

PACIFIC REGIONAL FORUM

FINAL REPORT

**September 16-18,
2022**

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

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INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Pacific Regional Forum was held on September 16-18, 2021. Registration for the Forum was **541** This included **335** members attending their very first Forum.

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the upcoming 2023 Regional Forums:

Northeast Regional Forum – June 2-4, Burlington, MA

West Central Regional Forum – August 25-27, Missoula, MT

Southwest Regional Forum - September 29-October 1, El Paso, TX

East Central Regional Forum – November 17-19, Independence, OH

UNANSWERED ASK-IT BASKET QUESTIONS

- **When will there be a new release of “Markings on the Journey”?**
 - Updated “Markings on the Journey” video contains Archival material – is in the production stages – and is slated to be released Fourth Quarter / Fall of this year.

- **Why not sell things at events like this? Things like Grapevine, Literature, etc.?**
 - Using 7th Tradition contributions, the General Service Board pays for Regional Forums expenses such as meeting rooms, travel and lodging for board and staff participants, and presentation materials. All forums are FREE – registration fees are never charged.
 - It may be helpful to view A.A. World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc. as wholesalers more so than retailers. Groups and members often purchase conference approved literature and Grapevine / La Viña materials through local Intergroup/Central Offices. Literature catalogs are available at each forum and individuals may make purchases through the Member Services Department back at G.S.O.

- **Can you direct me to a Corrections committee that operates within an area service structure? I have been involved in an “Intergroup corrections committee” while in Seattle (Area 72). Now I am looking at H&I in Mid-Southern California (Area 09). H&I is a ninth tradition committee operating autonomously under AA traditions. Neither of those are part of Area or GSO service structure. What does it look like to have a corrections committee operating within the GSO service structure? What resources are available where I can see this model?**
 - Thank you for your question. You mention that the “intergroup corrections committees” and “H&I correction committees” operate autonomously under the AA traditions. The you ask, *What does it look like to have a corrections committee operating within the GSO service structure? What resources are available where I can see this model?*
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 - My understanding is that the local area corrections committees run very similarly. They are autonomous as well. The thing that all these committees have in common is that they are trying to share the message of recovery to the alcoholic who is incarcerated.
 - In order to find out about corrections committees and how they operate within the GSO service structure, my suggestion would be to reach out to the Area 09 delegate. Her name is Jennifer, and you can reach her at alcoholicstuff@gmail.com. You can ask her about the policies and procedures used by correction committees in your area. In addition, she can reach out to other delegates in other areas and ask them what the correction committees’ policies and procedures are in their area.

- I hope this information is helpful. All here at GSO wish you the best.
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- **RE: housing process at AA international convention: 1) set an alarm for an hour before Housing sign ups begin online and have a list of preferred hotels ready. The reality is that my internet connection can be slow as well as my ability to figure out how to use the registration page. Every second counts in the current system and my results are usually very disappointing, despite my best efforts. I wonder if we could change the ""first come first served" internet stampede in any way to make the process less stressful and more fair? I know it sounds daunting, but I think it can be done. For example, every registrant could be assigned a random number and that number tells them what time they can go online and find a hotel room at the convention? Thanks.**
 - “Thank you for your question and suggestion. As you may know registration for the International Convention will open the summer before the convention (exact date to be selected) at which time details regarding the process and procedure will be provided. In the meantime, we are happy to bring your suggestion forward for discussion by the trustees’ International Convention/Regional Forum committee. Please continue to visit the aa.org website <https://www.aa.org/international-convention> for up-to-date information regarding the International Convention. We look forward to seeing you at the 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, BC.”
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- **When I see elaborate sophisticated flyers for AA meetings online with the name of the person who is sharing their story in large letters, I get squirmy inside. I know AA is not going to police these posts, but as a sponsor would it be appropriate to say these seem to be promotion rather than attraction? The meetings seem to be offering BETTER speakers than other meetings - that's the implication anyway. A meeting is only a way for drunks to get together to support one another and pass on our recovery program. I am so bothered by this pervasive trend to focus on WHO THE SPEAKER IS!**
 - Alcoholics Anonymous’ public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. It is up to the groups’ conscience on any event as to what information they place on a flyer or webpage or registration form.
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 - GUARDING ANONYMITY Announcement for Press When A.A. conventions are being covered by members of the press, it’s customary to begin meetings by asking their cooperation in protecting members’ anonymity. Such an announcement might go like this: “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. “Thus, we respectfully ask that A.A. speakers and A.A. members not be photographed, videotaped, or identified by full name on audiotapes and in published or broadcast reports of our meetings, including those reports on new media technologies such as the internet.
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 - “The assurance of anonymity is essential in our efforts to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us. And our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that ‘A.A. principles come before personalities.’”

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- In one case, for example, a university professor had been invited to address a large A.A. banquet in the same state where he lived and worked. Only his first name, nickname, and last initial appeared on the announcement posters, but the name of his school and a previous academic connection were fully displayed. The professor's actual identity couldn't have been more clearly revealed if his last name and photograph had been included. Is there a safe way to avoid making such de facto anonymity breaks? Well, one good procedure is to ask speakers how they wish to be listed on posters and advance notices. They'll know better than anybody else how much information about themselves ought to be revealed. In any case, whatever the speakers' feelings, the practice of using initials rather than last names should always be followed for the protection of A.A., as well as the individual. You can also purchase the "Anonymity in the Digital Age" poster through G.S.O.'s online store or your local Intergroup/Central Office.
- **What's going on with the Spanish Braille translation of the Big Book?**
 - Thank you for the question, to date we have not received a request for a version of the book *Alcohólicos Anónimos* (Big Book) in Spanish Braille. A request for a Spanish Braille Big Book can be submitted to the General Service Conference by filling the "Proposed Agenda Item Submission Form" (Annual deadline for submissions for a General Service Conference is September 15th) available on the A.A. website: www.aa.org
 - Note: While all items are received equally, experience has shown that ideas greatly benefit from the value of a broader group conscience. Consider if and with whom you would like to have a group conscience discussion on the proposed agenda item prior to submitting.
- **What can we do about 4 and 5 steps groups that register with GSO that don't follow the traditions?**
 - The GSO New Group Listing Guidelines/Form explains the following: "Being listed with the G.S.O. is not an official sanctioning of a group. A group listing does not constitute or imply an approval or endorsement of any group's practice of the traditional A.A. program. Tradition Four says, 'Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.' Hopefully every A.A. Group adheres closely to the guiding principles of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. The G.S.O. neither monitors nor oversees the activities or practice of any A.A. group."
- **Does GSO have a document for guidance on how to get the message to the unhoused? They are missing from the rooms.**
 - There is not currently service material that deals specifically with carrying the message to the unhoused. The pamphlet "F-107 Serving All Alcoholics-Making the A.A. Message Accessible" does say that, "All suffering alcoholics should be afforded the opportunity to receive the A.A. message and to participate in the A.A. program of recovery. There are A.A. members and groups committed to seeking solutions to ensure access." We do know of groups, especially in urban settings, who keep the doors open to all and provide a warm welcome as well as groups who cooperate with shelters and soup kitchens to provide literature and meeting listings. The pamphlet also

says, “If we can do a better job of reaching out to alcoholics who face access barriers in receiving the A.A. message, we help them to carry the message to other alcoholics they may already know or will come into contact with, providing a powerful example that it’s possible to achieve sobriety despite perceived barriers.”

- **How do we collect the data on members, analyze the trends and use this information to see who we need to help/how to reach people who need help?**
 - The A.A. Membership Survey is not a census which would attempt to count every A.A. member. Anonymous random surveys of the Fellowship have been conducted by the General Service Office every three or four years since 1968. The most recent survey results are in the Alcoholics Anonymous 2014 Membership Survey pamphlet found on aa.org. The A.A. Membership Survey provides a snapshot of the Fellowship.
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 - A review of this data which captures a snapshot in time representative sample of the makeup of our membership can be useful in helping local members perform Public Information outreach and service to carry the message to those populations that are reflected of having a low rate of participation in our A.A. Fellowship.
- **How much did GSO have to pay to house and support the delegates and staff quarantined due to COVID after the General Service Conference ended?**
 - While there were 44 confirmed cases of Covid19 at the General Service Conference, we paid for extended hotel stays for 16 delegates and staff quarantined due to COVID after the GSC ended. Below is the all the additional COVID related conference cost, including those hotel stays.

**ADDITIONAL 72ND GSC EXPENSES
DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO
COVID**

Extended Hotel Stays for Conference Members	16,290
Extended Hotel Stays for GSO Employees to take care of quarantined Conference Members	4,683
Meals provided by hotel for quarantined Conference Members	7,079
Supplies*	12,320

TOTAL ADDITIONAL EXPENSE \$40,372

ADDL EXP PER CONFERENCE MEMBER \$305.85

- **We know that the general service structure can carry the voices of those already here, those that the program has worked for, so that they can be included in our collective conscience. Is it important to GSO and or the**

conference to hear from those who have come and left, who have come and left, who have tried AA and found it unsuitable or unwelcoming for one reason or another? If so, how do we do that?

- The A.A. Membership Survey is not a census which would attempt to count every A.A. member. Anonymous random surveys of the Fellowship have been conducted by the General Service Office every three or four years since 1968. The most recent survey results are in the Alcoholics Anonymous 2014 Membership Survey pamphlet. The A.A. Membership Survey provides a snapshot of the Fellowship. Currently there is not a way for us to reach people who are not in attendance at an A.A. group as we only select a sample of active A.A. groups in the U.S. and Canada. We cannot survey who is not in the rooms.
- **Thank you for putting together this inspiring Forum. I love our trustees, and am grateful for their love and service. I would like to see more diversity on our Board. What can we all do to increase diversity on our board? (Class A and B)**
 - From inception Alcoholics Anonymous has been abundantly blessed by the Trustees incredible knowledge, love, devotion and service to our cause.
 - Class A Trustees are non-alcoholics recruited to serve on the board, often sought for their expertise in professions such as medicine, business, law, or social services. A.A. members can “sponsor their professionals” by supplying relevant literature and inviting their doctor, attorney, minister, and other mentors to open A.A. meetings and service events. Attending a Regional Forum would expose the potential future Trustee to the mechanics of our service structure, to meet trusted servants from the groups all the way down the chain to the service corporations, mingle with current Class A Trustees, and meet the current Board Chair and the General Manager of G.S.O.
 - Class B Trustees are alcoholics elected by the service structure to fill their positions. Often, these eventual trustees make their start as the General Service Representative of a home group. Every group can elect, support, and help develop diverse future trusted servants when electing their next G.S.R.
- **In some areas or districts there are military groups that are not traditional. Is it appropriate that these groups are registered as traditional groups?**
 - On page 12 of the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” it says, “Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, gays and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.” If the groups, you describe to not meet that description then GSO would list them as an organization rather than an A.A. group. They are welcome to be a “recovery” group, we just ask that they do not call themselves an A.A. group.
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WORKSHOP REPORTS

How to be all inclusive

Moderator: Kunane D., Area 17, Hawai'i **Reporter:** Deborah S., Area 17 Chair

Topic 1: What does it look like to be all inclusive while leaving outside issues at the door?

- It sounds like the one-liners such as “keep coming back”, “keep it simple”, and “this too shall pass”. It looks like translation to other languages, interpretation, educating about online participation.
- Explain how to connect and navigate to an online meeting. Utilize simple language, Spanish speaking member belonging to a Spanish speaking community.
- Creating a safe space for the newcomer and for all members
- It looks like GSR participating in discussion at service events and reporting the message back to their groups.
- Encourage the newcomer to get into service.
- Bridge the gap by using AA literature and pamphlets. Reiterate AA's Singleness of Purpose, when a group knows what groups are not represented in their groups.
- Like a newcomer, be willing to relate to others by participating.

Topic 2: How do we help the newcomer to leave their baggage/issues at the door and become a member?

- We can help the newcomer by being kind loving and nice.
- We can offer Big Books in other languages so that newcomers can read asking and understand, which will help them feel they belong.
- We can help by inviting the newcomer to something that includes their interferences or lifestyle (don't invite a vegetarian to dinner and serve only meat entrees). Be a good example of what you want the newcomer and to know. Don't drink, go to meetings, know the primary purpose of AA and the primary purpose of your group, and demonstrate it.
- Attractive: be an attractive example
- Avoid political issues and conversations by practicing Tradition 10
- Educate the newcomer to look for similarities rather than differences.
- Educate the newcomer on what the AA program is about.
- Practice the principles in your affairs.
- Learn unconditional love and teach it to the newcomer. Don't look at the newcomer as different. Individual efforts permeate the group.
- Make the newcomer feel included. Educate the newcomer to do the work. Members read AA pamphlets and literature to learn how to relate to others. Reinforce my humility as stated in chapter 4 of the Big Book
- Carry the message of hope, carry the message of recovery, and be welcoming to the newcomer.
- Invite the newcomer to your table.
- Work harder to communicate with the newcomer.
- Focus on the Singleness of Purpose

- In the book, Language of the Heart, it says “Being like other men and women, how can we expect to remain forever immune from these perils? Probably we shall not, at length, we must meet them all we cannot flee from them, nor ought we try. If these challenges...we, shall I be sure go out to meet them gladly and unafraid. That will be the acid test of our worth.”

Tradition Two

Moderator: Candice C., Area 18, Idaho **Reporter:** PJ W.

Opening:

Candice C, workshop facilitator from Idaho Area 18, introduced the topic of Tradition Two. She relayed appreciation for our ability for richness and depth which speaks to our relationship with a loving Higher Power and reminds us to be servants. In hopes of having a more organic workshop, she didn't prepare a structured workshop or presentation, but rather, took input from the attendees on potential topics, followed by a discussion of those topics.

Initial Discussion:

The initial discussion ranged from people wanting to learn more about how group conscience is formed, to how we behave in group conscience to how small things like eye rolling can shut down voices in group conscience.

However, most of the discussion revolved around the importance of an informed group conscience, and the importance of receiving and considering a minority opinion. With those two topics receiving most attention, the workshop began covering them more extensively.

Discussion on informed group conscience varied. We discussed how to bring more voices into group conscience to keep it more informed (for example, veterans of the armed services or quieter members). As well as accepting a group conscience when we didn't agree with it. We also discussed what uniformed group conscience looks like, to the problems which can arise when group conscience doesn't wish to be informed. One person shared about the similarities between Tradition Two and the First Concept in terms of service. Another shared HALT in service as: Humility, Acceptance, Love, and Tolerance. We heard concerns from a YPAA GSR about bringing about informed group conscience out of a chaotic group with little General Service experience, and many shared examples of how to accept group conscience outcomes they disagreed with. When it came to the topic of group conscience in a more general sense, many cited literature, including the Service Manual and the pamphlets “The AA Group” and “Twelve Traditions Illustrated” as helpful in forming group conscience.

On the topic of minority opinion, many were quick to note several instances at the group, district, and area level in which minority opinion swayed or partly swayed a vote. One person shared an instance in which it didn't change a group's mind, but it did change hers. In a stunning share, a newer member relayed how she'd participated in a group conscience she disagreed with and felt hurt by but didn't share how she was affected at the time. Later, she determined her part in things had been that she should have spoken up and shared her minority opinion as part of the group conscience after all. Discussion of not silencing voices and drawing them into discussion whether different than ours or not, was a point made and

reiterated in several different ways, including giving respect, not attempting to verbally or nonverbally silence others, remembering to ask for a minority opinion in the first place, and to “Listen as if you’ve never heard anything before.”

The workshop was fortunate enough to have Bob from the GSO sit in. He added that decisions almost can’t be made without minority opinion. He also noted in many instances, good ideas are built upon by others, sometimes to the point in which they’re unrecognizable later. Citing the 5th Warranty, that we ought never be punitive, he pointed out it was our responsibility to keep an open mind and embrace minority opinion, so we don’t chase folks away.

Closing:

Candice concluded the workshop with the following quote: “A vote is just a manifestation of a group conscience that has happened because of discussion.” The workshop closed with the Responsibility Declaration.

Overcoming Local Apathy

Moderator: Julie C., Area 42 Delegate **Reporter:** Jake S., Alt Delegate Area 42

Definition of Apathy: Lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern.

What can we do about the apathy since the pandemic within groups, areas, districts and intergroups?

- Enthusiasm: make it look attractive
- Discuss personal responsibility and understanding your role in a service position.
- Have workshops on what General Service has done for you, i.e. "what's in it for me?"
- Be excited for General Service
- Invite new people.
- Make sure there is funding available.
- Quote Bernard Smith's "Why do we need a Conference", changing "Conference" to "General Service."
- At the district, don't just do outreach to the groups "not there", try to retain the groups. Focus on the GSRs you already have.
- Don't let new people get lost in the minutia.
- Diversity
- People watch what you do, not what you say. Make sure you perform your responsibilities.
- Meet people where they are.

How do we get groups interested and involved in what is happening in general service to pay attention to and understand the value/importance of general service?

- Don't waste people's time. Make sure the work is meaningful and helping the suffering alcoholic.
- It isn't attractive to use the term "work", it can be off putting. Call it service.

- If you are a DCM, reach out to all groups in your district. Don't take it personally when some are unwilling to listen - you are not responsible for who shows up. Your feet make more noise than your mouth. Get over your own apathy first. We are not in the results business.
- Be consistent. Do what you say you are going to do. Lead by example. Speak about what touches your heart - you don't need to report on information that you don't understand.
- Are we responsible for keeping A.A. alive for the child being born tonight destined for alcoholism?

Tradition Twelve

Moderator: Amber N., Area 58 Delegate **Reporter:** Lisa S., Area 58 Secretary

1. The only reason I go for the common welfare of all above my own, is that I don't want AA to fall apart.

Common welfare always come first. AA groups sometimes miss the point of having the welfare of the entire group. When I looked at Tradition 12, I had to also look at Tradition 4. AA is a lifeboat; if I was in a boat and it leaked, I would be bailing water. My spiritual development needs to be high so that I can put the welfare of AA as a whole.

There are many benefits from service, the fellowship and connections. If I got a resentment in my home group, I could change home groups. AA saved my life - if there wasn't the fellowship, I wouldn't have had anywhere to go. That's why I take the common welfare of AA over my own. Doesn't have fear of AA not being here; if I'm only worrying about my self, I go into chaos - even in my own home, I try to take everyone into consideration. Balance between the principles vs feelings/personalities. Incredibly important, talks about spiritual foundation - when I get asked to be sponsored, I can't help you - all I can do is teach you the steps, traditions, principles. It's up to them to apply those things. Remember what are groups are there for, not politics. Remember that we deal with alcoholism, no one can be everything. We are not judges, treatment facilities, we need to remember we are AA.

2. Speaks of humility, which is driving ambitions. Result of practicing the principles. It's not a sacrifice. Still, learning how to do that; sometimes I need patted on the head by others to remember these things. God speaks in the group conscience. Principle of rotation. Online postings of flyers of speaker meetings - are they getting off rails? Are they promotion?

Make sure as Area Servants that the GSRs have the loudest voice in voting on subjects. Digital voting makes it so everyone can give their own opinion through their vote. I don't want the common good for AA; I want the best good - even wanting that is a personal ambition.

When the group conscience happens, I need to not want to come back and give a personal opinion. Can anyone be altruistic? I'm trying to be of service, but I'm doing service to keep myself sober. I learned that when I help another alcoholic, I'm serving the better good and not self-seeking or self-ambitions.

In Person vs Online Twelfth Step Work

Moderator: Chitra S. **Reporter:**

How do we reach the online newcomer?:

- Unique online approaches to reaching out to newcomers
- Using zoom to work the steps, meet with and connect to newcomers before and after the meeting.
- Keeping the meeting open after the meeting is over, and starting early so that anyone can help anyone who has questions or wants to talk.
- The online members are able to support those members going to in person meetings where available.
- Using the full spectrum of technology, no way is better or worse, it's about helping the alcoholic who is still suffering.

How does your group communicate with members outside of the meeting?

- Using the local website, share information from aa.org and creating opportunities for fellowship after the meeting, at other times.
- Picnics, events with food and games were used to connect parallel meetings where one is online and the other in person.
- Make sure that GSO publishes guidelines for using hybrid and virtual meetings.
- We are just learning how to make this work as so many alcoholics are showing up especially women or members who are afraid, as they are able to feel comfortable online.
- Unusual approaches to service work as an online group? Establishing connections in many languages finding a common solution.
- Using the same service positions, but making sure that everyone on the zoom call is informed of the process, open the circle so that the online members feel included

Service Sponsorship

Moderator: Sheryl T., Area 69, Utah **Reporter:** Laura C., DCM Area 69

To begin, the moderator read an excerpt regarding service sponsorship from our pamphlet, "Questions and answers on sponsorship." The attendees suggested five topics for discussion, and two were chosen by a show of hands. The topics and sharing from the mic, are summarized as follows:

1. What is service sponsorship?

Attendees shared their own experiences as service sponsors. Some said they use a more structured approach, with a set agenda of topics to cover. Others prefer a more casual approach, and tailor topics discussed to the individual sponsee. The motto, "keep it simple" was mentioned more than once. A sponsee might choose a service sponsor who has been active in AA's service structure.

2. How do we teach others about General Service?

Many encourage their recovery sponsees to first get involved in group service, moving on to district and area service as appropriate. We introduce sponsees to AA literature and help sponsees understand our “upside down triangle”. We show our enthusiasm because will interest others more than a pushy approach. We devote time to meet regularly with service sponsees. We make ourselves available. We hold district and area workshops on this topic.

Sense of the Meeting: good sponsorship is very important! All service is equal, and general service may not be for everyone. We share with others how doing service of any kind helps to carry AA’s lifesaving message of recovery to those still suffering.

Building the Informed Group Conscience: A two-way highway system

Moderator: Mitchell B., Area 9, Mid-Southern California **Reporter:** Ryan H., Area 09 GSR

The workshop “Building the Informed Group Conscience: A Two-Way Highway System” looked at communication and participation as means to build awareness in A.A. members and help to understand how to reach an informed group conscience. The session had two main questions. First, “How do we share the information?” There was great discussion on how the different districts in the Areas prepare and share information that comes from GSO, the Delegate, and the Area. How to inform members on Conference Agenda Items was the example discussed. A.A. members have shared that they do not get the agenda background material soon enough. District officers may not receive the material and groups do not have enough time to arrive at an informed Group Conscience on items. There were some great solutions by have members ready and willing to prepare summaries and get the information out as soon as it comes in. A member suggested presenting Area sharing sessions or workshops to speed up the process for Area sharing. The second workshop question “How can we make changes in the future?” dealt with “Unity”. There was great discussion on how the different Districts within Areas would come together and develop different plans to prepare the information from GSO. Having the ideas in place, if there is a gap in communication between groups and the Area, the Districts can help in gather the information to share with groups. Another great point from the discussion was if you do not seek or investigate the information when it becomes available then you are not only doing a disservice to yourself, but also to the group you represent. Having a willingness is key to extending the thoughts of the group conscience. Also, staying excited and motivated were helpful points that are key and essential in all Service work done by the members.

Remote Communities:

Moderator: Karla Y., Area 93, Central California **Reporter:** Doris N., Area 8, HWW Treasurer
How can we help/support RC?

Take literature to my hometown and other RC. As Spanish members we are a RC we are different from English members, we have a hard time communicating, with each other. Our shares are different, we have obstacles in our groups, it is complicated to carry the message to Spanish-speaking members but we need to make it attractive. Even been right in the middle staff can feel as a RC, 3,000 members at a state convention is not such a small RC but people don't know about GS, or the Conference. RC is part of Accessibilities and we need to convey information from group, district, area, and to the GSC. We have provide the

knowledge, on how to help, inform about GS, talk about forums, do forums, continue to work with the newcomers.

Who's missing/Who's not here?

A42 only has two Spanish districts, they barely had Spanish participation, so they started doing translation 3-4 yrs ago and now its a standing committee, that translates all documents for the Spanish members. We are missing all those who have not heard the message The Accessibilities Committee helps those that have disabilities, we can take meetings to them by using zoom. Let's inform the fellowship about G.S churches, clinics, service centers are out there and they don't know that we exist. What do we need to do so they can know that we are here? Invite psychologist, priests, to come and talk with us since we know that people who are ill go to them and they could tell them that we are here. Our triangle needs to be equal, in order to be of service to the alcoholic, Hispanic women are a RC and I was rejected. I didn't even know that a Workshop existed. Members from Oaxaca that speak Zapoteco and don't speak Spanish, someone can translate. That's who's missing? Those who can't speak Spanish In Salinas there is a large community of members from Oaxaca and they are a RC. What is being done to get to RC and what resources do they have? In A03 there was a tribe of Indians that were in AZ we need to work to reach them because they are dying. Our ignorance, we made literature in English and took it to their community. A09 my area there is a RC committee but there isn't one for the Spanish. There are \$2,000 and it could be used to help the Spanish Community The Hispanic Women are working. A pamphlet was made for HW and RC committee is going to use the money to buy literature to distribute to the people that are not here

Service Sponsorship

Moderator: Sheryl T.

This report is unavailable

From In Person to Online to What Now?

Moderator: Jodi B., **GSR Reporter:** Dawn C., Alternate DCM

Meeting opened with a great sense of humor over the last-minute change in moderator.

- 1) How are we going to incorporate our online meetings into our service structure?
There was a lot of spirited conversation around this (more to be revealed)
- 2) How do we present the potential problem of one member voting in more than one group in person or online?
- 3) We are behind the ball!. Online A.A. is not going to wait for us

A big thanks to Jodi who agreed to moderate this workshop last minute.

4th Edition Spanish Big Book Stories

Moderators/Reporters: Irene D. (GSO Staff), Amalia C. (ACM)

The 4th Edition Spanish Big Book Stories workshop at the Pacific Region Forum, started at 7 PM on Saturday, September 17. Around 50 participants, most of them AA members from the Hispanic community, from all corners of the Pacific Region from Arizona to Washington

states, many DCMs and Literature committee representatives as well as GSRs attended the workshop.

The workshop was led by Amalia C., Appointed Committee Member (ACM) on the trustees' Literature Committee and chair of the working group for the development of the draft of the 4th Edition Spanish Big Book. Also helping with the workshop was G.S.O. Staff Irene D., the GSO Staff member currently on the Literature assignment.

Amalia opened the workshop with a brief history of the Spanish previous translations of the Big Book and asked the Staff member to give a summary of the guidelines for writing and submitting personal A.A. stories to be considered for publication.

A presentation with slides showing some writing suggestions, created by a member from Area 06, was projected while the workshop took place. Also, paper pens, envelopes and the copyright assignment form were distributed. Amalia started the writing workshop with questions and answer, responding questions from the participants about the story selection process, and what type of stories are required. Once the Q&A concluded, Amalia invited the attendees to write during the workshop and use the opportunity to put their story on an envelope and hand it to the Staff member.

To encourage the writing process, Amalia invited members to share key events on their personal journey to A.A. and write down short sentences to capture the memories. As some members shared on their memories of alcohol impacting their lives, others started to write.

At the end of the workshop Amalia expressed her gratitude and one member handed her story along with the copy right form completed to the staff member.

The General Service Conference

Moderator: Nick E., Area 18 Chair **Reporter:** Kade W., Area 18 Alt. Delegate

The two questions discussed were:

- 1. Who is allowed into the general service conference?**
- 2. What is the process to observe? How many people are allowed in?**

Several past delegates shared their experience on the topic, how different Areas share information about the conference agenda to help inform delegates about the group conscience of groups and districts. We discussed several different processes for this, including mock conferences, preconference workshops and District events. We also discussed ways to get groups to engage in this process.

Concepts 3, 4, and 5

Moderator: Alex W.

This report is unavailable

What is your District/Area Website Saying?

Moderator: Doug S., **Reporter:** Tim G. DCM, Arizona

Should we hire outside professionals to build and maintain site?

- Outside help, while qualified, may be expensive, and the group may need to wait for projects to be done.
- Are members qualified or skilled to meet this task? Is that keeping people from taking on this service?
- For members, we must ensure there is a simple platform/user friendly.
- Perhaps there are qualified/technical capable people to serve create job description to match responsibility and can rotate easily.
- Backup site information

What do areas/districts put on their sites?

- Should we scrub contact information, minutes, and password protected financials? Agenda items, delegate pages?
- The website should be general service based, but also should include an events calendar, "What's new?", links for newcomers, meetings, and coordinators.
- It's important to have clear guidelines on what is posted, and that it's ok for districts to have a site.

PRESENTATIONS

Embracing our Remote Communities --- Tandy W., Area 2, Alaska

Good morning my name is Tandy W. an Alcoholic from Alaska, Area 02, Panel 72.

I'm so grateful to be here today and share a little about my experience in Embracing 12 step work in Remote Communities.

In AA, we define remote communities to be remote by Geography, Language and Culture. Up in Alaska we have all three categories, as perhaps several other areas do as well.

I would like to take you on a little journey of recovery for someone living in a remote community. This community falls into all 3 categories, geographic location, indigenous cultural and English is not their first language.

Imagine, if you would, that you have been drinking for years, trying to stop on your own, but you were unable to do so. Finally, you hit another deeper bottom and you feel there is no HOPE for a person like you. First off, you don't even know there is a solution for Alcoholism or that you have this disease and have never heard about AA. There are no Public Service Announcements, no treatment centers, only a small clinic, so no detoxing available.

The community is chock full of alcoholics who won't leave you alone when you try to stop drinking on your own – you are ridiculed, rejected, and you feel alone.

Then you see a flyer or hear on the radio that there are some people from Alcoholics Anonymous traveling to your village to talk to the community about Alcoholism. You reluctantly go to their meeting and walk into a room where everyone there is not like you, a different race, culture, language, and mannerisms.

You feel vulnerable, fearful, intimidated. You do not understand the terminology the “AA-eze” (acronyms, stories, expressions). The meeting ends and you are too frightened to stay after the meeting to chit chat with these strangers.

Sound familiar??? It sure does to me; I felt a lot of those same feelings when I finally walked into my first AA meeting.

What can we do as an organization, whose primary purpose is to have the hand of AA always to be out there? There is a lot we can do!

Recognize in your area who might be missing from your meetings:

- Indigenous people
- African Americans
- Blind and deaf people
- Folks who speak another language
- People who live off the road system

Carrying the message to remote areas can take many forms:

- A simple flyer posted, emailed, faxed or snail mailed to a community health clinic or center.
- A radio or TV PSA (which are easily obtain from GSO) Send them to the local radio and tv stations
- Provide our literature to local libraries. Did you know that the big book is the most stolen book from libraries?
- Sponsor a Grapevine subscription to a remote community
- Put together a 12- step trip to one of these communities

Bill W. said “Whatever the form, it comes down to one drunk carrying the message to another drunk”

Now imagine again, that you are that same alcoholic who heard a message of hope and is trying to stay sober in that remote community.

Your hometown has less than 200 people and there are no other AA members.

- The nearest AA meeting is over 500 miles with no roads.
- Phone service is not always available, you don't own a computer and internet is expensive or not accessible
- You have the Big Book, but you only have a 5th grade reading level

What would have been your chances of staying sober?
How would you have gone to any length to stay sober?

There is a solution, and it takes sober alcoholics like you and me getting off the couch and doing our part in giving back. Stepping out of our comfort zone and doing it.

Grab a sponsee or two and do something. Drive, fly, or take a boat to an isolated remote community, even if it is in your own city and share your experience, strength, and hope. You never know who will hear a word or sentence that might be helpful to the still suffering alcoholic.

Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Reciprocal Responsibility --- Kathy R., Area 3, Arizona

Hi everybody, my name is Kathy R. and I'm an alcoholic. Currently, I'm serving as Delegate for Area 03, which is Arizona. My sobriety date is 1/7/86, and my home group is Free At Last in Tucson, AZ. My topic is "Reciprocal Responsibility" a phrase used at the 2022 General Service Conference.

First, a definition of a phrase from Collins Dictionary.

“Howling at the moon – “to waste your time and energy trying to do something which is impossible or trying to get something which you cannot have. You need to adjust your expectations and stop howling at the moon.”

Does Howling at The Moon sound familiar? When I didn't want to work Step 3 and didn't want to drink, I took a suggestion to throw my kitchen ceramic bowls at the back of the garage. The sound of shattering pottery could provide me with some satisfaction and relief. Sounded good to me then – no third step! The problem began when I threw my *last* bowl. I was still angry since I had no steps under my belt AND I had to buy more bowls! Here is an example of “howling at the moon” in my life; I didn't want to drink, and I didn't want to do step-work. It's best summarized with the phrase “Dry Drunk”. When I was in enough pain, I took the 3rd step and found real relief. What happened is the pain motivated me to adjust my attitudes and I lived.

Attitudes lead to actions and actions have consequences. If I don't like a consequence, then the freedom from that consequence is in changing my attitude. Any choice has a consequence, including howling at the moon.

A 2022 General Service Conference Committee Consideration reads:

“The committee emphasized that at every level of our Conference process there is a reciprocal responsibility of all A.A. members and trusted servants, of participation and communication, to embrace the guiding principles of trust and transparency.”

As I apply that “reciprocal responsibility” idea to my own situation, I needed to *participate* in my own sobriety first. That required action on my part; specifically, taking Step 3. Then, the *trust* piece requires that I simply trust my sponsor and Higher Power to know what was best; not argue.

Similarly, if I'm unpleasantly surprised by *any* result, then I have a choice. I can continue to be unpleasantly surprised and sacrifice my peace of mind or sobriety, or I can change and sacrifice my defects like laziness. I can be unpleasantly surprised by a conference action or get better informed. Tools like the delegates' report, conference report and a service sponsor are some of the tools available to help inform me. My reciprocal responsibility is to *utilize* these tools. If I'm reluctant then the negative consequences apply like being unpleasantly surprised. If I don't want that negative consequence, then I must take responsibility to use the tools. The consequence of THAT action is freedom, for me. God knows I have howled at the moon, but I'm happier when I practice self-responsibility to change myself.

When reading Concept 4, we're given the right to Participate.

“At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.”

This concept assures that I can belong to AA and contribute to our future. Concept 4 also gives me a responsibility to match that freedom. It reads in part,

“Accepting the necessary disciplines that our several tasks require ...”, that's from our Service Manual, page C15.

This discipline means, again, the sacrifice of self-centeredness. For example, I practice the responsibility of self-discipline needed to learn about our legacies, structure, and how these influence any issue. By doing so, I sacrifice self by *working*, not practicing sloth, to get informed. That reciprocal responsibility, for me, meant looking beyond my uninformed opinion, my limited experience, my culture, and my language to see if change *might* improve carrying the message, for Anybody. The freedom I feel is freedom from fear.

I've talked about decisions and consequences, and responsibility and freedom. The Right of Participation has a Reciprocal Responsibility of self-discipline, initially apparent in the decision to be informed. The ability to continue to participate is based on me doing the inside work to address fear about anything. From experience, participating in AA is what got me excited about AA. I really do want AA to be here for another 87 years, at least! I'll close with a quote from one of our co-founders, Bill W. from the 1956 General Service Conference.

“I do not think that any of us would presume Alcoholics Anonymous in its present form would necessarily last forever. We can only hope that it will lead to better things for those who suffer from alcoholism”.

Thank you all for your sobriety.

Attraction verses Promotion --- Lauren A., Area 5, Southern California

The Eleventh Tradition states that, “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.”

So, how do we define the phrase “Attraction Vs. Promotion?” The definition of Promotion is: “activity that supports or provides active encouragement for the furtherance of a cause, venture, or aim.” The definition of Attraction is, “the action or power of evoking interest, pleasure, or liking for someone or something.” In Bill’s talk at the 1960 General Service Conference he said, “We live in an era of change. Our Twelve Steps probably won’t change; the Traditions, not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner for function, for service - let us hope that this goes on changing for the better forever.” Did Bill have a premonition about the internet? Maybe - his visionary mind knew things will and must change and innovate in order to help still suffering alcoholics all over the world. Hmmm....the World-Wide-Web.

We are not a closed society, nor a secret society, where our message cannot be known outside the rooms and that means things change. Our pamphlets and literature are readily available to anyone who wants it both in print and digitally across the US and Canada. In this day and age, one of the ways and probably the most practiced way people find us is on the internet. This means we have an online presence for people who are searching for help to stop drinking and desperate alcoholics who need us. We have an official LinkedIn page

for employers to be able to reach us when they need help and information to help an employee, our movement is searchable on Google with questions answered and misconceptions replaced with facts and literature is subject to Attraction Vs Promotion change and be adapted to help the message be clear, loving and accessible to ANYONE! Are any of these methods of making our movement accessible, “promotion”? I think not.

In my experience on the Conference Public Information Committee, I learned that we are ever trying to reach these alcoholics to just give them the information, that’s all. I think of the internet as a library in my hand. We let them know we are here and accessible in many forms. PSAs, Pamphlets, letters to media, Podcasts from G.S.O. and the Grapevine and our beloved YouTube Channel full of our “official” videos and massive digital content. With changes in culture and technology these are the places where we are increasing the usage of the internet and airwaves to give information. Not to sell anything, not to coerce anyone into our movement but to save lives and get the right information into their hands. Some of these methods have been controversial over the years but the staff and Trustees of the Public Information Committee are ever watchful and always making sure we keep our traditions intact in all of our work.

What is more “attractive” these days than updated information and Search Engine Optimization? We still have work to do on our online presence you know. We are buried beneath a huge pile of rehabs and misinformation in the search for “How do I stop drinking.” There is a payment structure to be in top searches that we don’t use. I personally do not see paying for SEO as promotion, nor paying for placement on streaming services of our PSAs. We need to be seen. We need to be available to give information. Give the information that we are here. Give the information that saves lives. Attraction Vs Promotion That’s all. This is how our message is preserved and carried under the watchful eye of the conference, the trustees, you and me.

Now, On Attraction. In discussions everywhere in 2021, I was told “we don’t want pamphlets that are printed. We want to be able to look things up on our phones and read there.” I know this doesn’t apply to everyone...I like a good old, printed version. Our attraction is our way of life, our being recommended by a friend and our reaching out to help...as always. The loving kindness we give to our newcomers is a MAJOR attraction. We have friends in the Media too and we have a message for them which states in part,

“From the beginning of A.A. over 85 years ago, we've recognized that word-of-mouth is not enough to carry the A.A. program's message of hope and recovery to the many people still suffering from alcoholism. We've needed help – and much of this growth can be attributed to the willingness of journalists and media professionals around the world to take an interest in our Fellowship.”

And sometimes...they even get it right.

So, in my mind, attraction and promotion go hand in hand in our time. Yes, we want our friends to refer us to a newcomer and also yes, we want our information to be accessible in any way possible. “There is never a need to praise ourselves.” But there is a need to let our light shine as a beacon of hope.

I'd like to thank you all for listening. It has been an honor to present to you. I know everyone sitting out there is a trusted servant and only wants what's best for Alcoholics Attraction Vs Promotion Anonymous. I'm in love with you all. Everyone should be heard, change is inevitable and I know the language of the heart will sustain us through it all

Strengthening Our Common Welfare --- Jennifer B., Area 6, California Northern Coastal Area of A.A.

“Us-versus-them” thinking is prevalent in society at large, and alcoholics can be an especially critical bunch. But here in A.A., we are supposed to be unified in a common purpose. Our experience has taught us that our common welfare must come first. My goal in the next six minutes is to promote a sense of “we” in how I communicate about various aspects of A.A., and to remind us that practicing our spiritual principles means treating each other with mutual respect and love.

We all love Alcoholics Anonymous. We want to stay sober, and we want to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. We don't have to agree on everything in order to be parts of the same whole. Unity is not conformity. Just because you and I think differently doesn't necessarily mean that one of us has to be wrong, or that one of us is the better A.A. member. Our diversity of experience and beliefs is our strength. It helps us broaden our reach to the alcoholic who still suffers, offering a wrench for every nut.

“Strengthening” implies taking action to make something stronger, like exercising a muscle. Or using tools to reinforce existing structure and connections. Our tools are spiritual tools. In the pamphlet “A.A. Tradition, How It Developed,” Bill talks about how our unity cannot automatically preserve itself: “Like personal recovery, we shall always have to work to maintain it. Here, too, we surely need honesty, humility, open-mindedness, unselfishness, and, above all — vigilance.”

One way we can help maintain our unity is with regular group inventory — in our home group, district, area, intergroup, or any service committee. We are people who share our experience, strength and hope. Hearing about what we are doing well, and what needs improvement from other members' perspectives, increases my understanding and effectiveness. For example, if safety issues or other barriers that were not part of my experience are impacting someone else's ability to access our message of hope, or their inclusion in service work, that's valuable information to have when coming to a group conscience on possible action items.

Another way we can strengthen our common welfare is through communication and cooperation among different service entities. In Sonoma County, CA we have liaisons who attend each other's monthly business meetings and an annual Unity Day where everyone comes together with displays and panels to encourage others into service — emphasizing that all service is important and we ultimately have the same goal.

At district and area level, we have held numerous joint committee communication meetings over the years for members of Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Bridging the Gap, and the Northern California Hospital and Institution

committee, to discuss where those services may overlap, or where alcoholics who need help may be falling through the cracks. With regular communication, we are less apt to step on each other's toes and we are much more likely find new ways to work together in harmony.

Technology is another tool that can help strengthen our common welfare, especially when it is used to bring us together. Area 06 is making great use of interpretation equipment, translation software, and hybrid meetings to improve participation.

Social media is a mixed bag, in my opinion, because it can reinforce that "us-versus-them" mentality. A private Facebook group for A.A. members may seem like a fine place to share event flyers or offer encouragement, but it might not be the best place to talk about controversial topics. Any tool can become a weapon if used improperly. I know I need to be vigilant to exercise restraint of tongue and keyboard.

The nature of social media generally seems to encourage disunifying behavior, such as spreading misinformation, confusing conjecture with facts, or openly criticizing other people. In this case, our fellow members who are doing service, or our special workers. Does that make A.A. service look attractive? We want to build more future leaders, not just influence our followers.

I like to take my sponsees through the Traditions Checklist. The very first question on the checklist is, "Am I a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?" There are so many good questions in that service material piece (SMF-131). I'd read more of them to you, but I'm running out of time.

Even more disheartening — and perplexing — is when members post their personal grievances about A.A., or how they think other members are "violating" traditions, on websites accessible to the public. Does that make A.A. recovery look attractive? Of course, we need to be vigilant about protecting A.A. with the guidance of our Traditions, but let's not be vigilantes. Let us always remember love and tolerance of others is our code.

I'll close with a quote from *A.A. Comes of Age* (p. 98): "Pride and fear and anger — these are the prime enemies of our common welfare. True brotherhood, harmony, and love, fortified by clear insights and right practices, are the only answers. And the purpose of A.A.'s traditional principles is to bring these forces to the top and keep them there. Only then can our common welfare be served; only then can A.A.'s unity become permanent."

Accessing Our Message --- Jenn D., Area 7., California Northern Interior

Hi everyone, my name is Jenn, and I am an alcoholic. I have the privilege to serve the California Northern Interior Area 07 as the Panel 72 delegate. I also serve on the Conference Committee on Literature. My topic for today is Accessing Our Message.

I'm a word person, and two of the multiple definitions of access in Merriam-Webster are 1) "freedom or ability to obtain or make use of", and 2) "a way by which a thing or place may be approached or reached."

As I think about what access to the message of Alcoholics Anonymous means, I think about how we—you, me, and the newcomer—are obtaining and using the wisdom of our steps and how any of us can reach that message.

Access to our message could look like the format. At the Conference this year, the Literature Committee discussed ways to ensure our current literature is accessible in all possible formats. That looks like traditional ideas like large print books, audiobooks on CD, or e-books through vendors like Amazon, Apple, or Vital Source.

It's also pamphlets that can be read by screen readers, and our efforts to make our books available to incarcerated alcoholics via tablets for free.

Maybe it's new ways of reaching alcoholics through our YouTube or Instagram channels or some other innovative digital platform.

Access can also look like the words we use. Our fellowship is almost ninety years old. So much has changed. Landing on the moon isn't something from science fiction. It's old news. We did that over fifty years ago. So, changing the language to reflect who we are today opens our fellowship up to anyone who might think we're a historical society rather than the living, breathing, vibrant community of alcoholics in action that we are. That we *really* are open-minded and welcoming. Transitioning to gender-neutral like "a fellowship of people" or non-stigmatizing language, such as "incarcerated alcoholics."

And maybe access is meeting the newcomer wherever they are, regardless of language, ability, gender identity, age, or anything else that might separate me from you. We're doing that through updating pamphlets like A.A. for the Black and African American or Native North American. Projects that are being led by stakeholders. Or how we are giving careful consideration to ensuring culturally relevant translations of our literature.

And it could look like the Plain Language translation of the Big Book. The definition of plain language from the International Plain Language Federation is, "A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information."

Isn't that what we want? A message so clear that still suffering alcoholics can read our literature and feel like they want this too? That our message won't be, as it says in the Twelve and Twelve, "mysterious and remote."

I want to address an idea—resistance to this project—that I think we've all heard. "But all you need is a Big Book, a sponsor, and a dictionary." Recently I heard an encyclopedia added to that list.

But I also hear this thought followed up with a statement along the lines of, "that's what I was willing to do, and anyone who's not, isn't ready to get sober." To me, that doesn't make our message very approachable or accessible. It sounds like our message can only be reached through an interpreter—someone to decode the message of Alcoholics Anonymous

for us. And, despite our claim that anyone is welcome in A.A., it seems like there's a caveat—as long as you do it like this.

But if we think back to the original concept of the Big Book, to share the program of recovery those first early A.A.'s had found, the intent of the book was to relay the message to someone who didn't have the opportunity to work with another sober alcoholic. Our message needed to be transmitted in writing to an alcoholic out there on their own. And the sponsor, dictionary, and encyclopedia assume a few things.

One, that someone has access to a sponsor. Not unwilling to work with one, but access. That could mean they are incarcerated or living in a remote community, whether that's language, culture, or geography.

Or maybe it's shame and self-doubt about their reading ability. It's a first-world problem to think that everyone is so situated that they can just pop over to the meeting starting in an hour and ask one of the many old-timers in the room to work with them.

Two, it also assumes that to be a sponsor, you need to have a certain level of literacy, especially knowing how to access a dictionary. I know plenty of people in A.A. who struggle to read, and probably can't look words up, but have an understanding of the Steps that humbles me.

Three, there's a certain hubris to think that a sponsee needs to work the steps exactly as I did. I've found what works for me, but that doesn't necessarily mean it works for you. So, in closing, think about access; it's not necessarily for you, but for anyone who's not here. I don't think a lack of desire for sobriety keeps people out but rather our rigidity. Our message matters, but not our antiquated ideas. Let's, as we were asked to do as newcomers, keep an open mind. Thank you.

Diversity is Our Strength --- Monty C., Area 8., San Diego Imperial Area

When I first chose this topic, I had all this stuff running through my head to say. As I begin to set down and write, nothing comes to mind. I had to relax and think about my own recovery, where I came from, and who my tribe is.

When I first arrived to A.A., I had no idea who my tribe was, or how to get one. I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin. I was different on the outside. Being a black or African American coming into AA wasn't easy. Being gay and black didn't help either, as there weren't very many people of color in the rooms.

Diversity is such a broad topic. Various types of diversity are cultural, ethnic, religions, gender, race, gender diversity and gender equality. Diversity means the quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, and sexual orientations. Being diverse also means to have an open mind and being able to understand different meanings or writing from the authors perspective. For me, diversity means learning to live within my cultural upbringing and incorporate that into my daily life without hiding in someone else's shadow. Being told that I can't do

something because of the color of skin or education is not what any human being should have to endure.

Diversity can be found in many different areas of life. It's a hot topic in the employment industry. There is training and courses you can take on how to be diversified. There is no training in AA. This is one of those times where we take skills outside of AA and apply to each and everything we do.

There are many groups of people who feel and are different in some way. In AA, there are several specialized groups; LGBTQ+, Hispanic Women, Indigenous people are just a few in the melting pot of AA. There are several others who are not listed. This doesn't make them any less different.

It has been stated that our numbers in AA have been flatlined for some time. With that being said, I think and see that our unity is growing by leaps and bounds. We build strength by standing together. Faith and Courage are the glue that helps guide my thoughts and actions as I carry out certain task. Not being afraid to comment or say something that will hurt people. Being able to express how I feel and listen to other people and see how they walk through difficult situations.

For me, diversity leads me to Concept 9. Concept 9 talks about leadership, and various ways on how to carry that out. Building leadership creates that pipeline which is the pathway to a strong future. By building future leaders, we lay the cornerstone of being open to the conscience of the group, district, or area. We hear items or topics from groups, GSRs, or members, and apply what works and discard what doesn't.

In AA, we have many diverse cultures and groups. One of the latest groups that I been involved with is the Hispanic Women's Workshop. These women are fighting to get to a place where the rest of AA already exists. These women bond together to take care of their own. Many started with nothing. No hope, no courage, no willingness, or desire. Slowly they are finding what works for them. Society keeps fighting against them and putting obstacles in the way. They keep persevering through. For me is true example of strength.

Strength is defined as the capacity of an object or substance to withstand great force or pressure. I chose this definition out of all of them because so many people have been through some pretty big struggles. We have been told that we are not equal, we will never amount to anything, you are not part of the race, or just some other excuse to make us not feel welcome. It takes courage and strength to keep your head up. To listen or participate despite how we may feel or been told is a huge quality of diversity.

Diversity helps me not be caught up in my own beliefs. It allows me to listen other experiences and make a better decision that is good for the greater whole. My owns thoughts are not always the best. Having an open-mind and being able to explore helps me to grow in knowledge about life, culture, experience and guidance.

The question for me: Are we building strength through diversity? For me, there are several factors in this. One our first tradition. We come together for one common goal. It's one our

greatest assets. The 7th step. Being humble! To remain teachable in all areas of our lives. And the 12th step, showing others what we have been taught and passing it along. For me, if we have never been taught or raise to have compassion, it will not come easy. It wasn't easy for me until someone set me down and said look at what you are doing. Are you feeling uncomfortable with the actions you are taking? If the answer is yes, then you need to change something. Change what? Everything.

The steps help start me on a process to change my way of life, my thought pattern, and coping skills. By carrying out this task, I get to see that without it I would fail. The skills of learning to cope while drinking brought me a dark place that had no training. I learn to survive with no basic skills of being a human being. The more I listen, the more strength I develop. Being able to speak up when I don't understand. Asking for help when I am going through something difficult. This is my strength. To grow to be different than I was yesterday.

"How to introduce General Service to the fellowship, especially those members who feel negatively about GSO"--- Ben N., Area 92, Washington State East

Hello, my name is Ben N. I am an alcoholic; my sobriety date is February 21, 2014. I gratefully serve as delegate for Washington State East Area 92, Panel 72.

My topic today is: "How to introduce General Service to the Fellowship, especially those members who feel negatively about G.S.O." I suppose the best way to introduce general service to the folks who have negative feelings about the General Service Office, would be to share my experience, in the spirit of "one alcoholic to another". I recall my home Group business meeting looking for someone to step up to the position of GSR. After the duties of GSR were read, one being, *serve as the mail contact with G.S.O.* An "old timer" with 30+ year's sobriety, who many looked up to, bellowed out: "the G.S.O. is nothing but a bunch of fat cats in 3 piece suits blowing our seventh tradition money!" (I was to learn much later our 7th tradition contributions are actually made to, and managed by the General Service Board). He went on to say our Group would be just fine without the General Service Office and the Trustees. That was my first impression of general service and New York.

When my sponsor agreed to work with me, she "suggested" I get into and stay in service. She said, "service is one third of our spiritual journey." Rather than commenting on that gentleman's opinion, she suggested I investigate for myself what this was all about...I could never have dreamed what I was to discover. At my first assembly, I experienced an overwhelming, indescribable feeling of being where I was supposed to be. That was the beginning, and the feeling is still with me today.

As GSR, attending our Area election assembly, our Regional Trustee, Joel C., there to facilitate the election, offered this instruction: "before we begin, consider that while sobriety time and experience is important, what is equally if not a more important qualification is availability and enthusiasm, because we don't do this alone." That one statement removed from me any fear, reservation, and feeling of not being "qualified". I was available and I was enthusiastic... I must be qualified!

While serving as an alternate DCM and as a DCM, I began to get a glimpse of the larger picture of A.A. as a whole. It became apparent that carrying the message was worldwide, not just limited to Groups, Districts, and Areas. I began to understand the vital role of the General Service Office in the flow of materials and information traveling up and down our triangle. An A.A. presence can be found in approximately 180 nations worldwide....Who knew?

While serving as Area corrections chair, it was suggested that all standing committee chairs contact their G.S.O. counterpart and introduce ourselves. Up to this point, my experience with G.S.O was limited to receiving Box 459, a service position kit, or an occasional email. Remembering what that old-timer had said about New York, I must admit that when the General Service Office Corrections desk answered the phone on the second ring, I almost fell out of my chair! I still had some lingering preconceived image of a lofty bureaucrat with not a whole lot of time for a Corrections chair out in Idaho. Talk about "*Contempt prior to investigation*"! I could not have been more mistaken. Diana L., who I would later meet at the National Corrections Conference, was knowledgeable, pleasant and eager to help me in my new position. Communicating regularly with Diana and other G.S.O. staff reinforced those words: "we don't do this alone"

After serving Area 92 as alternate delegate, my "spiritual journey" brought me to the 72nd General Service Conference. Walking into that big ballroom at the Brooklyn Marriott I was overcome by that same magical feeling of that first assembly. Over those six days, my eyes were opened to the dedication and love for Alcoholic Anonymous demonstrated by everyone there. The awe and appreciation I now have for our General Service Office and fellow conference members is difficult for me to describe. Experiencing firsthand the loving, tireless effort these folks put forth to support our Fellowship is something I will never forget. I am blessed with their lasting friendship. I thank God for my sponsor who insisted that I "get into and stay in" this beautiful third legacy of service! Thank You

PAST TRUSTEES SHARING

Kathy F., past Pacific regional trustee, 2018-2022

Recently, I shared my service experience for one of the districts in Area 06. They gave me some questions that helped me to reflect on the past four years, so I am going to pull from that because it touched my heart and gave me a great view. The folks that have come from the General Service Office and the Grapevine office, our board members, can't really blow their own horns but I can tell you, from my own experience, that these people love Alcoholics Anonymous so much. They work very hard to stay in their lanes and are dedicated and wonderful servants. It is a privilege to serve on the Board with these amazing people. One thing I have learned is that they love A.A. just as much as I do. But when I get done, I get to go back to my home group and I am hoping that they will elect me greeter. I get to stay in A.A. and continue to be a part of A.A. for the rest of my life. Sometimes they don't have that same avenue, so for any of those past trustees, keep them busy and keep inviting them, because they want to be a part of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Being a Pacific Regional trustee was a blessing. During the pandemic, service was a little different. During the years when we did everything virtually, we were able to get our business done. We were really effective and everyone worked just as hard, if not harder, to get things done. But those conversations we had, and I specifically remember one conversation I had with a friend where we shed tears together — and I know that that has happened among you — that was really missing for a couple of years. In regard to service, I think the relationships we build (and the times that we are not talking about business) are just as important, if not more important, than the business that we do. So during those years, we called each other more. We learned to pick up the phone and call more to have those conversations. How's your family? What's new in your life? How're your kids? We nurtured those relationships so that we served together better. Serving as a trustee, did it change my perspective of the Fellowship? Absolutely. I am grateful for our structure; it keeps everything right-sized. The groups on top and the board on the bottom. Without the structure, I think we'd be a mess. I am grateful for it.

The bigger picture I've gotten in Alcoholics Anonymous and the more people I've gotten to know outside of my group, the more empathy and compassion I've built in my life. I strive to build more of it as time goes on. I arrived at general service in my first position and I was pretty rigid: "You didn't do that right!" As time has gone on, my heart has become more open and I don't have to walk in your shoes in order to listen and understand and have compassion for wherever you are at. My favorite attribute that has been brought about by general service is that of having compassion for others.

The delegates that have served you work so hard, and especially during the pandemic worked extra hard to get to the groups, to develop and get the group conscience. They knew

the struggles. Finally, my favorite activity as a board member was to chair the nominating committee because I like procedure. I am not super-creative and they have a lot of procedures to follow—I liked that. Thank you.

David N., past general service trustee, 2017-2021

It is an honor to be here. I am going to speak about what I learned when I came into general service 25 years ago. Then I will share my perspective about how we are doing against what those past delegates and service members taught me. The first thing they taught me was that this is a safe place. They taught me that every opinion had value, that we needed to listen to others and consider fairly and open-mindedly what they had to say. It was mentioned the other day that all of us have a right to participate. Those mentors told me to read the content. Initially, I did not understand much of what I read, but our rights—decision, participation and appeal—spoke to me greatly. My mentors said that at district meetings and general assemblies, my job was to share my opinion without feeling the need to sway others. My first DCMC seat revered the Warranties, and I learned that same love from him. I learned about not being personally punitive, among other things. Now, that doesn't mean we can't be passionate. We all love A.A., and we want it to be here for our grandchildren. I was taught: "Say what you mean, but don't say it mean." They said that how we do things is more important than what we do. You can probably tell by looking at me that I am a child of the sixties. I really wanted to live those values back then: peace and love. But the truth is that I was a coward. And I was probably more attracted to the drugs and alcohol that were part of that lifestyle anyway. But when I read that line in the Big Book: "Love and tolerance of others is our code," I had a visceral attraction to this program that has not faded to this day. I never dreamed that I would find what I was truly looking for, back then, here in Alcoholics Anonymous.

So, how are we doing today? Again, my opinions only. I sense so much anger in the rooms of general service. At area, district meetings, online, and in private social media groups. I will freely admit that it could just be my own crustiness that I am projecting onto others, but I don't think so. The anger that I've heard is not just passionate anger, it is anger directed at other individuals. I've seen horrible personal attacks on fellow members in private Facebook groups supposedly dedicated to general service and our Three Legacies. I believe this is accelerating. I believe that, at least some of it, is a direct result of a perceived anonymity of the internet. Even though we see each others' faces, and we know who we are talking to, it is easy to forget that you are talking to real, feeling people, rather than just a collection of pixels on a computer screen. You may feel that you are making eye contact with people in a virtual room, *but you are not*. After a session here, this weekend, one woman said that she had never felt the warmth of a certain person she had previously only interacted with virtually, until she did so in person. So here is where I am going to make some people mad. I strongly believe that general service works best when it is in person. The story we've all heard, with people on two sides of an issue that hug in a parking lot after a meeting? It can't

happen in a virtual space. Or, it takes such coordination for it to happen that it usually doesn't. And people walk away from our meetings with hurt and anger and from other individuals that they may need for their sobriety. Those hallway conversations where misunderstandings can be addressed, it is much more difficult to coordinate online. In person, it can happen organically. I know that general service is moving toward hybrid meetings, and I suspect that it will continue even after everything has returned to normal, whatever that may mean. I hope that we learn to use these tools without losing sight of our principles. I truly hope that we will always remember our ideals of love and tolerance and Warranties, the rights, as trusted servants, we have as we interact with others in general service. Those rights have attracted me to general service for nearly twenty years, almost a third of my life. If we continually practice those ideals, you will attract the next delegate in your area, the next general manager, and possibly the next Class B trustee for your region.

Nancy H., past general service trustee, 2011-2015

This is my 15th or 16th forum. The one thing I remember about my first forum is dinner. I went to dinner with a group and sort of idly looked up at a tall building and said, "Does anyone know what that is?" It was in San Jose, CA. Everyone stared at me and said, "Of course we do! It's the Santa Clara County jail!" And then they pulled out all their stories about it. I said to them, "How come I didn't get to go to jail like all the other kids?" They assured me that it was just as well that I had not gone to jail and that I would not have enjoyed it, despite their stories. That was my takeaway. I took reams of paper home, some of which I read. Some I even understood. I understood each individual word, but it was putting it together and making sense of it, that was difficult for me. I didn't quite know who the people were. I think I knew I had a delegate. But I was very unclear on going further down the triangle.

I got sober in 1988 but I didn't come to A.A. at first because I already knew about A.A.; I had seen "Days of Wine and Roses" so I knew you all wore gabardine suits and smoked. I smoked all the time, too. But I didn't own any gabardine suits. Finally it became clear that I was sufficiently crazy, which was my big fear. I was never worried about being an alcoholic, I just feared being crazy and that you would come for me. After about three weeks, I went to an A.A. meeting because no one would even speak to me anymore. They assured me that was the place for me, and because of the "Days of Wine and Roses" I put my hand in, kind of like in "Field of Dreams" and pulled it out to make sure it was still pinky-beige. I thought you would be in black and white. I got to that meeting and it was a book study, thank God. They read the Big Book. What I remember about that meeting is that people would tell the most horrendous things about themselves that I would have gone to the grave before revealing. But everyone in the room laughed. So, I felt right at home; you all have perverted senses of humor so I must fit in here. The second week, they said they needed a treasurer and I volunteered, because at the time I had my most favorite job title ever, "Comptroller." They said, "No, you can't. You can barely open the Big Book. You can't have our money." And I said, "I can, I am the comptroller." An old-timer who had founded the meeting said,

“Oh, honey. Aren’t we all?” Which I finally got, six months into going to meetings. I said, “Oh, they are all deranged accountants?” Again, I didn’t care, because for me, A.A. was the last house on the block. I had no plan and no anything, so whatever you said was fine with me. By the third week, they needed an alternate G.S.R. and they let me do it. I didn’t know what a G.S.R. was, so I was happy to be the alternate of whatever. By the next week, the G.S.R. had resigned, and they looked at me and they looked at each other, and said, “Congratulations, Nancy. You are our new general service representative.” I have to tell you, it wasn’t because they recognized my potential as a future trustee, it was because the next job was coffeemaker and there was no way they were letting me at their coffee pot. Because if you put the plug into the wrong set of outlets, you knocked out all the electricity to the A.A. meeting and the N.A. meeting next door. Somehow they could tell, just by looking, that I was exactly the sort of person that would put the plug in the wrong outlet. And that was how I came to general service. I do not recommend six weeks of sobriety as a starting point, but for me it was great because I wasn’t flustered understanding the words you all used because I didn’t understand *any* of the words you all used, in any context. That’s how I came to general service and the rest is very similar to what everyone else has already said. Thank you.

Rod B., past Pacific regional trustee, 2010-2014

So many things are going through my mind. We were talking about attending the General Service Board Weekend. I love my area so much that there is a big atlas at the G.S.O. Every time I went back, I would open it up to Utah.

Alcoholics Anonymous is dealing with a lot of things, currently. When I was a delegate we were dealing with financial difficulties of the San Diego International Convention, when I was a trustee there were all kinds of controversy going on, and it is going to continue to be that way. I think it is important to emphasize some things others have said. When Dr. Bob and Bill were at the beginning of A.A., they referred to how the social scientists looked at this organization as a potential emotional dynamite. We can understand how that is possible. I can remember, one time we were sitting with the General Service Board and a Class A was talking about the behavior of one of the Board members. They said, “Look at all the years of sobriety and all the years of work to be a trustee, how can it be that this is the case? That this behavior can be so abominable?” I said, “Just because the monkey is off your back, doesn’t mean the circus has left town.”

I want to share how nervous I was when I went to meet with the General Service Board. I thought, What story am I going to tell them? The only one I could think of was when I went to jail. In jail there were these inmates who were able to go and get pop and candy bars out of the vending machine and they were washing the cop cars on the weekend. I said, “Who are those guys?” They said, “Those are general trustees.” Right then and there it was my life’s ambition to become a general trustee. So I decided to tell that story, and thoughts were going so quickly through my mind; I was so nervous. But something hit me, and I said, “Yes,

that's what I am going to say. I am going to introduce myself the way I do at the sweat lodge." I said, "My name is Rob. I am Dine' of the Navahoe people. My mother is of the Towering House Clan and my father is of the Edgewater Clan. And I would venture to say that words like this have never been spoken in this venue. I want to say it just this way, because I think the circle of A.A. and the circle of Native tradition, I believe, is about healing and both circles are about love." And those were the words that I spoke.

I think it is terribly important, because I have seen, like all of you, really difficult behaviors from the way that we can do our service work. It got so bad, when I was a trustee, that one of our past members of the General Service Board said he was never coming back to the General Service Conference. That broke my heart. He said, "I cannot stand to see people that I love act this way toward each other, anymore. I am not coming back to the General Service Conference." So I would like to implore everyone about what I said about love and passion and being passionate and kind and loving toward each other. In this room there are our future service members who will continue to carry our message to the still suffering alcoholic. I believe that the more love there is in those gatherings, the more effective that work is going to be. Thank you.

Paul C., past general service trustee, 2005-2009

So many things are going through my mind. The great psychiatrist and holocaust survivor Victor Frankl said he was perfectly happy with the idea of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor as long as it was balanced with a statue of responsibility in San Francisco Bay. I think those in A.A. can endorse Dr. Frankl's sentiment. This is evident in our full-throated and robust endorsement of technology in bringing our life-saving message about Alcoholics Anonymous to all who need it. We need to be high-touch in A.A. but we also need to be high-tech. Much of the time, if you want to be a leader, you have to find out where people are going and get in front of them. And that is what is happening with this digital revolution that is going on. Edwin Markham once said, "He drew a circle that shut me out—Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win: We drew a circle and took him in." Our circle should be inclusive, rather than exclusive. We don't ever want to be the kind of people that will step over a drunk to argue about the Traditions. Our literature and our services are offered to marginalized and disenfranchised populations and this does not lead to a balkanization of our Fellowship. It enriches it. People have complained to me before about how we've got a pamphlet for black people, Native American people and so forth. When are they going to have a pamphlet for white men? "We already have one," I said. "It's called the Big Book." Bill W. was asked once if he could do it over again, would he change the first word of Chapter 5 "How it Works" from "rarely" to "never" and he responded appropriately, "No." We need to cooperate with other people who are trying to treat alcoholism. Not disparage them. It's okay to be on fire for A.A., but let's not scorch others who are trying to help those who can't get to see the light.

Ambrose Bierce's definition of to apologize was "to lay the ground for a future offense." We need to be more concerned with changing our behavior rather than our sorry, drunken, hungover, insincere apologies. There is no date beyond which I cannot thank someone for a kindness once rendered. There is no statute of limitations beyond which I cannot make amends to improve relationships by sweeping off my side of the street. And there is no expiration date on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I also want to mention two other things. I attended my first A.A. International Convention in Denver in 1975 when I made a sign that said "Denver—Easy Does It" and A.A. members gave me a ride all the way there. And back home.

Finally, I would like to note—I was not always old. I was 21 years old when I joined A.A. I, too, went to my first A.A. meeting in a county jail. Evidently it is still illegal to give LSD to undercover narcotics cops, and that's how I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous. Recently someone came up to me to tell me what a rave was. You know, the young people like to go to raves. They are parties where you drink, take drugs, dance and party and stay up all night. I said that we had something like that when I was young. We called it "the weekend."

Greg M., past Pacific regional trustee, 1990-1994

For me, A.A. is about unconditional love and service. And that is a result of this wonderful awakening of my spirit. I realized that I am sober by the grace of a loving God. And because I, early on, committed to always reaching out, even when I was frightened to death, I always had my hand out and I understand that what we do is we stay sober and we help others. I remember sitting at a regional forum, and the discussion was: "Are We 12-Stepping an Individual or Just Sending Them to Meeting?" There were about 100 people in the meeting and the moderator asked, "How many have been on an actual 12-Step call?" Five hands went up. And then a discussion ensued about how we can't go to someone's house and go inside to Twelfth-Step them. It might be dangerous. I've gotta work. I couldn't believe that. The most important grace of God, in my life, was to always be available. And I am not denigrating anyone or taking inventory, I was just shocked that people felt that way. I am a past trustee. At the time, the General Service Office actually took steps to reorganize itself, the board chair felt that the trustees were out of order and gave a presentation at the General Service Conference to form a fourth corporation. Havoc ensued. I've had the pleasure of knowing seven General Service Board chairs. I sat next to Dr. Jack at one Conference. It was so wonderful to watch him sleep. Two trustees had started yelling at each other and Jack had opened his eyes, observed, and closed them again; he had already seen it all.

In closing, I wanted to talk about something that is near and dear to my heart. It's the way that deflation of ego keeps rising when I observe what we are doing to individuals out there who are choosing to be everything to all people. I understand that now the Conference is year-round. Committees, delegates, conference calls and there is a whole outreach to

individuals. I hear that someone, sober for a long time, has contacted his friends with high net worth and asked them to donate the maximum amount. The General Service Board exists in the upside down triangle solely to serve the A.A. groups. They are the boss. I think our voices today are trying to reach the members. I would not be surprised if one day A.A. groups are replaced by A.A. members. I think that's a trend that we are experiencing. I think people mean well, but I hear people wanting to create services for the groups. I hear about wanting to create more electronic ways to contact individual members. When I listen closely, I think, "The board only exists to hear the collective will of the groups. They are to create what they asked, not to take the initiative and create and deliver possibilities." The General Service Board has an obligation to collectively exercise their vision, but never to move in that direction without balancing it and checking with the affiliate board. I don't know why we use that term. They are service boards, not affiliates. I have to be careful how I choose my words, because it doesn't serve us well when we speak top down, it's the other way around. We listen closely, we have dialogue, as we are doing this weekend. And out of that, we can use intuitive relationships with the God of our understanding to continually seek out what we are supposed to be doing and how to do that. Thank you.

CLOSING REMARKS

Bob W., G.S.O. General Manager, 2021-present

What a super charge this has been for me — and for those of us who are *in* A.A. and don't just go *to* A.A. We get active in service and we get to come to these things. I hope this inspires you to come back to others. At every forum we have a large percentage of first time attendees, so please keep coming back, carrying the message and spreading the word. Thank you for your service and thank you to your family for your service; they serve A.A. as much by making it possible. Mine is home, doing just that, serving A.A. so that I can stand here and be with you this weekend.

I want to go back to my remarks on Friday when I talked about the future of A.A. The future is you — all of you. The questions that came out of this forum were incredible. This has been way more than I could have expected. Because I see the desire and the zeal to ask questions and to learn. Please keep coming, keep learning. We need you. Keep your hands in the air. I love the share of the first-timer this morning who had mentioned that they were thinking that this was it and they weren't going to do anything else after they rotated out of service. Then they were like..."Ohhh!" That's what happened to me. I got up as a D.C.M. in 1997 and I was going to rotate from service and I gave my farewell talk from service—and someone nominated me as the area chair, and then later as the alternate delegate. I was

elected, I couldn't believe it. "Just when I think I'm out they *pull* me back in." And it kept happening.

From my own experience, just keep your hand in the air. If you think you are not the right person for that service position, you probably are. If you think you are the right person for that service position...well, don't stop coming and talk to people if you feel disappointed. I laugh more at events like this and it fills my soul. I heard the word 'love' mentioned so many times and it was attached to the word 'service.' That's what it has been about from the beginning and it is what it is about now. It is what it will continue to be about. Who wants to *not* have that in their life? I want it in my life, now and forever. Keep coming. Your General Service Office is here to serve you, please know that. Thank you.

Linda Chezem, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, General Service Board Chair, 2021 - present

Thank you. Those are two little words that are so big in our hearts in the language of love. So, I want to thank you. I have been to Salt Lake City before. I thought the Golden Spike was driven in Denver. I didn't know that the Museum of the Golden Spike was here in Salt Lake Valley until a friend took me out to the museum and started telling me a story. I don't want that story to be a parable for A.A., so I am going to tell it to you: Two railroad companies were given the opportunity to connect the railroad across the United States. They were paid by the mile — up to \$18,000 dollars a mile depending on the difficulty of the grade. But they were greedy and they didn't talk to each other. They fought each other and sabotaged each other and went 210 miles past each other on duplicate lines and Congress had to intervene to get the railroad lines together.

I don't want A.A. to become like the railroads. I want us to come together. That is, we have to communicate. In A.A. language, we have to share our strength, hope and experience — and you have been doing that all weekend long. It's wonderful, because I think the tracks will come together. In that spirit, I am going to give you my personal email. I welcome hearing from you. My answers may not always be the best answers, but I do try to call on other people (who know more than I do) to give you an answer. I don't want us to be tracks passing each other in the night. Let's keep sharing our strengths, hopes and experiences. Let us stand and share the 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."