

Pacific Regional Trustee's Report
October/November Board Weekend
Report dated November 11th, 2019

Our October/November General Service Board Weekend is typically in Rye and this one was as well! Rye is very quiet and has a different feel to it especially in the fall. The fall leaves were all different colors and it brought a feeling of peace to the weekend. Of course, this does not mean that we were not busy doing our work, which is abundant. 😊

Much of the work happening at this General Service Board weekend was focused on continued efforts toward fulfilling the Conference Advisory Actions. We also were looking at several items sent in for possible agenda items for the 2020 Conference. I would have to say when I think about what all 3 boards are doing right now, I would summarize it by saying we are moving forward by making sure the message of A.A. is where people are looking for it, with guidance from the General Service Conference. With so much cooperation and collaboration between the 3 boards, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine and the General Service Board, I feel that we are making great progress in our service to the fellowship. It is an exciting time to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous! Our 3 legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service that are guided by our Steps, Traditions and Concepts are alive and well and can be seen in the Boards and in the Conference actions. As we work toward better communication within and outside of A.A., we look to our principles for guidance in this age of technology and social media. I believe that our 36 spiritual principles are still just as important for us today as they always have been and vital for the future of our amazing fellowship.

You will receive the full reports in about 3 weeks on AAWS, AAGV and the Trustee's Committees. Below are some of the highlights.

AAWS report highlights

- Accessibilities/Loners International Meeting
 - The Big Book is now available in ASL as well as words written on the screen and lip reading. A press release has just gone out including in ASL. The Twelve and Twelve will be available soon!
- Communications
 - Major projects in Communications continue to be the A.A. Meeting Guide App and the website. The Communication Department will begin on November 11th and will encompass the Communication Services Department. This department will oversee You Tube which will have all the Video PSA's on it by mid-December. It will maintain the App, Website and work with the service desks to help with press releases. This department will also look for opportunities for non-alcoholic

trustees to speak at professional events. As time goes on, this department will continue to expand its role in communications inside and outside our fellowship. There is additional information about this department at the end of my report.

- Conference
 - Agenda item submission deadline is December 15, 2019 for the 70th General Service Conference
- Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment
 - The Linked In page format has been approved and will be implemented asap!
- Corrections
 - Over this past quarter the Correction Desk has received more than 400 letters per month for correspondence or literature. The AAGV/LV Carry the Message project helps get AAGV/LV subscriptions into the hands of these members
- International
 - Our 2 Trustee's at Large attended the Meeting of the Americas (Redela) in October in Buenos Aires. There is more about this trip in the Trustee Committee report.
 - At the Sub-Saharan Zonal Meeting a representative from Zimbabwe had asked for information about carrying the message inside the walls and took this back to his country. He has reported that since then, 2 meetings inside prisons have started and that authorities have embraced this service.
- International Convention
 - As of October 7th, over 21,000 people had registered. There are a lot of hotel rooms left and shuttles will be provided. Please register asap!
- Public Information
 - A survey professional from Duke University has been hired to review the current survey methodology.
- Administration
 - ERP -Enterprise Resource Planning, our offices new software. As a result of the implementation, Service Kits, GSR and DCM Kits were backlogged, but are close to caught up now.
- Publication
 - 3 audio books in English, Spanish and French will be released in streamable and downloadable formats in early 2020. They include Alcoholics Anonymous, The Twelve and Twelve and Living Sober
- Finances
 - Contributions for first 9 months are higher than prior year by 6.29% which is good because the contracted services for the implementation of ERP is over budget by \$433,000. Finances will be further discussed in the Trustees Finance Committee notes. Online contributions continue to increase. Processing these contributions are less expensive.

AA Grapevine/La Vina report highlights-I currently serve as a director on AAGV, Inc

- New order catalogue in all 3 languages will be in the Box 459 coming out mid-November
- The new Website is almost complete
- The magazines very soon will go back to being titled AAGrapevine and AALaVina both with the words “The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous” below.
- Pending Conference Approval, our new Non-Trustee Director is Cindy F. and our new General Service Trustee is Josh E. on AA Grapevine.
- A large YPAA event purchased \$5000 in GV and LV Toolkits.
- Voices of Women has sold 1763 copies since relaunch in August and the Language of the Heart in MP3 has sold 418 copies since 10/15/2019.
- American Prison Data Systems agreement has been approved so that digital material can get into the prisons
- Wow, check out the AAGV You Tube Channel. There are new audio stories from the audio project focused on sponsorship and a great story from the AAGV magazine with corresponding video as well! The audio stories are utilizing photos that have been submitted by members.
- The AAGV is forward thinking and is a huge part of the future of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is the voice of A.A. today and can work quickly to communicate in today’s world.
- Conversion of AAGV’s 31 CD’s have been formatted for purchase into MP3’s
- AAGV, Inc now offers 33 eBooks (26 in English, 5 in Spanish and 3 in French)
- Free shipping on AAGV/LV books and material through 12/31/2019

Trustees’ committees

Here are selected highlights from some of the committee reports.

- Archives
 - On November 3rd Archives celebrated its 44th Anniversary
- Conference
 - 25 items have been submitted so far for the 70th GSC
 - Subcommittee on equitable distribution is still working on ideas to submit to the Conference
- Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment/ Accessibilities/Remote Communities
 - LinkedIn page is approved and will be implemented asap. This will help professionals find and get information about A.A.
 - \$25,000 was added to the 2020 budget of this committee for Class A Trustees travel to national professional conferences
 - \$1500 was added to the budget for AAGV/AALV products for the Remote Communities desk to utilize in requests and outreach
- Corrections

- The staff secretary on corrections will be reaching out to local corrections committees for possible language alternatives than what we currently use in our literature for members inside the walls
- As well as the AAGV, this committee is looking at digital literature distribution systems so that our literature will be available to inmates as books will be phasing out of being allowed to go into many prisons
- Finance-I serve on this committee
 - AAWS total revenue is \$185,912 greater than budgeted and expenses are \$611,525 greater than budgeted. This was due to the ongoing costs of implementation of the new ERP system
 - Expenses are a mixed bag. The bad news is that the ERP implementation continues to plague us, both operationally as this difficult transition is being completed, as well as financially, which has driven up operating costs by over \$400k. Adding to that is higher than budgeted costs on contract reviews due to ERP work (and other contracts, too). Salaries are under budget. Bottom line is a net actual loss of \$625k versus a budgeted loss YTD of \$355k. However, like our areas, contributions at the end of the year are always much larger at year-end, so AAWS's projection is still a net profit of \$25k at year-end
 - AAGV revenue is \$123,239 lower than budgeted and expenses are \$81,358 less than budget
 - AALV had a shortfall of \$110,860 vs. a budgeted shortfall of \$124,379. Magazine sales are up by 528 subscriptions
- International-I serve on this committee-
 - Redela, the Meeting of the Americas, just took place in Buenos Aires. There are 35 member countries and 17 were represented through 19 delegates-some countries had two attendees. Only one woman attended, and she was from Brazil. Many countries representatives could not come because of instability in their countries
 - Trustee at large Canada shared that Venezuela is dealing with awful, heartbreaking conditions. 1 Venezuela GSO employee called in sick because she had not had enough to eat for 3 days and was ill. There are so many people fleeing the country and that includes tons of A.A. members which is causing instability in A.A. The 7th tradition that you guys contribute to the GSB is helping to get literature to these people through the International Literature Fund as they have struggled to produce the literature through their own means in this unstable situation
 - The International desk has responded to over 2200 emails since the July meeting
 - The next World Service Meeting will be held in Rye, NY right before the Board weekend and the visitors coming for the WSM have been invited to stay for the Board weekend.

- Some of our Class A trustees are reaching out to other nonalcoholic Trustees in other countries to share experience strength and hope.
- In this past 6 months, 2 nonalcoholic trustees have traveled outside the country to represent A.A. and to help carry the message. Peter Luongo went to Cuba and Nancy McCarthy went to Poland.
- International Conventions/Regional Forums
 - Committee was presented with a second draft of a virtual Regional Forum. This will be an amazing piece. It will be ready soon and is about 5 minutes long showing what happens at Regional Forums
 - We are looking at how Intergroups/Central Offices can be more visible at Forums. Maybe through presentations or workshops
 - At recent Forums there have been meals set up with trustees, directors and staff for members to have more one on one time to share and ask questions. This has been received very well!
 - At the International Convention there will be a General Service Board booth together with the AAGV and AAWS booths. This is the first time we have had this booth.
- Literature
 - The pamphlet for Hispanic women is well underway in choosing stories for inclusion in the pamphlet
 - The Three Legacies pamphlet has been sent to publishing to put together a draft and a progress report
 - Our 3 Illustrated pamphlets, Steps, Traditions and Concepts are being worked on in Publishing
 - There is a subcommittee looking at the needs that are being expressed through the requests for workbooks and plain language Big Book. There are exploring the needs being expressed and will be reporting to the Conference.
- Nominating-I serve on this committee
 - We are looking at results that were compiled through an inventory on our board and trustee structure and workload and has formed a subcommittee to delve in further. These results will be shared soon
- Public Information
 - There is a sub-committee reviewing our comprehensive media plan for possible revisions to be forwarded to the conference.
- Communications Department
 - As a result of the Communications Audit, strategic planning, sharing sessions at the General Service Conference, Forum discussions and simply all of the discussion on communication, effective November 11, 2019 a Communications Department is being formed at the General Service Office. In 2018 the General Service Board directed that a communications plan be developed to address the facets of needed change in how we communicate inside A.A., to the outside

world and our public relations (PR) policy. While many of the changes are within General Service Board trustee committees, it became apparent that better processes to develop content (especially digital) as well as Public Relations could best be addressed by the formulation of a Communications Services Department at GSO. The services currently being provided by the existing Communications Services staff would be integrated into this new department. This department will work as a kind of internal agency within the General Service Office to help the boards and service assignments develop content and to provide production and distribution capabilities. All work undertaken by the new Department will be accomplished in collaboration with appropriate GSB trustee committees, A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine staff or departments to ensure that all A.A. content and messaging is consistent with our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. This will also prevent duplication of efforts, will help to consolidate our A.A. messaging and ensure that the group conscience is honored. Additionally, this new department will provide professionally produced material to the service assignments and committees to obtain Conference approval for any and all projects that require such approval. The Department will not formulate communications policies but will support the execution of policies of the service assignments, other A.A.W.S. and Grapevine departments and the three corporate boards. The goal is to create an internal service organization or agency that will produce and distribute the majority of communications inside and outside of GSO, A.A.W.S. and AAGV. You might ask, "what's meant by the majority of communications?" It really means all communications that might be considered announcements – on our own website, in the news channel of the Meeting Guide App, email blasts providing information, or non-PSA videos – or a new or revised product or initiative (like our new, upcoming web site for aa.org or Our Great Responsibility). It includes day-to-day management of the www.aa.org website and Meeting Guide. It includes production of press releases and development of relationships with the news media. It involves writing stories, which we hope will be placed in the news media and finding Class A Trustees who are willing to speak at non-AA events and to the media and training them how to do that while remaining consistent with A.A.'s Steps, Traditions and Concepts. These efforts would not conflict or supersede the ongoing and voluminous correspondence between GSO's A.A. staff and the Fellowship on matters relative to A.A. groups, services and shared experience. Ultimately and always, this department is being formed to share the message of recovery more effectively through the services, communications and literature provided by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. The belief is that this "internal agency" or department will be able to serve the A.A. fellowship by sharing our message more and more effectively, guided by A.A.'s Steps, Traditions and Concepts.

General Service Board Sharing Session
Theme: “Our Lives, Our Unity, Our Function Depends on Communication”

Presentation: “Effectively Carrying the Message to the Newcomer”
Brenda Brown, G.S.O. Staff
November 2, 2019

I would like to thank Jan Lembke, and Mary Cumings for the loving invitation to speak on the topic: “Effectively Carrying the Message to the Newcomer”

I received the gift of sobriety in June 1992 after entering a treatment rehabilitation for alcohol and drug abuse. I heard the message of recovery during a Big Book Meeting facilitated by the man who was to become my sponsor. Sharing about the disease concept as it is laid out in the “Doctor’s Opinion”, he shared his experience, strength and hope in a profoundly peaceful manner. It was an attraction, I wanted to understand who I was and develop having a bit of the peace that flowed from him.

Fortunately, given the fact that I was literate, spoke English, had a belief in God, and – other than my alcohol-confused mind, presented with no outward mental or physical challenges, A.A.’s message of hope and recovery was readily received.

Additionally, in 1992, carrying the message to the newcomer was fairly simple – and usually took the form of either a face-to-face meeting, a telephone connection or perhaps a late-night Public Service Announcement (PSA). As you probably know, having become public in 1991, the internet was in its infancy; and social media was just barely on the horizon.

Fast forward to 2019, how well are we meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse population – cultural, gender, age, language (to name a few) amongst a vast landscape of modern technology and communication platforms? How well are we fulfilling our responsibility statement when we pledge that “I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.” What efforts are working well and where are we falling short?

A brief inventory of AA literature reflects new and/or updated literature addressing the alcoholic with mental health challenges, the atheist or agnostic alcoholic, and most recently updated translation of the Big Book and 12x12 in American Sign Language (ASL). In development are pamphlets for the Spanish-speaking alcoholic woman and an updated pamphlet for “Young People in A.A.” There is also a Young People’s Video project designed to reach today’s younger alcoholic. And the trustees’ Committee on Literature is looking at updating the pamphlet for the African American Alcoholic, as well as exploring the development of a plain-language Big Book designed to meet the needs of the alcoholic.

Our Publishing Department continues to review and update the catalogue to assure that the “message” is attractive and accessible. Work on AA’s website will include a cleaner, clearer and simpler to navigate site, making information easy to find.

AA’s new YouTube channel provides an additional platform from which videos can be easily shared with a broader audience in order to enhance carrying the message to ALL alcoholics and the public and professional community.

It is important to note that while we continue to explore our effectiveness in presenting and making sure that A.A.’s message is accessible to all who seek help, we seek to support the local efforts.

Some local projects like in Area 68 which recently launched a new A.A. Deaf Intergroup website! This website is a resource for deaf A.A. members and newcomers to find interpreted A.A. meetings, to choose A.A. meetings to be interpreted or to access ASL meetings. The website also includes resources for those seeking to create an accessibility committee for A.A. members who are deaf in their area. An area in the Northeast is beginning to look at the feasibility of creating a PSA t which will target the older alcoholic. And, of course, Young People’s committees are on fire with their ongoing video projects.

Before we take a collective congratulatory “pat on the back,” let’s discuss where we are falling short in reaching the newcomer. To better reach these groups of individuals delineated above, the following actions could be explored:

1. Write new pamphlets specifically targeting the deaf, the blind (in Braille), U.S. and Canadian residents with a primary language other than English, the homebound, etc. For instance, a pamphlet for those for whom English is not the primary language could have a simple message directing them toward resources that contains translations into several different languages. Another example would be a pamphlet for the homebound, directing them toward resources online and with information that would help them get a meeting brought into their home.
2. Developing further internet/online resources to reach and communicate with these groups—for instance, developing a podcast series that explains various A.A. topics and traditions, and that explores resources available to various groups of special needs individuals.

At the end of the day, we need to be constantly asking ourselves the question: Are we effectively carrying the message to the ALL newcomers? Are we making sure that communications are being made that specifically target or effectively reach groups or individuals who might not be able to hear the appropriate message through our normal communications channels?

As our Fifth Tradition states, “Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” “I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

General Service Board Sharing Session
Theme: "Our Lives, Our Unity, Our Function Depends on Communication"

Presentation: "Effective Communication Up and Down the Triangle"
Carole Boerner, General Service Trustee
November 2, 2019

Thank you Jan and Mary for the invitation to speak today about effective communication up and down the triangle or within the service structure. I have been thinking about the effectiveness of the service structure and the fulfillment of Concept I for sometime. Strangely enough or maybe not so much, I just completed conducting interviews with leaders in nonprofit organizations in Billings. One of the questions asked to describe the effectiveness of collaboration and communication within your organization.

One thing to point out, as Arnold R. has said to me, AA is a nonprofit organization unlike any other organization. We are truly unique in many ways. For example, it is unlikely that a Girl Scout would be afforded the opportunity to express her concern to the Chair of the Girl Scouts Board about a recent action of that board. It is good for the General Service Board to hear from our members, however, I wonder what else comes into the person's concern? Has enough information been provided? Legally, can enough information be provided? Have we asked probing questions opposed to being defensive?

When Bill inverted the triangle, he was trying to get away from a hierarchical organization. I challenge that 70 years later we now know much more about organization design. I believe Bill was looking to decentralize power within the service structure. Or to say it another way, afford each member an opportunity to weigh in on decisions being made. Does our current structure allow for this? We provide background information to allow for our area delegates to hear from the fellowship. Precious resources are used to allow for the widest possible vetting of agenda items with the information provided. Then the Area Delegate arrives at the Conference well informed of their Areas views on the agenda items and we don't allow them to be heard unless those items come out of committee. Some delegates frustrated with this fact, introduce floor actions just to allow the voices of their areas to be heard. Is this really embracing Concept I?

Background materials are compiled by the agenda item submitter, Staff, the General Manager (or Publisher), and sometimes by the respective trustees committee. Does this afford us to properly vet agenda items? A few years ago, a minority report was included in the background for a PI agenda item. I still am not sure if I think this was a good idea or not. But, at least it was a different viewpoint for people to consider when discussing the item. I seldom have seen both sides of the argument truly represented in the background material.

The Conference is the place where we're to set policy. Yet many times it becomes the place where Area Delegates feel they can voice their concern. With overly packed agendas for the Conference, we frequently cut the What's on Your Mind sessions. There are many other places that we can hear what's on members minds such as Regional

Forums, Regional Service Assemblies or Conferences, Area Assemblies, District meetings, and Group Conscience meetings. In my experience, I see that we do a great job of pushing communication out to people but maybe not so much listening. Alan Alda does much work in the field of communication. I recommend his book, "If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on My Face?" How we communicate brings to mind one of Alan's quotes - "Real listening is a willingness to let the other person change you." Is talking to people from a podium allowing for others to change us? What can we do to listen more?

When you have an opportunity, Google the Ladder of Inference or look at your Liberating Structures app for the What, So What, Now What structure. These show what happens in our own internal processes when a communication takes place. Basically, we all have the same data available yet we select our own data we're going to process. We add our own assumptions, establish our beliefs and we take action. The interesting thing is that our beliefs influence what data we select. It is my job to challenge my assumptions and my job to ask you questions so that I can understand your assumptions. This is real listening. I, however, like to stand my ground on my beliefs and not be challenged. If you would just do things my way, all would be well!

A few years ago, I met Edgar Schein. Edgar has two great books, "Helping" and "Humble Inquiry". He talks about learning to ask questions to better understand how we can help. In the last nearly 7 years of serving on Trustees committees, I've been frustrated at times with the chairs of committees controlling the conversation. We don't seem to be good at exploring the assumptions of other people. We don't always allow for probing questions to fully understand what the other committee members are trying to say. We seldom invite the quiet voices of the room to be heard.

I watch a few secret Facebook groups and the Technology in AA Forum. To me, it's obvious that we need to do better communicating. What I see is people often reacting in a manner as if they are at the end of the line in a game of telephone. (Remember from grade school when one person would whisper something to another who was to pass the message along to the next person and so on?) From my findings of my nonprofit leadership project, the importance of everyone having the same information was paramount. High frequency and multiple forms seemed to work the best. Many platforms can be used such as email, text messages, app notifications, Yammer, and Slack. Yet, we mustn't forget that AA's foundation is one alcoholic talking with another. These connections are so important. Spending time listening to others in the physical presence or video conference is necessary as well. Among the General Service Board, we are so busy at our quarterly weekends that it is almost impossible to make connections with people. What can we STOP doing to allow for more time to understand each other?

One more thing about secret Facebook groups and forums. When we have a functioning communications department, what would the harm be in providing these groups accurate information? If after each board meeting, could we provide them with bullet points of the actions of the boards? We share the reports of our committees and the minutes of the GSB with the Area Delegates. Why not engage in some healthy dialog? I have been an advocate for a social media policy and recently chaired an ad hoc committee to look into

it. Our thoughts were that we didn't need a policy. I have been conflict avoidant and have only a few times engaged with members in these forums. Yes, there are people who are difficult to converse with in person let alone on Facebook or the TIAA forum. If at the end of the day, engaging with a member to allow them and us to better understand each other may be worth it. Al-Anon has a couple great publications on using the Traditions for Conflict Resolution. It might be a good place to start. In no way, shape or form do we put up with someone bullying or being disrespectful. That's not AA.

Lastly, I want to talk about fear and ego. Our basic text says that the fabric of our existence is shot through with fear. Right now, my favorite line in our book, Alcoholics Anonymous is really a preposition - "Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God's ever advancing Creation". This speaks to me such that I have a duty to use my intelligence to spearhead my higher power's ever advancing creation. I have nothing to fear today. The only thing that can get in my way is my ego. However, my experience in many facets of my life has been that when I show up to serve others, things work out very well. When I'm trying to manage things (ego), I struggle on many fronts in my life. Or as Dr. Bob said, "Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words "love" and "service." We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind." Thanks for letting me share. Thank you.