box 459

News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.®

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First-ever Special Online Forum for Deaf Alcoholics Responds to Expressed Need in the Fellowship

The new special forum gives Deaf members "a seat at the table"

Regional, local and special forums have been held in Alcoholics Anonymous since 1975 as an opportunity for A.A. members throughout the U.S. and Canada to exchange information with representatives of the General Service Board, AAWS, AA Grapevine and GSO. Regional forums are held four times a year — each in one of eight regions that have extended an invitation; local forums are scaled-down versions for local communities; and special forums serve A.A.s who have an expressed need, often based on culture, language or geography.

The Special Online Forum for Deaf Alcoholics Anonymous Members — the first ever held — took place January 17, 2026. The special forum came to fruition through the hard work of Alene R., a late-deafened A.A. member, other Deaf and hearing members, and two GSO staffers — Eileen A., who at the time served on the Regional Forum desk, and Kelley C., who served on Accessibilities.

With a sobriety date of July 21, 1989, Alene has a deep knowledge of the accessibility issues that Deaf Alcoholics Anonymous members face. "The key ingredient in our history," she says, "is that we have been ignored and set aside. People decide what access we will have, where we will go, which interpreter will interpret. Deaf alcoholics have so little access to Alcoholics Anonymous that many of them have never participated in a group business meeting or district meeting or an assembly or a regional forum."

Alene has been determined to help change that. With the proliferation of online meetings during the COVID pandemic, members who are Deaf were able to put together a spreadsheet of various meetings of Twelve Step groups. In 2023, Alene took that spreadsheet, pulled the A.A.-only meetings from it, and created DeafAA.org with the help of other Deaf A.A.s.

At the Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA) in 2024, Jackie B., from the San Francisco and Marin central office, arranged a meeting for Alene and two other Deaf members — Matt M. and Bryan H. — with Chris C., Grapevine publisher, and general service trustees Teddy B.-W. and Carolyn W., who was AAWS chair at the time. At that meeting they discussed how to improve carrying the A.A. message to Deaf alcoholics. "Once we spoke with them, the three of us added three more Deaf members, Ash S., David D. and Sophia P. It was just like the story of the Grapevine when it was created by six A.A. members back in 1944," says Alene. "We worked with Chris and Teddy for a few months on how to follow the Traditions and get a Deaf person's story in A.A. in an anonymity-protected way. Then we hired a professional Deaf interpreter to copy the story so it could be shared in the visual language of ASL on Grapevine's YouTube channel." Thus, the Grapevine ASL YouTube Playlist was born.

When it came to the special forum, this group of six wanted to talk to people at GSO about the fact

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Note on anonymity: From time to time in this publication full names and/or pictures of GSO employees, Class A trustees and other nonalcoholics are used. The anonymity of A.A. members is maintained, as they are identified throughout by first name and last initial only.

that, as Alene says, "there isn't any service literature available for Deaf members," which makes it challenging to run meetings according to the Twelve Traditions. Jackie B. suggested to Alene that she send in a request for a Special Forum for Deaf A.A. Community. So, Alene and her team, with help from Penny H., then delegate for Area 58, applied for the special forum, using as a template for their planning a special forum for remote communities that took place in 2022.

As the chair of the planning committee for the special forum, Alene worked as liaison with the hearing and Deaf communities and with Eileen and Kelley at GSO. The planning began in fall 2024, nearly a year and a half before the January 2026 forum.

"There hadn't been a special forum for the Deaf community prior to this, so I'm glad we started early," says Kelley, who now serves on the Public Information assignment. "I think there was so much that you assume as a hearing person that you can do at events, especially online events, which wasn't possible here. It was really listening [to Deaf members], learning what was needed and adapting. For instance, a lot of what was usually shared at Regional Forums was put into plain language, because for many Deaf members English is a second language. Keeping it simple, usually using videos, and not speaking while showing them, was important. The cool part was the relay of interpretation. For instance, if I was presenting, that presentation was being interpreted into American Sign Language (ASL). The Mexican Sign Language team was LSM [Lengua des Señas Mexicana], and they were taking the ASL and interpreting it into LSM."

The special forum was an important exchange of information on the culture, language and needs of Deaf members and the structure and services of GSO and the General Service Board (GSB). Deaf members shared at panels on topics including "Deaf A.A. Community Culture & Language," "Is A.A. Accessible to Deaf Members" and "Interpreters, Safety and Inclusion." GSO General Manager Bob W., GSB Chair Scott H., Chris C., and Kelley discussed the resources available from GSO and the nature of the connection A.A. members have with the General Service Board and Grapevine.

"What we learned is that we might have the best intentions, but we really need to bring Deaf members to the table and ask them what resources they need," Kelley says. "We are trying to get *The AA Group: Where it All Begins* interpreted, and we have a few sections that we started with — the A.A. Group Inventory and the Business Meeting. Hearing A.A.s have all that information, so we know how to run a meeting, but Deaf members don't. The more we get this information out there in ASL, the more ASL groups can remain healthy and thriving."

Alene feels that the special forum was "a very positive experience and an educational experience for both hearing and Deaf members who attended. The impact we want it to have, and that I am hoping that it will have, is that hearing people will start asking Deaf people what they need. 'Nothing about

ATTEND A REGIONAL FORUM

Regional Forums provide unique opportunities for A.A. members across the U.S. and Canada to connect with people throughout the A.A. service structure. At forums, members can exchange information with representatives of the General Service Board, AAWS, AA Grapevine and the GSO.

Upcoming Regional Forums in 2026 include:

Western Canada
June 12–14
Travelodge Saskatoon, Saskatoon, SK

Eastern Canada
August 21–23
Hôtel Mortagne, Boucherville, QC

Southeast
September 18–20
Hilton Raleigh North Hills, Raleigh, NC

Pacific
December 4–6
Wyndham San Diego Bayside, San Diego, CA

Questions? Contact the Regional Forums desk at GSO, **regionalforums@aa.org**.

us without us,' in other words. So, this event was an attempt to allow Deaf people to be heard. And for hearing people not to be afraid to [find ways to communicate] with Deaf members. Like I'm using a relay service right now [which provides ASL interpreters to facilitate conversations between Deaf and hearing people]. You could absolutely do this with any Deaf person. But 99 percent of the time, this doesn't happen. A hearing person might ask another hearing person who knows the Deaf person and it's all like the game of telephone. We want to be heard, we want to be asked, and we want a seat at the table."

Alene expressed gratitude for the work of all those who helped to make this forum a reality. "In all this planning," she says, "Kelley and Eileen are wonderful people to work with. They were able to learn a lot about us, and I'd like to thank them for all their hard work and flexibility. I also want to thank Area 58 and Area 08 for providing interpreters for service meetings, without which we never would have gone to PRAASA and met Teddy and Chris and Carolyn. It blew our minds that they took the time to talk with us and to have that direct communication."

For more information, please contact access@aa.org.

GSO Reopens for Tours

The General Service Office at 475 Riverside Drive, 11th floor, in New York City, reopened in April after the successful completion of a retrofit project. On April 24, GSO welcomed its first visitors to the revitalized space, including groups of A.A. members as well as area delegates and board members in town for the 76th General Service Conference, which took place April 26-May 2. The A.A. meeting at the office has also resumed and is held every Friday at 11 a.m.

The 11th floor office space was retrofitted to accommodate all GSO employees on one floor of the building. The newly updated space is designed to better support collaboration and our ongoing work serving the Fellowship.

This milestone marks the culmination of several months of work that required patience and flexibility from all involved. We are grateful for the understanding and support of the Fellowship throughout the duration of the project, as GSO employees worked hard to ensure continuity of essential services throughout the duration of this project.

We are excited to welcome you back to the revitalized General Service Office.

Learn more about visiting GSO. To schedule a visit, contact gsotours@aa.org or call 212-870-3430.

Note: Faces shown are those of our nonalcoholic employees at GSO.

THE POWER OF OUR SEVENTH TRADITION

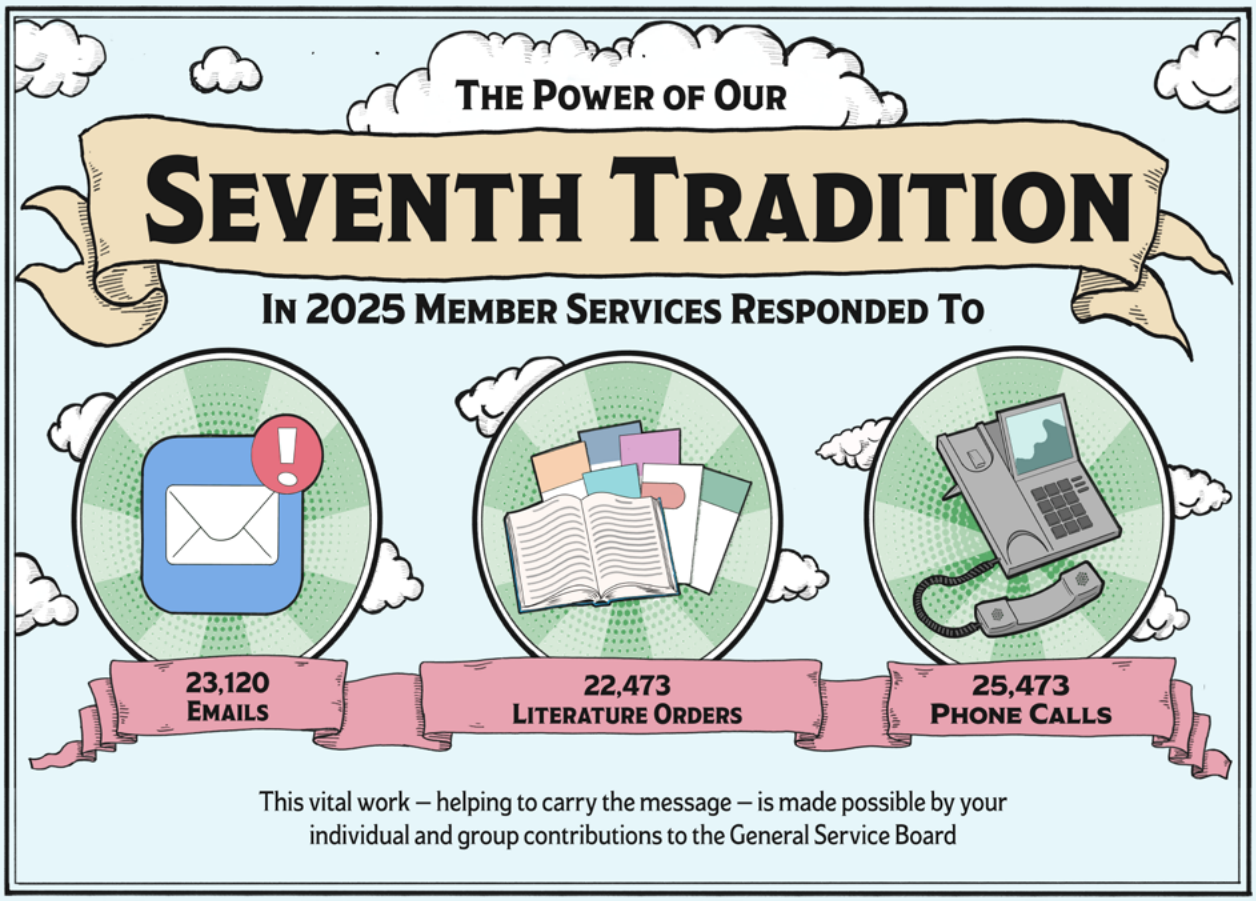
An Opportunity to Share Your Stories about the Impact of Self-Support

Your General Service Office is inviting members to share their stories about the ways the Seventh Tradition has had a positive impact on your sobriety and the Fellowship. You can participate by recording a brief (about one minute) message telling us how GSO/AAWS essential services, supported through your contributions, have touched your recovery or helped you or your group to carry the message.

Examples of stories might include:

- How a piece of literature helped you get or stay sober
- How service material produced at GSO aided your sobriety or helped you to carry the message
- Finding much-needed help and a meeting via the Meeting Guide app
- Experience with the *Loners Internationalist Meeting (LIM)* or Corrections Correspondence Service
- How the newsletters, *Box 459*, *About A.A.*, or *Sharing from Behind the Walls*, helped you carry or receive the message of A.A.
- Assistance you received from the General Service Office

We want to hear your stories! Send your voice memos to selfsupportfinance@aa.org.
Watch and share the video about this initiative here.



PUBLISHING NEWS

Twelve Concepts for World Service Video Now Available in Three Languages

The Twelve Concepts for World Service animated video is now available for viewing in English, French and Spanish. The video was adapted from an A.A. Great Britain version in adherence to an Advisory Action of the General Service Conference of the U.S./Canada.

The video is based on the A.A. pamphlet "The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated" P-8.

This lively tour through the Twelve Concepts offers a wonderful introduction to A.A. service, with roles and responsibilities illustrated in an easy-to-understand "whiteboard animation" style. Follow along to see how wide participation in the "inverted triangle" of the Fellowship enables us all to work together to carry the A.A. message of hope and recovery.

View the Twelve Concepts Video here

English: https://www.aa.org/twelve-concepts-for-world-service-video

French: https://www.aa.org/fr/les-douze-concepts-des-services-mondiaux-video

Spanish: https://www.aa.org/es/los-doce-conceptos-para-el-servicio-mundial-video

Your Contributions in Action

Your Seventh Tradition contributions to the General Service Board of the U.S./Canada helped fund the project to adapt this video for the U.S./Canada Fellowship — an example of the powerful impact of your "dollars in the basket."

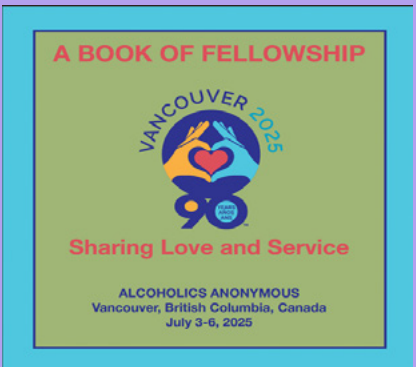
Audio Version of Plain Language Big Book Available Mid-June

The *Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous* will be available for purchase in audio format in mid-June. The *Plain Language Big Book* was designed so that the A.A. Twelve Step program of recovery from alcoholism may be easily understood by all people who have a desire to stop drinking. The print edition, first published in 2024, has sold more than 230,000 copies to date.

The audio version will be available at the AAWS webstore and major audiobook platforms.

Announcing: Souvenir Book Price Break

A Book of Fellowship: 90 Years of Sharing Love and Service (Item B-86) is now priced at $15 USD.



A limited collectible edition, this stunning coffee-table style art book originated as the "official" souvenir book of the Vancouver International Convention. Five years in the making, and now a Fellowship "fan-favorite," the full-color book offers a lively tour through A.A.'s history and stands as an exuberant celebration of our Fellowship in the United States, Canada **and around the world!**

Includes a lavishly illustrated Special Section: Celebrating 50 years of the GSO Archives — with a spectacular "gate fold-out"!

- 384 pages; 8" x 8" hardcover
- Full-color pages throughout

Item B-86; ~~$18~~ Now $15 USD

As always, we encourage ordering all our items of literature from local groups, districts, areas, intergroups and central offices, as they play a vital role in local Twelfth Step activities. To find an A.A. service office near you, please visit https://www.aa.org/find-aa

Call for Theme Suggestions for the 2030 International Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, July 4-7, 2030

Believe it or not, it's time to start thinking about a theme for the 2030 International Convention celebration of A.A.'s 95th Anniversary in St. Louis, Missouri, July 4-7, 2030. We invite you to send in suggestions that will be reviewed and selected by the trustees' International Conventions/Regional Forums Committee.

For inspiration, here are the themes of past A.A. International Conventions:

- **1965:** "I Am Responsible"
- **1970:** "Unity"
- **1975:** "Let It Begin With Me"
- **1980:** "The Joy of Living"
- **1985:** "Fifty Years With Gratitude"
- **1990:** "Fifty-Five Years — One Day At a Time"
- **1995:** "A.A. Everywhere — Anywhere"
- **2000:** "Pass It On — Into the 21st Century"
- **2005:** "I Am Responsible"
- **2010:** "A Vision for You"
- **2015:** "80 Years — Happy, Joyous and Free"
- **2020:** « Amour et tolérance, voilà notre code »
- **2025:** "90 Years —Language of the Heart"

Send your ideas to 2030ictheme@aa.org by October 9, 2026.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ON YouTube

Young and Sober in A.A.
AAWS Inc. · 246 views · 20 minutes ago

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Alcoholics Anonymous®

SAVE THE DATE

28th National AA Archives Workshop

Tacoma, WA Area 72
September 10-13
Washington State History Museum
1911 Pacific Ave, Tacoma, WA 98402

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT NAAAW.ORG/INDEX.PHP/NEXT-WORKSHOP/

OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE*

PODCAST

EVERY TUESDAY

*Available in English only

SEASON 2 STREAMING NOW AND AVAILABLE ON PODCAST PLATFORMS

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aa.org/gso-podcast

Visit the General Service Office!

Visitors are welcome to GSO, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tours are scheduled at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 2 p.m., and last about 45 minutes.

On Fridays, GSO hosts an open A.A. meeting at 11 a.m.
There is also a guided tour offered after the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

SCHEDULE YOUR VISIT TO GSO

All visitors must register in advance to gain access to the building in accordance with the building policy. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that individuals contact us prior to their visit so that we can enter them into the building's security system.

We're located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY *(building entrance at 61 Claremont Avenue).*

Groups of 10 or more must contact us ahead of time to schedule their visit so that we can best prepare for your time at the General Service Office.

To schedule your visit, email gsotours@aa.org or call 212-870-3430.

To learn more about visiting GSO, including location details, our health and safety policy, and information about purchasing literature, please visit aa.org/visiting-the-gso.

Please note, the building will be closed to visitors May 26, June 19, July 4, and September 1.

Calendar of Events

NOTE: Events may be canceled or moved to online formats due to health and safety concerns. Please contact the event coordinators as listed before making your plans.

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

JUNE

5-7 *Kenner, Louisiana*
Big Deep South Convention
Info: https://www.bigdeepsouth.org/

5-7 *Zadar, Croatia*
23rd International
English Speaking Convention
Info: https://www.facebook.com/groups/aacroatia/

12 *Quebec, Canada*
48ième Congrès Joliette et Lanaudière Nord
Info: congres@aa9026.org

26-28 *Vancouver, Washington*
Pacific Northwest Conference
Info: www.pnc1948.org

JULY

16-19 *Lake Junaluska, North Carolina*
79th State Convention
Info: https://www.aancconvention.com/

31-Aug. 2 *Hot Springs, Arkansas*
Old Grandad Convention
Write: Box 94032, Texarkana, Arkansas 72190
Info: https://www.oldgrandadconvention.com/

31-Aug. 2 *Plataforma de Zoom*
4ta Convención Virtual
Internacional Hispana
Info: https://aavirtual.org/web

AUGUST

6-9 *Orlando, Florida*
2026 Florida State Convention
Info: Outreach68fsc@gmail.com

14-16 *Omaha, Nebraska*
49th Annual Cornhusker Roundup
Write: Box 623, Bellevue, Nebraska 68005
Info: www.AA-Cornhusker.org

SEPTEMBER

4-6 *Omaha, Nebraska*
LIII Convención Hispana USA Canada
Write: Box 6002, Omaha, NE 68106
Info: www.liiiconvencionhispanausacanada.org

4-6 *Dallas, Texas*
Our Living Legacy Conference
Info: https://ourlivinglegacyconference.com/

4-7 *Redondo Beach, California*
South Bay Family Roundup
Write: Box 83, Redondo Beach, California 90277
Info: https://rcs.squaredroot.net/org/SBRU

4-7 *Tampa, Florida*
Tampa Bay Fall Roundup
Info: https://tampabayfallroundup.com

10-13 *Tacoma, Washington*
National Archives Workshop Tacoma
Write: Box 8105, Tacoma, WA 98419
Info: www.area72aa.org/naaaw

11-13 *Concord, California*
National Technology Workshop
Info: https://naatw.org/

18-20 *Key West, Florida*
Keys for Serenity
Info: https://www.keysforserenity.com/

18-20 *San Diego, California*
Woman to Woman San Diego
Info: www.womantowomansandiego.com

GRAPEVINE

A New Book!

Gratitude is a collection of powerful personal stories about being thankful. With warmth and humor, the stories, written by AA members, illustrate the many ways the program of recovery can improve one's perspective to help them enjoy each day to the fullest. The book includes chapters on spirituality, fellowship, family, service, getting through tough times and more. All stories were previously published in Grapevine, the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. A great book to start the day. Also makes a wonderful gift.

Visit: aagrapevine.org/books