

The Triangle Newsletter

Area 40 Inventory Issue

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he can not fool himself about values.

Page 64 - Alcoholics Anonymous

The Process

Eight groups ranging in size from 10 - 20 members discussed the inventory questions September 19, 2015 at the Area 40 Fall Assembly. There were 16 questions; each group discussed a set of 4 questions. The questions for the inventory were included in the Spring 2015 Assembly minutes, posted on the Area 40 web site in May, and detailed information about participation communicated through DCMs in August. The standing committees were used as the foundation of the groups, with the standing committee Chair serving as the moderators. The remaining members of each group self-selected. A.A. Groups which were unable to participate in the Assembly were invited to select a set of four questions and submit their responses either through email to the ad hoc committee or through mail to the Area 40 Post Office Box. Two Groups participated in this way. There was lively discussion about areas where we could improve, and participants appreciated the process.

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Groups Please Contribute **articles and subscriptions to the Triangle!**

Next Issues topic - Gratitude!!

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Themes that were repeated through several of the groups and are worth mentioning are:

- **Communication.** Communication and sharing information was a common theme embedded in most questions. Whether we communicate or not, how we communicate, and when we communicate can each be a key to success in anything we do. The attitude we express when we communicate about our service experience, reach out to newcomers, report to Home Groups, and share with our friends may influence their willingness to participate. GSR, DCM, Committee Chair, Officer, and Delegate votes on important matters depend on communication with members, Groups and Districts. Our trusted servants use the Area 40 website and our Triangle newsletter to communicate with Groups and members. Technology has greatly improved our ability to communicate with each other and share information quickly via email and the Area web site. Even with all these capabilities, some members and Groups still miss getting this information; there are many areas where we could improve; communication can be used as both a tool and a solution.
- **Attraction.** Enthusiastic and grateful participation in service is attractive. When we share positive experiences in our meetings and with other members, we may have a positive influence on others to join us. Practicing positive behaviors includes avoiding conduct and language that is offensive, being judgmental or critical of others, or implying affiliation with other entities.
- **Participation.** Participation is the key to harmony and the solution to many of our challenges. Groups and Districts with strong participation are thriving and it is infectious. Smaller Groups and Districts struggle with how to attract more participation and commitment. Communication and attraction play an important part and there are many good suggestions about how to communicate and conduct ourselves in ways that would encourage people to participate. Looking at barriers people, Groups or Districts face may help us implement tried and true methods of reaching out, or, better yet, new ideas for reaching out, welcoming, and serving.
- **Barriers.** There are a number of obstacles that A.A. members, Groups and Districts face: money, sparse population, age, physical limitations, health, family, language, and being new to general service, to name a few. Welcoming attitudes, including these people in activities, reaching out through Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community, and sharing resources (travel, lodging, money) are some of the ways to reach out to underserved alcoholics and to encourage them to join us at our recovery meetings and service activities.

Summary of the 2015 Inventory Results

(For the complete, detailed results from the Inventory, please see the Fall 2015 Inventory Results posted on the Area 40 website or the Fall 2015 Assembly minutes available on the website or through your DCM.)

GROUPS/DISTRICTS

1. **How can we better convey the importance of the principle of participation in Area 40 General Service to our respective Groups and Districts?**

The groups discussing this question agreed some A.A. members and Groups may not understand how important Area General Service is. Discussion included the value of sharing the purpose of service work at the group, District and Area levels and of sharing the benefits to individual sobriety and the future of A.A.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Sponsor into service*
 - *Encourage involvement; invite people to business meeting/Group Conscience, District and Area meetings*
 - *Explain service structure*
 - *Share at Group level about trusted servant responsibilities and why they are important*
 - *Improve flow of information in both directions*
2. **What can we do to make our Groups, Districts, and Area more attractive?**
- Demonstrating a positive attitude at all levels of service was the common idea in all discussions about this question. Enthusiasm, inspiration, well-informed, principled, commitment, participation, and welcoming are all positive attitudes suggested in these discussions.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Demonstrate principles before personalities; guard the traditions*
- *Practice enthusiasm*
- *Use positive, inspiring energy*
- *Reach out to less experienced members and struggling Groups and Districts*
- *Create fellowship*
- *Be informed about the service structure and how each entity participates*
- *Express gratitude and interest*
- *Make and keep commitments*
- *Invite others, offer rides and fellowship*
- *Focus on how we carry the message through service*
- *Be a good example*

3. Is the business of Area 40 seen as a result of a year-round process by and for its Groups and Districts?

The members discussing this question agreed that understanding of the year-round process is likely limited to members and Groups who are involved in the service structure. These members may serve in Bridging the Gap or Public Information by answering the phone. They may be familiar with the services provided at the Area level and have perhaps experienced the process of creating an agenda item in the Group and seeing it move (or not) down the structure through the District, the Area and the General Service Conference. They have likely participated in pre-assemblies, studied and discussed agenda items at their Home Group, District, Area Committee and the Area Assembly and followed up by attending a Delegate's report or reading the General Service Conference Report. Although there were no suggestions or recommendations, there were suggestions and recommendations for other inventory questions that could improve understanding.

4. Considering Concept I, "the final responsibility and the ultimate authority of A.A. word services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship" (the A.A. Groups today hold final responsibility and ultimate authority), do the Groups in Area 40 have everything they need to carry out this responsibility? If not, what could Area 40 do to help provide what they need?

The GSR "may be the most important job in A.A." (*from the G.S.R. pamphlet*). The person who has this responsibility is the channel through which the Groups exchange information with other service entities, ask for help, and voice their conscience on matters important to carrying the message to other alcoholics. The principle of autonomy allows a Group to participate at whatever level they are capable, but District Officers and committee Chairs and Area Officers and committee Chairs may be in a position to offer a helping hand to Groups in need.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Encourage Groups to have a GSR who participates in District and Area*
- *Offer concern and assistance to Groups who have the desire but not the ability or means to participate*
- *Consider (District trusted servants) visiting Groups frequently to offer support and encouragement*
- *Invite speakers to talk about service in addition to sharing their story*
- *Assure Groups have the opportunity to participate in pre-assemblies, Area Assembly and have a copy of the Conference Report*
- *Conduct annual GSR school or other workshops*
- *Read job description of service positions before elections*
- *Use every available resource to assure Groups receive information*

INDIVIDUAL/PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE**1. Who are underrepresented alcoholics in Area 40? What can be done to overcome difficulties in attracting these people?**

There are many populations in Area 40 who are underrepresented: Native Americans, less populated areas with geographic or other accessibility issues, members of Groups that struggle with financial participation, veterans, low income people, aging population, single parents, young adults and juvenile offenders, newcomers to service where orientation and mentorship are not available, and non-English speakers. Many of these groups have professionals or service agencies that serve them. Reaching out to these service agencies and professionals to build relationships, offer our services and literature might help reduce some barriers. A.A. members, Groups and Districts might reach out directly by visiting meetings. Area Officers and standing committee Chairs are available for support and assistance at the local level with these activities. Financial support and relocating the Assembly could also reduce challenges for some Districts and Groups or, as one member stated: "... *lead a horse to water, can't make him drink, but don't take the pail away*".

The inventory groups developed a comprehensive, detailed list of ideas targeted at specific underserved populations. Individuals, groups and Districts might consider some of these ideas which are listed in the detailed inventory results posted on the web site and available in the Fall 2015 Assembly minutes.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Reach out to underserved, invite them to participate; rotate District meetings to locations more accessible by these Groups*
- *Be an attraction, maintain a positive attitude, invite people to come along*
- *Provide scholarships for GSRs and DCMs who need financial support*
- *Recognize and reach out to first time Assembly attendees; provide mentorship and /or service sponsorship*
- *Communicate the importance of participation in the service structure*
- *Develop creative incentives for District and Group participation*
- *Reach out to Veterans with literature racks at VA centers, development of a PSA, transportation, participation at Vet Stand Downs; public information VFW, college Vet centers*
- *Provide literature in Mental Health centers and reach out to Group Homes*
- *Reach out to Native Americans and Reservations by visiting meetings, providing literature, contacting spiritual leaders, rotating District meetings, including them in Roundups and special events*
- *Hold meetings in Senior Centers and Senior communities*
- *Provide literature in offices such as WIC, HRDC; create child-friendly meetings*
- *Identify juvenile programs and reach out with literature, meetings, and panels by means of a collaboration of PI, Treatment, and Corrections Committees*
- *Provide literature for non-English speakers at meetings; reach out to this population through churches; start and promote a Spanish speaking meeting*

2. What can the Area do to help members of the Area Assembly be better prepared as we come to participate?

DCMs and past trusted servants all play an important role in helping our trusted servants prepare for the Area Assembly. Communication among service entities and sharing information along the service structure is critical to well-informed decisions at all levels. This is an area where change could improve preparation and involves trusted servants at all levels.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- Area
 - *Provide mentors*
 - *Replace the GSR and DCM breakouts with GSR and DCM school*
 - *Provide better access to and notification of availability of background material, agendas, and other information*
 - *Assure that all methods of communication (telephone, email, hard copy) are used, depending on the needs of the Groups & Districts*
 - *Create a GSR packet and list of materials to bring to the Assembly*
- Districts
 - *Provide mentors*
 - *Conduct G.S.R. schools*
 - *Communicate with GSRs frequently, even between meetings*
- Groups and members
 - *Ask questions*

3. Do we effectively integrate new people into the Area Assembly?

The Framework for the Assembly was expanded, as a result of the 2011 Area Inventory, to include a welcoming session Friday night. It is agreed that this was a useful and welcome change. Since it is a work in progress, there is still more that can be done to welcome new GSRs and other trusted servants. Past trusted servants can reassure new people, mentor them. We can take care of those we elect by giving them what they need to serve.

Some of the same suggestions and recommendations appear on both Questions 4 and other questions in the inventory. The redundancy may indicate importance of changes to consider.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Send alternates from Districts and Groups when possible*
- *Prepare GSRs for the Assembly*
- *Encourage GSR participation by finding creative ways for them to participate; include them in meals and other fellowship activities*
- *Keep the communication channels open*
- *Design morning workshops for new people*
- *Develop a checklist for the Area Committee (including DCMs) use when reaching out, guiding GSRs*
- *Develop GSR packets*

4. Are we attracting new people to participate in the Area 40 service structure? What could we do to improve?

New people are participating in the Area 40 service structure, but there is always more we can do to be attractive and to encourage people who are serving at the local level to participate. Communicating the importance of service, considering changes in the process used to nominate Area standing committee Chairs, emphasizing the importance of GSR service position, considering alternate locations for assemblies, and

sharing resources are all ideas to be considered in order to attract new and qualified people into general service. Reaching out to interested or qualified members and providing service sponsorship were also mentioned. These suggestions might be considered by current and past trusted servants at all levels of the service structure.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Provide information and encouragement*
- *Reach out to local committees for new people*
- *Use standing committee Chairs for District workshops and events*
- *Consider changes to the selection process for standing committee Chairs; look for new people to serve; begin the process in the spring*
- *Provide scholarships or financial assistance to Groups and Districts that need help; share other resources*
- *Make it fun, attractive*
- *Include Groups without GSRs by attending meetings, providing information*
- *Sponsor/mentor*
- *Insure there is not a perceived limitation to the number of people who could participate - that we are not limited to/by our current space*

COMMITTEES/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

1. **The Triangle is the Area's newsletter; its purpose is to communicate service information among trusted servants, Groups, Districts and the Area Committee. How effective is the Triangle in serving this purpose? What can be done to improve its effectiveness?**

The Triangle is appreciated by GSRs, is read and considered effective by those participating in the inventory although address issues exist. Digital copy is appreciated, but the need to provide hard copy was voiced. There are a number of suggestions for broader readership and a reminder about assuring current addresses are available.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Announce it at meetings; use as a meeting topic; appoint a Group Triangle representative*
- *Engage individuals on a personal level with personal stories*
- *Invite submission of articles by individual members*
- *Include more Group and District information*
- *Provide digital copy with hard copy on request*
- *Resolve address issues, assuring Groups are receiving the Triangle*
- *Make subscriptions available on-line*
- *Highlight standing committee Chair articles each issue*
- *Define what we want from the Triangle*

2. **How can we improve the methods of encouraging and selecting effective leaders as well as nurturing leadership qualities in our trusted servants?**

We observe our members and encourage people who may be interested in service and direct them to areas where they might be useful. We try to be good examples with positive attitudes and enthusiasm for service and add some fun and interesting facts when sharing.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Begin with the newcomer*
- *Explain acronyms - don't assume they're understood*
- *Include service information in sponsorship; encourage sponsees to participate*
- *Maintain a positive attitude; be a good example*
- *Conduct workshops on how to nurture and grow effective leaders; provide them with the skills they need, such as how to prepare for and chair a business meeting*
- *Choose trusted servants with care*
- *Make service attractive, bring fun and sharing interesting tidbits*
- *Suggest service as meeting topic*

3. **Considering that the 2011 Membership Survey indicates most A.A. members are introduced to A.A. by sources other than A.A. members, what might the Area 40 Committees do to support the Districts in carrying the A.A. message to these sources?**

Discussion about this question indicated there is always more work to do. Districts hold workshops and luncheons, build relationships, distribute literature around their communities, and participate at the Area and Regional level to share what is working in other Areas and Districts. The Area 40 standing committee Chairs are available and budgeted to visit the Districts; Districts could use these resources more. The Area Chairs, on the other hand, should continue to extend their offer of availability, support and assistance to the Districts in their projects and activities. In addition, both the Area and District Committees could consider reaching out to professional organizations offering to attend their professional conferences.

Suggestions and recommendations (*Many of these suggestions and recommendations refer to District activities and responsibilities. The Area 40 standing Committee Chairs are available to support and help*):

- *Reach out to District Committees*
- *Use the Area 40 CPC, PI and Treatment Chairs*
- *Hold panels, workshops and luncheons*
- *Build and maintain relationships*
- *Attend professional conferences*
- *Refrain from behaviors that detract from successful relationships (negative comments about any entity, non-inclusive practices, implied affiliation with outside Groups and organizations)*
- *Thank stations that play PSA's, request others to include them*
- *Provide literature*
- *Reach out to the press*
- *Share experience, strength and hope at all*
- *Attend West Central Region Service Conferences and Forums*

4. How are Committee Chairs communicating with their District counterparts? What could be done better?

Members agreed that the Committee Chairs do a great job and recognized that smaller Districts have challenges and all Districts experience difficulty getting local members to participate. They also had ideas and suggestions about what could be done better. Reaching out with frequent communication, flexibility in the methods of communication, assuring agenda information and background materials are distributed as early as possible, and more workshops were among the suggestions.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Communicate using phone calls in addition to email*
- *Offer to visit Districts, attend Districts and Groups when traveling*
- *Invite Area Chairs to District meetings*
- *Help generate/encourage interest*
- *Support and encourage small and remote communities*
- *Communicate frequently: monthly emails, quarterly conference calls*
- *Assure Districts receive agenda and background material*
- *Include time on the election Assembly agenda for rotating Chairs to share with each other*

AREA ASSEMBLY

1. Is the Area Assembly effective in communicating information within the General Service structure?

Except for a few areas that could be improved, the discussion around effective communication within the service structure was very positive. The Area Officers and Standing Committee Chairs use the Triangle, the Area 40 web site, the telephone and the District Committee Members (DCMs) to exchange information with the Groups. Our Delegate and the Alternate are well prepared to carry the sense of Area 40 to the General Service Conference, and Districts host Delegate reports following the conference. There are a few improvements that can be made: including alternate DCMs in communication, notifying the Area Committee and Groups when new information has been posted on the web site, assuring that all interested A.A. members in the Area have access to agendas and background material, and creating more effective lines of communication with the Groups.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Include Alternate DCMs when communicating with DCMs*
- *Identify who/where to go for more information*
- *Provide access to agenda and background information for all interested Area 40 A.A. members*
- *Consider technology options (webinar, video conferencing) for pre-assemblies*

2. How are the Steps, Traditions, and concepts guiding our decisions and actions when we conduct business at assemblies?

Area 40 has a practice of welcoming our "elder statesmen" by inviting two past Delegates to each Assembly where they conduct workshops, moderate ask-it-basket sessions and share during the Sunday morning session. We rely on their leadership and experience. There is an expectation that we all know and understand the principles, but we are always learning as we use them as our guides. Reading them at the beginning of the meeting, having workshops, and communication about how they apply as we make decisions all enforce our ability to use them appropriately.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Assume personal responsibility*
- *Conduct workshops on Concepts*
- *Discuss Concepts*
- *Observe Concept V, minority opinion*
- *Consider the general principles of the Concepts*
- *Rely on elder statesmen and legacy of leadership*

3. Does the current format and scheduling effectively address communication and the business to be conducted? How can Area 40 more effectively conduct its business?

The committee system implemented in the 1990's, along with changes to the agenda and scheduling as a result of the 2011 Area Inventory, made significant improvements. The newly added Friday night Welcoming Session is appreciated and gives an opportunity for a preview of the weekend and to meet each other. Concurrent committee meetings and workshops result in difficult choices; alternatives might be considered. Time is valuable and we need always examine our methods to insure that we are making good use of our time together.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Make good use of time together*
- *Continue the "buddy" system for first-timers*
- *Consider use of technology that would expedite process*
- *Conduct all business requiring voting on Saturday*
- *Consider scheduling workshops that are NOT concurrent with committee meetings*
- *Create "newcomer" packet*
- *Continue 'preview' of weekend at Friday night welcoming session*

4. What keeps Groups from attending Area Assembly? What could be done remove these barriers?

Lack of finances, apathy, lack of information and geography affect Group participation at the Area Assembly. Enthusiasm about service work, sharing resources, sponsorship, and a positive attitude may lessen or remove these barriers.

Suggestions and recommendations:

- *Consider alternative locations for assemblies*
- *Create a way to communicate about sharing rides and lodging*
- *Consider financial support for Groups in need*
- *Attract Groups with enthusiasm and positivity*

Calendar of Events

Assembly Dates 2016

February 1st
 Spring Assembly
 Agenda items Due
 Special needs form Due

April 8-10
 Spring Assembly
 Yogo Inn - Lewistown

July 1st
 Fall Assembly
 Agenda items Due

September 16-18
 Fall Assembly
 Yogo Inn - Lewistown

<u>Events</u>
<u>January - 2016</u>
<u>15th-17th - Rule 62 Rendezvous - Mandan North Dakota</u>
<u>16th - MSP Orientation - Montana State Prison</u>
<u>February - 2016</u>
<u>20th - Mid Winter Social - Joliet Community Center - Joliet</u>
<u>March - 2016</u>
<u>4th-6th - 2016 WCRAASC - Bismarck North Dakota</u>
<u>4th-6th - 29th Annual Whitefish Sober Ski</u>
<u>18th-19th - 20th Pockets of Enthusiasm - First Presbyterian Church - Helena</u>

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Individuals: If your subscription has expired, this will be your last issue of the Triangle.

WHERE TO MAIL GROUP

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