AREA 40 TRIANGLE

A Newsletter for A.A. in the State of Montana

Letter from the Editor

We're moving into the holiday season, a time to connect with family and friends, to express gratitude, and to encourage others as we trudge the road of happy destiny. For some the holiday season is difficult. Maybe our families have not come back to us. Maybe we're still struggling with wanting to drink. Maybe we're unsure what to do with our free time and parties to attend. As always, whenever doubt creeps in, A.A. is there, the solidarity of one alcoholic talking to another. We can open a meeting. We can chair a meeting. We can reach our hand out to the still suffering alcoholic, whether that be the newcomer just coming in the door or the old-timer who's afraid to say they're a mess. Together we have a chance at a life worth living without drinking. Alone, we are sure to drink, and to drink is a sure way to die. As we move through this holiday, let us "walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!"

In service, Catherine B., Triangle Editor

- Quote reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 100, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

The West Central Regional Forum Report is hot off the presses! Check with your GSR or DCM to see about getting a copy to take to your group. There was so much information at the West Central Regional Forum, I barely touched the surface with the forum highlights I included in Issue Seven of the Triangle (October/November 2019). After perusing the report, I've decided to include more highlights.

Check this out and get fired up about A.A.!

Excerpts from West Central Regional Forum - Delegate Reports

Today's World - Demonstrating Integrity, Anonymity and Service *Kathi C., Delegate Panel 68, Area 76 Wyoming*

"[S]ocial media has an ego-feeding aspect, as well. There has been a reduction in the number of people posting pictures of their sobriety medallions compared to the volume from just a few years ago. During shares at a meeting, I have heard members talk about how they used to post their medallion picture but then stopped doing so as a result of inventory work and realizing that it was feeding the ego and promoting a lack of anonymity. They live the spiritual principles of the Steps by continuing to apply them on a daily basis. As with many things, there are two sides to the coin. Social media has the potential to be a great tool for information, if handled correctly. Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be attractive if it is invisible. The challenge is how to finesse the beast of social media to be a useful tool for the Fellowship while maintaining the individual member's anonymity. Sharing experience, strength, and hope about anonymity can help A.A. members learn more about anonymity and the

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The Triangle is anonymity protected. All A.A. members are identified by first name and last initial only.

"If I were asked which of our blessings I felt was most responsible for our growth as a fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, the 'Concept of Anonymity." Bill's last message read by Lois, 1970 Annual New York Intergroup Dinner

Tradition Eleven Swip-ik

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

"This in brief is the process by which A.A.'s Tradition Eleven was developed. To us it represents more than a sound public relations policy. It is more than a denial of self seeking. Tradition Eleven is certainly a constant reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A., but it also implies that each member ought to become an active guardian of our fellowship in its relation with the general public.

As we have seen, anonymity is the protective mantle that covers our whole society. But it is more than protection; it has another dimension, a spiritual significance. And this leads to Tradition Twelve."

Reprinted from A.A. Comes of Age, p. 130 131, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

"More and more, therefore, are we emphasizing the principle of personal anonymity as it applies to our public relations. We ask of each other the highest degree of personal responsibility in this respect. As a movement we have been, before now, tempted to exploit the names of our well-known public characters. We have rationalized that other societies. even the best, do the same. As individuals, we have sometimes believed that the public use of our names could demonstrate our personal courage in the face of stigma, so lending power and conviction to news stories and magazine articles.

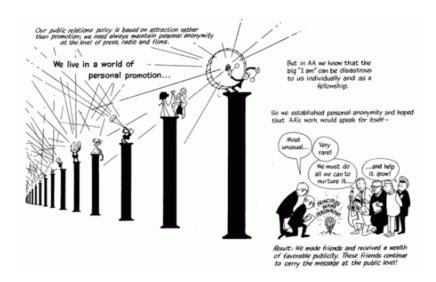
But these are not the allures they once were. Vividly, we are becoming aware that no member ought to describe himself in full view of the general public as an AA, even for the most worthy purpose, lest a perilous precedent be set which would tempt others to do likewise for purposes not so worthy."

Reprinted from The Language of the Heart, p. 92, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Eleventh Tradition. This can easily be achieved through sponsorship, via a meeting topic or via a workshop topic. It can be done!

Service, as this body knows, has many facets. Step Twelve is all about service. By carrying the message of recovery, one person to another, face-to-face with the honest, open sharing of how I came from being a toilet-hugging, puking-through-the-nose, disgusting woman of poor moral fiber to a successful multiple-career, at-ease, in-peace-and-comfort woman can give hope that they, too, can recover from the hopeless state of mind and body. Sponsorship is part of service, and sponsorship does not mean ownership. Sponsorship does not mean I am anybody's higher power. Sponsorship does not mean that I keep my sponsees in a state of spiritual bondage by being self-righteously rigid and browbeating them until they agree with my view of how the program should be learned, understood and applied in order to live a productive life. There is always Step work to be done. We also have group service, committee work, general service—the list goes on. My favorite service position is greeter, followed by coffee maker. As a G.S.R., I was told by the first delegate I served with that 'if it's convenient, it's not service.' I have always remembered that. Generally, I arrive early at A.A. meetings and functions to see how I can be of assistance—service. A picture is worth a thousand words. I have had many new members mention that they notice I am always doing something. Guide by example and invite them to join in the work while being joyful and enthusiastic about it. How can I help? Be a Tigger, not an Eeyore!"

- Reprinted from West Central Regional Forum Report, p. 13 - 15, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.



Communicating Up and Down the A.A. Service Triangle

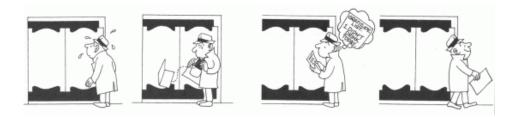
Paul L., Delegate Panel 69, Area 40 Montana

"These barriers to communication and the development of an us-versus-them mentality among the different service levels of the Fellowship is not new. 'The greatest hurdle the Fellowship will face in the next ten years will not concern copyrights, nor whether litigation is public controversy, nor the proliferation of self-help psychobabble. ... The greatest hurdle we face in the foreseeable future is the spill over into our Fellowship of the cynicism and distrust that are exhibited in our North American society at large in regards to its public servants. It has been noticed with growing concern that letters from members of the Fellowship are more and more suspicious of the motives of the leaders we have chosen to

serve us.' This a portion of a presentation given by Gerry F., the West Central Canada trustee at the 44th General Service Conference, twenty-five years ago. You can see that this question has come up before.

We need to take action; there is no magic wand. The necessary action is like the inventory that we first took and the early amends that we made: initially not easy, but as we saw the results we become more comfortable doing it. Finally, regularly taking our inventory and making amends has become second nature for us. So, too, will communicating among the different levels of service in the inverted triangle. Having calls between trustees and Conference committee chairs and committee members, sharing Conference results through delegate reports, having regional trustees share about board meetings and holding service schools will all become familiar to us, and we will wonder how we ever did it without them."

- Reprinted from West Central Regional Forum Report, p. 9, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.



Unity: Us and Them ... Or just Us?

Erika H., Delegate Panel 68, Area 41 Nebraska

"Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age lays out some of our growing pains: 'Gradually we saw that the unity, the effectiveness, and even the survival of A.A. always would depend upon our continued willingness to give up our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice meant survival for the individual, so did sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for A.A.'s entire fellowship. ... A.A.'s Twelve Traditions are little else than a list of sacrifices ... that we must make, individually and collectively, if A.A. itself is to stay alive and healthy.'

Sometimes we forget and we start thinking that we're different! We say things like, that group isn't very good; my group is the best group; those types of groups don't belong here; those people at the group, district, area or General Service Conference did something I don't like; those people in New York did something I don't agree with; or, I don't like those particular A.A. activities or events. According to a September 2013 Grapevine article, that is 'the voice that seeks to set the record straight, to triumph, to have the last word. Often that voice arises in me when I feel another member has shared something untrue, objectionable, threatening to my belief system or to AA, or our Traditions.'

When I start voicing ... that voice, I need to be mindful that I not feed my ego. I'm a sick person, and my alcoholic brain wants to tell me that I'm better than somebody for some reason, or that I know best, or that my being right supersedes our principles. Gosh darn, when my ego and my fears get together, it can be a hot mess. I have the right to opinions—and I have plenty—but our A.A. principles tell me I don't always have to share them. Tradition One in the 'Twelve and Twelve' tells us that 'desires and ambitions ... must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.' The Tradition One Checklist asks, 'Do I make competitive A.A. remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting A.A. in one place with A.A. in another?' It also asks, 'Do I put down some A.A. activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of A.A.?' and 'Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?'

- Reprinted from West Central Regional Forum Report, p. 16 - 17, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

A CALL TO ACTION!

We need your experience, strength, and hope! Please send us short articles—400 words or less—on Corrections. Please submit no later than December 28th via email to triangle@aa-montana.org. Were you a Corrections rep for your group? Or the Corrections chair for your district? Have you participated on a Corrections committee? Do you take meetings into the jail?

Inquiring minds want to know!!

Concept Eleven Bite

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

"The longtime success of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the Trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-Trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives and staff members who must actively carry on A.A.'s world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our final dependency on them will always be great indeed.

Far more than most of the Trustees, these servants will be in direct contact with A.A. world-wide, and their performance will be constantly on view. They will perform most of the routine labor. They will carry on most of the services. They will travel widely and will receive most visitors at the Headquarters. They will often originate new plans and policies. Some of them will eventually become Trustees."

- Reprinted from The A.A. Service Manual, p. 46, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

All Inclusive

Dan G., Delegate Panel 69, Area 24 Iowa

"I ask myself this question periodically: If that old-timer didn't make the conversation he was having with that group's other members feel *inclusive*, where would I be in my recovery today? Let's frame that briefly. There was a group of people who were having a discussion regarding recovery from alcoholism after a meeting that had several newcomers in attendance, many who had no clue what a Higher Power even was, and those newcomers were inclusive in their conversation. They didn't stand in the circle sipping their coffee; they were standing there, having a conversation together in a manner that was welcoming to anyone who wanted to join in the discussion.

I then ask myself after each meeting I attend: Was I being inclusive to the newcomer tonight? Unfortunately, there are nights I have to say, no, I was not. I placed myself in a manner where I was not approachable, and I was not a good example of how to be inclusive. I was self-centered and selfish in my conversation and with whom I was talking to. I need to be better than that. I *must* be better than that. I need to remember where I was in early sobriety when I entered the rooms of A.A. and had no idea why I was there, because I sure didn't want to be. In fact, there were times when I even had a plan to go out to the bar afterward, because my spiritual program was in shambles; I wasn't working with my sponsor and I for sure wasn't working the Twelve Steps of A.A. It was because of people like Ron that I stuck around. It was people like him who walked the walk and talked the talk and lived by the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Had it not been for men like that, you would have a different presenter today and Area 24 would have a different delegate."

- Reprinted from West Central Regional Forum Report, p. 3, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.



"Of course you're the only one who can say whether or not you're an alcoholic."

Tolerance: A Two-Way Street

Anthony F., Delegate Panel 68, Area 63 South Dakota

"In the story found in Tradition Three of the 'Twelve and Twelve,' we encounter a salesman named Ed. A member of Alcoholics Anonymous who claimed that we could do without all this 'God nonsense.' As Bill writes, A.A. was more pious back then, so there was a call to kick Ed out of the group. Cooler heads did prevail after Ed asked if they meant what they wrote by stating that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. But what they didn't do was change how they did Alcoholics Anonymous to fit Ed's ideas or beliefs. They stuck to what worked while being tolerant of Ed's continued bantering.

You see, tolerance is not agreeing with the other party. Instead, it means to allow the existence, occurrence or practice of something that one does not necessarily like or agree with, without interference.

Just as I would be concerned with a group wanting to throw out the modern-day Ed, I get a bit uncomfortable when people talk about being offended by the Lord's Prayer. Certainly, it's not required to like it or say it, and many groups have even removed it from their meetings. But offended? That sounds an awful lot like intolerance. Could someone who is offended by this prayer possibly be the good Samaritan and sponsor a Christian? Or do they refuse? Is it okay because there are 'enough' other people out there to be that person's sponsor?

Would it be okay for someone like me who lost a family member in the attacks of 9/11 to not help a fellow drunk because they are Muslim? Or is that when our code of love and tolerance really comes alive?

[...]

Dr. Bob writes, 'During nine years in A.A., I have observed that those who follow the Alcoholics Anonymous program with the greatest earnestness and zeal not only maintain sobriety but often acquire finer characteristics and attitudes as well. One of these is tolerance.'

I couldn't agree more. However, I don't believe we have 36 different principles in A.A. Instead, contained in our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts are probably seven or eight solid principles on which we should never compromise—principles like integrity, freedom, responsibility, and service leadership. I would also venture to say that the virtue of respect covers our code of tolerance."

- Reprinted from West Central Regional Forum Report, p. 10 - 13, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

85th Anniversary International Convention — Detroit 2020 July 2 - 5, 2020 - Detroit, MI

Join A.A. members throughout the world in Detroit to celebrate A.A.'s 85th Anniversary at Detroit's Cobo Center and Ford Field Stadium (and other locations). Join fellow members at meetings, panels, and workshops. There is nothing quite like sitting in a stadium with thousands of alcoholics saying the Serenity Prayer. If you haven't attended an International Convention, don't wait.

CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO ALCOHOLICS - Julie R., Bozeman, MT

Our 12th Step tells us we try to "...carry this message to alcoholics..." How are we to do this? I guess we could try dragging people off their barstools and telling them we've found a better way to live. In my experience, I've never been too successful offering a solution to someone who doesn't want it or thinks there's no problem. So I've found a better way is to go where potential alcoholics are looking for a solution. I've found many already in the rooms of our fellowship. I've found some in treatment facilities, hospitals, and jails, too. Who knows how many may have been reached by seeing or hearing a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on TV, radio and now YouTube? Some desperate souls search us out on the internet or call our published phone numbers looking for some help. I have been fortunate to talk to some of these seekers. We can fill pamphlet racks in offices and schools, hospitals and courthouses including our meeting schedules with information on contacting A.A. We can share our stories in talks to classes in schools. All of these methods may reach alcoholics directly or people close to them.

But are we covering all our bases? What about the alcoholic who might not go to any of those places? What if they reach out for help from their doctor, counselor or clergy member? What if the first person to encounter the alcoholic reaching out for help is not an A.A. member? Will these other professionals know what to say or how to help? That's where A.A.'s Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) committees come in. We can help those professionals who may encounter alcoholics in their line of

Tradition Twelve Snip-it

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

"We simply could not afford to take the chance of letting self-appointed members present themselves as messiahs representing A.A. before the whole public. The promoter instinct in us might be our undoing. If even one such person publicly got drunk or was lured into using A.A.'s name for his own purposes, the damage might be irreparable. At this altitude (press, radio, films, and television), anonymity—100 per cent anonymity—was the only possible answer. Here principles would have to come before personalities, without exception.

These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes A.A. life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as A.A. members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole society and under which we may grow and work in unity.

We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have."

- Reprinted from A.A. Comes of Age, p.134, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

AAGrapevine.org has the Traditions Checklist. Take it to your group. Engage with your sponsor. Challenge a sponsee.



"Doc...Remember when you suggested a nip of brandy to help me sleep?"

work. We can provide them with correct information about Alcoholic Anonymous, who we are, what we do (and don't do), where to find us, who to call. We can offer to be a resource to that professional for the suffering alcoholic needing help.

Before I realized my own drinking problem, I had gone to a counselor for marriage advice. When I mentioned there was a problem of alcoholism in my marriage, this counselor knew just what to do. He reached in his desk for a current meeting schedule for Al-Anon Family Groups and suggested I attend a meeting. Thus began my journey to recovery. I can only hope that had I then admitted my own struggle with alcohol, he would have had the information on Alcoholics Anonymous as well.

So fast forward a few years into A.A....when my sponsor was the district CPC chair, she asked me to participate in a panel to share my story with a group of professionals at a luncheon the committee was hosting. Though I wanted to, I didn't say no, not only because it was my sponsor asking, but because I knew the importance of our responsibility to be sure the hand of A.A. is always outstretched. To do that, we needed to be sure that those who encounter us drunks know how, when, why, and where to put them in touch with our lifesaving fellowship. It was my luck to be on the receiving end of that direction a long time ago and it has been my privilege to give back to A.A. and those professionals on the front lines with the newest potential members of our program.

I learned how to go about that by seeing what professionals were already in my life. Could I talk to my doctor, lawyer, counselor? What do I say? Do I have to know all about A.A.? At a workshop put on by an Area 40 CPC chair when I was about six or seven years sober, I learned that all I needed was my own story, some literature, meeting schedules and willingness to be a contact person. Since that time I've had the opportunity to serve on CPC committees in two different places I've lived - and even to chair one. Most professionals I have encountered are eager for information on our program and are appreciative of our efforts.

Where are we being called to carry the message?

Thanks for allowing me to share.

In loving fellowship,

Julie R.

Bozeman, MT

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY/PUBLIC INFORMATION - Derk W., District 11

My name is Derk W. I am the current Chair Person of the CPC in District 11.

First, let me say that in District 11 Public information and Cooperation with the Professional Community are combined. That being said, there may be some overlap from Public Information.

Our committee has been coordinating with the high schools in an effort to speak with the staff and student bodies. We first tried going through the school administration with no response. I was able to get email addresses and talk with the principals of two of the high schools. But principals of high schools are busy and the communication ceased, so I went to the high schools and spoke with the principle and vice principle in person. In January, they are going to allow us to speak with the students and staff.

We have been working with the sober living houses. We have coordinated with most of them to be able to come to their house meetings and give a kind of "what A.A. is and what A.A. is not."

Tonight, a member of the committee brought up talking to the clergy/churches. We had some discussion on how we would like to go about doing that. It sounded like we would be making an effort to go to the churches and speak to a clergyman about A.A. and its usefulness in combating alcoholism. No dates are set as of yet but hopefully with in the next month.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service. Have a great day. Sincerely, Derk W.

Concept Twelve Bite

General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principles: that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

"These Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which our General Service Conference should always possess. Barring any unforeseen defects, these are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.

There are significant aspects of these Warranties which should be considered. Notice, for example, that all of them are counsels of prudence —prudence in personal relatedness, prudence is money matters, and prudence in our relations with the world about us. For us, prudence is a workable middle ground, a channel of clear sailing between the obstacles of fear on the one side and of recklessness on the other. Prudence in practice creates a definite climate, the only climate in which harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved." - Reprinted from The A.A. Service Manual, p. 61, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Get the Concept Checklist at aa.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Need a flier for your group?

Check out aa-montana.org

December 2019

December 6th - 7th → 32nd Annual 1st Saturday, Liberty Arts MUSB, Billings, MT December 14th → SCMI Holiday Party, Shrine Auditorium, Billings, MT

February 2020

February 15th ► Emotional Sobriety Gathering, Fellowship Hall, Bozeman, MT February 27th - March 1st ► WCRAASC, Billings Sports Plex, Billings, MT

March 2020

March 20th - 21st ➤ Pockets of Enthusiasm, First Presbyterian Church, Helena, MT

April 2020

April 18th - 12 Step Study Presents, Civic Center, Great Falls, MT

May 2020

May 15th - 17th 2020 Spring Roundup, Best Western Plus, Bozeman, MT

September 2020

September 18th - 19th ► Fellowship at the Falls, Great Falls, MT

October 2020

October 2nd - 4th Fall 2020 Roundup, Big Horn Resort, Billings, MT

STOP THE PRESSES!!

The 2021 West Central Regional Forum will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula! **Save the date** September 10th - 12th, 2021



"I don't want to trudge the Road of Happy Destiny -I want to sprint it."

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