



WVGA **newsletter**

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EPGSA #67 November 8–10, 2024

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Our Delegate's First-hand Report: **Delegate Conference Reports**

To me, the best way to start this article about the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is by quoting The A.A. Service Manual, p.40:

"We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life."

The Area 59 Panel 73 Delegate, Pete B., attended the 74th General Service Conference in April 2024. Our delegate usually holds two in-person Delegate Conference Reports (DCRs), one in May and one in June. Pete held this year's DCRs on May 11th in King of Prussia and June 8th in Milton. To simply state it, DCRs are the venue to hear our delegate's first hand report on what happened at the April General Service Conference.

If you didn't have a chance to attend a DCR, here are some brief highlights on what happened.

One thing reported on was an assessment the General Service Office (GSO) did to relocate the office outside New York City. This is done to see if there are cost benefits without affecting membership services to our Fellowship. Since there would have been an upfront cost of ~\$6.5M to make the move, GSO has decided to remain in New York City for the time being.

DCRs are the venue to hear our Delegate's first-hand report on what happened at the Conference

The Conference approved an annual increase for individual contributions from \$5,000 to \$7,000. A few important facts on contributions are: 1) it saves our Fellowship money by contributing electronically over mailing a check - less human interaction; 2) since most individual contributors give much less than the maximum amount, the annual increase will have little effect on our Fellowship; 3) the cost of program services provided by GSO is only \$6.43/member – if we all contributed this small amount, we would truly be fully self-supporting.



Two topics of interest to many A.A.s pertain to our basic text, the Big Book. The first of these, the plain language translation of the book

Alcoholics Anonymous, was approved for publication with a few editorial changes from the draft reviewed at the Conference. GSO has indicated a target November 2024 publication date, having the title: Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous. As stated at the King of Prussia DCR event, the Plain Language Big Book "... is easy to read. The translation has the same message and ideas as the Big Book".

In addition to the plain language translation, the 5th edition of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, is in the works. Our "Big Book" is updated about every twenty years, containing the first 164 pages along with some new stories in the back. For the 5th edition, about 2500 stories were submitted by A.A. members for

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District 24 Bus Trip to GSO

On March 24, 2023, District 24 took a bus trip to the General Service Office (GSO) in NYC to do a 10am tour and attend the 11am meeting. We arrived at our meeting location in Glenside, PA at 6:00am to meet the bus, which we filled with snacks and water. It was an absolute pleasure to also have Area 59 Chairperson, Sue M., attend the bus trip with our district. After taking attendance and making sure that all 47 attendees were present, we hit the road at 6:15am and were in route to NYC to be there for the 9am registration. It was an impactful trip! The group was split into smaller groups for the office tour to make it more intimate and easier to manage. The attendees got to meet the GSO staff who were responsible for the various committees, ask them questions, and have conversations with them. The GSO staff told us about the various projects they were working on, as well as the various calls for stories, literature and audio recordings, such as the call for audio stories from the Young People in A.A. (or YPAA) community.

After the office tour, we were able to do a self-guided tour of the Archives area. During the self-guided Archives tour, we saw previously used filmstrips, cassette tapes, VHS tapes, early handwritten notes from Bill W., prepublication manuscripts with editorial markings, and the original blue and white striped dust jacket for the hardcover copy of the "12 & 12", which last appeared in 1999. We also got to see plaques made of steel created by ironworkers from the World Trade Center Towers. These plaques were used for a meeting across the street from the fallen towers. The "Ground Zero Group" would occupy Room 231 for the next two months as the recovery and clean-up efforts took place. Working in 6-hour shifts, the room always had an A.A. member in it for impromptu meetings, prayers, meditation, and support. The meeting was there from September 28, 2001 to November 30, 2001.

Next, we attended the 11:00am meeting. It was amazing to be in a meeting with people visiting GSO from around the world, GSO staff members, and District 24. I ran into an old friend from Area 44 who was attending because he was in town and needed a meeting. There are no coincidences! The speaker for the meeting was part of our group. He was newer to A.A. and was just so moved by the entire experience and being asked to share his story at the meeting. We took attendance when we got back on the bus to make sure we weren't leaving anyone behind. On the bus ride home, we played the movie, "My name is Bill W.," but most of the attendees were so excited about the day, I don't know if anyone watched the movie. We had many people in the district thank us for the experience for a long time after the trip that we decided to have another bus trip to GSO.

On June 14, 2024, we took our second trip of the panel to GSO with a whole new slate of attendees, including Deb S. from District 30! For this trip, we met at the same meeting location in Glenside, PA at 6:00am to meet the bus, which was again filled with snacks, water, and Capri Suns. After taking attendance and making sure that all 34 attendees were present, we again hit the road at the same time (6:15am) and were in route to NYC to be there for the 9am registration. By some miracle, we got into NYC early because there was no traffic! Some of the attendees were surprised that the building doesn't say "Alcoholics Anonymous" or "General Service Office" on the outside of the building. They were surprised that GSO only occupies one floor, the 11th floor, and not the entire building.

Since we were there early and GSO was not ready for us just yet, we got to spend time fellowshipping, eating breakfast, and drinking coffee in the cafeteria. We were not able to do that on our last trip because the cafeteria was not open, and masks were still required in March, 2023. When GSO was ready for us to get us registered, they met us in the cafeteria to give us our badges and then broke us up into 2 groups, so we could have a better, more intimate experience.

One welcoming change from our last experience to GSO was the General Manager, Bob W., made a mandatory in-office day for the GSO staff on Fridays, so they would be available for questions and discussions with members on the tour. Every single GSO staff member we encountered was friendly, open, and enthusiastic about the work they do. The GSO office staff works 3 days in the office and 2 days remote. Another cool part: another district officer and I noticed that we remembered some familiar faces from the GSO staff from our last trip and saw that they had rotated to new committees. Some of them remembered us too! Likewise, we saw there were some brand new GSO Staff Members who had recently rotated into their positions that we did not meet previously on our last trip. It was great to see that they truly do practice the spirit of rotation at GSO.

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE
A.A. WORLD SERVICES, INC.
AA GRAPEVINE, INC.

Area 59

Welcome to
Your
General
Service
Office

A phrase I made note of:

**Servant first,
leader second.**

We were introduced to the General Manager, Bob W., who showed us around his office and told us of the welcoming change of having the GSO staff in the office on Fridays for the tours. He showed us pictures of his family that were on his office walls. It was nice to get to know him on a more personal level. When he was speaking to us in his office, he said a phrase that I had to make note of, “Servant first, leader second.” Servant leadership is key in A.A. service, and I apply that today not only in A.A., but in other aspects of my life. Bob W. also had a picture of the signed, original photograph of the 1965 A.A. International Convention, held in Toronto, Canada. This signed photograph was hung in Bill W.’s office in GSO and is now hung in Bob W.’s office at GSO. It was cool to see that!

We spoke with the GSO Staff Member for Corrections, who recently rotated into the position. The last time I was there, I saw an impactful photo on the wall of the GSO Corrections office and asked him to explain it to the members in the group. The photo is from the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, LA and shows inmates holding Grapevines over their faces to ensure anonymity. The group is called “The Last Supper” group and they are on death row. They meet 12 feet away from the execution room. It was moving to think inmates on death row are attending A.A. meetings and staying sober one day at a time!

We met a staff member from The A.A. Grapevine/La Vina, who told us that anyone can submit stories at any time. He said members can even submit stories every week if they’d like. He said not to be discouraged if your story doesn’t make it into the Grapevine right away. Stories are filed by topic and pulled when needed. He also told us about the Grapevine 80th Anniversary Issue that came out in June and reminded me that Jeff W., previous GSO Staff Coordinator and an old friend of mine, wrote a story, 80 Reasons Why He Loves A.A. Jeff W. spoke about this article at our last E.P.G.S.A. in November, 2023 when he attended as the speaker. When we were discussing the Grapevine app, a member in our group downloaded the app right there on the spot, and signed up for the Grapevine Podcast, and Instagram accounts. We shared how our district supports Grapevine and how we are looking into ways to help support La Vina as a district. My favorite part, after talking with each GSO Staff Member, whether it be Grapevine, Corrections, CPC, Treatment, Nominating, etc., is that they always say, “See you at the meeting!” Just like us, they are alcoholics and attend meetings for their recovery.

Our tour guide also told us that when GSO Staff Members are away, either on vacation or away at the General Service Conference, retired GSO Staff Members come back to help. I thought that was amazing and showed their deep love for service and ensuring that A.A. continues. Our tour guide also showed us the conference room where General Service Board Weekend occurs. It was cool to be in the “room where it happens.”

After the office tour, we were able to do a self-guided tour of the Archives. In the Archives section, we saw the Stock Certificates issued by Works Publishing Inc, photos of previous A.A. International Conventions over the years (including the 1950 A.A. International Convention in Cleveland, OH – the 1st A.A. International Convention where the 12 Traditions were adopted and Dr. Bob made his last appearance at a large A.A. gathering), Dr. Silkworth’s desk, photos from Akron, OH, and a Presidential Volunteer Action Award and Medal issued to Alcoholics Anonymous by then President Ronald Reagan. In the Archives room, I was so excited to see Area 59 represented! There is a picture of Bill W. with Lou R. at the 1968 General Service Conference. Lou was the first African American delegate and served as the Panel 17 delegate from 1967 to 1968 for Area 59.

After our self-guided Archives tour, we went downstairs to the big meeting room for the meeting. At the start of the meeting, we all introduced ourselves, stating our name, home group, and where we are from, including the alcoholic GSO Staff Members. Those who attended the meeting were members from our group, members from Colorado, California, Maryland, and Iowa, as well as the GSO Staff Members we spoke with during the office tour. The speaker for the meeting was from our group! The GSO Staff Member for Corrections who chaired the meeting asked an attendee during the office tour if she would be the speaker. During the sharing session, one member from our group said she had just celebrated 90 days earlier that week and that this event would be “etched in her heart forever.” Another member shared that he had just gotten sober and one of the organizers of the bus trip convinced him to attend the trip. The organizer of the trip who convinced him to attend was not able to attend himself due to another engagement, but the new member still came and was so grateful he did.

After the meeting ended, we provided lunch suggestions to attendees and requested they be back at the bus at 2pm. After lunch, we got on the bus and took attendance to make sure everyone was accounted for, leaving no one behind in NYC, and hit the road to head back to Glenside, PA. By some miracle, we got out of NYC in record time, but hit some traffic and rain in NJ. We played a documentary on Bill W. on the TV for the bus ride home, but unfortunately, the speakers on the bus were not working. Everyone on the trip said it was a beautiful experience and it was a great day!

I am so overwhelmed with gratitude and love for my district for organizing two wonderful GSO bus trips. I encourage you to attend the tour and meeting at GSO to see how they make Twelve Step work possible. It is one thing to read about it in the Service Manual. It is a whole different experience to see it in action, in person.

Yours in Service,
Lauren B.
DCM – D24



Area 59 Subcommittee Spotlight: Archives

Interview with Jen F., District 47 DCM, Area 59 Archives Subcommittee Chair

While attending the Pre-Conference Sharing Session in April, I had the privilege of interviewing the Chair of the Area 59 Archives Subcommittee, Jen F., DCM of District 47. You may recognize Jen as an energetic and passionate DCM dedicated to carrying the message and helping future alcoholics by preserving the history of Alcoholics Anonymous in Eastern Pennsylvania.

I was excited to talk with Jen after the previous quarterly because she had a motion passed to update the history section of our E.P.G.S.A. Structure Manual. At this point, the motion has gone back to the home groups for consideration. According to our Archivist, Donald H., the manual hasn't been revised yet because up until now, "No one had the guts to do it!" So! Who are these DCMs that have the courage to put in the work that the likes of our area's primary historian had not yet seen!?!

Jen informed me that the Archives Subcommittee consists of five (5) DCMs whose primary purpose is to support Donald and Assistant Archivist, Jack, in the documentation of this panel. Jen was asked to chair the subcommittee by Pete, our Area 59 delegate. Previously the District 43

Archivist, Jen shared that Pete didn't know that when he asked her. Sometimes God just puts her where she is supposed to be, it seems.

When I asked her about the subcommittee's workload, the DCM of Upper Bucks County said, "There is a lot more than I thought!" Aside from regularly collecting group histories, they meet twice per month. One of the meetings is at the North Wales storage unit where they do hours of filing with Donald, filing everything from quarterly minutes to stick figure drawings of literature committee members that I designed for my presentation at Pre-Conference Sharing!

At the second monthly meeting, they work on other tasks. This panel, their big ask was to replace and update our E.P.G.S.A. binders. Area 59 has two sets of binders: travel binders to take to various events around Eastern Pennsylvania and the "fancy" E.P.G.S.A. display binders. Getting new binders for E.P.G.S.A. came as a recommendation from the previous panel.

"Finding binders is hard," laughed Jen. She did not expect to spend so many hours researching binders. The subcommittee had to actually step away from the task after another set

of binders had not come through. This stepping away from binders is what led the subcommittee to successfully update the history section of our E.P.G.S.A. Structure Manual. While the DCMs needed to take a break from binders, they still wanted to stay active ... and they did!

Jen said that their initial recommendation was to remove the whole history section. It seemed that it wasn't Area 59 focused, was inaccurate, and might not need to be there. They talked with the Structure Subcommittee and they did not want to have it removed. So, the task turned into revising the history section.

"The biggest challenge of archiving ... is deciding what to archive," explained Jen. There is just so much information and you can't include all of it! After hours of sifting and fact checking, a new version of the history section was ready to present this past April! The committee is now ready to reluctantly return their eyes to the E.P.G.S.A. binder project. "I have learned that I might have been too much of a perfectionist the first time around," commented Jen. She stated that the hope is to find a good fit without it having to be absolutely perfect.

My favorite comment from the interview came at the end when I asked Jen if there was anything she would like to add. She looked at me and laughed, "I just love this!" After rotating on from DCM, she would be available to fill an area officer/servant position or maybe go on to intergroup. Jen is available to help other districts with their archive needs.

Jen's sobriety date is November 6, 2016. If you want to find her in person, her home group is Rollings Hills Sobriety in Perkasio. I'd like to thank Jen again for the interview and for the hard work of all of the DCMs on the Archives Subcommittee.

Yours in Service,
Tom W.
ADCM – D67

Preventing DCM Burnout



The **DCM Sharing Session** is held in the beginning of the second year of a panel, put together by the Structure Subcommittee and the Alternate Delegate. This year's theme was *Avoiding Burnout While Remaining Responsible*. Area 59 is unique; we are one of the few Areas that model our entire service structure after the General Service Conference. For comparison, Delegates are responsible to Areas they serve and Conference Committees; DCMs in Area 59 are responsible to the Districts they serve and Area Subcommittees. Having 2 jobs rolled into 1 for a 2-year period can be taxing at times, but the rewards are truly tremendous. This is why the Structure Subcommittee felt it necessary to discuss with our fellow Panel 73 DCMs how we are doing mentally, physically, and spiritually.

The program for the Sharing Session was broken into 3 parts. First, we discussed, "District Morale; How it Keeps GSRs Active and Engaged". We had Matt M., Panel 71 DCM for District 23 share how he came into service and gave us some hope. He highlighted how we can embrace this experience as DCMs and make a difference in one person's life for the better, while providing guidance on "the bigger picture". We will only be DCMs for Panel 73 one time and one time only, so enjoy every moment of it!

Next, Bart T., Panel 71 DCM for District 48, gave a talk on, "Participation of DCMs and GSRs ... Are There Too Many Subcommittees? Are There Too Many Area Events?" Yes, there was a snowstorm on the day of the Sharing

Session, so we had an unusually low number of attendees. That being said, are we making General Service attractive? Are we utilizing the other District Officers? Bart gave a moving presentation on how service to our fellowship was the umbilical cord for sobriety on some days and how the participation of other GSRs and DCMs kept him connected.

The last and final topic for the day was "The Sacrifice of Service While Remaining Spiritual" with Candy S., Panel 71 DCM for District 25. The highlight of Candy's presentation was how we sometimes have a tendency to take on too many roles and responsibilities. She incorporated how there is truly something spiritual with taking one job at a time in our fellowship, and not to deprive another of having the experience of service.

Overall, the clear consensus of the Panel 73 DCMs was that this has been an interesting panel filled with plenty of growing pains. My personal favorite share from the microphone came from Tim R., Panel 73 DCM for District 44, "If we do not elect the qualified, God qualifies the elected." Being DCM has been one of the most stressful and rewarding positions in A.A. that I've ever had. I have learned more tolerance, patience, compassion, understanding, and to attack everything with love. I truly believe that we will always have more on our plate than we can handle because why would we turn to a God of our understanding if we didn't need His power to help us through?

Delegate Conference Reports

(continued from page 1)

consideration. It warms my heart to know that so many A.A.s took the time to write their stories to help the next sick and suffering alcoholic within the rooms of A.A.

Yours in Service,

Ted C.,

District 27 DCM, and Area 59
Ad-hoc Digital Communications
Subcommittee Chair

We can embrace this experience as DCMs and make a difference in one person's life for the better.

In closing, I have some questions for the readers to consider when reflecting on the time we have left as DCMs or if you're considering becoming DCM in the future. Are we making service attractive? Are we asking for guidance when unsure? Are we pausing when we are disturbed? As a fellowship of practical experience, are we discussing things with individuals that have had the experience themselves?

Thank you to all of the presenters from the DCM Sharing Session. Thank you to District 51 for putting on a great event and allowing me to serve as your Panel 73 DCM. Being a DCM is truly an experience that you will not want to miss!

With Gratitude,

Alex N.

District 51 DCM, and Area 59
Structure Subcommittee Chair

2024

Is an election year
for your next
Area 59 Delegate

67th annual

Join us to elect a new panel
of officers to serve A.A. in
Eastern Pennsylvania

Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Assembly

November
8 thru 10

Wyndham Lancaster Resort & Convention Center
2300 Lincoln Highway East
Lancaster, PA 17602

Who attends the EPGSA Convention/Assembly?

All GSRs, ADCMs, DCMs, Area Officers, and Past Delegates, plus any and all interested A.A. members are welcome.

The Home Group should financially support its GSR in attending the Convention/Assembly.

What happens at the Convention/Assembly?

In even-numbered years, we have elections for the Delegate and Area Officers.

In odd-numbered years, we gather for an Assembly at which the Area Officers and Area Committees report on their work to the Assembly.

Each year, we have workshops, discussion panels and meetings where the voices of the entire area are shared, offering each of us a wider and varied experience of 12th step service work.

What can I get out of this experience?

A renewed sense of purpose and energy to carry A.A.'s message.

A greater understanding of the issues involved and solutions to the problems we face when we are trying to carry the message to alcoholics.

A sense of being a part of Area 59 and A.A. as a whole; sharing in the ongoing efforts to protect our Fellowship and carry our message.

What do I do afterwards?

GSRs should consider giving a report to their group.

Members can and should share their experience at meetings and among friends.

Why is it important?

This is the only time during the year when we gather, speak, and vote as an Area. The Delegate may take this opportunity to seek guidance from the Assembly on matters concerning the Area or the General Service Conference.

At these Area gatherings we have a rare opportunity to share our concerns and solutions to problems we face in carrying A.A.'s message with a diverse group who can inform us of their experience.



Scan for the
most current
event details.



Area 59

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY

area59aa.org

Area 59 Archives

The History of Mini - Assemblies

Information about the beginnings of this event is sketchy at best. We do know that in 1971 “rap sessions” as they were called were being held. Their purpose was to hear the Delegates conference report, followed by a question and answer period. They were a day-long event with donated food.

Panel 35 Delegate Bob N. said in 1973 they were called “caucuses” and were attended by 50—60 people.

Under the tenure of Panel 27 Delegate Lenore J. they were renamed. She felt that the term “caucuses” sounded too political and changed them to “mini - assemblies.”

During the next two panels, 29 and 31, the Area was divided into 4 sections and a mini was held in each one. The Delegate from Panel 31 Lee B. told me that this was an attempt to unify the Area because of the prevalent “Phila. vs the rest” attitude then.

Formats have changed over the years as attempts were made to attract more of the fellowship. In 2001 it was called “Luncheon with the Delegate”. It consisted of the Delegates report, a catered lunch and a question and answer period.

In the mid 80’s through the 90’s a registration fee of \$10 to \$15 was charged to cover the rising cost of the meal. The feeling at that time was “if people pay they will pay attention.”

Attendance at these events has varied from almost 1200 attendees at the 4 minis in 1990 - that year 504 attended the mini held in Phila. - to the more recent 50—60 people. Through the 80’s and 90’s average attendance for 4 minis was around 650.

The number of mini-assemblies being held rotated between 3 and 4 with 4 being more prevalent. Recently in 2010 it was reduced to 2, then in 2011 to 1. After some discussion the number was raised back to 2 or 3.

In 2012 there were 3, and 2013 began the practice of 2 minis’ per year. When Covid came, virtual minis were held; 1 in 2020 and 2 in 2021. With the return of in-person activities in 2022 we returned to 2 per year. Attendance has improved in the last 2 years to 100-175 people.

By Donald H., Area 59 Archivist

March 2014

Updated May 5, 2024

Area 59 Archives

Area 59 Archives Walking Tour

Introduction

Join Area Archivist Donald H. on an informative walk through the Area 59 Archives Display Room.

Check to see if your group has a history on file by emailing: archivist@area59aa.org.

Area 59 Archives



In this first segment, we are introduced to the center of the room which contains (48) District binders that contain the Group histories, in alphabetical order, that have been submitted to our Archivist over the years.

Area 59 Calendar of Events

Calendar of Events



In this section of the Area 59 website you will find a comprehensive chronological list of events occurring within Area 59 and our larger A.A. fellowship.

We also show you how you can add your local A.A. event to Area 59's Calendar of Events.

Get in Service!

Bridging the Gap



Our fellowship offers a program designed to assist new members after their release from treatment and correctional facilities, this program is called **Bridging the Gap**.

Visit our webpage for more information and to get involved!

Bridging the Gap

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we newsletter is published by Area 59 to enhance Unity. Please let us know what you think. We welcome your suggestions for making this a more useful publication.

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Area 59

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we newsletter