

District 19 Sharing Session on Diversity and Inclusion

May 20th, 2021

Maire H. scribe notes

7th Tradition support for ASL interpretation, support our AA deaf members. Deaf members feel they are begging Area for support for interpretation. Deaf members need meetings, we cannot stay sober alone. Without ASL interpretation in meetings we are isolated. As zoom meetings shut down, in person meetings feel ASL is not needed in the in person meetings. Please support ASL in AA meetings to carry message of recovery to deaf members.

Native American community is under served. Please come to Native American community, please reach out.

Linguistic districts (15 & 18) feel more included when AA members come to their meetings, district meetings, to inform members of events going on in the Area. A personal invitation is inclusive. Posting information on the Area 8 website is not connecting with the linguistic communities.

Elder community is isolated. Connecting with elders in facilities is challenging. These elderly AA members can become quite isolated from AA supported.

I feel educated when other AA members speak up and share their experiences that are different than mine. It broadens my understanding of the AA fellowship experiences. Helps me to become aware of my own perceptions, ideas and actions that might cause a member or groups to feel unwelcome or unneeded. Grateful for the sharing and feedback because this is information I will carry back to my groups, sponsees and AA friends.

Change is difficult for us alcoholics. I believe we need to remember that transitioning back to in-person meetings and decisions to make meetings hybrid with zoom or not is a decision to carry message to AA members here, where we live. It is not necessarily a decision based on maintaining access to SD meetings for other members in other parts of the globe who have been attending our meetings. Although that has been a unique and wonderful experience.

In other areas of the nation, there are not ASL interpreters, even if there is funds for hiring an interpreter. One deaf member in Oregon has been felt more included since quarantine forced us onto online platform. Service positions for deaf members have become available to deaf members. Connection to other Accessibility Committees in North America, we are supporting each other and learning from each others' experiences in different areas. Discovered in Seattle that Area Accessibilities Committee is ASL interpreted and deaf members encouraged to participate in service. As a deaf member in a community with no support for deaf members, I am most often treated differently than my hearing AA peers, including assumption that I do not

know as much as hearing people, I am incapable of performing service work at district or area level. I call it “soft bigotry”

It warms my soul to hear the experiences of my fellow AA members who struggle with connecting in AA with other members as a result of differences. My experience as a gay white man who was raised in poverty, that it is assumed I have “inherited” specific cultural, social, economic privileges endowed to white people. That is not the case, so at times I have felt unheard.

Reach out to people in institutions, medical or psychiatric wards.

Developing mixed language meetings, for example Spanish / English meetings.

From experience attending many AA minority infused meetings and groups, I must remember there is a very fine line between carrying the message AA and an invitation to that of recruiting into AA. Also I try to encourage and ask for if my meetings include the Unity Pledge either in the beginning or end of meetings. This may help atheists and others on the edges of AA feel welcome and remind them that Unity is an important part of AA community and recovery.

Age diversity is beneficial to AA meetings and groups. The differences in experiences, lifestyles, is good. An unexpected gift of pandemic is zoom meetings have allowed AA members who might not normally attend the same meetings, have begun mixing.

Young people may be more deft and flexible with accommodating change and diversity.

Ask the AA members who are in the communities who may need an extra platform for their needs to be heard. If you are an AA member in the communities who need additional support, speak up!! AA members do want to hear your voice, needs, experience.