

# Newsletter

Published by the Newsletter Committee, Oregon Area 58. Alcoholics Anonymous  
see us at <http://www.aa-oregon.org/>

## TWELVE EASY STEPS TO BRING A GSR SCHOOL TO YOUR DISTRICT

1. **Introduce the idea of hosting a GSR School to the GSRs in your District.** Have a thorough discussion and then take a vote. Ideally your GSRs will vote in the affirmative by 'substantial unanimity.
2. **Discuss the idea of hosting other workshops and/or activities in conjunction with the GSR School.** Your discussions may include combining the GSR School with a presentation by one or more service committees, a 'home group' workshop, a potluck, a panel on sponsorship or the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, etc. Consider anything that will draw local members to the event.
3. **Select a location and possible dates for the GSR School.** Discuss a range of dates that will work for most of the members and find available locations. Check the Area's website as well as District and Intergroup websites in and around your District to avoid conflicting activities.
4. **Contact Your Alternate Delegate.** Email ([delegate-alt@aa-oregon.org](mailto:delegate-alt@aa-oregon.org)) or call Anne M. (phone number is in the Area Roster) with the dates you are considering. We will select the final date together. A two-hour block of time is preferred but each GSR School can be customized to fit the District's needs.
5. **Work with the Alternate Delegate to develop an agenda for the GSR School.** The Alternate Delegate may ask you for help selecting panelists for the GSR School. A current or past GSR from your District may be asked to participate, as well as a past DCM. The Alternate Delegate will send you documents describing what material is covered and will work with you to make the selections. A past Delegate is also generally asked to participate so if you have a particular person in mind, please let the Alternate Delegate know.
6. **Provide the Alternate Delegate with the approximate number of members you anticipate will attend.** The expected attendance is important for your planning (selecting a large enough facility, providing coffee, refreshments, relevant documents, etc.) but also for the Alternate Delegate who will be printing agendas and supplying other materials.

7. **Discuss the District's ability to be self-supporting.** Reimbursing mileage (\$.35 per mile) for panelists coming from outside your District is one way your District can be fully self-supporting. If you are unable to do that, reimbursing actual gasoline expenses is also helpful. The Alternate Delegate will make every effort to bring all the panelists in one car so that only one mileage and/or gasoline reimbursement is necessary. If, however, you ask for specific panelists who are not able to carpool with the Alternate Delegate, more than one expense may be incurred. You should calculate in advance how much your District can offer as reimbursement and provide that information to the Alternate Delegate. Oregon Area has no budget for the GSR Schools, but the Alternate Delegate has a budget which can be used when appropriate. If your District cannot be self-supporting, don't let that stop you. We will always find a way to make GSR Schools happen for those who want them.
8. **Ask a trusted servant to make copies of the "Oregon Area 58 Guidelines" and the "GSR School Workbook" from the Area's website.** GSRs like to have these two documents available to them at a GSR School, and they are both available for download from the Area's website ([www.aa-oregon.org](http://www.aa-oregon.org)). If you are unable to have these documents available for attendees, please let the Alternate Delegate know in advance.
9. **Discuss providing other materials appropriate to the GSR School.** Are there other documents or AA pamphlets you think would be valuable to have on hand? The AA pamphlets about the GSR and DCM come to mind, but the illustrated pamphlets about the 12 Concepts and 12 Traditions are also very relevant. All can be purchased from your local Intergroup or central office and are available for download from GSO's website ([www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)).
10. **Once scheduled, post details about your GSR School on the Area's website (events calendar) and on your District and Intergroup websites (if available).** The Area Webmaster can help you place your GSR School on the calendar if you are unfamiliar with the process for adding an event.
11. **Print flyers and disseminate them to the groups in your District and in neighboring Districts.** The more the merrier, so spread the word with enthusiasm, and as far and wide as possible. When you announce the event, if you are excited about it, others will get excited about it too.
12. **HAVE FUN !!** GSR Schools are not just for GSRs or potential GSRs. Hosting a GSR School, with or without another activity, is a way to fellowship with newcomers, old timers and everyone in between. The information provided by the panelists is relevant to all members, will enrich everyone's sobriety, will broaden each attendee's understanding of general service, and will provide the connection between our individual 12<sup>th</sup> Step work and being of service to AA.

Yours in love and service,  
Anne M, Alternate Delegate  
[delegate-alt@aa-oregon.org](mailto:delegate-alt@aa-oregon.org)

## **Something Different from Public Information**

Last January I was asked by the Portland Intergroup Public Information Chair if I would join her at Portland State University. The request came from some students who wanted to know something about Alcoholics Anonymous. They had asked if we could put on a small presentation. So of course the answer was yes. Yes seems to be the magic word when it comes to sharing about Alcoholics Anonymous.

When the evening came to do the presentation I wondered (as I always do) - do I have all the facts? Am I ready to do this? I know that thirteen years ago if someone told me that to stay sober I would have to share about A.A, I would have resigned right there and walked away. I am just glad that at the time I was asked to do one simple thing. Go to a meeting one day at a time. Things sure are different today. As I arrived at PSU I was welcomed by two young men. I had a conversation with both of them to find out what they wanted to know about A.A. They shared that they had gotten into trouble and that alcohol had a big part to do with being in trouble. After listening to and relating to their behavior I was put at ease. By now the Intergroup PI Chair had arrived. She asked me how I would like to do this presentation. We talked. For a moment it was going to be the same A.A. spiel, which is to share what A.A. is and what A.A. does and does not do. For some reason that night this just did not seem totally right. So I suggested that we do something different. I suggested that I would open the meeting that night and then she (intergroup chair) could share with them what A.A. is and what A.A. does.

So the meeting began with "I am alcoholic" and from there I began to share what it was like and what happened, and what it is like now. I

do not know if they could relate to what I shared that night. I do know that we had to answer more questions and pass out more pamphlets than usual, and after the presentation was over we still had more questions to answer.

I am thankful to the God who connected me with two young but potential alcoholics who had gotten themselves into trouble with alcohol, because as their punishment they had to invite A.A. to campus, write a report on alcoholism, and invite everybody who was in the same student housing building to attend the presentation. This gave us an audience of about twenty-five to thirty people. Most of all I would like to thank everyone who has done "something different" so that a drunk like me could recognize the disease of alcoholism and find the path leading to my sobriety. Thanks so much. May God continue to open more doors so other drunks like me can catch the wonderful gift of recovery from alcoholism.

Yours in service

Marc C. PI-North

## **Increasing Group Participation at the Area Level: Strategies that Work**

Among many encouraging pieces of intelligence that surfaced during the February 2008 assembly was the news that five Eugene-Area meetings based at the JESCO Club had merged to form a single registered group, and finally had the resources to send a GSR to an area assembly. This was great news to me as a former DCM. Although Eugene-Springfield as a whole is always well represented at Area assemblies, those JESCO meetings were a glaring example of one type of meeting that ought to have a voice in AA, but tends to fall through the cracks in terms of representation.

The JESCO club, which also hosts NA meetings and miscellaneous recovery events, is located in the poorest part of Eugene, three blocks from the Eugene Mission, our principal homeless shelter. Although all the meetings there are well attended by people who desperately need our program, a limited number of the attendees have enough sobriety and stability to commit to any service position more demanding than coffee maker or chair detail. Seventh tradition funds are lean at best. Some proportion of those who stay sober in such a meeting remain as home group members out of loyalty or personal preference, but others gravitate to groups where the atmosphere is more middle-class.

Our local districts have repeatedly attempted to reach out to such unrepresented groups, offering rides and help with lodging for GSRs to attend Area assemblies. Though lack of funds is the most commonly cited reason for not having a GSR, it is probably the easiest to surmount. I see no violation in AA traditions in a group's supporting their GSR with money given by another group to support the activities of an AA District. It's a different matter when the same group is represented by a person who has minimal connection with it, as can happen when people who have rotated out of one GSR position makes themselves available to another group.

Merging several meetings into a single group, with one GSR and (usually) one treasurer, makes a great deal of sense under these circumstances. The degree of autonomy of individual meetings becomes a matter of group conscience. Typically each meeting has its own secretary and retains control of meeting format and etiquette. If there is one particularly strong meeting in the lineup, that one will probably contribute disproportionately to the finances and to the service personnel, but the other meetings are able to play an active role in the service structure as well, and their members to take service positions on a rotational basis.

Division of duties between GSR and alternate is one solution to a situation where there are several people qualified to be GSR, but none of them is able to commit the time do

all aspects of the job thoroughly. One group in District 19 explicitly divided up the GSR duties between the GSR and her alternate, having one person attend assemblies and the other District and business meetings.

Finally, smaller groups can have a voice in the Area service structure through their DCMs, GSRs for other groups, or members of the Area Committee. These people cannot vote on behalf of your group, but they can transmit concerns to the assembly, and they can make reports to your business meeting. *Any* individual or meeting is free to contact *any* trusted servant, including your conference delegate or the General Service Office in New York, with any concern related to AA, and can expect that the request will receive thoughtful consideration. Addressing it first to either the DCM or the appropriate Area chairperson, however, gives you the benefit of commentary and fine tuning from someone well versed in AA traditions, greatly increasing the likelihood that your proposal will fly.

Martha S., Eugene, OR

## The Peanut Gallery

A collection of wit and wisdom heard at meetings in the Oregon Area. As no items were submitted for this department from our trusted servants outside the Eugene-Springfield Area, the selection is a trifle lopsided.

I don't know much about a new freedom and a new happiness. The steps for me are like this giant Matterhorn and I'm slogging around the bottom looking for the trail.

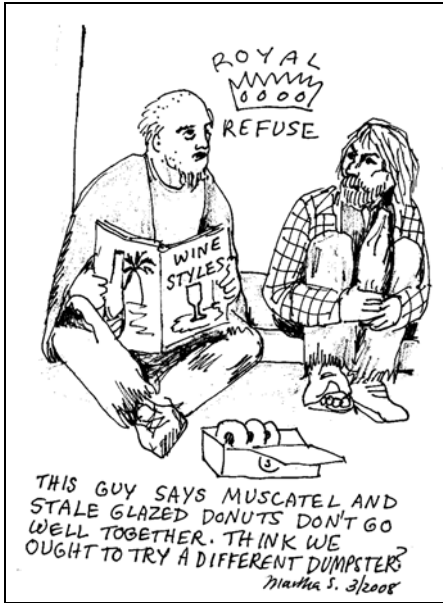
Sally. Eugene (1 year sober but just beginning the 9<sup>th</sup> step)

I was a social drinker, all right. You know, you can be social lying on the floor, if you're lying with your back down.

Gary, Eugene

I don't have any trouble socializing with normies. I'm a normie myself until I start drinking.

Jeffrey, Eugene



If you turn it over and you don't let go, you end up upside down. Kathleen, quote from unknown source.

This meeting reminds me of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. We're all pilgrims on our way to ... somewhere... and we amuse ourselves with tales along the way.

John, Sober Awakening, Eugene.

*Canterbury Tales* is one of the great classics of English literature. Written by Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, it describes a group of pilgrims traveling to a saint's shrine in Canterbury. Each pilgrim tells a story, most with a moral. I suppose the personal stories section of the Big Book could be subtitled "Akron Tales" or something of that sort.



## Images of Sobriety

Contributed by Ken P., Eugene

As a professional artist, I made hundreds of images before I got into recovery. This happens to be the first one I made in sobriety, just a few days after I "graduated" from treatment (March 1985). It's a brush and ink drawing made on site in northern Wyoming, where I had driven to

begin a two-month artist's residency. A small creek had scooped out a kind of amphitheater in the soft soil, and I was intrigued by the contrast between this hollowed-out feature and the projecting bluffs in the distance. It reminded me of the human body, and perhaps even the soul - which in my case, was waiting to be "filled up" with something. Something like AA.

It was a 19 mile drive each way to Buffalo, Wyoming, which became my first home group before returning to Eugene. I still have an autographed copy of *As Bill Sees It* from that group.

Ken P., Eugene

## The AA Grapevine - "Our Meeting in Print"

Years ago my sponsor said that it is wise for anyone to say, "Yes" if someone asks them to be their sponsor. He said it is okay to agree to be a sponsor even before doing a Fourth Step. He suggested that if the new sponsee called and asked for help with a Fourth Step they can say, "Can I call you right back?" They could then hang up and call their Sponsor to say, "Can you help me do a Fourth Step so I will have something to share with this guy?" Well, Gus and I acted out that dance with my new position.

I got a couple of calls from Grapevine Reps asking, "What does a Grapevine Rep do?" I said, "Can I get back to you?" I called Gus. I asked him what I should tell them. He sent me some good suggestions.

Now if you are new to our assemblies and you find them confusing, let me say, "That's wonderful!" I was confused too. We have this wonderful thing called service sponsorship. The next time you go to an assembly, walk up to someone with a friendly face, or the least threatening face you see, and ask them, "What is a service sponsor?" The simple answer might be that he or she is a sponsor who has experience with our service structure, someone who helps us not so much with the Steps, as with our Traditions and Concepts. I was told it is a great benefit if my service sponsor has held the same position that I am currently holding.

I didn't ask Gus to be my service sponsor... I just started acting like he was. My service sponsor's name is Bruce and he is in the middle of six months of living the life of a sailor, with his bride, on the high seas of the Gulf of Mexico. Since Gus did the job of Grapevine Chair also, I asked him to help me out. Gus, are you my back-up service sponsor?

So, in early February I was looking at this piece of paper he sent. Gus titled it, "GRAPEVINE IDEATIONS, Some Ideas That Might Help GV Representatives Be More Effective." That's when the argument started. I should add that I was alone in my house at the time.

One voice said, "This is a bad idea." Another said, "Why are you stalling? Just do it!" The first item on Gus's list read, "Become a Grapevine/LaVina subscriber and reader, a well informed rep knows about the GV and it starts with reading the magazine." "Eric, you don't want to go to the assembly and admit that you have never read a Grapevine magazine from cover-to-cover, do you?" "No, but I don't want to go and tell them that I have done it only once, either!" The voices in my head quieted a little bit when I actually got into action and went looking for the current issue, but boy did they start up again when I looked at the cover. There it was, right under the red Valentine's heart and in capital letters, "DATING SOBER." "That will get you in trouble, Eric. I told you this was a bad idea!" Another voice said, "You've been married 34 years, this better be a topic you don't remember much about and you better not have a desire to learn!"

When I started reading, the argument ceased completely. Over the course of a couple of days, I realized that during the last year of being your delegate I had slipped into a embattled frame of mind where I had been feeling trapped in a service position that just seemed like it was overwhelming. It felt like it was way too much for me to fulfill the responsibilities of the job. I realized that I was resisting taking on my new duties as the Area Grapevine Chair. I was tired and there was a part of me that wanted to run away from service entirely. As I read the magazine, I went from "prisoner of war on the eternal death march" to "extreme gratitude for this wonderful February issue of our meeting in print." It's the best Grapevine I've ever read! And, this is the best job of being a Grapevine Chairperson that I have ever done!

The featured articles were great... about love, romance, patience, sex, acceptance, surrender, patience, humility, willingness and patience... or at least that is how I took it.

The article on Tradition Two is one of the most touching and effective testimonies of the value of surrendering to the group conscience that I have read to date.

### Oregon Area 58 AA Newsletter Volume 35 Issue 3

The article titled, "Unity or Uniformity," raises important and relevant questions for any group that is doing a group inventory. We certainly want to spot how we can sometimes engage in practices that pressure our newcomers to think that they need to believe as we believe, or that they need to do as we do. It is easy to think that because the group functioned in a certain way, "back in the day when I was a newcomer," that it is the "right way" to do it now.

For myself, I want to support each new generation of AA leaders and encourage them to help us in continually reinventing ourselves. If we are learning and living our 36 principles, as elders in our groups, we can be a tremendous source of stability and inspiration to our young leaders. I continually see how doing this makes our group more attractive to newcomers, to say nothing of the boost that it gives to our emerging trusted servants, tomorrow's elders. I find that they usually want their creative service efforts to be within the framework of the Traditions. This is especially true if they trust that the elders are open to their ideas and enthusiastically thanking them for their service. We do well to periodically review Concept X which reminds us that, "Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority..." I try to touch on these topics while I answer their questions about the Traditions and Concepts. We need not fear change under these circumstances.

The article that made me cry the most (Okay, I was sobbing) was the one on forgiveness by the lady whose husband was murdered. I won't spoil the ending by telling you too much, but if you have a growing excitement about God working in your life, I recommend it.

Grapevine Chair of Oregon Area is my new service position, and considering how time-consuming the last one was, my wife is very supportive of me having this one! I don't know what I'm doing yet, but I can feel a growing enthusiasm for whatever it is.

I am very grateful to the groups of Oregon Area for this opportunity to serve.

In Fellowship, Eric K., Past Delegate and Oregon Area Grapevine Representative