

Fall 2010

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NEWSLETTER

www.aa-oregon.org

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AA

OREGON . AREA 58

▲ The General Assembly Edition ▲

From the Newsletter Chair By Rhonda Z.

Hi Area! I just wanted to take a small paragraph to say thanks for letting me be of service. Also, I wanted to call attention to the fact that this issue will be a little different compared to the last few we have most recently seen—more like a ‘no frills’ edition in honor of our General Service Assembly this weekend. I know that many of you have expressed a deep enjoyment of some of the previous features such as the “Top 12 List,” Area Archives, and even Sudoku. Don’t worry; these items are not gone forever. They are just gone from this issue so that we can bring you a more succinct edition that is both timely for the General Assembly and will also warrant fewer pages. Remember, there will be a Round Table at the November Assembly where you can come and share your ideas on the Newsletter. And, as always, this is *your* Area and this is certainly *your* Newsletter. Please let me know *anytime* what content you would like to see. Thanks. ▲

Did You Know: Business Meeting Minutes

Did you know that all of our business meetings are available in their “minutes” form online at www.aa-oregon.org? Here’s what business meeting minutes typically contain:

1. Agenda
2. Area Voting Procedures
3. Minutes
4. Area Officers Reports & PRAASA Reports
5. Financial Statements
6. Group Contributions
7. Proposed Budget English
8. Proposed Budget Spanish
9. Service Committee Reports
10. District, Intergroup and Assembly Reports

For more info, feel free to contact our Area Secretary, Penny H. at secretary@aa-oregon.org



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Anonymity in a Digital Age – My Experiment with Facebook

By Chase B.

“Chase B***** Has Joined the Group ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’” was displayed on the website. But I am *already* a member of AA, I thought. This was in the late fall of 2009, and, by that time, I had enjoyed membership in AA for almost 15 years, and yet there it was, in all the humble glory and mechanical grace that comes with the digital age – a public declaration of my affiliation with our fascinating 12 Step Fellowship.

It actually started out as an experiment, really. Let me explain. I had been asked to do a presentation at a conference titled “Anonymity in a Digital Age,” So, being somewhat well trained over the years by the GSR’s of Oregon Area, I knew I needed to do some research on the matter. I had been pestered by some of my contemporaries in recent years to jump on the Facebook bandwagon, so I figured I would open an account to explore how, or if, AA members declare or imply their membership while using this popular social networking tool.

My first move was to type ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ into the search box on the Facebook website. The top hit of the search query was titled ‘Alcoholics Anonymous,’ with a button next to it called ‘Join.’ Laughing out loud, I clicked on the ‘Join’ button, and voila, I became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous! They didn’t even ask me if I had a desire to stop drinking! Oh well, *I know* I can’t hold my booze! Now it was time to check out some of my fellow AA members! There was a random selection of members on the screen, so I clicked on one of the full names before me. I was redirected to the personal page of a ‘Mark H*****’ who lives in London, England (name changed to protect the innocent). His page contained his full name, the company he was employed by, and all kinds of other cool stuff, not the least of which was his list of ‘Interests.’ (Continued on page 3)

Oregon Area Delegate News By Anne M.

Greetings from your Delegate on tour! Since the May Assembly, I've reported on the 60th General Service Conference on 8 occasions to 17 participating Districts. I have 5 more reports scheduled, covering 5 Districts plus the Mill Creek group in the Oregon State Penitentiary. I still have plenty of open weekends, so I'm hoping the remainder of the Districts will invite me to come and give a Conference report ... hint, hint ... ☺ My schedule is posted on the Oregon Area website, www.aa-oregon.org/delegate.

There will never be enough time to give a full verbal report on everything that happened at the Conference, so I will soon be posting my full Conference report on the Area's website. I have already posted the outcomes of all the Conference agenda items on the Delegate's page. If you have a passion for a particular committee or agenda item and want to know what happened, you will find the answers there. Feel free to email or call me if you have specific questions or need more detail. I will also take a few moments here to inform you of some very important issues that came from Board reports at the Conference, and for which your input is needed.

The A.A. Grapevine: The A.A. Grapevine Board and the Conference Committee on the Grapevine need your input on the future publication and delivery of the monthly magazine. Subscriptions have dropped dramatically, resulting in a projected deficit in 2010 and possibly 2011. The Board has 'heard' indirectly many explanations about why members are no longer subscribing and/or not purchasing new subscriptions, but they need to hear directly from you -- whether you are a subscriber or not -- in order to make some decisions about the future of the magazine. Is the A.A. Grapevine still relevant today? Do we still need / want it? How does it (or does it) contribute to our ability to carry A.A.'s message of hope and recovery? Only the Fellowship can answer these questions and provide direction. The Conference recommended that fellowship-wide sharing take place on 4 key questions. A few more questions were added after the Conference and a survey was developed that I've been handing out at all my Conference reports. This survey is also available for download from the Area website (web address above). It is a 'fillable' form, which means you can complete the survey while the document is open on the website, save it to your computer, then email it to me. You can also print a copy, complete it, mail or email it to me, or give it to your GSR to bring to the Assembly. I encourage each of you to please complete a survey form (one per member please) and take copies to your home group and ask home group members to also complete and return the survey. The more information we gather, the better.

Electronic Access to Literature and Other A.A. Information: The General Service Office (G.S.O.) needs your help in determining how best to deliver information

electronically and which information/literature is desired.

A short survey is posted on the Oregon Area website (web address above). Please complete the survey and email or mail it to me. Please also tell your home group members about it and maybe even print off some forms and take them to your meeting. As with the Grapevine survey, the more information we can provide to our trusted servants at G.S.O., the better for all of us.

Anonymity on the Internet: With all the current technology including social networking sites, Twitter, etc., we have an even greater challenge of protecting our personal anonymity and the anonymity of our friends. Do you mention going to meetings, being sober, or your (or someone else's) sobriety date on your Facebook page? Do you Twitter about last night's home group business meeting and/or which band played at the A.A. dance? Do you post pictures from your District picnic or campout on MySpace? This may sound silly, but it is happening. We are breaking our anonymity all over the web. What a great topic for a panel or workshop in your District. Let's get some dialog going about how to stop the flood of anonymity breaks.

Protecting Vulnerable Members in Meetings: At its fall quarterly meeting in November 2009, the General Service Board (GSB) received and accepted a report from its 'subcommittee on vulnerable members in A.A.' A serious question had arisen as to whether the GSB has a role in protecting minors in A.A. meetings. The subcommittee members agreed that, in its position at the bottom of the A.A. service structure, the GSB "would not have a role in setting any behavioral policy or guideline for the A.A. groups or members in regards to protecting any vulnerable member including minors coming to A.A." The subcommittee members also agreed that "... it is the groups and individual members that need to ensure that all members feel as safe as possible in A.A., and that newcomers are provided with strong sponsorship and made aware that A.A. is a microcosm of society of the world outside the A.A. meeting room - that they may encounter a few members who do not have their best interests in mind about getting sober through the A.A. program of recovery." Here, then, is another great workshop topic. How can we as individuals and groups raise awareness of this issue and ensure that our meetings are safe for everyone?

Thanks to everyone who has participated so far in the Conference reporting process. If at any time there are questions, please contact me at delegate@aa-oregon.org. ▲

Digital Age (continued from page 1)

As you might have guessed, his top interest, along with sailing, badminton and music, was 'AA.' Well I know that I am always closer to my next drink if I feel self-righteous and indignant, so I quickly acknowledged my offended perspective, and promptly logged off the site and went to a meeting (one that required my physical presence).

The purpose of a social networking tool is to connect with people, either directly, through private messages, or publicly, through published 'wall posts,' which are essentially broadcasted messages or 'status updates', that are displayed either to the entire Facebook world of over 500 million people, or to your personal 'network' of friends, depending on how you have your privacy settings configured. These status updates can be as benign a statement to the world as "heading off to work everyone, wish me luck," to a sharper, more precise statement such as "We need a Greeter at the Tuesday Night Men's Stag, any volunteers?" Does this last statement break one's anonymity? No, not technically. Does it imply AA membership to anyone that understands some of the keywords? I think it does. It certainly will leave those outside of AA circles who receive your 'update,' a bit puzzled about words like 'Stag' and 'Greeter.' Is this a hunting excursion? Do hunters 'Greet' prospective 'Stags' before they hunt them down? Hmmm. So many questions!

Shortly after my big experiment last year, I withdrew my membership from the Facebook AA group. Don't get me wrong, I have no beef with this group, but I grew to enjoy the connectivity that social networking offered me with people in my life, not all of which are AA members; some who may want to hear about my personal life from me directly, not as part of a two-dimensional description of me on a website.

Our 11th Tradition, which states, "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," has certainly not changed. The principle it contains is a reminder of our collective experience with regard to membership equality, personal humility, and staying 'right-sized.' Our historical practice of omitting our last names and avoiding identifiable photographs when disclosing our AA membership publically is still certainly as achievable as ever, but modern technology, including social networking and the sheer power of search engines, such as Google, may leave each of us with a few more hoops to jump through if we want to fit ourselves to adhere to our spiritual principles along these lines.

Whether it be through customizing our privacy settings, or being mindful about what we broadcast so easily to the digital domain, the responsibility—in this alcoholic's view—is up to each and every member

... so let it begin with me. ▲

Personal Experience With Service By Karla B. D6

It's been 15 years since my last drink so clearly something is working in my life. I'm not going to pretend I understand whatever it is that is keeping me sober but I believe that service is what keeps me happy while I am sober.

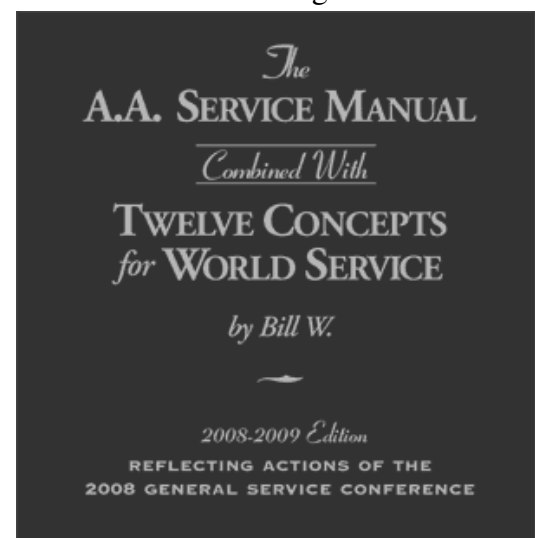
At about my 3rd meeting, I realized that if I wanted what ya'll had, I was going to have to join in. However, being as painfully shy as I am (yep, still am) I couldn't actually talk to anyone. So I decided to start washing the dishes. A couple of meetings later, this other new gal asked if she could help and she became my first AA friend. Unconsciously, this taught me a bit about service. In some small way I learned that doing something for others actually stops me from acting the ways I have always acted. I have spent my entire sobriety in service of one way or another. And each thing taught me something new.

When the district needed a secretary, I stepped up (my sponsor told me to, and sometimes I can be compliant). I learned about the General Service structure and the idea that we are servants to groups and drunks...not leaders.

As a GSR then DCM, I learned how to get up in front of others and vote my group's will instead of my own. I've taken meetings into treatment centers and institutions and these are some of the best meetings I have ever attended. To see the desperation in the eyes of some of the women...then ever so slowly...every once in awhile I get to witness the light coming on. What had been darkness gradually becomes the slightest glimmer of hope. Being an alcoholic with low self esteem I get to learn that I have a message that someone might need.

I walk with other women through the steps and every time I get something new out of the steps AND I make a new friend. And since the majority of my disease is a desperate loneliness, these relationships are paramount to an alcoholic like me.

We are not the only organization on earth that promotes service. The idea of working for others with no thought for ourselves is a timeless concept. So far it's working for me, so I think I'll keep doing it! ▲





SKIP'S PRAASA REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



Our Alternate Chair, Skip A., was invited to give a report at PRAASA (Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly) on whether or not the conference should take its on inventory, and if so, how? This is a complex issue, as we have recently heard in discussion regarding our own Area inventory (see Business Meeting Minutes from both February and May 2010 at www.aa-oregon.org). Here are some of the highlights of Skip's report to the Pacific Region:

...In our text Alcoholics Anonymous Chapter 5, it reads *"a business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade"*. My Sponsor paraphrases the rest of the paragraph as "uncover, discover, discard." . . . the Trustees Committee Chairperson on the General Service Conference, **our own** Madeleine P, appointed 4 members to a subcommittee to create a procedure or process by which a Planning Committee would be established. It also clarified that the subcommittee was NOT to undertake the development of a plan for an inventory, but only the **CREATION OF** the Planning Committee that would establish the process for an inventory. The subcommittee submitted a "Discussion for the Proposal for a General Service Conference Inventory." It determined its two main objectives were: 1) determine if the subcommittee felt there was a perceived need to recommend to the GSB a proposal that the Board ask the GSC to undertake a Conference inventory, and 2) if it was agreed such a recommendation be make, to include some suggestions as to how such an activity might be accomplished. The report stated the intention for the Inventory Planning Committee to reflect the current Conference composition . . . reflected in the 17 member Planning Committee. The report also provided recommendations to what a Planning Committee would include in a Conference Inventory; the Structure, Content, and Participants of the Inventory, how often to conduct it, how to process the information, and who to share it with.

So, while I ask you "should the Conference take its own inventory, and if so, how," I am also reporting to you that Committees are already acting on the issue. So far, the Conference has never taken one; the only exception being the Twelve Concepts as a possible form of inventory taken by Bill W. However, three Conferences had the theme "AA Takes Its Inventory" in 1963, 1981, & 1993, and relevant presentations and workshops were provided. ▲

BACKPAGE EXTRAS

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information please visit www.aa-oregon.org or the respective hosts' websites. To submit an event to be included in the newsletter, please send it to newsletter@aa-oregon.org

- Southern Oregon Jamboree, Oct 14 -17 2010 200 N Riverside in Medford, Oregon
- November 6, 2010, 6 PM, Annual Hermiston Oyster Feed!
415 South Highway 395 in Hermiston, Oregon
- WACYPAA in Yosemite December 10-12
- Pacific Northwest Conference 2011 PNC in Bend the weekend of June 24, 2011.

AREA 58 Assemblies

- Service Committee Roundtables
November 19-21, 2010 - Medford, Oregon
Host: District 16
- February Eugene/Springfield Districts 6,19,20,33 more information to follow
- Pre-conference Assembly in Corvallis, May 20th 2011 at the Ashbrook Independent School
- General Assembly September 16th 2011, District 22 will host in McMinnville at the Yamhill County Fairgrounds



OREGON AREA 58 NEWSLETTER Want to submit an article? Articles should focus on stories, group news, district news, or other service activities in Oregon Area 58. We may edit your submission for formatting purposes. Please have these to the Newsletter Chair 1 month prior to the next Assembly. Email the Newsletter Chair at newsletter@aa-oregon.org and please use the subject heading: "**AREA 58 Submission**" If you don't hear back, always feel free to resubmit. Junk mail filter applies.