

# **SPRING ASSEMBLY**

**April 14, 2013**

Area Chair, Mark N. opened the meeting at 1:05 pm with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer and a reading from Chapter 5 of the Service Manual (p. S 40).

Area Chair read voting requirements for Spring Assembly

Count= 55; 36 required for substantial unanimity, 28 required for simple majority.

## **Secretary's Report:**

Secretary read Old Business and New Business from Fall Assembly 2012. A motion to accept report was made, seconded and passed.

## **Treasurer's Report:**

This report will capture activity from the Fall Assembly to Spring Assembly, 5 months.

Opening balance for November 2012 was \$3,522.36. Contributions for the past five months totaled \$8,909.98. Our total expenses total \$13,752.81 with a closing balance of \$3,700.93.

Over the last 5 months:

- ⌚ Dist 1 has 30 registered groups. 6 groups made 8 contributions of \$517.50 averaging \$86.25.
- ⌚ Dist 2 has 41 registered groups. 8 groups made 20 contributions of \$1,201.50 averaging \$150.19.
- ⌚ Dist 3 has 66 registered groups. 8 groups made 10 contributions of \$369.56 averaging \$46.20.
- ⌚ Dist 4 has 52 registered groups. 6 groups made 10 contributions of \$518.70 averaging \$86.45.
- ⌚ Dist 5 has 57 registered groups. 13 groups made 25 contributions of \$1,960.33 averaging \$150.79.
- ⌚ Dist 6 has 39 registered groups. 8 groups made 17 contributions of \$1,044.12 averaging \$130.52

There were 13 contributions, anonymous/unregistered group/or difficult to identify totaling \$573.49.

Noted activity for the past 5 months includes:

- ⌚ Of the \$9,000 within the prudent reserve, \$3,000 was returned to the active treasury in January, 2013.
- ⌚ Area 31 received \$2,000 from the Mass State Convention. The Area Committee voted, and this money was to be distributed accordingly- the 6 Districts and 6 Committees, were to receive \$75 to be added to their allotted budget for expenses, totaling \$900. \$800 was to be distributed to individuals who attended NERAASA to cover a portion of their expenses and \$300 was to be given to Archives to rebind the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Big Book.

On the reverse side of the 5 month spread sheet is March's contributions to the Area. \$2,233.01 was received from 33 contributions, averaging \$67.67. Contributions for March of 2012 totaled \$1,952.85 from 37 contributions, averaging \$52.78.

## **Registrar's Report:**

- ⌚ Area 31 currently has 294 groups listed as active, 10 of which are registered groups in correctional facilities. This is an increase of 2 from the Fall Assembly.
- ⌚ GSO closed access to the database for 2 weeks for migration from one server to another.
- ⌚ The records office is working on cleaning up the database. They are currently concentrating on "Incomplete" group listings. Area 31 has no "Incomplete" group listings.
- ⌚ Area 31 does have "Unknown" groups. Unknown is defined as a listings whose contact information is missing or contains address information that is no longer valid (i.e., mail returned to GSO as undeliverable). Registrar brought a listing of unknown groups for each District and asked that DCMs investigate whether or not they are still active and if they are provide him with updated contact information.

- ⌚ Registrar in cooperation with Area 48 (Hudson/Mohawk/Berkshire) Registrar and Delegate is transferring some Area 48 groups' records over to Area 31 on the database. These are groups in Northwest Mass. that used to be in Area 48 that are now part of Area31.
- ⌚ Registrar is ready to accept group information change forms. Group change information can be submitted on paper, email (registrar@area31aa.org) or by phone (contact Jack at XXX-XXX-XXXX). Information should include group number, group name, first and last name of group contact, contact's mailing address, contact's email address, contact's phone number. If you do not know your group number, Registrar will find the number for you and asks that you use the number in all correspondence with the area and GSO.
- ⌚ Any GSR expecting a new GSR packet from GSO that has not yet received it, contact Jack.
- ⌚ Finally, Registrar has received a request for access to the website, not knowing that access is open to all and not understanding the role of Registrar vs. Webmaster. May be reason Registrar is getting so many hits!

### **Area Archivist Report:**

- ⌚ Once again I attended NERAASA in February and sat in at the Archives Round Tables. It was great opportunity to share with Archives Committee Members and Archivists from the entire Northeast Region. There are so many benefits that we receive from sharing our common interest and obtaining new ideas from each other.
- ⌚ A full set of CDS from NERAASA was purchased and has been added to our Archives.
- ⌚ One of our Archives Representatives Tom is currently digitizing some of our many tapes to make them more accessibly.
- ⌚ On March 23, 2013 we held an Open House at the Archives Office. My goal is to someday be able to have the Archives Office open on a regular basis to give the members of Area 31 an opportunity to visit and possibly be able to listen to or view our history.
- ⌚ Ray L the Archive Chair & Paul H the Archive Co-Chair along with Archive Committee and myself continue to work in unity sorting and protecting that which we hold so dear.

### **Ad Hoc Reports:**

#### **Handbook Ad Hoc Committee:**

- ⌚ Updating addresses.
- ⌚ Adding new committees (WMYPAA and Website).
- ⌚ Updating history with last year's items.
- ⌚ Including new and updated committee descriptions, meeting times and locations.
- ⌚ Revisions are not yet complete. Continuing to work on revisions.

### **Standing Committee Reports:**

#### **Accessibility:**

- ⌚ Currently committee has 8-10 members, including 2 members from the deaf community.
- ⌚ 8 meeting per week for the deaf and hearing impaired in Area 31. These meetings are posted on the Area 31 website.
- ⌚ 10 headsets and associated equipment for the hearing impaired were purchased, tested and are currently in use.
- ⌚ Almost ready to publish the Accessibility phone number in the "When and Where". Have 15 volunteers ready to give rides to disabled AAs. Chair and Co-Chair will be visiting Districts and meetings where coverage is lacking right now to try to get volunteers in these places (primarily Berkshire county and rural areas in NW Mass.).

- ⌚ Currently driving 3 people to meetings every week (2 blind individuals and 1 person in a wheelchair).
- ⌚ Working on getting ASL interpreters for the MA State Convention.

### **Archives:**

- ⌚ Chair recognized the great work of our current Archivist who has been serving in this capacity since June 2007.
- ⌚ Have gone to group anniversaries with boards in Florence, Ludlow and Longmeadow (Randall) as well as the Day of Service in Lenox. Scheduled to bring boards to anniversary meetings in Sheffield, Holyoke and Northampton.
- ⌚ Open House on March 23<sup>rd</sup> was a success with 40 – 50 people visiting the archives office between 11am and 1 pm that day.
- ⌚ Next Archives Office Open House will be held on June 15<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1pm.
- ⌚ Archives committee member Tom is converting tapes to CDs after Ray (Chair) listens to them to determine priority order of conversion.
- ⌚ Chair reminded assembly attendees to look at Archive boards before leaving the Assembly. Bring the message back to your groups that the boards are available for display at their anniversary meetings.
- ⌚ Also, encourage groups to update group histories. Chair or Archivist will be happy to help you fill out the Group History form.

### **CPC:**

- ⌚ Co-Chair began CPC report with a reminder that the CPC Chair position is still vacant.
- ⌚ 10 – 12 CPC reps are in attendance at the monthly meeting which represents an improved turnout over recent history.
- ⌚ All Sponsor Your Doctor packets that have been assembled have been distributed to groups. Ask about it at your next group business meeting.
- ⌚ Mailings have gone out to 5 professional groups in Greenfield with no response as yet.
- ⌚ Given the low level of activity over the last 18 months, the Chair recommended the Area consider recombining PI and CPC to provide a larger pool of volunteers for outreach and presentations.

### **Grapevine:**

- ⌚ The Grapevine was originally founded based on the success of local AA newsletters. It is an extension of our twelfth step to carry the AA message to alcoholics.
- ⌚ We help educate GVRs on ways to engage and inform AA members on all the resources available.
- ⌚ We educate GVRs about the GV offerings. Encourage promotion of the GV. Engage GVRs in thinking about ways to promote the Grapevine. GVRs decided to get some back issues to take back to their groups.
- ⌚ GV Resources available on the website - topical books and the new audio project.
- ⌚ Outreach – GV Boards are available for display at meetings. Just let us know if you are interested. Best contact is through the website email. We will raffle off a subscription when we are there.

### **Public Information:**

- ⌚ 20 active members on PI committee.
- ⌚ All meeting minutes are posted on the Area 31 website.
- ⌚ Planning to sponsor a Tradition 11 Forum. Stay tuned.
- ⌚ Standing commitments: 1450 AM Radio show taping 4 times a month (CPC does 1 of these); Phoenix Academy and IOP “Start Program”.

- ⌚ New commitments: Saint Rose de Lima School, Somers High School (could use help with meeting daytime commitment obligations).
- ⌚ Materials used to prepare for PI presentations are: PI Kit (\$18 at Intergroup); PI Workbook (\$2.50 at Intergroup); Contact list for new PI member to use to schedule shadowing an experienced PI on a commitment; and the pamphlet “Speaking at Non-AA Meetings” which is available on line at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) or in print at the Intergroup office.

### **Round Up:**

- ⌚ Chair thanked the groups and individuals who have already donated.
- ⌚ Still looking for donations of coffee, cash and conference approved literature. Donations can be dropped off at Intergroup.
- ⌚ If booking a room at the Clarion Hotel, please mention you are there for the Roundup since discounts depend on filling a certain number of rooms.
- ⌚ No dinner is planned for this year, but the committee has obtained discount agreements with a number of local restaurants and will provide a list closer to the time of the Roundup.
- ⌚ The \$10 registration fee is a donation. Anyone who cannot afford to donate is still welcome to attend.
- ⌚ The committee has already obtained 63 registrations.
- ⌚ Hopes all committees have received and reviewed the program since each committee is expected to lead at least one session at the Roundup.
- ⌚ Next meeting is April 24<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at 474 Pleasant St., Holyoke.

### **Website:**

- ⌚ This past fall this assembly elected to form a new standing committee for the Area web-site.
- ⌚ Committee first started meeting prior to November’s budget meeting. Since then we have been working on establishing definition of the site, the committee, the Web Master, and Committee Chair.
- ⌚ We are considering ways of providing back-up to the maintenance of the site in the event of an absence of the Web Master. We will be developing an instruction binder as a step by step tutorial toward this end.
- ⌚ We will develop standard policies/criteria for review of materials being submitted for inclusion on the site. Anonymity and conformance to A.A. principles have been a main focus.
- ⌚ We are reviewing and revising materials presented to the Handbook/Guidelines ad-hoc committee pertaining to the site, and committee.
- ⌚ Detailed minutes can be read on the web-site committee page under “Documents”.
- ⌚ We encourage all committees and districts to use the standard e-mail accounts appropriate to their service entities when conducting Area business, and discourage the use of private e-mail accounts for these purposes.
- ⌚ We would also encourage submission of materials appropriate to your service entities to help enhance the effectiveness of carrying our message.
- ⌚ Finally, please make your groups aware of the new opportunity for service within this committee. We meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at 7pm. In the Area office at 474 Pleasant St. Holyoke. We are also seeking a chair for this committee for this year.

### **Invited Committee Reports:**

#### **Institutions Committee:**

- ⌚ The Guidelines and Job Descriptions booklet has been a valuable resource and tool for support, education, and direction for the Committee Members and the “body” as a whole. Copies have been

distributed and are available for all. It will continue to be utilized at our Monthly Meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday -7:00pm – Providence Hospital Auditorium, Holyoke.

- ⌚ In the past 6 months the Institutions Committee has welcomed 32 new Institutions Group Reps – IGRs. A strong and enthusiastic beginning; as 26 of those IGRs began in January 2013.
- ⌚ Treasurer’s Report: Institutions Committee is fully self-supporting through contributions of either the individual AA member or through the Home Groups. Nearly all donations to the committee are used to purchase A.A. General Service Conference- approved literature for direct distribution to newcomers in institutions which we serve. In the past 6 months \$6,393.69 has been gratefully received; which averages to \$1,065.62/per month.
- ⌚ Librarian Report: A New direction for our library supply. Fewer *12 Steps & 12 Traditions* with the stock focusing more on *Living Sober* and *Came to Believe*. Pamphlets are also being purchased as they are informative, helpful and less expensive. Our Librarian is looking at the wants and needs of the people in the various institutions which we serve. Big Books are still being supplied.
- ⌚ Bridging the Gap: In the past 6 months a total of 24 calls have been received from Crocker Communications and forwarded to our Bridging the Gap Area Coordinator. We have seen a decrease in call activity; with only 7 calls received in the last 3 months.
- ⌚ Both I and the Co-Chair attended the 2013 NERAASA and participated in the informative 2 night Roundtable sharing sessions – Corrections/Treatment Facilities/Bridging the Gap. These sessions sparked a valuable course of action for our Co-Chair. He and our Bridging the Gap Coordinator are working together to support and encourage the “Sponsors & Alternates” to bring the BTG pamphlet to their Institution Commitments and to also engage in conversation to help educate the nurses, counselors, and staff members on the Bridging the Gap Service. This in turn, will aid the patient/client to receive help as they leave a facility and enter into the general A.A. community.
- ⌚ A New direction for Area 31 Bridging The Gap - the printing of informative cards which would be given to patients and clients as well as all pertinent staff members.

### **Western Mass Intergroup:**

- ⌚ 24 hour hotline continues to be covered by Intergroup staff and volunteers from Area 31 AA groups.
- ⌚ Continue to publish monthly newsletter “FYI”.
- ⌚ Intergroup Office is open 26 hours per week.
- ⌚ Intergroup offers support to groups in the area by printing and copying flyers for group anniversary announcements.
- ⌚ Ad Hoc committee has been formed to review Intergroup Guidelines.
- ⌚ Online Bookstore accessed via the Intergroup website [www.westernmassaa.org](http://www.westernmassaa.org) is now accepting payment via PayPal.
- ⌚ Website is a great resource for Area 31. The website received 5,340 hits in March. Meeting list is available here as well. “When and Where” (print version of meeting list) is available for sale at the Intergroup office.

### **Berkshire Intergroup:**

- ⌚ Thanks to Area 31 and District 3 Committee members for attending BIG Committee meetings and keeping us informed about AA throughout the area and AA as a whole.
- ⌚ BIG office open 6 days a week.
- ⌚ Key items over the past 6 months:
  - Completed review of the volunteer Hot Line list – 43 volunteers
  - More balanced volunteer office staff coverage – newer and older people in sobriety working together on the same shift.

- Refilled Grapevine subscriptions for 3 schools.
- Alkathon and Service Workshops were held
- Finance Auditing, reporting and recording format finalized
- Modified the By Laws
- Completed the Mission Statement:
  - The mission of Berkshire Intergroup office of Alcoholics Anonymous is to make the AA program available to those requesting help for a problem with alcohol; to assist them toward the path of recovery; and to foster unity and communication between member groups. This is accomplished primarily through caring, supportive volunteers staffing a business office which provides telephone contact, literature and meeting lists.*
- Upgraded BIG computer
- Obtained a digital recorder
- ⌚ Plan for the next 6 months:
  - Maintain volunteer coverage of the business office and Hot-Line
  - Ad hoc committee formed to reach out to groups needing support and dark groups not participating in the District and/or BIG
  - Encourage more groups to have a GSR and Intergroup Representative.

### **Webmaster:**

- ⌚ The website hosting package has been renewed for one year at \$47.52.
- ⌚ Area documents submission is spotty. District #5 is making the most use of this feature of the website.
- ⌚ Calendar submissions – a number of committees make regular use of this feature – make submissions to '[webmaster@area31aa.org](mailto:webmaster@area31aa.org)' to have events added to the calendar. All Area Committee, Standing Committee and District Committee meetings are listed.
- ⌚ Area 31 domain hosted email account usage seems to be better but some accounts are still not being used.
- ⌚ The top page access list is longer and this indicates that more pages are being accessed. Top of the list is still the home page with 1711 hits over the past two weeks. The Registrar's page is second in numbers. There have been a fairly high number of attempts to register or log in to the website. This is unnecessary; there are no secure pages on the site as yet. The document pages for District #6 and District #4 have both had a relatively high number of accesses (over 50) considering that they each have only one document listed.
- ⌚ **Top referrers in the past 2 weeks:** (Various Russian websites also referred to us. No idea why.)
  - 92 <http://www.westernmassaa.org/>
  - 9 <https://www.google.com/>
  - 4 <http://aagrapevine.org/>
  - 2 <http://aa-meetings.com/>
  - 2 <http://search.comcast.net/>
  - 1 <http://search.yahoo.com/>
  - 1 <http://us.yhs4.search.yahoo.com/>
  - 1 <http://www.bing.com/>
- ⌚ **phrases:** (Using the Area31aa search function)
  - Searched Content for Norwood?
  - Searched Content for Public Information
  - Searched Content for meetings.

- ⌚ For those interested in the NERASSA Website/IT Report Back it is available on the website, listed under Area Documents/Standing Committees/Website
- ⌚ The following is a breakdown of statistics for the website which were not reported from the podium:
  - **Top pages in the past 2 weeks:** (pages more than 50 hits)
    - 1711 hits to the homepage
    - 403 Registrar
    - 263 Mini Conference
    - 233 NERF
    - 192 Attempts to register (no registration is needed to access the site)
    - 132 District # 3 Service Workshop
    - 131 rss.xml - Website XML Feed
    - 106 User account – Login attempts (no login is necessary to access the site, yet)
    - 85 Calendar
    - 61 District #6 Documents
    - 55 Standing Committees
    - 52 District #4 Documents
    - 52 Round Up Documents
    - 51 Cooperation with the Professional Community
    - 51 Western Mass. Young People in A.A.
    - 50 Contact Us
    - 50 Western Mass. Intergroup
- ⌚ **Search engine results: 'Area 31 AA'**
  - Google - 1<sup>st</sup> and then 16-37
  - Bing – not found
  - Yahoo – not found
  - Blekko - 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - DuckDuckGo - 2<sup>nd</sup>
- ⌚ **Search engine results: 'Area 31 A.A.'**
  - Bing - 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - Yahoo - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3rd

### WMYPAA:

- ⌚ Chair thanked assembly for vote at Fall Assembly to admit WMYPAA as an invited committee in Area 31.
- ⌚ 20 people attended the 4/13 business meeting.
- ⌚ Spaghetti dinner was a success with 100 -125 attending. The event was self-supporting.
- ⌚ Most positions have been filled. Institutions rep voted in at 4/13 meeting.
- ⌚ Description of WMYPAA committee for the Area Handbook was written at the 4/13 meeting.
- ⌚ Upcoming events (all info submitted to webmaster for posting on Area website):
  - 4/25 - 6:30 pm at Barnes and Noble in Holyoke the subcommittee for event planning will meet.
  - 5/10 – Internal affairs event. Pizza party and board game night to help unite the committee.
  - 6/2 – 5 to 8 pm at 474 Pleasant St., Holyoke. Hot Dogs and Beans dinner and 3<sup>rd</sup> legacy workshop with 3 speakers. Donations will be gratefully accepted.
  - 7/6 – 4 pm Bonfire at 65 East St. Easthampton. Two bands, two speakers and potluck dinner.
- ⌚ WMYPAA will provide service at the Roundup - conduct the sobriety countdown, host a meeting and more.
- ⌚ Meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat of the month at 11:30 am at 474 Pleasant St. Holyoke. Next meeting 5/11.

## **District Reports:**

### **District 1:**

- ⌚ Pat S elected Co-DCM, Bruce C elected Secretary.
- ⌚ Mike (DCM) and Pat have been attending meetings that do not have GSRs to encourage them to elect and send a GSR to the District 1 meetings. Three new GSRs have begun attending and more are expected at future meetings.
- ⌚ One issue is that potential GSRs have expressed reluctance to attend due to concerns about their safety in the vicinity of the meeting location (Serenity Club on Belmont Ave in Springfield).
- ⌚ Mike expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to make a presentation at NREAASA on Electronic Interaction. Not only was he able to gain more knowledge about the topic but he obtained an invitation from Area 11 to make an encore presentation to their committee. This afforded Mike the opportunity to spend more time with our delegate in preparation and to gain knowledge from him. He also was able to observe how Area 11 conducts their business meeting and hear about the issues they are discussing.

### **District 2:**

- ⌚ Participation in District 2 meetings has grown from about 10 to over 20 reps in attendance at monthly meeting.
- ⌚ Area Committees attend by invitation only.
- ⌚ Introductions of members at District 2 meetings have been shortened to name and group name in order to spend as much time as possible on District business.
- ⌚ District 2 GSRs voted to use 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy AND nominations for their elections.
- ⌚ Roundup – District 2 will sponsor 3 round tables
  - The Home Group
  - Tradition 6
  - Tradition 9
  - Welcome volunteers to help out in any or all of these roundtable discussions.
- ⌚ District Inventory will be conducted soon.
- ⌚ Recent discussion on the subject of how to handle issues at meetings (e.g., inappropriate romantic advances to newcomers; cursing at meetings).

### **District 3:**

- ⌚ Our district covers 34 towns and we have meetings in 23 of those towns. We have 67 registered groups and hold 95 meetings.
- ⌚ We have had 13 groups represented by their GSRs in the past 6 months...not all in one meeting
- ⌚ We have recently invited a WMYPAA rep to our meetings.
- ⌚ At our Feb District meeting, Anne F presented the GSR power point which was well received by the 19 people present. The feedback from our GSRs was that it was extremely informative. We are looking forward to the second part of the presentation.
- ⌚ We collaborated on the Service Workshop day with Berkshire Intergroup which was held at the Lenox Community Center. It was a great success with 86 registered participants. We were fortunate to have almost all of our Service committees represented. Our meeting in the afternoon was made up of 6 of our districts old timers who shared their experience, strength and hope on sponsorship or on how service has impacted their sobriety. We had an amazing Ad Hoc committee and wonderful volunteers

who made the day a huge success. We had a free raffle and gave away 6 literature books. We also had a Big Book that was signed by the participants and given to the gentleman who had less than one month of sobriety. I personally was touched by a woman who was present w 6 mos. of sobriety who talked about having been in corrections and rehabs. She was emotionally choked up several times during the day. She plans to reach one year sober and then be a part of bringing meetings to the Berkshire House of Corrections.

- ⌚ We have had some good problem solving discussions on issues facing our GSRs. We have begun implementing discussion of articles from Box 459 when time allows for it.
- ⌚ District 3 and Berkshire Intergroup are working together to reach out to our dark groups to spark more representation of these groups and their members.
- ⌚ After our discussion on Finance in regards to the self- supporting packet, I plan that at our next District meeting to hand out some of the Birthday/anniversary envelopes and suggest that groups give them to their anniversary celebrants w their coin as I heard Mike the DCM from District 1 or 2 share.
- ⌚ I am hoping to see if I can get a group together from our District to join me on a field trip to our GSO office.

#### **District 4:**

- ⌚ District 3 GSRs have had many interesting discussions over the past 6 months. For example:
  - Self-support and giving \$2 instead of \$1
  - How to get help for a struggling group
  - Reaching out to dark groups
  - Voting procedures within the home group
- ⌚ District 3 is interested in hosting a workshop for the Area. Planning the workshop was to have taken place at the March meeting but the snow storm interfered with holding the meeting. So, stay tuned.
- ⌚ Alternate Delegate made GSR presentation to District 3 and it was well received.
- ⌚ Patty K was elected secretary to replace Melissa who is now Co-DCM.
- ⌚ There are now between 12 and 15 GSRs in attendance at the monthly District 3 meetings.

#### **District 5:**

- ⌚ NUMBER OF REGISTERED GROUPS: 69
- ⌚ District 5 has been slowly increasing its numbers and participation. Since January, we have had 11, 13, 15, 16 GSR's and Alt GSR's in attendance.
- ⌚ We continue to distribute beginner's packets to all new GSRs. The LCM greets at our monthly meeting.
- ⌚ Our GSR's are active participants, volunteering to take on District responsibilities and some have been attending the Concepts Meeting. Many of us were able to attend NERAASA.
- ⌚ Our District has been holding a monthly discussion of the Tradition of the month, and the Service Manual (based on a 2 yr. rotation schedule). One of our GSR's volunteer's each month to lead that discussion.
- ⌚ All of our positions are currently filled. We recently lost our CO-DCM, however at our last meeting (April 1<sup>st</sup>), using Third Legacy Voting procedures, we elected a new CO-DCM (Pauline) and a new LCM (Ralph). We are also very grateful to have a District Secretary (Amy) and we are utilizing the new Web Site ~ the Webmaster is posting all of our monthly activity so our information is easily accessible.

- Ⓟ We enjoyed the Area ~ GSR Presentation in Feb which our GSR's found very informative.
- Ⓟ District Group Changes:
  - Ⓟ Welcome Home Group has re-located their two meetings (Tues Step Group and Friday Speaker Meet) to the New Birth Christian Church ~ Thorndike ~
  - Ⓟ Sunrise Group moved to the Palmer Historical Society Building ~ Three Rivers ~
  - Ⓟ South Hadley Falls Group (Friday) is searching for a new place to meet ~ the Falls Congregational Church is closing ~ they are hoping to stay in So Hadley
  - Ⓟ South Hadley 12 & 12 Step Group is moving to its old location ~ Methodist Church ~ (Carew St)
  - Ⓟ East Longmeadow ~ (Sunday Night) who had been considering a new meeting place is back at its previous location
- Ⓟ Contacting Dark Groups:
  - Ⓟ Many of our GSR's are assisting in visiting our District's "Dark Groups" ~ updating contact information and hoping to visit their business meetings to stimulate enthusiasm ~ we are all looking forward to the Area Round Up!!!

### **District 6:**

- Ⓟ 9 GSRs attended the March meeting.
- Ⓟ Suffield Men's Group April 14<sup>th</sup> 5pm
- Ⓟ District 6 will host 2 workshops at the Roundup
- Ⓟ Area Chair noted that a speaker at NERAASA expressed a concern that the AA message is sometimes diluted at meetings. This occasioned much discussion at the March meeting of District 6.
- Ⓟ Minutes of District 6 meetings are being submitted to the webmaster for posting.
- Ⓟ Concerns expressed recently
  - Welcoming the newcomer
  - Attendance dwindling during the summer
  - Struggle to get group members active in service
  - Arguments at group business meetings.

### **Delegate's Report**

Thank you to Anne for coordinating the mini-conference yesterday and to all those that participated. The information gathered from the individuals, groups and committees is vital in my role as our area's delegate. It forms the area conscience and that is one of the many valuable properties you have gifted me so I may share it at the Conference next week. Thanks to Beth, our Area Secretary who had the mini-conference minutes typed up and in my mailbox before the day ended yesterday.

My Conference assignment is alternate chair of the Policy/Admissions Committee and we'll meet three times in our committee of nine delegates before we present our report to the Conference later in the week for a vote. The Saturday evening before the Conference opens the delegates will meet for the first of two times for a Delegates Only Meeting. At this meeting it will be my honor to be one of three delegates asked to share on a topic. My topic will be Trusting The Committee Process. Something we all attempted to do yesterday, and if we tried we were successful. The other two topics will be Why Are We Here and The Full Conference Process. Two other roles I've been asked to do – someone must have stuffed my name in the hat more than once – are moderator of break out committee concerning the inventory and the opening day reading from a passage in the Big Book on Friday morning.

Notes will be taken throughout the Conference and the Report Back will be shared at our Area Roundup on May 18<sup>th</sup> at The Clarion Hotel on Riverdale Street West Springfield.

Two more events at the Conference that will be exciting are when I present Bob W. as our candidate from Area 31 for the Trustee At Large – U.S. position. The other is submitting a bid for NERAASA 2016 in Area 31!

The Northeast Regional Forum (NERF) - better known as “The GSO Road Show” will be in our neighbor’s backyard, Area 11 Connecticut, at the Crowne Plaza on 100 Berlin Road, Cromwell, CT from 7-9 June this year. Registration is free but necessary. The easiest way to register is online at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) and click on the For Groups and Member tab, then click on the regional and local forums on the left, and then regional forums schedule and we’re on top of the list. Hotel reservations can be taken care of here now.

G.S.O. Financial Results: The committee reviewed G.S.O. financial results for the year ended December 31, 2012. Gross Sales for the year of \$12,620,075 were \$380,000 (2.9%) less than budgeted and \$148,800 (1.2%) less than last year. Gross Sales include approximately \$48,000 of eBook sales which went on-line December 9, 2011. Net Sales of \$12,364,700 were \$350,250 (2.75%) less than budgeted and \$141,400 (1.1%) less than the year 2011. Gross Profit from literature was \$7,878,000 and represented a 63.7% Gross Profit Percentage compared with 63.7% for the year 2011. The Budgeted Gross profit percentage was 62.3%.

Contributions for the year of \$6,565,600 were \$37,600 (.6%) greater than budgeted and \$301,100 or 4.8% greater last year as well. Contributions received from Countries that participate in the World Service Meeting Literature efforts were \$65,000 less than budgeted and \$40,000 less than the prior year. Contributions from AA Members and groups were 5.6% greater than the prior year. On-line Contributions amounted to approximately \$231,500 compared with \$156,000 during 2011.

Total Revenue (gross profit from literature plus contributions) was \$14,444,000 or \$4,231 (.03%) less than budgeted and 217,600 or 1.5% greater than 2011. Total expenses for the period of \$14,283,552 were approximately \$56,788 (.4%) less than budgeted but \$875,065 (6.5%) more than 2011. Net profit for the year 2012 was \$160,450, \$52,000 more than the budget after adjustments for Conference actions but \$657,500 less than 2011.

Grapevine Financial Results: For 2012, average paid circulation of the Grapevine print magazine was 83,258 actual compared with 86,929 budget and 2011 average of 90,493. Online circulation was 5,535 vs. a budget of 4,324.

Gross profit on the magazine of \$1,525,246 was approximately \$48,000 greater than budgeted.

Gross profit on other publishing items of \$423,670 was approximately \$49,000 more than budgeted and approximately \$38,000 greater than 2011.

Total gross profit for the year was \$1,948,916, was approximately \$97,000 more than budgeted, and \$91,000 more than the \$1,857,890 in the previous year.

Total costs and expenses of the magazine for the year were \$1,706,713, approximately \$137,000 less than budgeted and \$153,000 less than 2011.

After adding interest earned there was a net profit in 2012 of \$257,000 compared with a net profit of \$22,844 in 2011 and a budgeted profit of \$34,081 for 2012.

Grapevine Budget Review: The 2013 Grapevine budget anticipates an average paid circulation of 78,760 print copies and 4,653 online copies. Total magazine income is expected to be \$2,200,256, approximately \$142,000 less than the \$2,342,913 achieved in 2012. Total direct costs are expected to be \$815,296, approximately \$2,000 less than 2012. Gross profit on the magazine for the year 2013 is estimated at \$1,384,960, a decrease of \$140,000 from 2012. Gross profit on other magazine

related items of \$434,899 is anticipated, \$11,000 more than 2012.

Budgeted costs and expenses of \$1,824,205 for 2013 compare with \$1,707,014 for 2012, an increase of \$117,200. After anticipated interest earnings of \$16,300, a profit of \$11,954 is anticipated for 2013.

The committee recommended that the General Service Board approve the 2013 Grapevine budget reflecting a profit of \$11,954 and Reserve Fund cash draw up to \$100,000.

Grapevine presented worst case projections reflecting a \$123,741 loss in 2014 and a \$260,000 loss 2015.

LaVina Results. For the year ended December 31, 2012, income from magazine sales was \$107,270 compared with a budget of \$106,833. The average of paid subscriptions for La Viña was 9,157 versus 8,981 budgeted and 8,982 for 2011. Gross profit on the magazine was \$54,342 compared with \$59,478 budgeted. Other publishing income added \$11,124 to the revenue stream. After deducting the costs and expenses of \$181,285, a net loss from operations of \$115,820 was realized. This compares with a budgeted loss of \$105,668 for 2012 and an actual loss of \$69,723 for 2011.

LaVina Budget. The 2013 budget for La Viña projects gross profit on the magazine to be \$53,829 or within \$1,000 of 2012. Gross profit on related items of \$11,124. After deducting costs and expenses of \$191,932 the 2013 budget reflects a loss from operations of \$127,179 which is \$12,000 greater when compared to the 2012 loss of \$115,822.

The committee recommended that the General Service Board approve the 2013 La Viña budget reflecting a loss of \$127,179 to be covered by the General Fund.

The Chair made an advance request that 2014 budget proposals include a break-even scenario with corresponding operational/service changes.

Reserve Fund: As of December 31, 2012, the Reserve Fund had a balance of \$15,353,752 for the purpose of computing the number of months of operating expenses. The fund represents approximately 11.3 months of operating expenses.

The GSO staff is pleased to announce they received 1,584 visitors last year. And Archives responded to approximately 1,555 requests. A net total of 903 new A.A. groups in the U.S. and Canada were listed at GSO last year. Each new group's general service representative (GSR) or contact receives AA literature and basic information to encourage the group to link with their local structure and support Twelfth Step activities. Publishing News – Last year 2012, was the first full year of offering the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve in English, French and Spanish, in e-book format for use with AA e-reader. From December 12, 2011 through December 31, 2012, digital distribution for the Big Book totaled 4,244 units and 3,755 units for the Twelve and Twelve. International Translations: There are 67 current Big Book translations, with 18 new translations pending.

Lastly, "The Plan" was discussed yesterday at the mini-conference and the written presentation can be obtained upon request or our Area Secretary can attach it to the minutes for uniform distribution. Thank you for your love and support, I'll be looking forward to seeing you at The Roundup next month.

[Attached to these minutes]

### **Alternate Delegate's Report:**

- ⌚ 107 people attended the Mini Conference on 4/13. A record attendance in recent history!
- ⌚ Alternate Delegate made 5 presentations in February at District meetings. The presentation will be made to District 1 GSRs at their 4/18 meeting.
- ⌚ Part 2 of the GSR presentation is ready to go on the road. Please contact Area Chair to schedule a presentation.
- ⌚ Nov 8 – 10, 2013 the 50<sup>th</sup> MA State Convention will be held. Planning Committee will meet May 28<sup>th</sup> and July 30<sup>th</sup>. Anyone who wants to get involved in this great event is welcome to attend. The Planning Committee members from Area 31 meet at Plantation Inn in Chicopee located opposite the entrance to the MA Pike (exit 6) at 5:45 pm. The meeting is at the Framingham Sheraton, where the convention will be held in November. The committee members usually arrive back at the Plantation Inn between 10 and 10:30pm.

### **Area Chair's Report:**

- ⌚ Area Chair is still looking for individuals to fill the positions of Website Committee Chair and CPC Chair. Anyone with interest in doing service in either of these positions, contact Area Chair at [area\\_chair@area31.org](mailto:area_chair@area31.org).
- ⌚ One topic was tabled at the Fall Assembly. Let's try not to table a motion today but work through to a decision on anything that comes up.
- ⌚ At a recent Concept meeting where Concept 9 was discussed it was noted that Concept 9 service is not as hard as sponsoring another AA. Area Chair asked those gathered how many were sponsoring others. He was surprised at how few people raised their hands. He reminded the assembly how important recovery and service sponsorship is to carrying the message.
- ⌚ Chair thanked the Area for sending him to NERAASA.
- ⌚ He reminded the assembly that Area Committees are responsible for updating and bringing their boards to the MA State Convention for display throughout the weekend.
- ⌚ Looking for topics for the Fall Assembly. Contact Area Chair with ideas ([area\\_chair@area31.org](mailto:area_chair@area31.org)).
- ⌚ Upcoming Service Commitments:
  - May 25<sup>th</sup> – Green St. Group in Monson at 7:30 pm.
  - July 22<sup>nd</sup> – Young at Heart Group in Dalton 8 pm.

Recount of Voters – 66 Total; 45 required for substantial unanimity, 34 for simple majority

### **Old Business**

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Voting – Candidate Selection Process**

- ⌚ Area Chair opened the discussion with where we left off on this topic at the Fall Assembly. At issue is whether or not the Area will change our voting practices as described in the Are Handbook. Area Chair said there are 3 options:
  - Change so that candidates are selected ONLY by standing for the position
  - Change so that candidates are selected by standing for the position first and then accepting nominations from the floor or anyone not already standing.
  - Keep voting as is (i.e., nominations only).
- ⌚ Motion was made to amend the Area 31 Service Handbook voting procedures to include the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy procedure of standing for a position as well as nominations.

Discussion:

- Nomination is not part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy voting. Should list 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy first, then ask for nominations.
- Make sure it is worded so that standing takes place first.
- Nominations are unnecessary if ALL eligible for the position are standing.
- Someone who is shy or reluctant may disqualify him or herself but if nominated would be given the confidence to accept the nomination.
- The spiritual aspect of 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy (removing ego from the process and allow God to guide us to the right candidates) will be counteracted if nominations are allowed.
- If everyone stands and we invite God into the process, only those unable to meet the obligations of the position will sit down.
- ⌚ New Motion to adopt 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy voting without nominations was then discussed to determine what the exact wording of the motion should be.
  - Just eliminate the word “nomination” from the first 2 bullets in the current wording.
  - Past delegate Bob W described how it’s done in the state of Maine: a roster of names are read and each person whose name is read must say yes or no to the question, are you available to serve in this position?
  - Past Delegate Bobbi said that Area 30 (Eastern Mass) reads a roster as well.
- ⌚ Motion to amend the previous motion to the following wording was made and seconded:
 

“Amend the Area 31 Service Handbook voting procedures to read as ‘All member of the Assembly stand. As qualifications for the position are read, unqualified members sit. The names of all those that remain standing are listed on the board of candidates.’”

Motion passes 61 to 5.
- ⌚ Motion as worded above passed with 59 in favor, 3 opposed and 4 abstentions.

### **New Business**

- ⌚ Motion was made and seconded to make Webmaster a non-rotating, non-voting officer of the Area Committee.
 

Discussion:

  - Question was asked how the webmaster is selected. Answer given by Are Cahir that Area Chair appoints the webmaster based on expertise needed to fulfill responsibilities of the job.
  - Question was asked how the Area Chair would handle the need to remove a non-rotating officer due to absenteeism or neglect of duty. Delegate answered that the individual would respectfully request the person’s resignation.

Motion passes 60 in favor, 1 opposed, 5 abstentions.
- ⌚ Area Chair reminded the Assembly that a second vote is required prior to this change being enacted. It will therefore be put onto the Fall Assembly 2013 agenda under Old Business.

### **Motion to close:**

Made and seconded. Motion passes unanimously. Close at 4:00 pm

## Explanation of “The Plan”

(Presentation given by Delegate, Brian O, at the Mini conference on 4-13-2013)

Good afternoon, my name is Brian and I am an alcoholic. Thank you for your service work in general and specifically for giving up your lunch hour and the possibility of a good speaker for my knowledge and understanding of “The Plan.” May God help us to leave here less confused than where we think we are.

Before sharing the proposed plan it may be best if we back up to what the problem was or is and even before that to discuss the section of the service structure we’re going to talk about today and a brief history of how we arrived at where we are.

Primarily, we will be discussing the lower part of the triangle where the General Service Board is and is halved into two separate boards which are A.A.W.S., Inc. and Grapevine, Inc. The GSB is comprised of twenty-one trustees, seven class A (nonalcoholic) and fourteen class B (alcoholic). Of the fourteen class B’s eight are Regional Trustees, two are At Large Trustees, and four are General Service Trustees. (Chapter 9!). The General Service Board has custodial oversight over the two corporations which it exercises by electing the directors of each. (Chapter 10!) The makeup of the two boards is a fine example of our Fourth Concept “Right of Participation” as there is representation on each board from the other company or “Inc.”.

From chairman of The GSB, Ward Ewing, “For at least the past twenty years problems of communication, finances, cooperation, and elections of Directors have resulted in conflicts and inefficiencies that have affected the functioning of the General Service Board. The consistent and pervasive character of these problems suggest they may be structural in nature. The General Service Board concluded that we needed to examine the structure as well as current practices to address the concerns.”

The General Service Board began their inventory back in October 2011 and finished it up in January 2012. Ward said, “the most significant result of this inventory was a strong desire by the Trustees to focus more on strategic and policy issues and less on operational concerns that are largely carried forward by staff. Among these large policy concerns were the relationships between the General Service Board and the two subsidiary corporations.”

Specifically here are some of the concerns:

- ⌚ **Communication** –Communications between the GSB and the service corporation boards often have been conflicted. While AAWS is directly connected to the GSB, AAGV is connected indirectly. As a result on multiple occasions the GSB has been surprised by AGV regarding finance, operations, and recommendations presented to the General Service Conference.
  
- ⌚ **Unity** – A lack of clarity regarding the authority (“right of decision”) of the General Service Board and of the subsidiary corporations has resulted in numerous conflicts. For example, despite the clear statement in Concept VIII that GSB exercises custodial oversight of the corporations “through their ability to elect all directors”, there have been multiple disputes among GSB Trustees and subsidiary corporation Directors over the elections on Non-Trustee Directors and of General Service Trustees.

- ⌚ **Collaborative Operations** – In our changing and financially difficult time, there is a need to develop, where appropriate, more collaborative and efficient operations. The joint catalogue and shared shipping and mail room are a beginning, but there is a great need for greater cooperative and coordinated work as we develop our web sites, e-books, and other digital communications.
  
- ⌚ **Finances** – In the last five years we have drawn just under \$1 million from the Reserve Fund to meet current expenses. Approximately 50% of the net income for the General Service Office comes from the sale of literature, and no one knows what will happen to that income as print diminishes and we enhance digital formats to address this change. We need to plan strategically to finance our services.
  
- ⌚ **The Tenure of the Grapevine Editors** –The last four editors have left the position in less than happy circumstances which indicates chronic, systemic difficulties in the operations.

At the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference last year we approved a recommendation as an Advisory Action to submit a plan to us at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference. (By the way, Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole or recommendations discussed and voted on by all Conference members during general sessions. The group conscience of the Fellowship in the United States and Canada are expressed in Advisory Actions which the General Service Board accepts in its legally required annual meeting following the Conference.)

The proposed plan represents an informed and well considered collective group conscience of the General Service Board. It seeks to fulfill the Conference action by dramatically improving communication between the GSB and the subsidiary corporations, by providing an appropriate means to develop collaboration and to coordinate operations, and by strengthening reporting and communication for financial decision making, thereby serving the broader Fellowship more effectively and efficiently while enabling the Board to exercise its primary role as principal planner “with respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance.” (Concept VIII) The Plan has two components: Changes in current practices which were approved by the GSB at its February, 2013 meeting and a change in the composition of the corporate boards. It’s recognized the overall implementation of these proposals will require time, adjustments, and fine tuning before smooth functioning is achieved. However, because the proposal does not create legal changes in our corporate structure, if they do not work out as planned, current practices may easily be restored.

As stated earlier the proposed plan would not change the current corporate structure. It would provide for improved communication and cooperation by electing the same people to serve on the Board of Directors of AAWS, Inc. and the Board of Directors AAGV, Inc. This will provide a unified board (legally known as an “interlocking directorate”) that will focus on the operations of both subsidiary corporations and will allow the GSB to focus on the strategy and policy. The corporations will remain as distinct, independent corporate operations.

There are fourteen initiatives that deal with three areas. They are: **Communications And Unity**, **Governance**, and lastly **Operations & Finance**. I'll read them all if time permits and the interest is there, otherwise I'll highlight the main points.

1. **Meeting Minutes, Attendance & Real Estate** will be shared.
2. **Orientation & Ongoing Development** will increase.
3. **Size & Scope of any Subsidiary Board** will be set by the GSB.
4. **Eligibility of General Service Trustees** will open up qualified candidates throughout the Fellowship.
5. **Eligibility of Appointed Committee Members** to include non-alcoholics.
6. **That there are shared distribution, intellectual properties, technologies, contracts & services, and accounting & reporting** between the subsidiaries.

This concludes my brief presentation of what took hundreds of hours to formulate, all by well-intentioned trusted servants of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is my intent to clarify a trying time at the board level of AA. And as we all know from our pain and trying times, growth usually emerges. Keep them and me in your prayers as we gather at The Conference in one short week from today.

Let us invite God back into the room for my sake as we'll open it up for questions now.