Canada

28-31—Memphis, Tennessee. Southeast Regional Conference of Young People. Write: Ch., Box 753252, Memphis, TN 38175; E-mail: chair@sercypaa05.org

29-31—Bate, ComEAU. Congrès de Bate-ComEAU. Write: Ch., 1145 rue Nouvel Bate-ComEAU, QC G5C 2E3, Canada

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