

"We..." E.P.G.S.A. Newsletter

10/15/19

Edition 2, Volume 3

From the Current Delegate by Ken D., *Delegate, Panel 69*

We are coming to the final quarter of Year 1 for Panel 69. With this time of year comes our Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Assembly and Convention. We are celebrating our 62nd E.P.G.S.A. Convention this year with the General Service Conference theme: "Our Big Book: 80 Years, 71 Languages." The Convention Committee, our Area Committee and special servants have been working throughout the year to prepare an inspiring, educational and fun convention packed with Fellowship, experience, strength and hope.

The purpose of our Assembly is for General Service Representatives from all groups across Eastern PA to be together. The Subcommittee Chairpersons and Area Officers will deliver brief annual reports. This affords an opportunity to communicate with all groups that choose to do so. Our Area Subcommittees feature a wide array of educational service workshops. There's plenty to learn and share with each other about carrying the message, from Archives, and Corrections, CPC and Public Information to Structure, Treatment, Literature and Finance. There will be displays and, of course, Grapevine literature sales and workshop.

For Subscriptions to our newsletter, click or scan here:



<https://rebrand.ly/a59we>

What's Happening at GSO?

The Meeting Guide App has been licensed by A.A.W.S., Inc. (Fall 2018) and a new updated version was released this summer. The app is the brainchild of Josh R., a web developer, who wanted a way to find meetings on his mobile phone. Read the full story in Box 459: https://www.aa.org/newsletters/en_US/en_box459_fall19.pdf

New & Enhanced Features

- Search — Find A.A meetings by name or location, in addition to day and time
- Daily Reflections — a selection of reflections by and for A.A. members
- Enhanced location functionality
- Expanded user interface, with a new menu bar and "Contact" feature.
- "News" — Learn about events at the General Service Office (G.S.O.) and Grapevine, as well as information about updates within the app.



[Meeting Guide](#)

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Our guest line-up includes:(1) a woman whose story is in the current edition of our Big Book, (2) the first Native-American Member of our General Service Board, Past Trustee from East Central U.S. from our neighboring state – Ohio, and (3) my friend and servant of Al-Anon Family Groups, the PA State Delegate to discuss cooperation between our Fellowships. The Area 59 Committee also selected the Reverend, David Zwifka to be our non-alcoholic Guest Observer.

I have had the opportunity to meet some of the staff and tour the totally renovated facility of the Wyndham Resort in Lancaster. The rooms are marvelous, and the event spaces are terrific! I look forward to being there with you. While the online registration cut-off date was Oct. 1st, day registration has been extended to October 30th- see the form at <https://area59aa.org/2019-epgsa-convention-assembly/> Please contact convention@area59aa.org or any Area Officer for more details. You can contact our Alt. Delegate, Caroline N. to volunteer for service once you've registered for the convention. A volunteer form is posted at <https://form.jotform.com/61803922815153> on the Area website.

Discuss with home groups and members the importance of the worldwide spiritual connection that happens when we bond together to carry the message! You can come together with us and feel the strong recovery community of our marvelous Fellowship!

In Fellowship & Service,

Ken D.
Delegate
Area 59, Panel 69

A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues-and their sponsors ***By: Sarah R.***

Today I am going to talk to you about one of our newest pamphlets- *A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues-and their sponsors*. Initially I thought, as perhaps you did, what a great pamphlet for 'people who deal with those issues'. Though not quite guilty of "contempt prior to investigation" I

certainly had formed an opinion based on nothing more than the title and my character defect of wanting to see myself as 'different than' others. After reading this, however, I have once again come to the conclusion that there is no 'them' in Alcoholics Anonymous, only 'We', and we recover together or die alone.

Our pamphlet opens with a paragraph on "Do you have a drinking problem"? It is then immediately followed by, "You are not alone," a short introduction to the stories that follow. "The Afterword" includes a list of suggestions

developed by a group of doctors who are in A.A. Also included is a "Note to medical professionals" adapted from our pamphlet *The A.A. Member-Medications and Other Drugs*. That pamphlet was referenced several times as an important resource.

The 12 stories by men and women who are alcoholics "coping with serious mental health issues" are informative and inspiring. I had not realized just how many of us come to A.A. with a mental health diagnosis. Even more surprising to me were the many members who wrote of working a great program, who still suffered terribly before being properly diagnosed and successfully treated for their disorder. In the pamphlet it states that "among bipolar people substance abuse exceeds 50%". The statistics that I have seen pertaining to other mental health issues also indicate a large, perhaps underserved, population of alcoholics.

The experiences of 5 members who sponsor people with a mental health disorder are also included in this pamphlet. They share how they carry the A.A. message of recovery and make it clear that they are not therapists or doctors. I was particularly moved by one man's taking personal

responsibility to advocate for those with mental health issues by addressing "scorn, ridicule and stigma with respectful suggestions that discrimination has no place in A.A."

Here is a short excerpt from Cathy's story: "My experience has been that there are many A.A.s who shy away from members with mental illness. I've even witnessed intolerance of those with mental illness at meetings. I believe this primarily stems from fear. In the Third Tradition on pages 140 and 141 of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, it talks about this fear and intolerance. It goes on to say, 'Yes, we were intolerant...How could we know that thousands of these sometimes frightening people were to make astonishing recoveries and become our greatest workers and intimate friends?'

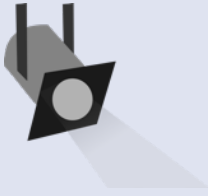
In chapter five of the Big Book, it says, 'there are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.' We can recover, and we do recover. We just need the love, support and compassion of our fellow A.A.s, and maybe just a little extra patience and tolerance."

This pamphlet is available on line in English, Spanish and French:

https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/aa-literature/p-87-aa-for-alcoholics-with-mental-health-issues

https://www.aa.org/assets/es_ES/aa-literature/p-87-aa-for-alcoholics-with-mental-health-issues

https://www.aa.org/assets/fr_FR/aa-literature/p-87-aa-for-alcoholics-with-mental-health-issues



Spotlight on District 34

By Rick S.

Mention Lancaster County, and most people immediately think of farms and horse-and-buggy “plain folk.” That image was certainly reinforced by the third quarter Area 59 Committee Meeting held in southern Lancaster County amid cows and cornfields. In addition to rural farm country, Lancaster County includes the City of Lancaster and several bustling boroughs with cultural amenities and urban challenges. The county encompasses three AA districts — 34, 63, and 64 — each of which has a mixture of population centers and rural territory.

Of these three districts, District 34 has perhaps the greatest contrast. The district includes all of southern Lancaster County, which is the most sparsely populated region of the county, as well as a large portion of the urban core of Lancaster. This means that the district’s 25 registered groups range from small, intimate gatherings of people who have known each other for many years, to large meetings in the city with a steady flow of newcomers.

In recent years, many recovery houses have sprung up in Lancaster and surrounding areas, and the people who live in these facilities attend downtown meetings in large numbers. People often stay in Lancaster for a few months and then return to their home areas, which creates a challenge for some city-based homegroups to fill service positions, even though attendance might average 50 people or more at a meeting.

District 34’s diversity underscores the importance of having an active district presence to meet a wide range of needs and concerns. This fact was recognized by Area 59 officers who became concerned several years ago about the district’s future. District 34 was the first Lancaster County district, but after spinning off districts 63 and 64 in 1992, the “mother” district’s participation in Area 59 waned over the years.

In 2014, Paul M., an area officer and later area delegate, approached Jeff S., a previous District 64 DCM, to ask if he would be interested in helping revive District 34, which was in danger of going dark. Jeff took to the task with great enthusiasm. He made a commitment to visit every group in the district at least twice a year to emphasize the importance of GSR participation at the district level.

Jeff’s diligence and energy worked! Attendance at district meetings increased, people stepped up to fill officer roles, and today District 34 is again providing a valuable service to its groups and their members. In addition to a DCM, the district has an active ADCM, secretary and treasurer. It also has a liaison to the Lancaster Intergroup, which serves the entire county.

The district has held three well-attended workshops over the past two years, and it has successfully transitioned to two new DCMs as well as new officers. In addition, as previously mentioned, it hosted the September quarterly meeting for the area. “The whole district deserves credit for helping bring District 34 out of the dark,” Jeff says.

Like sobriety itself, however, maintaining a healthy district requires constant effort. Autopilot is for airplanes, not recovering alcoholics or general service entities. District 34 is focused on updating information on groups that don’t send a GSR the district meeting and discussing an inventory to look into ways to increase district-level participation.

District 34 Committee meetings are held the second Thursday of the month, starting at 6:30 p.m., at the Willow Street United Church of Christ, 2723 Willow Street Pike, Willow Street, Pa. Visitors are always welcome!

November- Gratitude Month and the 7th Tradition By the Finance Subcommittee

Sobriety and gratitude go together like turkey and gravy, which makes Thanksgiving an especially relevant holiday for AA members. In fact, we AAs need the entire month of November to remind us to be grateful for all the gifts of sobriety!

Many of us have heard the saying, "Gratitude is an action word," and one of the actions we can take is to put more money in the meeting basket or contribute individually to Area 59 and other service entities. But gratitude shown through the 7th Tradition goes much deeper, tying directly into the spiritual principles that have given us a new life.

The 2006 Grapevine article reprinted below really captures this idea, reminding us of the spiritual foundation of financial self-support.

The Portals of Service

"The topic for today's meeting is gratitude."

Following this announcement, we hear our members express heartfelt thanks for AA and for being sober today. While these are no doubt sincere reflections of one's experiences, I am saddened by the limitations of some definitions. With so many possible ways to express our gratitude, why do we limit ourselves to those found solely in our day-to-day recovery?

My sponsor believed in gratitude as long as it was linked to action. In fact, the most oft-quoted phrase in my home group was, "Gratitude is an action word." "Into action" meant I accepted responsibility to give back what I had freely received. The living examples I saw showed me

that AA worked, and this supported another common saying heard around the tables: "If you want what I have, do what I do." I wasn't surprised to see that the dictionary definition of gratitude is "a feeling of being thankful to somebody for doing something."

Being at an appointed place on time and doing the work that was asked of me was a beginning. It was a sure cure for my self-pity, self-centeredness, self-sufficiency, and selfishness. Whether it was pouring coffee in my home group, or going on a Twelfth-Step call, I entered a new pattern of thinking; I thought not only about myself, but also about others. A picture of unity began to form. The smile from my face traveled to my heart. No matter how desolate my condition, I learned to feel grateful for the day.

I was also taught that gratitude sometimes meant a sacrifice of money, despite one's financial condition. During my first year, my purse often contained only coins. I believed I had to keep every cent for my personal needs and reasoned that when I had more money, I would put a dollar, or more, in the basket. Until I found a sponsor, this was how I thought. Dorothy made it clear that, as an act of gratitude, I could begin by putting a nickel in the basket. Exercise faith, she said, that despite my financial fear, I would have enough money to live on.

I learned two important lessons from this: 1) I was a part of AA and 2) Giving--even a small amount--encouraged me to trust in the process, and in my Higher Power.

Incidentally, I always had enough money to pay the bills.

Let's encourage self-support through contributions and use it as a goal--not for the monetary value, but for the value of continuing as a unified society. The Seventh Tradition is about participation, and participation is the key to unity. The simple act of contributing is an action taken in gratitude for our life. It is a way we can be a part of--a spiritual and financial payment of what we have so freely been given.

Through the many portals of service, we are given an abundance of ways to express our gratitude. So, we might ask ourselves, "Are we fully participating in AA--as a whole--by our actions and our self-support?"

In our groups, are we taking every opportunity to explain what services the General Service Office provides? Do we need to consider a card or sheet of information on the breadth of services from GSO? Do we talk about services beyond our own structure to include our world services? And do we take the time when the basket is passed to read the Seventh Tradition, followed by an explanation of where our contributions go? Are we self-supporting at all levels of service? These are small but significant steps that pay great dividends, for it takes sacrifice and action--by us all--to maintain our spiritual fitness and ensure our existence as individuals and as a society.

This, in turn, leads me to ask, "Where are we today with self-support?" I believe we can all agree that we are self-supporting. This is seen when we look at how we receive monies--through the sale of our literature and voluntary contributions. In fact, in Concept Twelve, Warranty Two, co-founder Bill W. reminds us that self-support includes the sale of literature as well as voluntary contributions. If our aim is to be fully self-supporting through our contributions alone, it will require even greater sacrifices from us all.

I have not written about numbers, but about the gratitude and spiritual significance of participation in self-support and how it affects us.

Whatever direction we take, AA cannot survive without our help. We have a tremendous responsibility and a joyful opportunity. Twelfth Step calls, sponsoring, and group services, from general service representatives to trustees--all are a vital part of keeping our Fellowship alive and growing. Gratitude is a result of being informed and getting involved--a blessing of change within and an expansion of love to our fellow man. Participation in our Seventh Tradition is the fullest expression of our gratitude.

-- Phyllis H.

Olympia, Washington

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The Area 59 Finance Subcommittee has many resources available to assist groups with self-support, from 7th Tradition packets and pamphlets, to presenting at a workshop or meeting. Please contact finance@area59aa.org for more information.

FYI...

Two handy reference “Mini Catalogs” are designed to help folks discover what is new and revised in our A.A. literature and other items:

- 1) [Mini Catalog of New and Forthcoming Items of A.A. Literature from A.A.W.S., Inc.](#)
- 2) [Mini Catalog of AA Grapevine new and backlist books and other items .](#)

**Keep up to date
with General
Service in Eastern
PA by visiting our
website:**

<https://area59aa.org/>

“We...” is a newsletter for members of the Area 59 (E.P.G.S.A.) General Service Committee, Service Volunteers and interested Fellowship members. For information contact literature@area59aa.org

OUR BIG BOOK-80 YEARS, 71 LANGUAGES

2019 G.S.C. THEME