

box

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News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.[®]

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www.aa.org

MAY EACH OF US FIND JOY,
comfort and purpose in our sobriety this holiday season
and may we find ever more opportunities to share
our gratitude with those in need.

All of us at G.S.O. send warmest wishes
for a joyous Holiday Season!



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2016 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by providing an opportunity for A.A. groups and area trusted servants, as well as any interested A.A. members in a particular region, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. There is no registration fee for Regional Forums; they are hosted by the General Service Board and coordinated by G.S.O.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work. First-time attendees are specially welcomed.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to area committee members, delegates, D.C.M.s, and central offices and intergroups approximately six months ahead of time. Online registration is also available at www.aa.org.

- *Southwest "Additional"*—June 3-5, DoubleTree by Hilton Denver, Denver, Colorado
- *Eastern Canada*—July 8-10, Airlane Hotel and Conference Centre, Thunder Bay, Ontario
- *Western Canada*—August 26-28, The Calvary Community Church, Kamloops, British Columbia
- *Pacific*—September 30-October 2, Hilton Waikoloa Village Hotel, Waikoloa, Hawaii
- *Southeast*—December 2-4, Orlando Marriott Lake Mary, Orlando, Florida

Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

AA Grapevine Announces "Forming True Partnerships"



FORMING TRUE PARTNERSHIPS

How AA members use the program to improve relationships

A collection of Grapevine stories showing the many ways members use the Twelve Steps, sponsorship, and the tools of the A.A. program to improve and repair

relationships, old and new (GV34), \$10.99; five or more copies, \$10.50.

To order this book or any other product from the GV collection, visit us at AAGrapevine.org and click on Store or call (800) 631-6025 US/Canada, (818) 487-2091 International or fax us at (818) 487-4550.

Request for Shared Experience — Social Media

The trustees' Public Information Committee is gathering information about how A.A. members, groups, and service entities are currently using social media and social-networking platforms (such as, but not limited to, Twitter, Instagram and Google+) for A.A. purposes.

At this time the trustees' P.I. Committee is only asking for information regarding *actual experience* in using such resources for A.A. purposes.

Information should be sent via email to publicinfo@aa.org or by postal mail to P.I. Desk, General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. The committee has asked to receive this information no later than December 31, 2015. This request has also been distributed to area delegates and local A.A. service offices.

The committee would welcome your shared A.A. experience on this important subject.

■ G.S.O. Welcomes New General Manager

In early October 2015, Greg T., of South Orange, N.J., became G.S.O.'s newest general manager, following Phyllis H., who served in the position from 2008 to the fall of 2015. Of his new job, Greg says he hopes to be able to provide "clear and consistent leadership" across all G.S.O. functions as the office continues to evolve in service to the Fellowship.

"There are so many vital interactions we engage in at G.S.O. — with board members, Conference members, group members and individuals, along with those outside the Fellowship: doctors, lawyers, corrections and treatment professionals — and it is our challenge to provide them all with dependable and meaningful guidance and to share freely the vast experience we have gained as a Fellowship.

"As a nonprofit organization there's nothing more important to me than keeping Recovery, Unity and Service foremost in my mind — and in my heart — always, every day, one day at a time."

According to Terry Bedient, nonalcoholic chairperson of the General Service Board, "We had numerous résumés for the position and from the rich talent pool, the search committee and ultimately the entire board was impressed with Greg's extensive background in not-for-profit management, in understanding the needs of membership organizations, as well as having a substantial background and passion for publishing, and a kind of maturity and thoughtfulness — a careful consideration — about the issues facing A.A. We were pleased with the broad talent pool overall, and we are pleased that Greg is willing to serve.

"Given the challenges facing the General Service Board and the Fellowship itself — including challenges of membership, challenges of engagement, challenges of the Seventh Tradition — we felt that Greg had a profound understanding of the Fellowship and the skill set to help the board think into the future."

Of working with Phyllis H. over the past seven years, "it has been a great pleasure," says Terry. "My experience of A.A. is that most members have a passion for the Fellowship and the Twelve Steps, applying the principles of the program in all aspects of their lives. Fortunately for her and for us on the General Service Board, Phyllis has been one who could live that passion through her job.

"So we are delighted that we have had the opportunity to work with her for the past seven years. And though she will be leaving large shoes to fill, we are grateful that Greg was willing to put his name in and be considered for the position."

As far as her own plans for the future, Phyllis doesn't really have any at this point in time. "I have some things in mind, but in the first year it's much like the first year of sobriety, I'm not making any major decisions.

"I'm leaving with the fullest heart," she says, "and am so looking forward to picking up on more sponsorship and involvement in the day-to-day activities of the group. Just being 'one of'... walking the A.A. life."

No stranger to G.S.O. operations, Greg has served for the past two and a half years as G.S.O.'s publishing director, where he was responsible for the planning, publishing and distribution of A.A.'s broad catalogue of materials. Additionally, he brings to his new position considerable management and entrepreneurial experience and a diverse record of accomplishment in the book publishing industry, in both the commercial and not-for-profit sectors, where he learned to be "a good steward of funds — contributions and earned income — in service to the mission."

A graduate of Yale University with a B.A. in philosophy, Greg also received an M.A. in theology in 2006 from Seton Hall University. Having written and edited a number of books, both novels and nonfiction, Greg began his executive career in publishing as a senior manager at the Doubleday Book Clubs in New York City in the early 1980s. Following a seven-year stint at Time Warner's Book of the Month Club, Inc. where he became vice president and editor in chief, Greg eventually found himself as the senior vice president and editor in chief at Random House, Inc.

Sober since 1986, Greg has served the Fellowship in a number of different capacities. Initially a volunteer member of the Grapevine Editorial Advisory Board from 1992-1995, Greg served on the Grapevine corporate board as a nontrustee director from 1996-1999, and subsequently on the General Service Board as a Class B general service trustee from April 1999 to May 2003.

Greg remains active in his home group — where he has been happily involved over the past 29 years as a greeter and coffeemaker, as well as holding other group service positions.

"My experience as an alternate G.S.R. really shaped my entire A.A. service life. In that position I began to learn that it was important to show up, be prepared and be willing to participate. Also, throughout the past 29 years or so, in whatever role I have been assigned, I have found it necessary to listen to all points of view in order to arrive at an informed group conscience."

As Greg now takes on the new challenge of heading up the General Service Office, he hopes to "lead by example and be a worker among workers," adding "I really enjoy the A.A. work we do and want to encourage all fellow employees and trusted servants — both individually and collectively — to do the best job we can for the Fellowship that saved our lives and the lives of those we love."

So, for now and the foreseeable future, with the support of his wife Maureen and their two sons Patrick and Bryan, Greg is focused on carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous and excited about the prospect of serving the Fellowship he dearly loves.

With characteristic candor and good humor, Greg notes of the challenges ahead, "I expect life as I have known it will change dramatically — and I look forward to it!"

■ G.S.O. Construction Project Underway

With visitor tours suspended and the Friday morning A.A. meeting held in various locations, beginning in August, G.S.O. braced for months' long round of construction aimed at providing more suitable office space for the Grapevine, which will move from its current location on the 12th floor, and addressing existing needs for reconfiguration on the 11th floor. Scheduled for completion by the end of the year, the project represents the second major reconstruction undertaken since G.S.O. first moved to Riverside Drive in 1992.

Says Terry Bedient, Class A nonalcoholic chairperson of the General Service Board, "By the end of 2015, both Grapevine and G.S.O. space will be consolidated on the 11th floor. This will provide our dedicated Grapevine and La Viña staff with needed additional working space in the newly renovated area, and will provide the opportunity for enhanced communication and sharing of technical resources, as well as a reduction of overhead expenses."

"Sharing space with A.A.W.S. offers the opportunity for greater unity and cooperation among the operating corporations," says Ami B., Grapevine's executive editor/publisher, "while simultaneously providing much-needed work space for Grapevine." Currently, Grapevine has nine full-time employees who will be relocated, along with several freelancers who will gain some onsite workspace. Additionally, based on their specific technology needs, Grapevine will be bringing their own servers from which to operate the magazine software critical to their business model.



Binders from the former Reference Room now occupy the floor in the Archives library. The binders, which contain background material from trustees' and Conference committees going back to the 1970s, will be relocated to a new smaller Conference room.

At a cost of more than a million dollars, the construction will allow for future growth, both for Grapevine and in other areas of G.S.O. operations.

During the construction, however, a number of office workers and departments on the 11th floor have had to relocate to available space elsewhere on the floor, some offices have been subdivided to maximize space, and some new offices have been added. Off-site storage is being used for many of the materials that ultimately will go back into the reconfigured space and other materials are being moved temporarily into the Archives for safekeeping.

Never losing sight of A.A.'s primary purpose, however, during the run-up to the actual construction, Eleanor W., G.S.O.'s managing editor, came across some boxes of old A.A. literature slated for the trash. Immediately, she put in a call to New York Intergroup, and before long a couple of local A.A.s showed up and carted the boxes away to be used in prisons and treatment facilities around the city.

"All in all," says Greg T., publications director and incoming general manager, "while the project has been unsettling for many who have had to move and make do under less-than-ideal circumstances, the construction will ultimately provide a more contemporary layout for both corporate offices."

Karen Hale, nonalcoholic manager of administration services/special projects, who is overseeing the inter-



Renovation of the area where the Grapevine workstations will be located.



The former Conference room was used as a 'swing space' for various departments and employees who were temporarily relocated pending completion of their new area. A new and larger Conference room is under construction.

nal aspects of the construction, along with former G.S.O. staff member, Adrienne B., also noted how difficult it can be for employees, who have been temporarily uprooted from workstations many have inhabited for years, to relocate to newly redesigned spaces when the construction is done. By her calculation, the most challenging aspect has been the process of wrangling people from one location to another and encouraging them to let go of what used to be. Trust, she says, is a challenge in the process — trust that everything will be alright in the end.

Internally, one of the trickiest elements of the project has been coordinating the temporary employee migrations to allow for the least amount of disruption and to minimize any possible breaks in service to the Fellowship. Principal among such challenges has been maintaining computer access as individuals and whole departments move to available space. According to Militza Alma-Loyola of the information technolo-

gy department, whose members have been integral to the move, "With a total of five phases, we had to move everybody out of where they were, find spots for them to get set up, wait for the construction to happen and then for the construction to finish, and then move on to the next phase.

"The idea is to keep everyone connected to the network. Much of the internal wiring for the computers is going to be changed," she says, "so we have to shut down the old wiring and connect everyone on the new.

"For example," she says, "today we moved 30 people. But with the planning we have done, we have been able to keep the chaos to a minimum... Manageable chaos. The best kind," she says.

So, it is expected that by the end of the year the construction will come to a close; new workstations and offices will be repopulated; favorite pictures of family and friends that have been stashed away in boxes since the end of summer will reemerge on employees' shelves, desktops and workspaces; the Friday Morning A.A. meeting will return to the new and larger Conference room; and tours will pick up for A.A. visitors from near and far, making the office available once again to the Fellowship it so dearly serves.



Records department workstations near completion.

■ Anonymity — When Principle Meets Practice

Our first encounter with the principle of anonymity as newcomers to A.A. is often simple: we are assured that no one will be told that we've turned to A.A. for help with our drinking. Soon after, we might learn that while all of us are free to disclose (or not disclose) our A.A. membership in our *personal lives*, no A.A. member should ever reveal his or her identity as an A.A. member through any *public media*.

But as we “grow in understanding and effectiveness” we may encounter situations where the practice of this vital spiritual principle requires deeper consideration than a simple yes or no.

A member recently ran into one such situation. “I’m a sober member of A.A. I’m also a social worker in a big city,” she shared with the Public Information coordinator at G.S.O. during a recent phone call. “That means I’m required by law to report any situation in which the safety or welfare of a child is in jeopardy.” This member (who asked that her name be withheld so as not to identify the group or individuals who were involved) has been sober a while, and she knows that when participating in A.A. she is doing so in a nonprofessional capacity. But when she was sitting in a meeting and another woman, visibly intoxicated, arrived with a toddler in her arms, her professional radar went up. “I didn’t say anything during the meeting,” she said, “but the car keys in the intoxicated woman’s hands couldn’t be ignored.”

As soon as the meeting ended, the member spoke quietly with a few other members of the group. One of them knew the child’s father, and a call was placed to him. The member then let the woman know she needed to make a second call: this one to 911. “I’ve been in these situations before outside of A.A., so I knew how to approach it. The professionals who arrived were calm and helpful. They explained to the woman that they were there to help her get medical attention, and she agreed she needed help. When the child’s father arrived to pick up the child — he was a few months sober himself — everyone breathed easier knowing that the safety of all involved had been addressed to the best of our ability.”

This member said it also helped to discuss the situation afterward with some of the group’s other newcomers. “We knew it could be confusing,” she said, “so we took the time to explain that our spiritual principles don’t overrule the laws of our community.” (This same principle has been covered before in a previous article “A.A. and the Law” in the Fall 2010 issue of *Box 4-5-9*.)

Another A.A. member recently called the P.I. desk to share a different kind of concern related to anonymity. This member works in the field of nursing, and recently ran into a group of nursing students who’d been invited to an open A.A. meeting to learn about A.A. as a resource.

“I understand that if I attend open meetings that I run the risk of being seen by non-A.A. members, and that this can have an impact on my personal anonymity and, potentially, my professional life,” the member shared. “I’ve felt comfortable with this level of risk for a while now. But it occurred to me that there might be other members, perhaps some newly sober ones, who also work in a professional field where the label ‘alcoholic’ might cause career problems.”

She decided to share her concerns with the local C.P.C. committee that was reaching out to nursing students. “I certainly didn’t expect them to stop reaching out to professionals,” she said. “I just thought more communication with local groups about this sort of effort could be helpful to everyone involved. That way, A.A. members who don’t want to run into a group of nonalcoholic professionals in a meeting have an idea that such invitations have been extended, and can make better decisions about what meetings they wish to attend — and maintain the level of personal anonymity they wish.”

In his essay on Tradition Twelve, Bill W. provided us with a clear line regarding anonymity at the level of public media: “At this altitude (press, radio, films and television), anonymity — 100 percent anonymity— was the only possible answer.” In 2013, the General Service Conference affirmed that “the Internet, social media and all forms of public communications” are included at this level (see “Anonymity Online”).

Having such information is vital to understanding the principle of anonymity — but as these members have discovered, the *practice* of this vital spiritual principle also takes common sense, honest conversation, and a loving concern for the welfare of others.

■ Reaching the Older Alcoholics — the ‘Invisible Epidemic’

Alcoholism in older adults has been called the “invisible epidemic.” It has been estimated that up to 10 percent of the elderly adult population meet the criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence, but health care providers often mistake symptoms of alcoholism for dementia, depression or other problems. Also, elderly alcoholics are more likely to hide their alcoholism, and less likely to seek help, and their alcohol use is often made more dangerous by the cocktail of prescription drugs many seniors take daily.

The problem will only get worse as the baby boomer population ages—by 2030, 21 percent of the U.S. population will be over 65. Even when they ask for help, many older adults have difficulty getting to A.A. meetings; they may have trouble driving, and shrinking social networks can sometimes mean that fewer friends are available to help them.

This is why elderly outreach programs have become so

important within Alcoholics Anonymous. At the 2015 International Convention in Atlanta there was a panel discussion devoted to the topic “Carrying the Message to Older Alcoholics.” One of the panel members was Chris S., who is C.P.C. chairperson for Area 5, Panel 63 and CEC (Contact with the Elderly Community) chairperson for Area 5, Panel 59.

“Reaching out to elderly alcoholics has been a passion of mine for a number of years,” Chris says. “Partly it’s because of my own age—I’m 75 and I understand the challenges of staying sober while you are aging. In particular things like loss of health and mobility, financial insecurity, the death of loved ones. It isn’t easy.”

What is the best way to reach out to elderly alcoholics? “There are different ways of doing it,” Chris says. Forming a CEC committee in your area is a good start. The committee can send out letters to health fairs and geriatric physicians and assisted living centers. Chris’s own approach “is to try to do one thing well, so I decided to focus on senior centers. Senior citizen centers are generally pretty easy to approach. Most of the staff let us put literature, Big Books and Grapevines in their libraries. We took panels into senior centers, for seniors and staff alike—sometimes they weren’t alcoholics, but knew that so-and-so was at home drinking too much.

“Another approach people can use is to start a Seniors in Sobriety (SIS) meeting, or at least designate certain meetings Senior Friendly (SF). Seniors isolate themselves, they don’t identify, they retreat, they decline. They need to know they are welcome. When I got sober it was the ‘meeting after the meeting’ that was so important, one alcoholic talking to another. This is what seniors need—another person to talk with about sobriety and these special challenges older people face.”

Another type of elderly alcoholic who needs help is the alcoholic who is already sober. Jeanmarie M., sober 22 years and a nursing student in Tennessee, has mostly elderly patients.

“I have found sober alcoholics in hospice and assisted living and was able through conversations to recognize that they are alcoholics,” she says. “A situation I had in the spring was when I came across a patient with a Big Book in his lap. And I said to him: ‘I got one of those.’ He had been sober 32 years at the time, had just moved to the area and hadn’t been to a meeting in a month. He was dying of cancer. I said, ‘I’ll get you a meeting by tonight.’ It was the most powerful thing to carry the message to him. The guys in my home group came and said they would get him a temporary sponsor, and he said: ‘Temporary is the only kind I can have.’

“We have members within our home group who have been living in assisted living. I have been able to work with a grandmother who was not yet sober. It’s a different kind of population. One thing older people say is that they find it difficult to come to meetings and open up when people are so much younger.” What might help the elderly, Jeanmarie says, is individual outreach by

younger people. “They really enjoy people who are younger and who want to talk one on one about what it is like today in the Fellowship. But it has been a challenge to find younger people who are interested in working with older ones. When they do they find it becomes mutually beneficial.

“It has been very rewarding for me to come across patients who have been sober 41 years, 32 years, and get them a Big Book and watch how they come alive again. It really invigorates their sobriety to have that contact with the Fellowship once again. It’s easy for them to get isolated and we need to take care of that.”

The 2014 A.A. Membership Survey shows 18% of A.A.s are age 61-70. In 2007, that was 12.3%. Currently, 7% of A.A.s are over age 70; in 2007, that was 5.3%. As the general population ages, the need for the service work of reaching out to elderly alcoholics will become even more crucial.

■ ‘The Man on the Web’: Online Intergroup of A.A. Nears 20-Year Anniversary

“Today’s counterpart to the ‘man on the bed’ is the trembling, sick alcoholic in cyberspace,” writes Dennis M. of the Bronx, N.Y. in a Grapevine article titled AA in Cyberspace. “And we see a good number of them looking for help for the first time. We see them coming back from slips; we see them finding A.A. at a time and a place where we can feel their desperation and share our hope, just as we do in f2f (face-to-face) meetings.”

Excited about today’s expanding ability to reach out to suffering alcoholics, A.A. members around the world continue finding new ways to carry A.A.’s message of hope.

One helpful development in this effort has been the growth of the Online Intergroup of A.A. (O.I.A.A.), an organization nearing its 20th anniversary. First formed to help unify the growing number of online meetings that began to mushroom in the late 1980s, many starting as bulletin board meetings and email groups, the O.I.A.A. was legally incorporated in 1996, giving online groups a forum for exchanging information and ideas and for helping one another carry the message of A.A. online.

Online meetings come in a variety of formats: real-time chat, email meetings, telephone chats, audio-visual meetings using video streaming applications, message boards/forums, and discussion board meetings. Some are targeted toward specific groups: women, military, deaf/hard-of-hearing, and there are meetings available in a number of languages. Many have regular schedules, and some are “catch-as-catch-can,” with members posting when there is time and a burning desire.

Many A.A. members use the online medium to supplement their f2f meetings or vice-versa, depending on each

member's own situation, and most online groups encourage attendance at 2f meetings. There are many A.A.s, however, who cannot attend 2f meetings (geographically-isolated members, members with physical disabilities, members living in a foreign country, members in the military or at sea, older A.A.s, shift workers, parents with young children) and online A.A. may be the best or only resource available to allow these members to participate fully in the A.A. Fellowship.

One of O.I.A.A.'s chief services is an online meeting directory posting an up-to-date list of online A.A. groups on its website (www.aa-intergroup.org). On average, the directory lists about 170 groups. It also directs an estimated 22,600 online visitors a month from more than 100 countries to meetings held in 14 languages and to meetings with formats that make A.A. accessible to people with vision, speech, or hearing problems. A little more than half of O.I.A.A.'s visitors access their information on mobile devices (phones or tablets), with others using desktop computers. O.I.A.A.'s directory does not include every A.A. group in cyberspace, however — only those that choose to be listed and subscribe to the Twelve Traditions of A.A.

Keenly aware that "personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity," as the First Tradition says, O.I.A.A. also encourages communication among online groups as well as with local intergroups, areas, G.S.O., and other A.A. service bodies. This is done chiefly through the work of its committees. In addition to a Twelfth Step Committee, which is comprised of approximately 40 members worldwide, speaking multiple languages and fielding between 350-400 requests for help per month, O.I.A.A. has formed committees for: Public Information, Cooperation With the Professional Community, Unity and G.S.O. liaison, Conventions, Finance, Policy and Admissions, and World Wide Web — all of which are described on O.I.A.A.'s website.

O.I.A.A.'s governing body, the Intergroup Assembly, is made up of an Intergroup Representative and alternate from each registered group, plus its committee chairs, their alternates, and five officers: a chair and co-chair, treasurer, historian, and secretary. With the lessons learned over nearly 20 years working together, they strive to practice the principles of A.A. in all web affairs, so that the hand of A.A. will always be there in cyberspace as well.

■ Two New A.A.s Join G.S.O. Staff

In early October, the General Service Office welcomed two new staff members: Jeff W., of Maplewood, New Jersey, and Sandra W., of Rahway, New Jersey. Jeff comes to G.S.O. with a background in marketing and advertising, where most recently he was creative director for a nonprofit public health initiative; Sandra, already employed at

G.S.O., moves into a staff position after three years as the senior executive assistant to the general manager and prior work as an administrative assistant and legal secretary. Jeff is currently serving on the Corrections assignment and Sandra is handling the Literature desk.

The shift from a long career in marketing and advertising to a staff position at G.S.O. is one Jeff says he is excited about. "The longer I've been sober the more I've wanted to align what I do for a living with what I love and value. I don't think I can do any better than working at G.S.O.," says Jeff. "For the last year I've worked at a nonprofit whose goal is to create 'movements' to encourage people to make positive health changes in their lives, from quitting smoking to exercising more, to reducing stress. Much of the content I help create keeps members up to date on organization news, addresses their concerns, and tries to inspire them. So, there are certainly some similarities with what I'll be doing here, though these movements are all based on moderation — something I don't know that much about," notes Jeff wryly.

"Nevertheless, I am hoping the communications skills I've learned over my 30 plus years in marketing and advertising will be useful. I've written everything from press releases and pamphlets to PSAs, developed new websites and prepared presentations for public health conferences and corporate board meetings. I'm also experienced at incorporating feedback from a variety of stakeholders and making sure projects get delivered on time and within budget."

Involved in general service — answering phones at the local intergroup and holding a variety of positions at the group level — since the beginning of his sobriety in November 1983, Jeff has also served on the Grapevine Editorial Advisory Board, has been the Area 44 Grapevine chair, and most recently has been involved with NERAASA, a regional service assembly for the Northeast region. "I'm fortunate to be from an area where past delegates and trustees stay active, share their experience, and lead by example," says Jeff.

"What I've learned from them and the strong groups I've been part of in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and N.J. will certainly help me. I've also served on our Area Corrections committee with people who've been taking meetings inside for many years. They've seen it all and been through it all, and their passion is inspiring."

In terms of his new assignment, Jeff notes, "One challenge that could be particularly relevant to me on the Corrections Desk is making sure members without Internet access still have access to A.A. resources. We don't want one A.A. for wired members and another for the not-wired."

On a personal basis, says Jeff, "I've had four wonderful sponsors over my years and they've basically rebuilt me from the ground up. They've taught me to listen instead of always speaking, to ask for help (especially when I'm sure I don't need it), to pause when agitated, to not make a big deal out of things, and to be friends with my mind but not always do what it suggests.

"I know I'll be leaning heavily on both my current sponsor and sponsees, as well as my wife who's a long-time sober member and seems to know me better than I know myself. My two sons are also very supportive of me getting to do what I love and they've promised to keep me apprised of my current defects of character."

Like Jeff, Sandra W. brings a diverse background in A.A. general service to her new staff position, having gotten sober in February 1990. And, while the challenges of working for the Fellowship as a G.S.O. staff member are many, Sandra already has a familiarity with G.S.O. that will stand her in good stead. A graduate of the City University of New York with a degree in English, Sandra initially came to G.S.O. in 2012 on the administrative side of the office, where she has worked directly with the general manager, G.S.O.'s management team and the A.A.W.S. Board. "It is amazing to witness what a team we have at G.S.O. — alcoholics and nonalcoholics working together for one common purpose," she notes, "a loving support system like no other."

Working more closely with the Fellowship is something she looks forward to and her experience in general service will prove to be an excellent point of reference in her new position. "My service life beyond the General Service Office includes being a G.S.R., alternate D.C.M., co-chair of the N.Y. Intergroup Steering Committee, serving on the area Grapevine committee, and helping to organize various district events." In addition, Sandra has brought A.A. meetings into local shelters, detoxes and correctional facilities.

"Working at G.S.O. is everything I expected and, at the same time, nothing I could have imagined.... The impact of working for the organization that literally saved my life

is hard to put into words. I feel it each morning when I get off the elevator and see the circle and triangle — a visual reminder of why I am here. And when I leave each evening, I see the Serenity Prayer — in all the different languages.

"Alcoholism had removed everything from my life — employment, home, family, friends, and even my son whom I abandoned during the throes of my disease. From the beginning, I have been enveloped by the unity, love and service of our Fellowship — that hand of hope extended to all alcoholics.

"I want my sober life to reflect that hope — I want to be there for the alcoholic who reaches out for help — whether in my new job as a G.S.O. staff member or as a greeter at my home group."

G.S.O. warmly welcomes its two newest staff members.

■ Reminder: Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2016

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees, from the West Central and Western Canada regions, will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2016. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2016, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new West Central regional trustee will fill the position currently held by Andrew W. of Missoula, Montana. The Western Canada regional trustee will fill the spot left vacant by the death of Marty W. of Sidney, BC.

Please submit your candidate's résumé to the Secretary, trustees' Nominating Committee, General Service Office.

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Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 *Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season.* Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



2 *Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers.* If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3 *Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time.* If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



4 *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



5 *Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about.* Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



6 *If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.*



7 *Don't think you have to stay late.* Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8 *Worship in your own way.*



9 *Don't sit around brooding.* Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



10 *Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations.* Remember—"one day at a time."



11 *Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy.* Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



12 *"Having had a . . ."* No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided. **Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site.**

December

- 4-5—*Lexington, Kentucky*. We Have Recovered Big Book Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 11805, Lexington, KY 40578-1805
- 11-13—*Birmingham, Alabama*. Magic City Roundup II. Write: Ch., Box 550058, Birmingham, AL 35255; www.magiccity-roundup.com
- 17-20—*Portland, Oregon*. WACYPA. Write: Ch., Box 1941, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; www.wacypaaxix.org

January

- 8-10—*Dodge City, Kansas*. 46th SW KS Conf. Write: Ch., Box 276, Satanta, KS 67870
- 8-10—*Mahnomen, Minnesota*. 14th Wild Rice Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomen, MN 56557; www.wildriceroundup.com
- 14-17—*Raleigh, North Carolina*. Tar Heel Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 18412, Raleigh, NC 27619-8412; www.tarheelmidwinter.org
- 15-17—*Galveston, Texas*. SETA Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3381, Bryan, TX 77803; www.aa-seta.org
- 22-24—*Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*. Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com
- 22-24—*Puerto Vallarta, Mexico*. 14th Sobriety Under The Sun. Info: www.aapvconvention.com
- 29-31—*Brawley, California*. Imperial Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 393, El Centro, CA 92244
- 29-31—*Fort Worth, Texas*. XXXII Reunión Zona Norte de TX. Write: Ch., 3244 W. Seminary Dr., Ste. B., Ft. Worth, TX 76133; www.oficinaintergupalfortworthtx.com
- 29-31—*Omak, Washington*. Okanogan Valley Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 3873, Omak, WA 98841
- 29-31—*Nanaimo, Alberta, Canada*. 48th Nanaimo's Rally. Write: 285 Prideaux Centre Nanaimo, BC V9R 2N2; www.nanaimoaa.org
- 29-31—*Costa Teguise, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain*. 7th Internat'l Conv. Info: www.aalanzarote.com

February

- 4-7—*Cape Canaveral, Florida*. Space Coast Roundup. Write: Ch., 720 E. Haven Ave., Ste. 3, Melbourne, FL 32901; www.aaspacecoast.org
- 5-7—*Dumaguete City, Philippines*. 34th Philippines Nat'l Conv. Info: www.dumagueteaa.org
- 5-7—*Oostende, Belgium*. 27th North Sea Conv. Write: www.aa-europe.net
- 11-14—*Norfolk, Virginia*. 52nd Internat'l Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12805, Norfolk, VA 23451-0805; www.internationalwomensconference.org
- 12-14—*Sacramento, California*. Language of the Heart Spring Fling Conf. Write: Ch., Box 661685, Sacramento, CA 95866; www.sac-springfling.org
- 13-14—*Couva, Trinidad & Tobago*. Nat'l Conv. Write: Ch., LP #52 Rivulet Rd, Couva, T&T; aagsott@gmail.com
- 19-21—*Yuma, Arizona*. Yuma Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6722, Yuma, AZ 85366; www.yumaroundup.org
- 19-21—*New York, New York*. EACYPA. Write: Box 1208, 335 E. 14th St., NY, NY 10009; www.eacypaany.org
- 19-21—*Lone Wolf, Oklahoma*. 14th SW Unity Conf. Sunlight of the Sprit. Write: Ch., Box 3464, Lawton, OK 73502; sosconference@yahoo.com
- 26-28—*Springfield, Massachusetts*. NERAASA. Write: Ch., Box 6602, Holyoke, MA 01041; www.neraasa2016.org
- 26-28—*St. George, Utah*. 19th Dixie Winterfest. Info: www.dixiewinterfest.org
- 26-28—*George Town, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands*. 8th Cayman Islands Roundup. Write: Ch., 1832, Grand Cayman KY1-1110, CI; www.caymanroundup.com

26-28—*Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim, Ireland*. First All Ireland Conv. of YPAA. Info: http://ireypaa.org

March

- 4-6—*Bismarck, North Dakota*. West Central Reg. Svc. Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2451, Bismarck, ND 58502; www.aanorthdakota.org
- 11-13—*Aberdeen, North Carolina*. Area 51 Corrections Conf. Info: corrections@aanorthcarolina.org
- 18-20—*San Ramon, California*. NCCAA Spring Conf. Write: Ch., 150 Cleaveland Rd, #97, Pleasant Hills, CA 94523; www.norcalaa.org
- 18-20—*Kingston, Ontario, Canada*. Area 83 Internat'l Spring Assembly. Info: chairperson@area83aa.org
- 24-27—*Suva, Fiji*. First Australasian Conv. Write: Ch., 48 Firth St., Arncliffe, NSW, 2205, Australia; www.aanatcon.org.au

April

- 1-3—*Ames, Iowa*. Aim for Ames. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010; www.aimforames.org
- 1-3—*Tonopah, Nevada*. Area 42 Pre-Conf. Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 9080, Mammoth lakes, CA 93546; www.nevadaarea42.org
- 1-3—*Williamsburg, Virginia*. Serenity Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 832, Midlothian, VA 23113; www.serenityweekend.net
- 15-17—*Fairmont, Minnesota*. 22nd Sunlight of the Spirit Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 748, Fairmont, MN 56031-0748; sossweekend@gmail.com
- 15-17—*Erie, Pennsylvania*. 41st Swing Into Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Erie, PA 16512-1357; www.aeriepa.org

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Box 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20____

Name of event: _____

Location: _____ CITY _____ STATE OR PROVINCE _____

Planning Committee address: _____ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET) _____

CITY _____ STATE OR PROVINCE _____ ZIP CODE _____

Web site or E-mail: _____ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

Contact person: _____ NAME _____ PHONE # AND OR E-MAIL _____

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board

