



we

newsletter

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NERAASA: Why We Gather, and Why It Still Matters

With NERAASA coming up, I've found myself reflecting on what these regional gatherings actually offer, especially in a service world that can sometimes feel busy, process-heavy, or disconnected from the bigger picture.

I attended NERAASA in Hershey, PA, for the first time two years ago, without really knowing what to expect. I remember being struck by the scale of it, how seriously people approached service, and the feeling that I had stepped into something much larger than a single weekend or conference agenda. At the time, I don't think I fully understood how much history was in the room, or how intentionally these assemblies connect where we've been to where we're going.

Through more of my experience in service, I am seeing that NERAASA exists for a reason. It isn't just about presentations or reports. It's about bringing trusted servants together to listen, learn, and then carry that shared experience back to our Areas. The format itself reflects something core to AA: informed group conscience, shared responsibility, and the understanding that while no one voice speaks for all of us, every voice still matters.

As I prepare to attend again, what stands out to me most is how grounding gatherings like NERAASA can be. AA history isn't something abstract or distant. It shows up in how we make decisions, how we talk

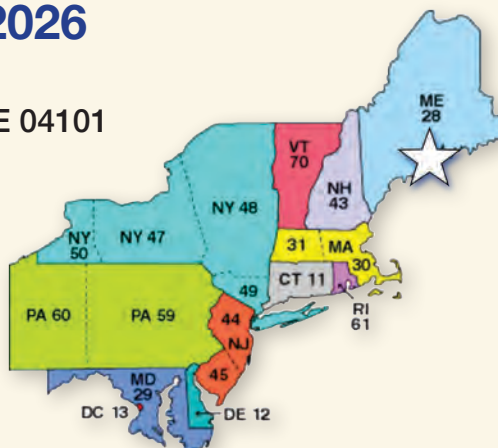
to one another, and how seriously we take our responsibility to the Fellowship. NERAASA is one of the places where that responsibility feels real and immediate. And for a few days, we sit together with big ideas like unity, humility, accountability, and care for AA as a whole. That sense of connectedness has helped me stay grounded in my AA program and has deepened my commitment to General Service.

As I head into this year's conference, I am focused on learning and gathering information, but I am also deeply interested in connection: to our shared history, to one another, and to the spirit of service that continues to sustain AA. NERAASA is a reminder that we're part of something larger than ourselves and that how we show up matters because, at the end of the day, we are fulfilling our mission of carrying the message to the next alcoholic.

Editor, *WE* Newsletter

February 20-22, 2026

Holiday Inn By the Bay
88 Spring St., Portland, ME 04101



Event Information

Finding Your Way at the A.A. Eastern PA General Service Assembly (EPGSA)

Walking into EPGSA for the first time can feel a little like walking into a small city. Meeting rooms with strange names, people greeting each other like lifelong friends, and a schedule that somehow manages to be both inspiring and overwhelming. You might be thinking, I'm excited to be here ... but what exactly is my role in all this? Don't worry ... that feeling is totally normal.

The weekend starts gently enough—check-in, welcoming A.A. meetings, and a little time to settle in. Accessibility is baked in from the start, with bilingual meetings, Spanish translation, and ASL provided throughout the weekend. Almost immediately, you realize this isn't just about attending meetings—it's about participation, service, and connection.

Friday night feels different from your home group meeting. There are general sessions, panels, orientations, and conversations about how A.A. functions beyond the group level. Somewhere between the ice cream social and the late-night meeting, a lightbulb clicks: this conference isn't just about sobriety—it's about how AA stays healthy, unified, and, frankly, a little bit magical.

Saturday morning brings the Area Assembly—the heart of it all. For seasoned members, this is familiar territory. For first-time GSRs, it can feel like stepping into the deep end. Motions are discussed, microphones open for sharing, and questions arise about literature, service structure, and the future of A.A.

Sharing sessions can feel intense—but they're also gold. People express strong opinions, sometimes passionately, about how AA should run. It can catch anyone off guard—even me. Who am I kidding? Especially me, and yes, it happened this time too.

Over time, though, these moments become perfect practice for patience and tolerance. Our Tenth and Eleventh Step tools aren't just for traffic jams and family dinners; they're also invaluable when discussions feel more like friendly (or not so friendly) duels. In those moments, I pause, breathe, inventory, silent prayer—repeat. Those “battle moments” often become the weekend's most meaningful experiences, always reminding me why every voice matters.

Then come the concurrent workshops. Cue the classic question: Which one am I supposed to go to? Several run at once, covering everything from service and leadership to accessibility, Public Information and AA history. Intimidating? Absolutely. Confusing? Yep. But the truth is, there isn't a wrong choice. “Suit up, show up,” as the old saying goes. Listen and absorb what makes sense.

Over time, the pieces start to click, much like reading our Big Book. My first time through it, I barely made sense of it. The only thing I truly knew was that this is where I belong. Each time I've gone through it, especially with a newcomer, more life gets breathed in, and understanding begins to happen.

The key is understanding the GSR role.

At its core, a GSR (General Service Representative) is the voice of their home group. Our job as GSRs is to carry that conscience to district meetings and area assemblies. GSRs don't make decisions for their groups—they represent them. They listen, share and bring information back so the group stays informed. GSRs vote locally on trusted servants, service priorities, group safety or how Seventh Tradition funds are used—always guided by their group conscience.

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One common point of confusion, especially for newcomers, is how AA-wide decisions, particularly around altering literature like the Big Book, actually happen. GSRs don't vote directly at the General Service Conference. Instead, each area sends a Delegate who votes on worldwide matters. Before the Conference, groups discuss agenda topics such as proposed literature changes, service policies or budgets. The GSR brings the group's views to the district and area, where they are passed along to the Delegate.

So while GSRs aren't sitting in New York casting Conference votes, they are essential to the process. Without group consciences flowing up through the GSRs, Delegates wouldn't have the guidance they need to vote responsibly.

This is my sixth conference in seven years of sobriety. They say after five years you get your marbles back, but I think some of mine are still rolling around somewhere, probably under a workshop table or hiding behind a stack of AA literature. And yet, even with occasionally missing marbles, I leave each year feeling clearer, more connected, and more confident in my service role than when I arrived.

If I might offer one suggestion to our lovely Conference folks: a short letter or email ahead of time explaining the GSR role in simple, digestible terms would be helpful. Even a small note forwarded by DCMs or provided at check-in could make a big difference. The GSR manual and packets are thorough, but they can feel like drinking from a firehose on day one.

EPGSA can feel overwhelming at first. But underneath the schedules, acronyms, and service language is a simple truth: AA works because groups participate. And GSRs help ensure every group's voice is heard.

Sometimes all it takes is a little time, a little explanation, and a welcoming conference to turn confusion into confidence. And maybe a few more marbles rolling into place can't hurt.

Samantha G

68th annual

Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Assembly

November 14 thru 16, 2025

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



Area 59

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY
area59aa.org



NERF: A Deeper Look into Service Beyond the Group

2025 Northeast Regional Forum

December 5–7
Providence, Rhode Island

Thanks to Area 59, I had the honor and privilege of attending NERF (Northeast Regional Forum) from 12/5/25 – 12/7/25 in Providence, RI. NERF, hosted by GSO every other year, is designed to foster trust and communication among the Fellowship, the General Service Board, the Staff, the GSO Directors, and the AA Grapevine. This event is open to all AA members, with no registration fee.

On Friday, 12/5/25, Jen, Alex, and myself hit the road to head to Providence, RI, which was a 4 and a half hour drive. Along the way, we decided to stop in Mystic, CT, for lunch and to let the highway traffic die down. As we were walking to the restaurant, I heard someone say, “Hi Lauren,” and thought to myself, who would know me here? As I looked up, I saw our brand-new Officer at Large walking towards us! She was only on her second day as Officer at Large and rearranged her schedule to attend NERF. What are the odds of running into her here? There are no coincidences! We all ate lunch together before heading the rest of the way to Providence. Friday night, we heard presentations from the General Service Board Chair, Scott H., and the Northeast Regional Trustee, Ken T. It was an amazing experience to hear these reports given by the General Service Board.

On Saturday, we had a jam-packed schedule that started at 9 am. During the morning assembly, we got to see an anonymity protected video from the GSO staff, where they introduced themselves, gave their sobriety date, talked about their roles, and said their favorite home group service position. It was really cool to see that they continue to stay engaged at the home group level, serving as coffeemakers or greeters, as well as serving on the GSO staff. In the latter part of the Saturday assembly, we got to see a presentation by the Canada Trustee at Large about his experience with AA Around the World. The

presentation was delivered in French, with an English translation. It was an amazing experience to witness AA’s global growth and to hear his story.

We had workshops in the afternoon and in the evening on Saturday. I attended the “Beyond the Basket: The Spiritual Heart of Self-Support” hosted by the Area 61 (RI) Delegate. As the workshop began, the moderator asked for someone to take minutes and prepare the report. I raised my hand and said I was already taking notes and would be of service! It was a great, interesting workshop where we talked about how self-support is not only financial, discussed a situation where a member had passed away, and asked that, in lieu of flowers, people send money to their Area. The treasurer had to contact each person to confirm membership; if they weren’t, she returned the money. That was humbling, especially since she said that the Area was low on funds at the time. The next workshop I attended was “Service Sponsorship” hosted by our Alternate Delegate, Alex N. I enjoyed hearing others’ experiences, and this workshop was truly humbling for me. As soon as the workshop ended, I texted my service sponsee, feeling a renewed sense of purpose to meet more regularly.

On Sunday, we heard from our former Northeast Regional Trustee, Francis. After Francis spoke, we held a session for first-time attendees. Since this was my first time at NERF, I went up to the mic. I mentioned that I had always known about NERF but didn’t think it was really necessary for me to attend. Little did I know what an impact this weekend would have on me, and I regret not going to it sooner. I also encouraged others from Area 59 to go to the mic and share their experiences. I am proud to say we had strong representation from our Area, and many first-time attendees shared their experiences at the mic.



Service Subcommittee Spotlight

District 30 – *Public Information*

District 30's Public Information Subcommittee Serves Up a New Message

Sometimes the most meaningful service work happens quietly. District 30's Public Information Subcommittee is seeing that firsthand through a simple project: placing a gentle A.A. message on restaurant placemats throughout the community. The ad itself is small and unassuming; however, the care behind it speaks volumes.

In November 2025, District 30 launched a new Placemat Advertising initiative designed to reach an alcoholic in need of help. Spearheaded by the Public Information Subcommittee, this initiative places access to AA's message directly in front of dining customers at local diners in Downingtown, Coatesville, and Honey Brook. Over the next five months, we anticipate these ads will reach approximately 150,000 people.

The effort came from months of planning and brainstorming. Subcommittee members spoke openly about where A.A.'s message belongs, how it can be shared respectfully, and how to ensure it feels welcoming rather than promotional. The focus isn't on grabbing attention. It's on reaching the still sick and suffering, especially those who may not even know they're looking for help yet.

The finished placemat ad reflects that intention. It doesn't make promises or tell anyone what to do. There are no slogans or testimonials. Instead, it offers a simple, honest question, one many people have already asked themselves in private, and a quiet reassurance that help is available. A website and QR code provide a next step for anyone who wants it, without pressure or expectation, and lead someone to the 24hr hotline.

There's something especially fitting about sharing A.A.'s message in a restaurant. These are places where people naturally slow down. They sit, wait, and think while sipping coffee or waiting for a meal. A placemat isn't something you scroll past or tune out. It's just there, giving someone the space to read — or not — in their own time. That kind of gentle availability feels very much in line with the spirit of A.A.

This approach also closely aligns with A.A.'s Tradition Eleven, which reminds us that our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. The placemat ad doesn't call attention to A.A. members, make claims, or seek recognition. It simply offers information and leaves the rest up to the individual. By keeping the message simple, anonymous, and non-promotional, the subcommittee stays true to the idea that A.A.'s reputation is built not on advertising, but on the quiet example of what the program offers.

Many of us remember how uncertain that first search for help can feel. Before walking into a meeting, most of us didn't know where to go, what would happen, or whether we'd belong. Sometimes all it takes is a small nudge — a simple message in an ordinary place — to plant a seed. That's exactly what these placemat ads are doing.

Alcoholics Anonymous has always been about belonging to the community. Diners and cafés are places where people gather in every stage of life — celebrating, struggling, or just passing the time. In a quiet way, this project places A.A. right there alongside them.

This effort reminds us that Public Information isn't about promotion. It's about presence. And sometimes, the A.A. message shows up not in a meeting room or on the phone, but quietly — right there at the table.

A Public Information Meeting Made Possible Through Service

On February 1, 2026, District 30 of Alcoholics Anonymous, Eastern Pennsylvania Area 59, hosted a Public Information Community Meeting at the Episcopal Church of the Trinity in Coatesville. While the meeting itself lasted two hours, it represented months of thoughtful planning and cooperation by the District 30 Public Information Subcommittee.

Public Information work often happens quietly. Subcommittee members met, discussed, and coordinated details with the shared goal of creating a welcoming space where accurate information about Alcoholics Anonymous could be shared with the community. Their efforts reflected A.A.'s long-standing belief that recovery works best when helping hands are informed and ready.

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The meeting was chaired by Matt H., District 30 PI Chair, and featured Paul M., an A.A. speaker offering a faith-leader perspective, alongside Pastor Steve Ritchey, a non-A.A. speaker who shared how Alcoholics Anonymous functions within the broader community. Together, the speakers clarified what A.A. is—and what it is not—while emphasizing the importance of A.A.’s Traditions, including anonymity, self-support, and cooperation without affiliation.

Community members, professionals, faith leaders, law enforcement, families, and friends were warmly welcomed, underscoring that A.A. does not stand apart from the community but works alongside it. The discussion highlighted how many people find their way to A.A. through someone outside the rooms, a clergy member, employer, medical professional, or concerned loved one, someone who knows where to turn for help.

District 30’s Public Information Community Meeting served as a reminder that Public Information is less about promotion and more about connection. Through consistent service and collaboration, the District 30 Public Information Subcommittee helped ensure that when the question arises, “Where can I find help?”, the answer remains clear and accessible.

Bob P

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M-27i - Public Information Workbook

For A.A.s serving on Public Information (P.I.) committees, this workbook offers shared experience on carrying the message through various media, including print, radio, TV and the Internet, as well as on organizing workshops and creating presentations. Sample letters to various professionals provide additional guidance.

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Want to Stop Drinking? We can Help!!
Visit area59aad30.org



Alcoholics Anonymous

Public Information WORKBOOK

www.aa.org

Public Information Workbook

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.

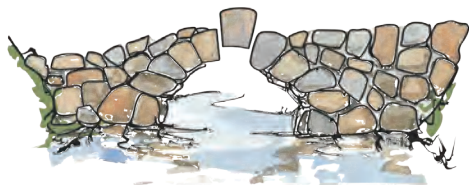
Area 59 Calendar of Events

Calendar of Events



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

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.

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