

AA CONCEPTS

Northern Illinois Area, Ltd. Area 20 Service Letter

Fall 2016

Being a Delegate

I am eight months into serving as your Northern Illinois Area 20's Delegate to the General Service Conference and it's about four months since I got back from our last General Service Conference.

As in most service positions, I do not know everything and probable never will, but I am getting the hang of certain things by trial and questions. I don't say "error" because as I have heard many times that one person cannot break A.A. and since I am not different or special, that would also apply to me.

I have been sharing my experience at the 2016 GSC at district meetings and regular meetings and have been asked many times to also talk about what got me involved in general service and standing for Delegate, so I decided to write my article on that.

Being a Delegate is far beyond anything I could have imagined when I entered into my third and hopefully last detox back in 1999.

I got involved in general service to find out if our group's contributions were going to where our treasurer said they were going; I had big trust issues. I had no idea at the time of the concept of "trusting our trusted servants."

My service started at the group level, and as many others probable did, I began cleaning ash trays, making coffee, chairing the meeting and being treasurer. This was a great way to get to know everyone at the meetings better.

Before I came into Alcoholics Anonymous I was a total isolator. If

someone knocked on the door, I would go to the last window in the house and ever so slightly peek through the curtain to see who it was. I never opened the door even if I knew them.

I began a General Service Representative (GSR), and started going to the district meetings which gave me an opportunity to get to know more members from other meetings. I was very interested in the Grapevine since it was the first A.A. literature I read, for me it was easier than the Big Book. So when elections came up at the district I stood for Grapevine chair. I became the district Secretary next, which left me no choice in the matter of actually listening to the committee reports, not just hearing them. I could not think of what I wanted to do next and I didn't think at the time that I would make a good DCM so I stood for Grapevine chair again. Then I felt I was ready to serve as the District Committee Member (DCM). At this time I wasn't as prepared as I thought I should have been. At this time I got a service sponsor, a woman who was heavily involved in all types of A.A. service and had been there and done that. I know now that the saying, "that no one really knows how to perform all the duties of their position until they are ready to rotate out," was true for me.

I enjoyed going to the assemblies as a GSR and meeting many other members of Alcoholics Anonymous from the other districts in the Area. I was able to hear reports from the Area's standing

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Concepts is published quarterly by the Northern Illinois Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a service letter to keep Northern IL Area, districts, and GSRs informed of service opportunities, events, and experience relevant to carrying the AA message. Subscription is free but generally limited to A.A. members within the NIA geographical area.

All publication costs are paid by A.A. members through their contributions to NIA. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of Alcoholics Anonymous, NIA or the Editor.

Comments, suggestions and subscription requests plus shares of experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:

Concepts@aa-nia.org

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<http://www.aa-nia.org>

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From the editor

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

Last weekend I attended the State convention/East Central Regional Conference. I brought 2 women with less than 6 months. I had more fun at a conference than I had in a while. Some of it was because I actively participated in a small way. Some of it was their enthusiasm. These women wanted to do it all, see it all, experience everything there was offered. I would like to thank the committee. These things take work and commitment. My sponsees are definitely better for the experience, as am I. And if the emotion on the newcomer's face at the end of the sobriety countdown stays the conference got one person sober.

This quarter's Concepts is generally about service. Kelly, the Delegate, and Marilyn, the Area chair, both submitted articles about service. So I tried to go with a service theme. I don't think it came together as well as some past themed issues. But there are suggestions on ways to be of service that seem small but are very important. I can't hit it out of the park on every turn to bat. I filled 11 pages with, what I hope, will be interesting to the readers.

**Submissions for the next issue
will be due Nov 12, 2016.**

**Thank you for your submissions.
Heather S. Concepts Editor**

committees and their officers especially our Delegate. Also, as a GSR I was able to vote on agenda items at the Area assemblies. When I became the district Grapevine representative I attended the break out meetings at the assemblies with the other Grapevine representatives from the other districts. It was great to hear and share ideas on how to get the word out about the Grapevine and help boost subscriptions. This was especially exciting for me when the Area held a Pre-General Service Workshop/Assembly. As a group we discussed the agenda items that were going to be presented at the GSC by our Delegate. As district secretary I did basically the same thing except I was in the secretaries' breakout meetings. As the District Secretary I had to pay more attention to what was being said by our DCM and other members, which gave me a broader understanding on what was going on not only at the district level but at the Area and GSO.

Then as a DCM I became the voice of my district's opinions. I still attended the assemblies, but now I attended Area Committee meetings. The committee meetings precede the assemblies. Agenda items are brought up and discussed to get a better understanding of the actual motion. We then brought the information about the agenda items back to our district to share, and in turn they would share it with their groups to get an informed group conscience. After rotating out of the DCM position I almost took a break from general service. Today, I know that my higher power knew what was best for me. So I stood for Area Treatment Chair, and I was elected when my name was pulled from the hat. This was a good committee for me since I had been in numerous treatment

settings. I really enjoyed that position-working with the district Treatment Chairs and having workshops. Since I am at the Area level I thought it would be idea to just continue working down the triangle with the hopes of someday becoming the Area Delegate. I then stood and became Area Chair, which was fairly confusing at first, even though I had read everything that I could pertaining to that position. Thank God for members who had been in that position before me. One of the gifts I had gotten from A.A. was to be able to say, "I don't know and could you please help me?" As the Area Chair I was on the State Conference Planning Committee which included our Delegate as well as the Chairs and Delegate of Areas 19 and 21. Today I have good friends in those two areas. When it was getting closer to the time to rotate out of the Area Chair position, I thought I should stand for Delegate. I was really enjoying working with all the members' throughout the Area and I just wanted more. I became addicted to general service and serving others. I did not get that position at the time, but I also stood for Alternate Delegate and got that position. Looking back, and because of what I learned from working closely with the Delegate, I realized that I really wasn't quite yet prepared to be the Delegate yet. I learned and asked questions of our Delegate at that time, and felt comfortable when the next election came up and I was voted in as the Panel 66 Delegate.

Throughout my service I had become a better listener and less critical of others. I have always said that the only dumb question is the one not asked. A Delegate to the General Service Conference (GSC) is to the Area as a GSR is to their groups, sending

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and receiving information back and forth. As anyone goes down the service structure triangle they become a trusted servant to many more. As Delegate, I feel a very strong responsibility to the needs and wishes of my area. At the GSC I went to the mic and stated what my Area's opinions and concerns were. I represented Area 20 to best of my abilities. I gained many new friends from all over the United States and Canada. A few of us are still in contact with each other.

When I got back from the GSC I was worried about how I was going to compress and summarize all the information I gathered in those six days down to an hour or so, so that it could be disseminated to people in Area 20. They say that, "whenever someone asks you to do something in A.A., your answer should be yes". That has never been truer to me than it is now as the Delegate. Being a Delegate requires a lot of personal time. To have members who are genuinely interested in what is going on in Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, and not just in their meetings, gives me a positive feeling that many members are interested in general service and want A.A. to always be there for the next suffering alcoholic who wants it. When I first got sober I attended a Traditions workshop. The members and the Delegate made it seem fun and attractive to me. I hope I am passing along to others what was so freely given to me, attraction not promotion. I am grateful to be of service to Northern Ill Area 20 and A.A. as a whole.

Kelly L.

Delegate Panel 66/NIA 20
Grapevine Committee

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Hello Everyone,

This is my first article for Concepts, so please forgive me for being so late.

When Heather asked me to submit something to Concepts, I had no idea what to write about. Today, while taking my lunchtime walk I got to thinking about this past weekend and going to the 2016 Illinois State Conference/Central Regional Conference. I had such a good time. I got to see people that I don't see very often which I truly enjoy.

When I was at one of the planning meetings for the 2016 IL State Conference/Central Regional Conference, Rich H. asked for a volunteer to host one of the speakers, Madeleine P. I saw my hand go up. I had never hosted anyone before. I asked what was expected of me, which was to pick her up at the airport, bring her to the hotel and be sure that she had dinner on Friday night, then drive her back to the airport on Sunday after the conference ended.

I thought, I could do that, but what do I talk to her about? I don't even know her!

Well, on I 190, I missed my exit because we were so busy talking and then I took another "detour" because of talking. She had no idea we missed our exit, after all,

she is from Portland, Oregon. Please don't tell.

I would like to thank the 2016 Illinois State Conference/Central Regional Conference Committee for all of their great work. It takes a lot to put one of these conferences on and the committee worked very well together.

Dawn B. (District 23) and I were involved in the 2006 Spring/Assembly Conference making the "Big Book Box" centerpieces for the banquet. I know from that experience that stepping up brings growth. Every bit of service that I have taken in Alcoholics Anonymous has been more growth for me. Dawn has stepped up to Co-Chair the 2017 Spring/Assembly Conference along with Jeff L. (District 40). It seems that Dawn and Jeff, who has been very involved in service, want more growth. It's about the three legged stool, UNITY, SERVICE and RECOVERY. I encourage you to follow along.



I'm not alone anymore and I can't break AA. Wow! What a concept.

Respectfully,
Marilyn F.
Area 20 Chair

Rule 62



If an alcoholic says something in the forest and there's no al-anon there to hear him, is he still wrong?

Cleanandsobernotdead.com



Love is like an hourglass, with the heart filling up as the brain empties. - Jules Renard

Marriage is the chief cause of divorce. - Groucho Marx

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society. - Mark Twain

THE PROMISES OF ALCOHOL

If we are casual with this phase of our development, we will be drunk before we are halfway through.

*We are going to know a new imprisonment and a new misery.

*We will relive the past and won't be able to shut the door on it.

*We will comprehend the word CONFLICT and we will know PAIN.

*No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we'll sink even lower.

*That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will deepen.

*We will gain interest in selfish things and lose interest in our fellows.

*Self-esteem will slip away.

*Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will SUCK.

*Fear of people, and of economic insecurity will multiply.

*We will intuitively know how to run from situations which never used to bother us.

*We will suddenly realize that God would never have done to us what we are doing to ourselves.

*Are these extravagant promises? We think not! They are being fulfilled among those of us who are still drinking and/or drugging --sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

They will ALWAYS materialize, IF WE DRINK FOR THEM.

From recoverylane.com

**The Seventh Tradition states:
“Every A.A. group ought to be
fully self-supporting, declining
outside contributions.”**

While contributions cover each group's rent and other expenses, the Seventh Tradition is essential at every level of A.A. service. It is both a privilege and a responsibility for groups and members to ensure that not only their group, but also their intergroup/central office, local services, district, area, and the General Service Office remain self-supporting. This keeps A.A. free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose — to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

Although the amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world, we may want to remember that a dollar does not support as many Service Material from the General Service Office

**SOME THINGS TO THINK
ABOUT**

Some facts: • Currently about 40% of groups contribute to the General Service Office. • Costs of Services provided by G.S.O. (as

of 2016) are approximately \$7.15 per member per year. • Gross profit from A.A. literature sales account for over 50% of G.S.O.'s income. • Your contributions help ensure the future of our Fellowship worldwide.

Personal thoughts: • What is the value of your sobriety? • Does your group know that contributions may be made online at AA.org? • Gratitude, expressed through contributions, reaches the still-suffering alcoholic.

F-42 Self Support_FF-17_meetingcard.qxd

Editor's note: This card is free from GSO. Shared experience says when this card is read at the beginning of every meeting contributions go up. I think it is because we forget what we are paying for when we put money in the basket. This card is great reminder.



How the Groups Govern the General Service Office Your delegates are key people in World AA

Those who have preceded us in AA have given us three guides, called the Three Legacies, developed through their experience, for the continuation of the effectiveness of the program for ourselves and for those who will follow us. These precepts--Recovery, Unity and Service--were arrived at through long and painful efforts to gain and maintain their sobriety, by founders Bill and Dr. Bob and other pioneer members.

To establish effective communication, Canada and the United States have been divided into some eighty-five areas. Sometimes these are statewide, sometimes less, according to population and geographic needs. Since there are many groups in each such area, the areas are subdivided into districts, each containing several groups. A General Service Representative is chosen by each group, from among its own members, to work with the Committee Member from its district. The GSRs in each district choose this Committee Member from the members in their district. He serves on the Area General Service Committee. From among the Committee Members, the GSRs of the entire area elect a Delegate. This Delegate serves for two years as the representative of the entire area at the General Service Conferences. His instructions come from the GSRs through the Committee Members and the Area Committee.

The General Service Conference is not a governing body in the usual sense. It collects experience and informed opinion and recommends policy to the General Service Board and the GSO. The Board is the legal authority which it was necessary for our Fellowship to set up and incorporate in order to conduct the affairs of AA in accordance with law.

The importance of this to the individual AA is that the group purpose as coalesced by the Delegates, expressed in the form of suggested policies by the General Service Conference, and implemented by the GSB and the GSO is infinitely greater and sounder than the sum of its individual ideas can be.

In some places this chain of communication is not complete because the individual members of the groups have not always understood the opportunity thus afforded them to do Twelfth Step work by helping to formulate the policies recommended by the General Service Conference, and the opportunity to help maintain unity through understanding support of the services of GSO. Since participation in the Third Legacy is never stated as a requirement, many groups do not realize the importance of this work to the continued firm tenure in the program of their own members. Such groups may fail to choose and support an active GSR.

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The work of the General Service Office is carried on by a dedicated staff divided for working convenience into six divisions: Coordinator, World Directory and Group Records, Institutional Services, Overseas Services, General Service Conference and Public Information Service. The total operation is supervised by a part time AA general manager.

When I ask myself the question as to whether or not I would be in AA today if there had been no GSO, I must answer that the chances are one hundred to one that I would not even have known about AA and might very well be pushing up the daisies by now, instead of enjoying life. Somewhere along the line that led to my sponsor contacting me, GSO had an essential part in carrying the message. Its pamphlets, some of which I was given, were of direct help to me too. But there is more to it than that. Each of us continues to need the services of GSO for our own well-being, whether or not we are aware of it. Who else can continue to spread the word effectively, so that we can continue to help the individual alcoholic in order to help ourselves? Who else can consistently offer us all inspiration to stay on our program and grow in it? Who else can keep honesty and truth foremost in the program, so that deviations from accepted practice are minor? GSO can do all this because of the vast experience that comes to it from other groups like our own and because we support it in its efforts. Supporting GSO is not only a matter of gratitude, it is also a matter of self-preservation for each of us!

The use of the term "World Service" has led some of us to feel that GSO is principally interested in encouraging AA in

foreign countries. We tend to forget that we, here in this country, are a part of the world and that as the principal part of the AA world, we get the principal benefits from the services of GSO and have the principal responsibility for its continuing effectiveness.

When we in our individual groups understand the AA system of representation for communication and how each individual group can have a part in shaping the course of AA as it continues to grow, when we understand how much we individually benefit by making possible the carrying out of the policies we thus help shape and express through the General Service Conference, then, I am sure, every group will make an effort to select a GSR for their group who will be interested, active and effective.

The matter of financial support for GSO is equally important.

Even with the best of will and effort, the GSO cannot be effective without money to cover the necessary expenses of operation, and some sort of representative framework to keep GSO and the groups in touch.

While the Conference has suggested that a contribution of three dollars per member per year be used as a yardstick, there is a more direct method of determining an individual group's proper financial support for GSO. That is on the basis of the group's ability to contribute. Legitimate local costs can

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be stated in five categories: Rental of meeting place, Food, Speaker expense, Arrangements for helping the local newcomer get in touch and Literature. If a group is hard-pressed to meet its legitimate local obligations, perhaps fifty cents per member is about right for that group. On the other hand, if the group treasury is ample, twenty dollars per member may not be out of line. As a minimum, each group ought to give enough financial support to ensure it maintenance of an active interest in this aspect of Twelfth Step work.

Its members ought to be interested enough to feel that it is a privilege, not an obligation, to help support the GSO through their contributions. When we all give this kind of support, our GSO can operate effectively, in the black, and can constantly build and improve its services on behalf of our Fellowship so that the impact of AA upon alcoholics generally will be increasingly inclusive.

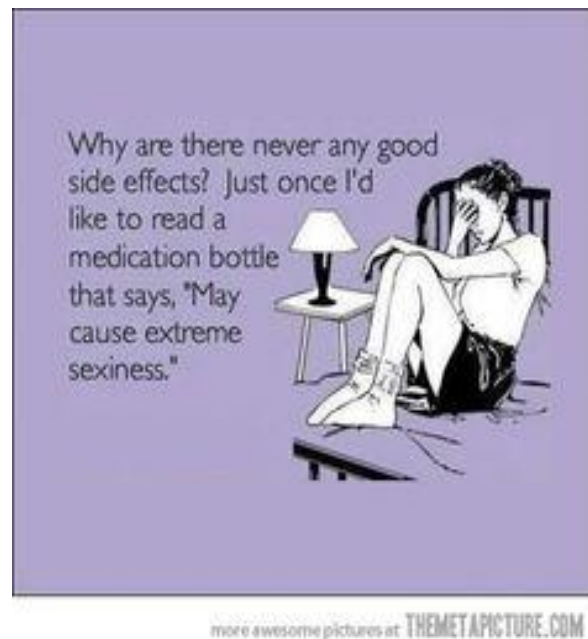
When we hear that less than one alcoholic in twenty is now being reached by our program, it is a measure of the distance we still have to go. While the GSO cannot provide the individual effort of Twelfth Step work with the individual alcoholic at the local level (with the great exception of the 520 loners sponsored by the GSO loner staff member), it certainly can be of the greatest help in interesting more alcoholics so that they will seek our program and the better way of life that is implicit in it. Fully as important, GSO can be of very real help to those of us who have already started on the program.

Something read in a booklet, a bulletin, the Grapevine, or some other publication or letter from the GSO, may provide just the spark we sometimes need to keep our feet on the ground and on the right path.

If we try to "carry the message" as part of our efforts to practice the principles of AA "in all our affairs," we need the help GSO provides. Our Fellowship is like a three-legged stool: It wouldn't be very stable without all three legs, Recovery, Unity and Service. We lose something personally if we "let George do it" when it comes to keeping the Service leg strong and effective.

R. K. Traverse City, Michigan

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Announcements

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org

NIA 20: www.aa-nia.org

75th Colorado State conference, Sept 2-4, Westminster Colorado
<http://convention.coloradoaa.org/>

Fall Assembly, Sept 17, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

Fall Committee Meeting, Oct 15, Lord of Life Church, LaFox IL

We Agnostics, Atheists & Freethinkers International Convention Nov 11-13, Austin TX email: info@waaftiaac.org www.waaftiaac.org

Winter Assembly, Dec 10, St Charles Borromeo Parish in Hampshire



Big Book Conference
AA Northern Illinois Area 20

“A Design For Living”

Saturday, October 29, 2016

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. - Registration begins at 8: a.m.

Guest Speakers: **Bob B.** St Paul, MN **Carleen L.** Helena, MT

Wheaton Bible Church 27W500 North Avenue, West Chicago, Illinois 60185

**Contact: niabigbookconference@gmail.com or Jason @
312 834 1819**