

AREA 14 NEWSLETTER

November 2013

Message From Your Area Chair:

Gratitude – “a feeling of appreciation or thanks”, that is what Merriam-Webster tells us it is. I have known these words from early in my life, but I appreciated them when my life was saved. Sometimes it is missed when I go through the day by day actions of living, so I spend time with others who remind me why I am able to speak today without alcohol on my breath.

November is Gratitude Month and I was giving thought about those who came before me. I read some articles from Box 4-5-9. It was 1959 where a member was celebrating 10 years of sobriety and sent GSO \$10 “in appreciation and gratitude for ten years of continual sobriety, but for the Grace of God and those before me in AA.. May I always remember that in giving I receive.”

In December 1962, a member from a group in South Africa wrote about being grateful to G.S.O. “for having very kindly printed without charge....translation of A.A. literature”. So they proposed to go into action and made a donation of \$16 for the assistance in carrying the message.

There are other ways we can continue to have appreciation and celebrate gratitude in action and reach out to others, we can invite our sponsor or sponsee to coffee or to lunch, we can go to a meeting that needs support. Bill wrote in *The Language of the Heart*, p. 271, “When brimming with gratitude, one’s heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion we can ever know.” I close, planning on how I will show my gratitude, I hope you do also.

In Fellowship & Service,
Vivian F.
Area 14 Chair, Panel 63

Carrying the A.A. Message Using New Technologies

*Area 16 Delegate Tom H.
Speaking at the SE Additional Forum in West Virginia August, 2013*

Imagine if you will Bill Wilson at six months sober, alone, and out of town on a failed business venture as he paces through a hotel lobby struggling not to join that happy crowd in the hotel bar. It’s the year 1935. Bill cannot call a Central Office and find a meeting. He can’t hop online on his iPad or SmartPhone and join an online meeting. He can’t Foursquare his location inviting A.A.’s to an online Mayflower Hotel meeting. He can’t write on his Facebook wall that he is lonely and thirsty. He can’t open an app on his phone and read some A.A. literature. No, Bill has to look through a phone directory which doesn’t have a search engine. Bill has to go through the alphabet and place nickel after nickel into a pay phone hoping and praying that someone will understand and help him in his plight to stay sober.

If I am the person answering Bill’s call and plea for a drunk to talk to and it is 1935 I might either hang up or lead him to the insane asylum. Imagine receiving this call before A.A. is born, when alcoholism was a great stigma. Imagine Bill making the call. I don’t know about you but I think I would have succumbed to that happy crowd in the hotel bar. In today’s world if you are as desperate to stay sober as Bill was your options for finding help are many.

Today if you are backpacking your way across Southeast Asia, or in a very remote place in Kenya and you become lonely and thirsty the first thing most of us would do is look to see if we have a Wi-Fi connection.

We might send out a text message or leave a voicemail with our sponsor. We might share our situation with our Facebook friends and within seconds they would provide us several ways to catch an online meeting or offer to do a virtual face to face meeting on Skype. Before we know it there are several of our friends in a chat room and through the advancement in technology we feel connected to our life saving program all while backpacking across a foreign country. And even if your internet connection is poor or absent you might notice a Big Book icon on your phone or change from music to speaker tapes on your iPod. The multitude of ways to carry and receive our message of hope is vast and growing.

The ways in which technology advancement have helped us reach and save lives since Bill's time is truly amazing. If Bill were alive today I'm certain he would want to be Skyped into meetings like this all over the world. I am also certain Bill would remind us of the importance of the face to face meeting at his coffee table with Ebby that began his, and our, journey to sobriety.

I am sure there a few in this room who have never worked with a wet drunk or in the least for most of us it has been many years since we have. My last wet drunk call was a little over a year ago. I had the privilege of answering a plea from the 12 Step Hotline in my Area. Ken was drunk when I picked him up and took him to a meeting. He kissed my neck as I dropped him off and told me he loved me. At first I was uncomfortable with a neck kiss and then I realized I'll take a neck kiss over vomit in my lap any day. Ken is not sober today but I think it's interesting how Ken came to A.A. Ken first contacted a Facebook friend who was in Arizona at the time. While she was on Facebook with Ken she contacted the Intergroup Hotline closest to Ken. The Hotline called me and then I called Ken. My face to face meeting with Ken started through a social networking site that is barely nine years old but lead to an old fashion face to face and "get in the car."

It seems to me that new technologies can enhance and dare I say in some ways replace the ways in which the new alcoholic is reached and the current member is helped. In fact in some ways without new technologies some people might not be sober. There are people in remote communities throughout the world that depend upon an internet connection to speak with another alcoholic. There are people today who have never sat down at a coffee table with their sponsor and yet the bond they feel with the person who saved their life using technology parallel's the bond I feel with my sponsor whom I've spent many face to face hours with.

If Bill were alive I think he would embrace this technology and not be the least bit afraid of it. I think Bill would try to find ways to use it to its fullest. The importance should be placed on helping the conversation between two drunks happen instead of trying to make it happen a certain way.

Ken found A.A. through technology and in the old fashion way I picked him up most every night and took him to a meeting. We spent hours talking. The new technology created and old fashion one on one. I have a sponsee who did his fifth step with me via Skype while he was traveling the world. He might as well have been in my living room. I could see his face and hear his voice, nothing was lost.

Is there more we can do as a fellowship to embrace and use new technologies to carry the message? Yes, I believe there is and that begins with having more faith and less fear. I believe the growth of our fellowship depends upon finding ways to embrace and use new technologies to carry our life saving message to those still suffering inside and outside of our rooms. In the end it still takes two people wanting to stay sober. Bill found his and I pray you use whatever resources available to find your Dr. Bob too!

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January Assembly

We have a lot of new things planned for the January Assembly. We are continuing to have our workshops translated into Spanish. This coming year, we will have the GSR Orientation using the simultaneous translation.

Have you ever wondered what that might be like to attend and listen to a workshop or meeting that is being held in a different language? Well we are offering the opportunity to you! Las Tradiciones will be simultaneously translated from Spanish to English. We only have so many head sets, so if you are interested, you may want to find that meeting on the agenda and make your plans to attend. I challenge you to walk in the steps of our Dist. 33 members.

I hope many of you have been reading the Delegates Corner and know that Ward Ewing, immediate past Chairman of the Board, Trustee, will be our special guest. We have spent much time in 2013 focusing on the movement in general service from the General Service Representative (G.S.R.) to the District to Area and to the Conference. What comes next? What goes on after our ideas and suggestions get to the Delegate and are sent to the Conference, to the Trustees, to the staff at our General Service Office (G.S.O)?

Bring your questions to the January Assembly. We will be having a special workshop after lunch where we will discuss the “second part” of the General Service Structure.

But, during lunch, we will be having a “indoor picnic lunch” with Mr. Ewing. Bring your brown bag lunch, or purchase a boxed lunch at the hotel (\$11 hotel boxed lunch) and join us for a sharing session and learn a bit about a Class A Trustee and what they do for Alcoholics Anonymous and how they become involved!

Put the date on your calendar and get ready for another Saturday at the Assembly filled with informative workshops and more and interesting things to come.

North Florida Area Conference

Change keeps happening at our North Florida Area! I would like to welcome, Alex, our new webmaster to the North Florida Area.

Are you interested in submitting information, article to our Area Newsletter, send it to chairperson@aanorthflorida.org.

“I am responsible, When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

Declaration of the 30th Anniversary International Convention, 1965, Toronto, Canada

Check out the website, especially note the Activities of the Area where there are so many workshops to visit Support our Area Districts!

www.aanorthflorida.org