

Newsletter

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Words From Our Outgoing Chair

As my two year term as your Oregon Area Chairperson comes to a close, the thought that comes to mind is, “wow, what a ride!” I mean that in a good way. ☺ This has been the most amazing and rewarding Area position I have held so far. It has also been the most demanding and time consuming, as those who came before me warned me it would be. Even so, words do not easily describe how grateful I am for the opportunity you’ve given me.

As I traveled around the State, meeting so many of you along the way, the fact that AA is very much alive and well in Oregon Area was reinforced time and time again. From Portland to the south coast, from Baker City to the north coast, I have seen first hand the outstanding work you are doing to carry the message. I doubt I would have had the chance to see it with my own eyes if I hadn’t served in this capacity. The GSRs in Oregon Area are well informed, the Districts are rooted in the Twelve Traditions, and the message you all carry is being heard loud and clear in your communities and beyond. Please, please, please keep up the good work. For those of you who are involved in ‘general service’ (which means service outside your home group), keep sponsoring the newcomers into service. Show them by your example what you do and share with them how being of service to AA has strengthened your sobriety. Encourage them to come with you to workshops, Assemblies and fellowship activities and show them how volunteering to help will benefit them. If you are not involved in general service, look around for someone who is involved and ask them if you can tag along. My guess is they will be thrilled. You won’t be sorry, I promise. Here are a few ways your participation in a service activity could impact the still suffering alcoholic.

Oregon Area Orientation

To Be Held In Eugene
January 5, 2008

The second ever Area orientation will be held in Eugene at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, located on the corner of 13th and Pearl in downtown Eugene, on January 5th. What is an Area orientation, you ask? Let me explain. Last year an AA member had a question and an idea all at the same time. That member wondered why people always say it took them two years to learn their job in AA, and when they finally felt comfortable, it was time to rotate out. Many times, information and materials do not get passed on or are transferred quickly, leaving those rotating into a position feeling quite lost. The suggestion was made to set aside a special time for those who have done the job to ‘train’ the new members. This would help them get started sooner and thus be more effective in their service to AA.

When a newcomer shows up at a meeting for the first time, it could be because one or more of you took a meeting into a jail, a prison, a hospital or a treatment center. It could be because you dropped off meeting schedules at the local probation office, a church, a library or a doctor's office. It could be because you provided literature or speakers for a drug and alcohol awareness week at a school or for a community event. Perhaps someone left a *Grapevine* on an empty seat on a bus or in a waiting room. Perhaps someone was desperate for information, happened upon our website and found a meeting you posted there. Perhaps the money you contributed to your group's Seventh Tradition or a fundraiser found its way to the General Service Office (GSO) in New York and was used to translate the Big Book into another language. Perhaps it was used to send one of our AA Trustees to another country to help them start a central office. Perhaps the money was used to send a book to an inmate or provide him with an introduction to the Program of AA through a correspondent. Do you have to be a GSR or DCM to do these things? Not at all. But doing them may lead to that, so watch out. Your HP may have more in store for you. ☺

Over the past two years, the Area's landscape has changed because you, the voting body, saw some needs and pushed forward to make adjustments. You saw a group of Spanish speaking members struggling to be part of the Area service structure but not being able to communicate because of the language barrier. You approved creation of a new committee that will assist them and enable them to participate on every level. You saw a need for more training for newly elected officers, newly appointed committee members and new DCMs. You approved an annual Area orientation where these trusted servants will benefit from the experience of others who served the Area before them, who can answer their questions and prepare them for the job ahead. You approved creation of two brand new Districts in the Portland metro area so that all the groups in that geographic area could be better served. You helped the Area move into the age of technology by approving the purchase of software and computer equipment for trusted servants who need it to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. These are just a few of the accomplishments the GSRs who represent your home groups have made during the time I have served. When those GSRs give reports at your business meetings, please honor them by listening, asking questions and lending your voice to your group's conscience. It all starts there, in the home group, and works its way to the conference in New York.

The idea was tossed around, a motion was written and brought to an Assembly, it was discussed, taken back to the home groups, and brought back to the Assembly for a vote. The result of the passage of that motion was the first Area orientation which took place in January of 2007. According to all the feedback, it was a rousing success so we're doing it again in January of 2008.

The morning session will be primarily for new DCMs and Alternates and the afternoon session will focus on Area officers and service committees. That does not mean you must hold one of these positions to attend. If you are curious about serving in a position at the Area level and happen to be in the neighborhood, stop by and have a seat. There will be a wealth of information available for the taking, and perhaps it will influence your journey in the direction of Area service. If you are a new DCM, Area officer or service committee member, your attendance is ***highly*** recommended. You will be glad you came.

If you have questions or would like to volunteer to help, please contact Anne M. at (503) 703-0310 or altdel@aa-oregon.org.

The job I did was only a small part in accommodating that process, but I gained so much from it. I will never be able to repay the debt, but I certainly intend to keep trying as I move into my next service position. Thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Chairperson. It has been a great honor and a privilege.

Anne M.
Oregon Area Chairperson, November 2005-November 2007.

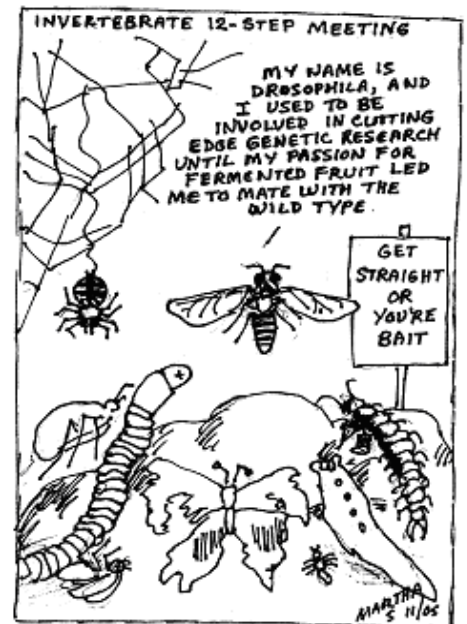
Telling Your Personal Story

I'm a born journalist. I tell people that since my qualifications for the world's oldest profession are mediocre at best, I had to fall back on the second-oldest. Sometimes when I'm sitting in the meeting, I hear a personal story that really grips me and others around me, and think: that belongs in the Big Book, or the Grapevine, or at least in the local EVI newsletter I chaired for several years before rotating in as your Area Newsletter Chair.

I regularly attend a weekly speaker meeting that has minimal requirements for featured speakers. Overall, most presentations contain something valuable, and some presentations really stands out in terms of carrying the AA message. Conversely, a monthly speaker meeting that stresses length of sobriety and brings in people from out of town occasionally produces a real dud. This is not just my personal opinion, but based on a sense of the audience. Just what is it that makes the difference?

The basic bare bones of the story, presented honestly, are a solid beginning. A story of recovery from alcoholism, told sincerely by someone who has worked the twelve steps with a sponsor, cannot fail to contain much of value. It is the insincere stories, and those that have very little to do with recovery from alcoholism, which fall truly flat.

Although open discussion meetings will often tolerate five minutes of personal sharing that barely touches on recovery from alcoholism, the person taking the stand at a speaker meeting, or writing for an AA publication, is speaking for AA, sharing his experience, strength and hope with others who hope to learn from his example. While a person may have many stories to tell, some possibly wittier, more interesting, and more impressive than the story of his recovery from alcoholism



Drosophila is the scientific name for the common fruit fly, which is extensively used in genetic research. Fruit flies eat yeast, which is why they're attracted to fermenting fruit. You may have noticed that they'll head for a glass of wine and blissfully drown in it. If you were a less than classy drunk like me you'll also recall that a few dead fruit flies don't materially detract from the quality of rotgut wine, unlike ants and cockroaches, which have an unpleasant flavor.

While we're on the subject of invertebrates, it really is true that you can catch slugs in beer traps in your garden. I am told on good authority that in some sections of town, the winos may beat the slugs to the beer and sabotage your gardening efforts. I did have a dog who liked beer, and she was quick to raid the slug traps, not even caring if the slugs got there first.

through Alcoholics Anonymous, it's the AA story this audience came to hear, and the other stuff needs to take a back seat.

A good personal story need not be dramatic. One of the most moving personal stories I've heard came from a middle-aged "toast-burner," a woman who'd never lost a job, gone to jail, or damaged her health, who came into AA initially as support for a teenaged daughter in treatment. The story of how her getting sober and involved in AA nurtured her emotional and spiritual growth and enabled her to overcome the scars of a dysfunctional upbringing resonated with many members of that meeting, male and female.

Since the take-home lesson of an AA personal story is recovery, recovery should be introduced early in the narrative. A long drunkalogue, full of exciting exploits, followed by "And then I got sober, and I owe it all to AA" doesn't tell the audience anything about how to do it and may leave younger and less worldly folks with the impression that they will be missing out on some pretty cool stuff if they put the plug in the jug before they get to skid row. Adventurous, low-bottom stories do capture the imagination, however, and they may be just what some people need to hear. A man who has just gotten out of prison and is living at the Mission can easily dismiss the toast-burner, rationalizing that she could never have gotten sober if she had half the problems he had.

When telling my story, or giving another person pointers on telling theirs (as a sponsor and newsletter chair, I take the liberty of acting as an editor or composition instructor) I try to follow the guidelines of good expository writing. Introduce the main point (recovery through AA) prominently in the first paragraph. Follow an outline or structure that gives your main point top billing in the body of the text or presentation. Use well-chosen examples to illustrate points rather than attempting to cover everything in a cramped space. Include enough detail to bring things to life. Avoid vague generalities. Stick to your own story.

In the AA context, speaking in your own voice helps get the message across. The style of AA speaking and writing is overall quite informal and allows for much individuality. I've been told, justifiably, that my own personal style, learned at the feet of parents who were both English professors, turns some people off. I haven't mended my own ways, but I've learned to put away that red pencil when dealing with other people's grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, if your "personal style" includes modes of expression that violate the AA

WORD SCRAMBLE

By Anita

Below are some scrambled words pertaining to AA service. Unscramble them, write the letters in the boxes/circles, and use the circled letters to form another AA-related word.

B L E S S M A L

□□□○□□○□

L I S T E N O C E

□□○□□□□□

G E T A L E E D

○□□□□○□□

I N S M O O T

□□□□□□○

Y I N T O R I M

□□□□○□□□

ANSWER

□□□□□□□

Mark Your Calendars!

February 2008 Quarterly Assembly

February 22-24
Ramada Inn
Medford, Oregon

Registration information is on the Area Website. Get your meal and room reservations in early. It helps the host committee in their planning and ensures you will not be sleeping on a couch and eating alone at Burger King.

traditions of cooperation and respect for others, it would be best to modify it before venturing beyond the bounds of sharing in a closed meeting. Pervasive strong profanity, personal attacks on individuals, thinly veiled political or religious rants, bigotry and sexual innuendos may well be the habit of someone who's still dealing with character defects in early sobriety, but they're not AA and they'll poison any AA message to which they're attached.

If there are parts of your story that you are uncomfortable sharing in a public forum, you may omit them, but don't present a distorted, sanitized version or rewrite other parts of your story to cover up the omission. You may wish to consult your sponsor on this one. One option is to explicitly write on one small facet of your recovery – "How I got into AA", "Ninth step amends brought our family back together" - making no pretense that the piece is a complete story.

In the final analysis, honesty is the only real requirement for a good AA story. Without it, the whole point is lost. . Poor packaging and delivery may reduce the impact of the truth, but it's still the truth and it will still inspire people. The best craftsmanship and delivery in the world can't turn a lie into a good example

Martha S., Newsletter Chair

November Oregon Area Assembly - One Member's View

One of the benefits of being a GSR, DCM or member of the Oregon Area Committee is the opportunity to spend the occasional weekend at the luxurious Resort on the Mountain at Welches, Oregon, surrounded by fragrant fir forests and a world class golf course overshadowed by majestic Mount Hood. Unfortunately this takes place the third weekend in November, when it's 38 degrees outside and raining so hard you can barely see the opposite side of the parking lot, let alone Mount Hood. The absence of viable recreational opportunities keeps your trusted servants on task.

Our industrious and well-organized Area Secretary Eric V. has already posted minutes from the November Assembly elsewhere on the Oregon Area website. The minutes include motions voted on at the assembly and tabled motions, with summaries of the discussions which took place. Anyone wanting to have input on February's vote on the tabled motions should consult these minutes, which also contain reports from

The Peanut Gallery

Heard any clever things at meetings lately? Some of the things people say are wise and funny and eminently quotable. Send them in! Otherwise this feature will be overburdened with quotes from Eugene meetings your newsletter chair attends. I'm pretty sure folks in these meetings don't have a corner on the wit and wisdom market in Area 58.

I started going to Al-Anon because I figured it was a way to get all the benefits of the 12 steps without having to stop drinking.

Naomi, Eugene

I told people I couldn't go to AA because it conflicted with my religious views. Basically my religious views were: God hates us all. AA does conflict with that.

Sharon, Eugene

Some days I'm a few fries short of a happy meal

Jim, Eugene

As Dr. Paul said, when I'm alone with my mind, I'm outnumbered.

Hank A, Eugene

I feel like I'm in this sort of AA Purgatory – I'm not saved, but I'm not drunk either.

Greg, Eugene, (2 years sober, never worked steps with a sponsor.)

If you come to AA looking for romance, as they say, the odds are good but the goods are odd.

Georgine, Eugene.

Area officers, committee chairs, and DCMs. The DCM reports give a nice snapshot of AA service activities around the state.

People new to the wild and wonderful world of Area business meetings, and not a few of us who have been at it for some years, got a thorough introduction to AA's unique decision-making process in the form of a tabled motion to fund the chair and co-chair of ad hoc committees to attend Area assemblies. After several GSRs communicated their groups' concerns that ad hoc committee chairs who were also GSRs might be double-dipping, the suggestion was made to amend the original motion adding the phrase "at the chair's discretion." The Chair asked for, and received approval from the mover and seconder of the original motion, and explained that under Oregon Area guidelines, this was sufficient for amending a motion. Other areas may require the vote of the assembly to amend a motion. After some further discussion, a member moved to table the amended motion and take it back to meetings. Chair opted to continue discussion without taking a sense of the meeting. One of the past delegates stood up and read procedural guidelines allowing for re-tabling an amended motion. At this point Chair called for a vote, and the assembly voted not to table. Discussion continued. Someone proposed a second amendment explicitly prohibiting double funding. Several members pointed out that this amendment was unnecessary, as the chair was already reviewing requests for funding. Furthermore, it undermined the important concept of a "trusted servant" by putting in writing the suspicion that GSRs who were fully funded by their home groups and had volunteered to chair an Ad Hoc committee might line their pockets with Area funds. This second amendment did receive the OK of the original mover. The motion the body voted on read: "Ad hoc committee chairs and / or co chairs, at the discretion of the Area chair, be funded to attend the Area assemblies with no possibility of double funding. The funding will be at the same compensatory level as the Area Officers."

The motion passed with a comfortable 2/3 majority, but with a significant minority who took to the microphones to express their dissent. One minority speaker argued that the matter was not urgent and should be returned to the groups. This convinced several people who had voted in the majority to change their votes, which triggered a motion to revote. The revote motion failed, and the amended motion stood as passed.

At first glance this seems like a terribly cumbersome way to allocate at most a few hundred dollars in 7th tradition money for a purpose with which very few people had any quarrel. On the other hand, the lengthy deliberation process led to refining a motion that initially contained some ambiguities. No one felt as if he or his group had been railroaded, and most people went away feeling they understood what they voted on.

During my first year as GSR, the perceived inefficiency of the process really bugged me. It doesn't any more. Yes, it mattered rather little how this particular micro-issue was decided, but everybody went away with a much better concept of how to reach a group consensus in more important matters. In any case, the golf course was under water, the ski slopes were bare, and there is no mall in Welches, Oregon.

Martha S.



Gifts of the Program

Do you have an image that symbolizes some aspect of your recovery? Send it in. Let's take a peek at how beautiful sobriety looks in Oregon. Lorinn C., from my home group, captured this tranquil sunset over the Willamette River. Sobriety has given her the time and money to pursue a passion for photography.

