



Each of us in A.A.
has received the gift
of sobriety. All of us
have found a new
usefulness and most
of us have found
great happiness.



This adds up to the
gift of life itself—
A new life of
Wondrous
Possibility.

—Bill W. 1955



Box 4-5-9 is published quarterly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, copyright © 2016 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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New York, NY 10163

G.S.O.'s A.A. Website: www.aa.org

Subscriptions: Individual, \$3.50 per year; group, \$6.00 for each unit of 10 per year. Check—made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc.—should accompany order. To have issues delivered directly to your inbox, register your email on the A.A. Digital Subscription Service on G.S.O.'s Website.

2017 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by providing an opportunity for A.A. groups and area trusted servants, as well as any interested A.A. members in attendance, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. There is no registration fee for Regional Forums; they are hosted by the General Service Board and coordinated by G.S.O.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work. First-time attendees are specially welcomed.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to area committee members, delegates, D.C.M.s, and central offices and intergroups approximately six months ahead of time. Online registration is also available at www.aa.org.

- *Northeast*—June 2-4, DoubleTree by Hilton, Pittsburgh Cranberry Hotel, Mars, Pennsylvania
- *West Central*—September 8-10, Holiday Inn, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- *Southwest*—October 20-22, San Antonio, Marriott Northwest, San Antonio, Texas
- *East Central*—November 17-18, Hilton Springfield Hotel, Springfield, Illinois



Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

Sharing Our Steps

It is a well known fact in A.A.'s earliest days that Bill W. and many of the pioneering members had "big plans" for the fledgling Fellowship — plans that extended to visions of A.A. hospitals, schools, community centers and social reform. As Bill W. put it in the essay on Tradition Six (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 155), "The moment we saw that we had an answer for alcoholism, it was reasonable... for us to feel that we might have an answer to a lot of other things. The A.A. groups, many thought, could go into business, might finance any enterprise whatever in the total field of alcoholism. In fact, we felt duty-bound to throw the whole weight of the A.A. name behind any meritorious cause.

"Here are some of the things we dreamed. Hospitals didn't like alcoholics, so we thought we'd build a hospital chain of our own. People needed to be told what alcoholism was, so we'd educate the public, even rewrite school and medical textbooks. We'd gather up derelicts from skid rows, sort out those who could get well, and make it possible for the rest to earn their livelihood in a kind of quarantined confinement... We seriously thought of rewriting the laws of the land, and having it declared that alcoholics are sick people. No more would they be jailed; judges would parole them in our custody. We'd spill A.A. into the dark regions of dope addiction and criminality. We'd form groups of depressive and paranoid folks; the deeper the neurosis, the better we'd like it. It stood to reason that if alcoholism could be licked, so could any problem.

"It occurred to us that we could take what we had into the factories and cause laborers and capitalists to love each other. Our uncompromising honesty might soon clean up politics. With one arm around the shoulder of religion and the other around the shoulder of medicine, we'd resolve their differences. Having learned to live so happily, we'd show everybody else how. Why, we thought, our Society of Alcoholics Anonymous might prove to be the spearhead of a new spiritual advance! We might transform the world.

"Yes, we of A.A. did dream those dreams. How natural that was, since most alcoholics are bankrupt idealists. Nearly every one of us had wished to do great good, perform great deeds, and embody great Ideals."

However, as A.A. groups and individuals tried any number of these "big ideas" in the Fellowship's early years — hospitals, education, reform — Bill noted, "In consternation, we saw ourselves getting married to all kinds of enterprises, some good and some not so good."

Summing up the A.A. position, Bill continued: "These adventures implanted a deep-rooted conviction that in no circumstances could we endorse any related enterprise, no matter how good. We of Alcoholics Anonymous could not be all things to all men, nor should we try."

Nevertheless, as A.A.'s program of recovery began to spread throughout the world, crossing innumerable boundaries of language, culture and geography, many

sufferers in other realms came to recognize how the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions could help them, too. Friends and family members of alcoholics saw the benefits the Steps could bring to their own concerns and sought to adapt them to their own needs. Sufferers of afflictions other than alcoholism reached out for the help inherent in A.A.'s program of recovery from alcoholism.

With its position of nonendorsement firmly anchored in A.A. Tradition, and the guidance contained in A.A.'s Preamble that the Fellowship "neither endorses nor opposes any causes," it has been possible over the years for A.A. to share its Steps and Traditions — upon request — with other groups or fellowships of people recovering from various addictions, compulsive behaviors, and mental health problems and, in the years since 1955 and up until 2015, 663 groups or fellowships have requested and were given permission by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (which holds the copyright), to use or adapt the Twelve Steps and/or Twelve Traditions. While A.A. neither endorses nor opposes any of these groups or fellowships, many have proven to be great resources for those who suffer from a wide range of maladies and circumstances.

Says Dr. Robert DuPont, a well-known nonalcoholic practitioner in the addictions field, "The twelve-step approach is ever-changing and growing. It also is endlessly diverse, fitting in with every culture and subculture in the world. It is adaptable and sensitive to vast diversity...."

"When people ask me the percentage of success of ... the twelve-step fellowships, I say it is 100 percent — for those who follow the programs as they're intended to be followed. This means not just going to an occasional meeting, but to many meetings every week, having a sponsor ... 'working' each of the Twelve Steps in depth ... and making recovery the No. 1 priority."

And so, with our experience of the Traditions as our guide, A.A. has been able to share the fundamentals of our program with literally hundreds of other groups or fellowships who are seeking relief from a broad range of difficulties, keeping in the forefront of our policies and procedures Bill W.'s heartfelt admonition: "There are those who predict that Alcoholics Anonymous may

■ Reminder: Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2017

Three new Class B (alcoholic) trustees will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2017. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2017, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new Southeast regional trustee will fill the position currently held by Chet P. of Orlando, Florida. The new East Central trustee will replace Bill F., of Marietta, Ohio, and the new trustee-at-large/U.S. will replace Bob W. of Westfield, Massachusetts.

well become a new spearhead for a spiritual awakening throughout the world. When our friends say these things they are both generous and sincere. But we of A.A. must reflect that such a tribute and such a prophecy could well prove to be a heady drink for most of us — that is, if we really came to believe this to be the real purpose of A.A., and if we commenced to behave accordingly. Our Society, therefore, will prudently cleave to its single purpose; the carrying of the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Let us resist the proud assumption that since God has enabled us to do well in one area we are destined to be a channel of saving grace for everybody.

"On the other hand, let us never be a closed corporation; let us never deny our experience for whatever it may be worth to the world around us." (*The Language of the Heart*, p. 346)

■ 24th World Service Meeting Held in New York

"One World, One A.A., One Language of the Heart." Such was the theme of the 24th World Service Meeting (WSM), held at the Hilton Westchester Hotel in Rye Brook, New York, October 23-27, 2016. Hosted by the General Service Board of A.A. of the U.S. and Canada, the event brought together representatives from over 40 countries or linguistic zones around the world, providing a continuing international forum for shared experience and ideas on carrying the A.A. message of recovery from alcoholism.

Since its inauguration in 1969, the WSM has succeeded in bringing together far-flung A.A. service centers and reflects a final vision of co-founder Bill W., who believed there could be "one world of A.A." to assure that help would always be available for sick alcoholics wherever they might be or whatever language they might speak.

The event alternates biennially between New York and other locations around the globe, convening in such diverse cities as Cartagena, Colombia; Auckland, New Zealand; Oviedo, Spain; Malahide, Ireland; Mexico City, Mexico; and Warsaw, Poland.

Described as a living and growing exchange of experience responding to the needs of A.A. worldwide, the meeting covered a number of relevant topics and offered sharing between A.A. structures that are well established and those that are just beginning to solidify.

Workshops on country-to-country sponsorship, the home group, A.A. service and spirituality, and the advantages and disadvantages of social media in A.A. highlighted the meeting. But as always, at the heart of any A.A. gathering is the sharing between one alcoholic and another, and in a presentation titled "We are not a glum lot," Loreta B. of Lithuania shared some of her story.

"When I came to A.A., I was only 29-years-old. Now I know how young that was. I had lost a son, lost a good home, lost teeth, lost weight. I was broken from the truth.

It's hard to tell how alone I felt. And while I did not have money to put into the Seventh Tradition basket, service began for me on the first day.

"I washed many a cup, swept the floors after meetings. I used to come hungry, belly rumbling. It was a shame, but I really wanted to stop drinking. From the first day, I felt a peace, a safety — meeting after meeting."

Loreta stayed sober, stayed involved, and eventually found herself in New York as a WSM delegate.

"Over nineteen years ago," she noted, "I wasn't any good to myself or anyone else. Now I feel what it means to be of service. It is an indescribable feeling one cannot buy. I am part of the Fellowship."

As Bill W. wrote in 1960, "From the beginning, communication in A.A. has been no ordinary transmission of helpful ideas and attitudes. Because of our kinship in suffering, and because our common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves only when constantly carried to others, our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart."

And thus members from around the globe discussed — in workshops, committee meetings, and presentation sessions — a broad range of topics related to Recovery, Unity and Service. Ultimately, having made new friends and strengthened A.A.'s worldwide connections through their sharing, delegates journeyed home to pass along the experience, strength and hope they had gathered, to enrich A.A. in their own countries and further extend the hand of our worldwide Fellowship.

The next WSM will be held in Durban, South Africa, on October 6–11, 2018, with the theme: "Our Twelve Traditions: A.A.'s Future in the Modern World."

■ C.P.C./T.-A. Appointed Committee Member

The trustees' Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee has an opening for an appointed committee member (ACM). We are searching for a qualified individual to fill this service position.

Some of the qualities most desirable for this appointed committee member opening are:

- Experience in A.A. service.
- Professional or A.A. service experience working with people with physical, emotional, or mental challenges.
- Cultural, ethnic and racial sensitivity.
- Availability for meetings of this trustees' committee held during General Service Board weekends (usually the last weekend in January, July and October), as well as one meeting during the General Service Conference in April.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to work within the committee structure.

In seeking applications for all vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large applicant file of qualified persons which reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

To obtain a résumé form for this opening please call the Treatment and Accessibilities desk at G.S.O. (212) 870-3344, or email tf@aa.org or access@aa.org or contact the C.P.C. desk at (212) 870-3107 or email cpc@aa.org. Deadline for applications is March 1, 2017.



■ "Blue People" Graphic

A gathering of folks, silhouetted. In blue. A gathering of people, all sorts of people, that look just like us.

This graphic image is affectionately known as the "Blue People." Originated in January 2006, the simple graphic has come to be regarded as a heartwarming representation of the inclusiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous, a powerful and much-adored depiction of our membership. A graphic image that has also come to be synonymous with G.S.O.'s A.A. website, aa.org.

The General Service Office receives many requests like the following: "Can we use the 'blue people' graphic from the home page of www.aa.org on our local A.A. website, or on stationery, business cards, banners, or other items?"

The "blue people" graphic is a copyrighted design and trademark of A.A.W.S., Inc., with all rights reserved for use exclusively by the A.A.W.S. Board, AA Grapevine Board, the General Service Board of U.S./Canada, and the General Service Office of U.S./Canada.

A.A. World Services, Inc., Board of Directors, June 17, 2016

■ Regional Forums: A Moveable Feast

In April of 1975, Dr. Jack Norris, a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee and then chairperson of the General Service Board, presented a report on an idea that had been under discussion by the trustees for some time. The idea revolved around the possibility of setting up a series of “regional get-togethers” where members and trusted servants could meet to exchange information and experience with the General Service Board and the General Service Office. The purpose of these get-togethers would be threefold: to provide better communication between the General Service Board and grassroots A.A.; to provide the General Service Board with an opportunity to “take the pulse of A.A.” personally; and to reaffirm with A.A.s everywhere that the only purpose or interest of the General Service Board is to carry the message of recovery to alcoholics everywhere.

Noted the report, “In brief, the idea is simply this. It seemed to us that for 25 years A.A.s from all over the U.S. and Canada had been coming here to New York to listen to the Board reports, to approve Board actions and to advise the trustees as requested. Now we think it’s time for the Board to reverse this direction. We think perhaps we should come out to you, region by region, and listen to your reports, answer your questions and talk with the members throughout this country and Canada on a personal basis.”

And so Regional Forums were born — a series of get-togethers open to all A.A.s that would, hopefully, as the report noted, “air many feelings, voice many opinions, make many suggestions — but would make no decisions.”

Recognizing the role played by the General Service Conference as the decision-making body within A.A., Regional Mini-Conferences, as they were initially known, would be more informal, with agendas, presentations and procedures developed at the local level, with the General Service Board assuming all financial responsibility.

The first such Mini-Conference was held in the Southeast Region, in Atlanta in December 1975, with 275 people in attendance.

Over 40 years later, Regional Forums are still going strong, and today there are four Regional Forums a year, spread among the eight regions of the U.S. and Canada. In fact, the 200th Regional Forum recently fell at the Western Canada Forum in Kamloops, British Columbia on the weekend of August 26-28, 2016. Said Steve S., G.S.O. staff member on the Regional Forums assignment, of the 200th, “There was cake served in the afternoon and a special PowerPoint slide prepared to commemorate the event. People had a good time and generally were touched that this landmark event just happened to fall on the forum that they were attending. We had a large cake and people seemed excited. The cake disappeared quite quickly.”

A Forum program usually consists of presentations on the roles of Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees, Class B (alcoholic) trustees, A.A.W.S. and A.A. Grapevine and La Viña,



The Big Book is translated into 69 different languages and the foreign literature display at Regional Forums provides tangible evidence of how far the Fellowship can reach.

G.S.O. staff and directors, A.A. around the world and A.A. finances. Following each presentation there is time for questions and answers. On Saturday morning, delegates give presentations on topics they have selected. General sharing sessions are scheduled throughout the weekend, which give members and trusted servants an opportunity to ask questions or make comments from open microphones placed throughout the room. On Saturday evening several workshops are held simultaneously on a variety of topics of local interest, often moderated by trusted servants in the region. A.A. videos are also shown, such as the history video “Markings on the Journey” and, most recently, A.A.’s newest public service announcement “Doors” and the new corrections video “A New Freedom.” Sunday morning first-time Forum attendees are invited to share their comments, followed by talks from past trustees. At the end of the Forum everyone receives an “early bird” newsletter that summarizes board and staff presentations. A Final Forum Report is later assembled and sent to all who attended. This report includes the delegate presentations, workshop summaries and past trustees’ sharing.

Says Ivelisse Rivera, a nonalcoholic employee at G.S.O. who has been helping to organize and coordinate Regional Forums since 1992, “Regional Forums are the greatest thing that ever happened to G.S.O.”

True to the original vision, Regional Forums have provided a means of communication, a virtual moveable feast

of information creating a solid conduit between local and regional members and the General Service Board. Notes Ivy, as she is known to the many Regional Forum attendees she has crossed paths with: "I think the main thing I have seen over the years for Regional Forums is that they create trust, trust between the Fellowship, the office and the board. Because attendees are able to meet face-to-face, it makes people more relaxed about the future of A.A. And they trust more. They see the dedication. They see that A.A. is way more than their group and they get an inside scoop on what is happening that they wouldn't get otherwise."

An important part in the success of all Forums is the role played by the local host committee. Whether it is greeting attendees at the doors, staffing the registration tables, setting up G.S.O. and Grapevine literature displays, putting up workshop signs, distributing hand-outs, and much more, local A.A.s always rise to the occasion to help out.

And today, getting information about Forums has changed considerably since 1975. Where once word of upcoming Forums was disseminated through cumbersome (and costly) mailings, information on Regional Forums is just a click away on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site (www.aa.org). There you will find a Forums schedule, Regional Forum flyers, a Forum calendar poster, along with Online Registration and, where available, links to online hotel registration. For planning purposes, preregistration is encouraged and on-site registration is always available. There is no charge for Regional Forums registration and the costs of the event are covered by the General Service Board.

One of the most welcome evolutions on the Regional Forums front has been a shift over the past seven or eight years to focus Forums more specifically on first-time attendees. "We're always looking for ways to make the information more engaging and as closely applicable to what the groups and members are doing to help alcoholics," says Steve S. "The presentations and the sharing and the open microphones, it's all geared to support members

and groups as they carry the A.A. message."

Wrote one first-time attendee from the Forum in Kamloops, "I may never get to New York. I may never see my G.S.O. friends in person again, but rest assured, your presence in our small town has made all the difference. You probably already know this, but when you take the time to travel thousands of miles and put up with the trials of travel, I am the beneficiary.

"My rededication to the daily practicing of the program is because of you..."

"Thanks from the bottom of the heart I found I had. I only misplaced it for a few decades."

The email was signed, "Gratefully, Scott," along with the addendum, "Just a member, not a G.S.R. or a D.C.M., just a (now) sober guy."

Some other comments from first-time attendees at Forums across the U.S. and Canada, echo Scott's enthusiasm and gratitude:

"The bug you get for service? I'm infected. I realized that you all are not hundreds of people I don't know, you're a part of service to what is now like a huge home group to me."

"I'm one year sober and struck by how even as we discuss millions of dollars, we are all the same."

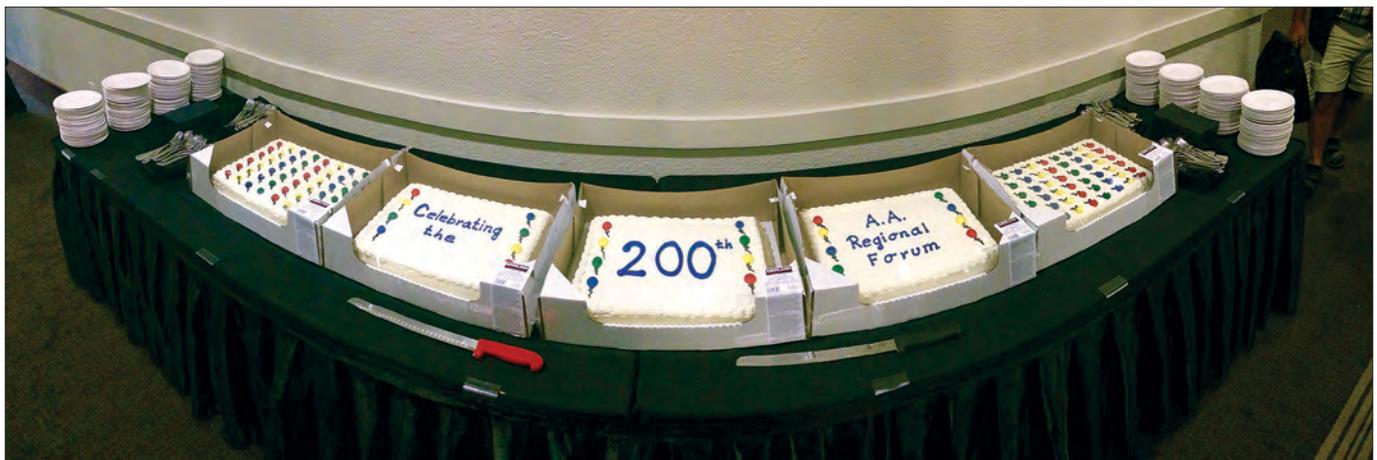
"The organization, professionalism and leadership are impressive and help me realize how much more there is to A.A."

"I was hitting a wall in sobriety and coming has been an adventure. I'm reconnecting with people I've known for years and it has rekindled my love for service."

"As a woman often having very few women to connect with in my small hometown, I am blown away by how many awesome women are here this weekend."

"This has been an amazing weekend, thanks everybody! Twenty years ago I got picked up outside the walls of prison... I feel free all over again, that's what this weekend has given me and I want to go back to my group and just be a part of."

"I had to show up for first-timer sharing. I didn't want to miss what I had to say!"



Cakes set up in celebration of the 200th Regional Forum. According to Steve S., Regional Forums coordinator, with over 275 A.A.s in attendance the cake didn't last very long.

When it comes to Regional Forums, everybody has a story to tell about their first. Greg T., G.S.O.'s general manager, who attends each Forum, shared his.

"My first Regional Forum came as a director of the Grapevine board — a Pacific Regional Forum in 1996. I vividly remember being dazed and confused as to my role, but being gently guided by staff and other board members as to what my participation was to be."

Having attended many Forums since, Greg still feels the effects of that first one. "Just within the past couple of days," he says, "I was contacted by someone on an unrelated matter who reminded me of making a connection at that Forum, the first time we had ever met. And so it still reverberates and helps to inform my current commitment to service in A.A."

"As general manager," Greg continues, "the most fascinating aspect for me now is getting a better understanding and appreciation for the role of the delegate, beyond the Conference, within their own regional context, and seeing them 'in action' among their fellows. One of the best things about Regional Forums I've attended or participated in as general manager has been the delegate presentations. I don't want to short any other aspect, but the delegate presentations I have heard have been outstanding, informative, and have caused some really good thinking and reflection on the principles of various aspects of service."

"The workshops, too, are an important and perhaps underestimated feature of Forums because it is very often there that the most immediate issues are first brought forward by those who are most directly affected and concerned by these issues. A grass roots aspect of the Forums, fulfilling the original vision, carrying information from one distant A.A. outpost to another."

Says Ami B., Grapevine executive editor/publisher, who also attends most Forums, "My favorite thing is being able to meet A.A. members that I would never have the opportunity to meet otherwise and to get a feel for local A.A. There is a unique feeling at each Forum."

"The Grapevine/La Viña workshops are wonderful, too. Each one is different because those in attendance choose the topic and create the way our time together unfolds."

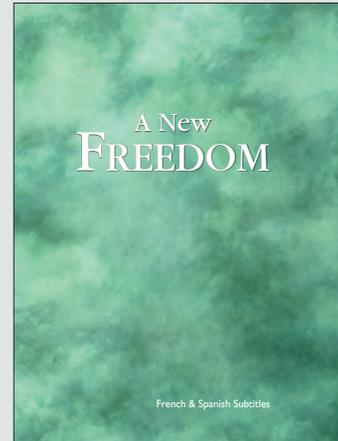
"Lately, we've been starting with something we've named: What's Your Story?"

"In turn, each member in the room tells the rest a brief synopsis of the story they would write for Grapevine. By the end we've usually heard a wonderful cross-section of stories that could make up an entire issue. Then we name our 'issue' after the place, such as the Thunder Bay-Denver-Kamloops or Kona edition. Everyone usually has a good time and it can be very touching."

Information, then — and the bond that exists between one alcoholic and another — may well be the food upon which we A.A. members feast. And through the loosely structured system of our Regional Forums, the series of "regional get-togethers" started over 40 years ago, that feast is most certainly a moveable one.

■ *A New Freedom*

Filmed inside correctional facilities in the U.S. and Canada, this 30 minute video features a diverse group of A.A. members who are currently incarcerated or have been incarcerated and are staying sober one day at a time. They share what it was like when they drank, what happened after participating in A.A. in prison, and what it's like now as a result of working the Twelve Steps and continuing to participate in the A.A. Fellowship. (DV-18; \$10.00)



■ 'A.A. Is Not Just a Gift for Hearing People'

Getting sober can be a difficult journey for anyone, but it is made even more difficult if a person is deaf. The vast majority of A.A. meetings are geared only for the hearing, something that Teresa K., Special Needs & Accessibilities Chair for District 7 (Area 36) in the Twin Cities would like to see changed.

"We talk about being a fellowship, but we often get stuck behind the language barrier and we don't reach out. We tend to believe that because there are no people who are deaf in our meetings, that there are no alcoholics who are deaf. But of course, there are — alcoholics who are deaf are just not at meetings because their disability makes it difficult for them to participate."

Teresa's home group is Foxhall Chapter Seven in Minneapolis, one of two open speaker meetings in the Twin Cities area that regularly employ American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. And this is more than many cities have, Teresa points out. "Because of its reputation for treatment centers, Minneapolis draws a lot of recovering alcoholics, and there is actually a Deaf treatment program. So there is a little bit of a Deaf sober community, who look for meetings to attend after they leave rehab."

Foxhall Chapter Seven used to employ a company that would record speakers on audio and make them available on CDs. After the company bowed out, the group decided to tape the meeting themselves, making the audio file available in a free email subscription. It was but a step

■ AA Grapevine Announces *Our Twelve Traditions:* A.A. members share their own stories of experience



OUR TWELVE TRADITIONS

AA members share their own stories
of experience

A collection of Grapevine stories in which members share their experiences with the principles contained in A.A.'s Twelve Traditions. The stories offer groups, as well as members, workable solutions to many problems. GV35, \$10.99; five or more copies, \$10.50.

To order this book or any other product, including the new GV app for iPhones and iPads, from the GV collection, visit us at AAGrapevine.org and click on Store or call (800) 631-6025 U.S./Canada, (818) 487-2091 International or fax us at (818) 487-4550.

from there to deciding to employ an ASL interpreter so that people who are deaf could attend the meeting, and to videotaping the interpreter so that those who could not attend would have access to the talks. (The other meeting in the Twin Cities area with an ASL interpreter is the Three Legacies Speaker Meeting, which posts the ASL videos to a private YouTube channel that the Deaf can sign up for via email.)

The move to hiring and videotaping an ASL interpreter at Foxhall Chapter Seven was not without controversy, because, of course, it cost money. While the Google drive where the video files are stored is only \$25 a year for 200 gigabytes, having an ASL interpreter come to the meeting once a week costs \$80. "And there was some handwringing over this expense," Teresa says. "Which is understandable. Sometimes only one or two people who are deaf come to a meeting. But the thing is, people who are deaf start to think: 'I have a price tag attached to me when it comes to trying to access Alcoholics Anonymous.' Money is a real concern, but in general we need to figure out how to solve this. There is a spiritual principle — if we do the right thing, good things happen."

Teresa, who is a hearing person, began to get involved with the Deaf "when I saw people who are deaf in our meeting and I saw hearing people not talking to them. So I made a point of hanging out with them. I took an ASL class, learned a bit of sign language. And I began to

understand some of the issues in trying to bridge the gap and get the Deaf and the hearing talking to each other."

At the Foxhall Chapter Seven meeting, whiteboards are provided in the ASL seating section and the Deaf and the hearing can text each other. There are a few A.A.s who, like Teresa, know some ASL. And a lot can be gotten from context, in communicating with people who are deaf. But even the videotaping, as valuable as it is, is only a beginning, Teresa says. And since the General Service Office is in the process of selecting an ASL interpreter for a new translation of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Teresa has been able to help provide G.S.O. with contacts to professional interpreters, as well as share information about potential interpreters with the members of her Accessibilities committee who are deaf — one even wrote a comprehensive assessment of all the applicants.

"My district gave my Accessibilities committee \$900 to use this year at special service events to make A.A. accessible to the Deaf," Teresa says. "It does cost money, but when the money is there, it can really make a difference. But it's not just money. If you see a person who is deaf at a meeting, take a leap and cross the room and talk to him or her. Not everyone has a car, especially in big metropolitan communities, so offer a ride. If you are on a committee, ask if anyone has had contact with alcoholics who are deaf. Just because they are not in the room, doesn't mean they are not interested. Remember, every reason a hearing person has not to come to a meeting, a person who is deaf has, as well. And then there's one more — they can't understand what is going on, or relate in accessible ways to the fellowship.

"In some ways, frankly, hearing people are themselves the barrier between the Deaf and A.A. We need to break down this barrier. A.A. is not just a gift for hearing people. It's for everyone."

■ A "Mock" A.A. Meeting, With a Purpose

It's a real A.A. meeting. Or is it? It takes place in the classic church basement. Coffee and light snacks are available. As the meeting begins, the chair introduces a speaker, who shares his or her experience, strength and hope. Afterwards, people speak on the topic. At the break, there are announcements about anniversary celebrations, workshops, and business meetings, and the Seventh Tradition basket is passed. The meeting ends with the Serenity Prayer.

But this meeting, while peopled and chaired by sober alcoholics, is not real, or not quite. It is a "demonstration" meeting for the benefit of the 20 or so student doctors who sit at the back of the room, observing. This demonstration or instructional meeting is the brainchild of the Area 78 C.P.C. committee in Calgary, Alberta — an ingenious and

powerful instrument for ensuring that doctors (and nurses) are introduced to A.A. early in their careers.

Keith A., chair of the Area 78 C.P.C. committee, says that these demonstration meetings have been going on in Calgary since 2009, when C.P.C. members were struggling to figure out how best to reach out to busy doctors in a large city. They realized that it might be more effective to try to contact the doctors just before they graduated, when they would almost certainly be more accessible, and have more time. Through a C.P.C. member with connections to the University of Calgary, the program was set up, and it has flourished. In seven years, 950 doctors have attended the demonstration meetings, which the university makes mandatory for the student doctors. The A.A.'s who take part in the demonstrations must have at least a year's sobriety, and while the meeting is mock, the sharing is not. "It has to be from the heart," Keith says. "The topics are either 'My Doctor and I,' or 'Religion and Spirituality,' the latter of which is important, since doctors are reluctant to recommend people to a program they think is overly religious in nature. We have student doctors from all religions, all countries, all walks of life. When they see we are a spiritual program, they can appreciate what's going on."

After the demonstration meeting, Keith says, the student doctors are reorganized into small groups, each with two doctors and two A.A.s. The student doctors ask the A.A.s how the program and the Steps work, how they deal with denial in a patient, how to speak to the family of an alcoholic. The second part of the meeting is scheduled for an hour, and, according to Keith, the student doctors almost never leave when the hour is up.

After their graduation, Keith says, the doctors are "going to do internships or become specialists or focus on family medicine." But under Canada's medical system, many doctors sign "return for service" agreements,

where they agree to work in underserved communities for a period of time in return for having been given financial support for their education. Indirectly, therefore, the word of A.A. is being spread around the country to areas where it might not otherwise be found.

The Area 78 C.P.C. committee runs a similar program for student nurses, both at the University of Calgary and at Mount Royal University, also in Calgary. This takes the form of a once-a-semester seminar, where a presentation is made to nursing students about to graduate — since 2009, over 1,000 student nurses have attended. The presentations are usually made to about 30 nurses at a time, in a classroom, with one male and one female A.A. member, who talk for about ten minutes each, provide A.A. literature, and answer questions. "A fair amount of nurses, as many others, have alcoholism in their family," Keith says. "Or may be alcoholics themselves. Most of them appreciate what we are doing. Our feeling is that nurses, even more than the doctors, are going to be exposed to the active alcoholics, or at least may have the initial exposure."

The Area 78 C.P.C. committee is ambitiously seeking to branch this type of demonstration program out into other areas of focus, in particular the judicial system. Keith says: "We are just now approaching the chief justices who look after judges in the court system to offer presentations to them. What we do with the student doctors is what we would like to see set up for the judges."

Area 78 is the largest in North America and, Keith says, many of the doctors who first attended the demonstration meetings seven years ago are only just now "coming back through the system" after having worked in rural areas and Indian reservations. Whatever their specialty of practice, they are almost certainly more enlightened about alcoholism for having been the beneficiary of this extraordinary service work.



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Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



2 Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3 Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



4 Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



5 Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



6 If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.



7 Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8 Worship in your own way.



9 Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



10 Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."



11 Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



12 "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

Calendar of Events

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

December

- 1-3—*Muharraq, Kingdom of Bahrain.* 15th MERCAA. Info: mercaa.org
- 2-3—*Lexington, Kentucky.* We Have Recovered Big Book Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 11805, Lexington, KY 40578-1805
- 2-4—*Orlando, Florida.* Southwest Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 9-11—*Birmingham, Alabama.* Magic City Roundup III. Write: Ch., Box 550058, Birmingham, AL 35255; www.magiccityroundup.com

January

- 6-8—*Dodge City, Kansas.* 47th SW KS Conf. Write: Ch., Box 276, Satanta, KS 67870; swksconf@yahoo.com
- 13-15—*Mahnomen, Minnesota.* 15th Wild Rice Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomen, MN 56557; www.wildriceroundup.com
- 13-15—*Weston, West Virginia.* Jackson's Mill Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 825, Clarksburg, WV 26302; www.jacksonsmillroundup.com
- 17-22—*Raleigh, North Carolina.* Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619-8412; www.tarheelmidwinter.org
- 19-22—*Port Canaveral, Florida.* Space Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., 720 E. Haven Ave., Ste. 3, Melbourne, FL 32901; www.aaspacecoast.org
- 20-22—*Mankato, Minnesota.* Recovery Unity Service Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2812, Minneapolis, MN 55402-0812; altchair@area36.org
- 27-29—*Hilton Head Island, SC.* 37th Annual Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com
- 27-29—*Amarillo, Texas.* 33 aniversario de la zona norte de Texas. Para Info: Box 31836, Amarillo, TX 79120
- 27-29—*Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.* 49th Nanaimo's Rally. Write: 2300 Bowen Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9T 3K7; www.nanaimoarally.com

February

- 3-5—*Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.* Fun in Sobriety Mid-Winter Round-up.

- Write: Ch., Box 742, Queen St., Station A, Fredericton, NB E3B 1B0; district5mwr@gmail.com
- 10-12—*Fort Walton Beach, Florida.* 46th Gulf Coast Round-up. Write: Ch., 1635 Parkside Cir. Niceville, FL 32578; www.gulfcoastroundup.com
- 10-12—*Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.* TCYPAA. Write: 5833 Clinton Hwy #202, Knoxville, TN, 37912; www.tcupaa2017.com
- 10-12—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.* WRAASA. Write: CH., Box 47068, Winnipeg, MB R2H 3G9; www.wraasa.wixsite.com/2017
- 16-19—*Cleveland, Ohio.* 53rd Internat'l Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 20267, Cleveland, OH 44120; www.internationalwomensconference.org
- 17-19—*Virginia Beach, Virginia.* 41st Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 66173, Virginia Beach, VA 23466; oceanfrontconference.org
- 17-19—*Pattaya, Thailand.* Thailand Roundup. Info: www.aathailandroundup.org
- 24-26—*Framingham, Massachusetts.* NERAASA. Write: Ch., 1657 Worcester Rd., Framingham, MA 01701; www.neraasa2017.org
- 24-26—*St. George, Utah.* 20th Dixie Winterfest. Write: Ch., Box 1715, St. George, UT 84771; www.dixiewinterfest.org
- 24-26—*Ripley, West Virginia.* Cedar Lakes Round-up. Write: Ch., Box 20388, Charleston, WV 25362; bluestone.cedarlakes.roundup@gmail.com
- 24-26—*Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.* Canadian Eastern Reg. Svc Assembly. Write: Ch., 21-442 Main St., Shediac, NB E4P 2G7; www.ceraasa.org

March

- 3-5—*Cheyenne, Wyoming.* West Central Reg. Svc. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 4164, Cheyenne, WY 82003; wcraasc2017@aa-wyoming.org
- 10-12—*Aberdeen, North Carolina.* Area 51

- Corrections Conf. Info: corrections@aanorthcarolina.org
- 10-12—*Spokane Valley, Washington.* NW Pockets of Enthusiasm Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 8143, Spokane, WA 99203; nwpockets.org
- 10-12—*Toronto, Ontario, Canada.* 74th ON Reg. Conf. Info: aaorc.ca
- 17-19—*KS Hengelo, Netherlands.* Women's Recovery Weekend. Info: aa.womens.weekend@hotmail.com
- 24-26—*West Harrison, New York.* 49th SENY Conv. Write: Ch., Box 904, Carmel, NY 10512-0904; aaseny.org
- 24-26—*Fort Worth, Texas.* 3er Foro Estatal Hispano de Oficinas Intergrupales e Intergrupos del estado de Texas. Para Inf: 3244 W. Seminary Dr., Ste # B, Fort Worth, TX 76133; oficinaintergrupal@hotmail.com
- 24-26—*Qawra, Malta.* Malta's 11th Annual International Conv. Info: www.aamalta.org.mt/convention
- 31-2—*Inverness, Scotland.* 51st Highland Gathering. Write: Ch., 2A Duff St., Inverness, Scotland IV3 5JA, UK

April

- 8-9—*Couva, Trinidad & Tobago.* 61st Nat'l Conv. Write: Ch., LP #52 Rivulet Rd, Couva, T&T; aagsott@gmail.com
- 7-9—*La Mirada, California.* 36th Annual H&I Conference. Write: 14299 Firestone Blvd. La Mirada, CA 90638; socallhandi.org

May

- 5-7—*San Juan, Puerto Rico.* 61ma Area 77 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 361692, San Juan, PR 00936-1692; convencionarea77@gmail.com
- 12-14—*Metairie, Louisiana.* 49th Big Deep South Conv. Write: Ch., 638 Papworth Ave., Ste. A, Metairie, LA 70005; www.bigdeepsouth.org
- 18-21—*Eretria, Evia, Greece.* 23rd Internat'l Conv. Info: parthenongr.ana@gmail.com

Planning a Future Event?

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

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

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20_____

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