

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

1/15/2022

Newsletter Edition 4, Volume 1

**From the
Current
Delegate:**
by
Caroline
N.,
Delegate,
Panel 71

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From the Current Delegate

Happy New Year, Area 59! Our service to Alcoholics Anonymous during Panel 71, which spans 2021 and 2022, is now in its second year, and we are quickly approaching the next General Service Conference, to be held in Brooklyn, New York, April 23-30, 2022.

The annual Conference process is underway, and I very much hope that you will be a part of the conversation. Here is a snapshot of where we are and what's ahead:

- September 15, 2021 was the deadline for proposed agenda items, with a total of 178 submissions received by the Conference Coordinator at the General Service Office.
- At the October Board Weekend, the Trustees' committees, A.A.W.S. Board, and Grapevine Board reviewed and discussed these proposals, and agreed to forward 15 items to the 72nd General Service Conference.
- In December, the Conference Coordinator sent the list of preliminary agenda items totaling 77 to those of us who are the current members of the General Service Conference.
- On January 23, your Area officers and District Committee Members (DCMs) will gather for the DCM Sharing Session and I will ask DCMs for input on which of the preliminary agenda items they would like to see selected for discussion at our March 19 Pre-Conference Sharing Session.
- Later in the month, January 28-31, I will attend the January Board Weekend as the Chair of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions, and have the opportunity to attend Trustees Committee meetings and the General Service Board meeting as an observer, along with the other Conference committee chairs. The Equitable Distribution of Workload process indicates that at the January Board Weekend, agenda items will be divvied up among the thirteen standing committees.

What's Happening at GSO?

[Highlights](#) from A.A.W.S.
October 29, 2021

Box 4-5-9 [Winter 2021](#)
Edition was released

12/20/2021 [Launch of new A.A. website](#) [Announcing](#) the launch of our newly updated Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) website, www.aa.org!

- Next month, in February, I will then receive the final list of agenda items along with the accompanying background material, in English, and in Spanish in March. I will share this information with you via Google Drive and set up a Google Group to invite your feedback on any and all agenda items, which will be open for sharing up until the Conference itself at the end of April.
- **On March 19, 2022, you are also invited to the Area 59 Pre-Conference Sharing Session at West Chester University, hosted by District 44, to share your input on select agenda items. Like at the Conference itself, items will be discussed in small groups before being considered by the full body. We will develop our Area 59 conscience.**
- Then, I will attend the weeklong Conference in April, and following, I will report back to you on the proceedings and outcomes in May and June. Concept III tells us: "...Conference Delegates are primarily the world servants of A.A. as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective areas. Consequently, they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time." When delegates veer from what they know their area's conscience to be, they are asked to report this to their area and the reasons why they voted as they did. I encourage you to come to the Mini-Assemblies, and also welcome invitations to your district meetings and workshops to share a Conference Report.
- Following the Conference, the Trustees' committees, A.A.W.S. Board, and Grapevine Board will then move ahead with enacting the Conference advisory actions, making progress throughout the year between each annual Conference and reporting back to the Conference committees on their activity.
- We can expect the next annual deadline to be in September 2022, to submit proposed agenda items for the 73rd General Service Conference to be held in spring 2023. Then the cycle will begin again!

As a reminder, my Conference committees are Policy/Admissions (my primary committee) and International Conventions & Regional Forums (some delegates serve on one of the two secondary committees, which is this one and Archives). The agenda items assigned to these committees will be the ones which I personally can carefully consider and have direct involvement with the discussion. Only if and when an item comes out of Committee in the form of a recommendation to the Conference as a whole for acceptance or rejection, does the entire body discuss it.

The preliminary agenda items for my committees are:

Policy/Admissions:

- Review G.S.O. General Manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection.
- Discuss translation and interpretation of General Service Conference material.
- Review progress report on the development of a process using virtual meeting technologies for polling the G.S.C. between meetings.
- Review dates for the 2026 General Service Conference.

International Conventions & Regional Forums:

- Discuss ways to encourage interest in Regional Forums and attract first-time attendees.

- Discuss update report on methods of closing the Big Meetings at the International Convention.

Speaking of International Conventions, I hope you all have the dates for the next one on your calendar: July 3-6, 2025 in Vancouver, BC, Canada! The Trustees' Committee on International Conventions & Regional Forums continues to consider how best to create an engaging and accessible event, from collaborating with the Canadian government to facilitate border crossing, as well as evaluating the logistics associated with a hybrid component, including but not limited to the Flag Ceremony.

In closing, I would like to take a moment to honor Greg G., Past Web Servant, who passed away on December 30, 2021. He served our Area for more than two decades, throughout numerous panels and delegates, seeing us through the early days of the digital age and helping us navigate technology while respecting our Traditions. His service, often behind-the-scenes, but also including his talk at EPGSA last November as our Friday evening speaker, has touched many of us, and I will be forever grateful to have known him. Let's remember Greg for his devoted service to A.A. and for the impact he had on our lives.

With gratitude,

Caroline N.
Area 59 Panel 71 Delegate
delegate@area59aa.org

From our Officer at Large/Area Registrar

Alicia S.

During my first year of sobriety, I stayed close to my home group members and closer to my sponsor. After a few months, my head had cleared and allowed me to remember the names and background of most of the people who attended the same meetings as I did. Sometime during my second year of sobriety, I asked my sponsor a question about the local intergroup and was instructed to attend their next meeting to find the answer. I was to act as the home group Intergroup Representative, and that sure did sound like a promotion to me! So, it is fair to say that my ego got me interested in A.A. service.

I went on to serve as secretary and then chairperson of the local intergroup. After that, there were positions with the planning committee for the PA State Convention. I got involved with the Loners Internationalists through GSO and wrote articles for the Grapevine. I was my home group's AGSR, GSR, and then I served District 36. As ADCM, I was assigned to the Area ad-hoc Literature subcommittee and as DCM was fortunate to chair the Structure subcommittee. There never seemed to be a shortage of opportunities to be of service to A.A. When election time came near the end of Panel 69, I had no plans for future commitments, but my Higher Power must have; I heard my voice squeak out again and again "accept" as various positions that I was familiar with came up for a vote. And it is truly an honor and privilege to serve Panel 71 as the current officer-at-large/area registrar.

And so – what IS my role in this position? Who do I serve? Well, the answer to that second question should be easy; I serve the Membership in Area 59. In other words, I hover near the bottom of our upside-down triangle. But the details of my role may not be as obvious. Our structure manual spells my responsibilities out in black and white. “...assumes the duties of the chairperson, the secretary, or the treasurer if and when it becomes necessary...” chairs the planning meetings for the area’s mini-assembly, acts as custodian of all Area property (i.e. maintains inventory), and as area registrar keeps all group information current. I also act in an advisory capacity to two area subcommittees - at present, ad-hoc Digital Communications and Archives. In order to perform my duties effectively, I believe there are certain characteristics that are necessary: a basic understanding of the Concepts with a desire for continued growth, a clear understanding of the service structure, a sense of order, a reasonable period of sobriety and perhaps most importantly – time, interest, and energy.

The position of officer-at-large was created in Area 59 in 1976 when the office of “alternate area officer” was established to assist the officers with the workload or to step in when one became ill. In 1984, the Area voted to change the title of alternate area officer to officer at large (OAL). There have been other changes as well. In the not-too-distant past, the OAL was responsible for arriving at Area events well before the start time to set up mics, speakers, translation equipment, and the like. Recently, with the addition of a tech servant position, that load has been lightened, but ultimately, the OAL is responsible for knowledge of the equipment – how to use it and set it up/tear it down, should the Tech Servant be unable to fulfill his or her commitment. There are, by necessity, trips to the area storage facility to pick up or drop off equipment and supplies. I still arrive at events early to place EPGSA signs and provide registration materials, remaining until well after an event has ended to help with cleanup, as needed.

Another change has to do with the GSO database: Fellowship Connection. In the past, the OAL was responsible for printing and distributing reams of paper reports for each district that included groups, addresses and names of those in service. Today, DCMs can view this information online, which greatly reduces the need for paper reports. As area registrar, I notify GSO of any group changes as soon as I become aware of them to keep the database current. Yearly printed reports are given to all DCMs so they have a physical copy that reflects the status of their district. I also provide specific reports (i.e.: GSR lists, group addresses, etc.) upon request. If I were asked to estimate the amount of time I devote to registrar work, it would be about 2-3 hours per week. As with all things, sometimes less, sometimes more.

In the event the treasurer, secretary, or chairperson is unable to fulfil their duties, it is my responsibility to step in and step up. There have been times when a quarterly meeting is approaching, and my nightly prayers included pleas for good health for my fellow officers! I did have to step in on two occasions; thanks to my habit of hanging around service-minded people, I had some knowledge of those positions and was not too uncomfortable filling in during a time of need.

One perk of this position is having the opportunity to get to know the groups in each district. We currently have just over 1600 groups in Area 59 and I am so grateful to have had personal interactions with many of the trusted servants from those groups. I have seen dedication to service up close and personal, and time and again have been inspired by so many of you.

Many years ago, at an out of state service event, someone gave me a button which read, “Service is the Secret”. I believe that to be true for me. Before I gave myself in service to others, I sat in meeting rooms with crossed arms, smoking lots of cigarettes and taking lots of other people’s

inventories. A.A. service introduced me to a new lifestyle – one that affords me genuine happiness and a sense of purpose. Yes, my ego may have gotten me into service, but I hope that my understanding of our Responsibility Declaration will keep me in service - doing my small part to help ensure that AA is here for generations to come.

From Our Tech Servant

Fred S.

Hello! I was approached by the Ad Hoc Literature Subcommittee to write an article about the Tech Servant role and how I came to be appointed to this role. In 2020, the Pandemic began, and in March of that year the Delegate Ken D asked me to chair the VEDAT – The Virtual Election Delegate Advisory Team. Our initial task was to figure out how we would do an online election at EPGSA (Easter PA General Service Assembly) in November of 2020. We, along with many in the fellowship, began learning about video conferencing many of use for our meetings and various settings within the software. The committee originally consisted of the Delegate Ken D, Alternate Delegate Caroline N, Past Delegate Hugh H, Past DCM Ira M, Web Servant Greg G, and ADCM Claire B. After Ken’s unfortunate passing in July of 2020, Caroline stepped into the Delegate role and Steve S stepped in as the Alternate Delegate. At various times, we were also joined by the Officer At Large Pete B and by Past DCM Nick P. We spent time researching whether the video conferencing software could handle what we needed it to do for the election (it could not), and we researched other ideas to include various vendors who supported polling software. Some of the companies had software that worked directly with the video conferencing software, and others worked totally separate. After many demonstrations and meetings, we selected our software company. Leading up to the election, we had 6 training meetings for the voting members to learn how to use the voting software, Hugh presented several online meetings talking about the weekend, and the Past Delegates and members of the Convention Committee visited the districts to spread the word about the upcoming election. We were supported during the weekend with volunteers who helped with technical issues during the election itself, and we also had people volunteer to keep the meetings free from the “bombers” who might wish to disrupt our convention. With much help from our Higher Powers and Francis G. the North East Regional Trustee, we were able to successfully hold the election of our current Area Officers, and we were able to host the entire weekend online. Over the course of 2020, the VEDAT role expanded to include supporting all of the Area online meetings to include the Area Quarterly Meetings.

After the elections, as the Area wrapped up Panel 69 and began Panel 71, our Delegate Caroline asked me if I would be willing to serve as the Area Tech Servant, and I was very happy to accept. So...what are the duties of the Tech Servant? I am a non-voting member of the Ad Hoc Technology Committee, and the Ad Hoc Digital Communications Committee. Both of these committees are brand new to Area 59. The Technology Committee is currently working on a process to move the Area email accounts away from our web host and into Google Work Space, which we believe will provide a better experience in handling email. The Digital Communications Committee is working with our Web Servant Scott F and Assistant Web Servant Lenny T to completely redo the Area website. As Tech Servant, I am also the Chair of the VAT-Virtual Assistance Team. The VAT

helps with any online meetings the Area has. We are fortunate to have the following people who have served on the VAT so far on this panel: Greg G (Past Web servant), Hugh H (Past Delegate), Michael S (Past DCM) and Nick P (Past DCM). For the online meetings, the VAT assists the Chairperson who runs the meeting. We help attendees follow a naming convention so that the Chairperson knows who is a voting member at the Area Quarterly Meetings, and who is an observer. We assist with timing people when appropriate, answering technical questions, and launching the polls as the Area Committee votes on various topics. I guess you could say that the VAT is involved in “virtually” all the online meetings. Other duties include assisting the Area Officers with any technical issues, such as software to assist the Secretary in taking minutes during the Quarterly Meeting and other software to help maintain the Area Roster. I have also worked with various Committee Chairs and DCMs in prepping for online Mini Assemblies and Online District Workshops. I also attend EPGSA, NERAASA (North East Regional AA Service Assembly), NAATW (National AA Technology Workshop) and NERF (North East Regional Forum), and I have learned many things at these conventions that I can share with the Area.

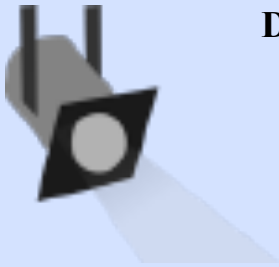
Another part of the Tech Servant role is being a “roadie”. For the in-person events, I am responsible for setting up the PA/sound system equipment and the Spanish Translation equipment. In all honesty, while I have a lot of experience working with and troubleshooting different types of software and hardware, I had zero experience with PA systems. Fortunately, in AA we do not need to figure things out on our own. Chris R, current DCM and Pete B Alternate Delegate both have extensive experience with PA systems and were more than happy to teach me many things. I am grateful that Nick P has also been learning and helping me set up and run the PA system and Spanish Translation equipment, and current DCM Jeff F has been a help with documenting the setup.

Another thing the Literature Subcommittee asked me is, basically, why do I serve in this capacity. I was an ADCM in Panel 57, which is when the Delegate Sheila D started the Ad Hoc Literature Subcommittee, and I was able to join and serve on that committee. In Panel 59 I was a DCM and I was fortunate to be able to Chair the Ad Hoc Literature Subcommittee. During those Panels, I got the chance to learn how General Service works and all the things that happen “behind the scenes” in Alcoholics Anonymous that supports all of us in our 12th step work. I observed the work that all the Subcommittees were doing, the work the Area Officers were doing, and the Delegate and General Service Conference were doing, and I was amazed at the quantity and quality of that work. That was also when I got the chance to read Bernard Smith’s (non-alcoholic Chair of the Board of Trustees) article on “Why do we need a conference” (page 40 of the current Service Manual). Some parts of what he wrote really stood out to me. Bernard wrote “We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism”. It took a while, but it finally occurred to me that AA is currently 86 years old....and I am not 86 years old. That means, that at one point I was the baby being born, destined for a life of Alcoholism, and that there were people who I will never meet, and whose names I will never know, who were doing service work to make sure that AA was here when I needed it. Bernard also writes about the “alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room”. I have thought about that often, and I do not believe I have been anywhere, where there was not someone who needed our help within one block of where I was. Where this really struck me is when I thought about the International Conference of AA that was held in Atlanta that my wife and I attended. There was a large meeting inside an enclosed ball park, and there were 40,000 to 50,000 recovering Alcoholics in the room....and I looked around and I saw all the people working there. Security guards, police, ushers, EMTs, food concession workers, janitors, managers of the building etc., and it occurred to me that even with all those recovering alcoholics in one room,

we wouldn't need to leave the room to find someone who needed our help.... I am sure there was someone working at the event who needed our help, and I hope they have made it into a meeting. Bernard also wrote we need General Service "to ensure the doors of AA never have locks on them..." And to "ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is". I have rotated out as a DCM many years ago, but by staying involved, I feel like I get a chance to pay back those who served to make sure AA was there when I needed it. My hope is that I might be able to help the Area Committee – the Area Officers and DCMs...the ADCMs and other District Officers and most importantly the GSRs do their vital work to ensure that AA can continue to help the still suffering alcoholic. A side benefit I did not foresee, but a huge blessing in my life is that I have had the chance to get to know so many great walking examples of the Big Book. They are people who love the program and are dedicated to Alcoholics Anonymous, and I have found that their love of and dedication to the program is contagious and my life is so much better for knowing them. They have taught me so much. If I could go back in time to my home group business meeting, and it came time to select a GSR- if I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't raise just one hand to say I would be willing to serve. I would raise both hands, jump up and down in my seat and say "please pick me" as I am truly blessed to have been able to meet so many great people, and each new panel gives me the chance to meet even more great people. Thank you for your service!

Link to AA's online bookstore:

<https://onlineliterature.aa.org>



District Spotlight: District 66

On behalf of all of our groups in District 66, we would like to thank the continued support of Area 59, which we are grateful to be a part of. District 66 is comprised of twenty-three registered groups and serves the Reading area. My name is Mike A. and I am an alcoholic. I also have the privilege of serving as the District 66 DCM. I was asked to write a few words highlighting our district.

I think what exemplifies District 66 is perseverance, especially during this panel and during a global pandemic crisis. Many groups in our district were forced to shut their meeting down (temporarily and in some cases for good). While other groups made the temporary switch to zoom. Others, switched to zoom permanently. This was not ideal for everyone, but it kept us meeting on a regular basis. We were keeping connected to stay protected.

What this taught a lot of us is that we are required to put work into our individual programs of recovery, no matter what happens, and that if we were to make it through any type of struggle, we would need to meet our higher power half way.

I'm always fascinated and love to hear stories about members of our fellowship making it through this pandemic and how they grew closer to God. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope we at District 66 get an opportunity to meet you sometime soon.

Mike A. DCM for District 66

“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

AA Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service 2022 GSC Theme

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