Recovery (a)

The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

focus: Spirit of Rotation

A life of service in Alcoholics Anonymous presents many challenges, but perhaps the greatest comes as we rotate on through the service structure. It is by no means easy to come to the end of a service job one loves and for which one has passion. It is perhaps even harder to come to the "end of the road" and funnel out the bottom of the service triangle.

A.A. history teaches us that great personal and spiritual growth accompanies our practice of the spiritual principle of the spirit of rotation. We also learn as we go along that nothing is as sure as the fact that our Higher Power provides us with

what we need, so long as we keep close to Him and perform His work well. And, because He has a great sense of humour, most of the time He provides without us even knowing that He's done so.

One of the very first conventions I attended was the International Convention of Young People in A.A. (I.C.Y.P.A.A.) in Montreal in 1990. One speaker that year was an A.A. member named "Joe".

Joe had been active in A.A. service in a lot of different capacities at the group, district, and

area levels, including G.S.R., D.C.M., I.C.Y.P.A.A. Chairperson (Boston, MA), and Area Delegate and was now at the end of his "official" service career. Having "done all that," Joe's most humble desire was to return to his home group and become "just another member" of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Joe's message resonated with me that night and, as the years have gone by, its sim-

plicity has stuck with me. I'm especially grateful to have been blessed with the ears to hear Joe

"A.A. history teaches us that great personal and spiritual growth accompanies our practice of the spiritual principle of the spirit of rotation."

> that night because many years later I needed to remember, and to put into practice, the gift of the lesson my Higher Power had provided me through Joe.

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focus: Spirit of Rotation

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Spirit of Rotation

Having trudged my own path in service, I was now at the "end of the road" and funnelling out the bottom of the service triangle in our Area. The "giants" who had walked this path before me and with whom I'd been privileged to walk, not on their shoulders but alongside, had set down a variety of examples of rotation.

The most attractive of those was set by a man who had a humble desire similar to Joe. His desire was to go back to his home group and make the coffee. No longer among us now, he was a man who left footprints upon my heart so gently that I didn't notice they were there until he was making coffee at "The Big Meeting."

It is unlikely that I have managed to live up to either of those examples as well as I could but I am reminded that recovery is a journey of progress, not perfection. Surprisingly, service continues but in very different ways than before. I continue to try to be of service in our Area when asked. I am an active member at my home group and I find that the rewards of sponsorship continue to be great blessings in my life. My family and my home life have taken their place on centre stage, where they belong.

I still have service goals, which is surprising for a guy whose drunken motto was "non servitam" (I will not serve) but I think the most important of those is my desire to attend an Assembly and sit through the business of Alcoholics Anonymous not only without speaking at the microphone, but without feeling even the urge to approach it. I'm sure that with God's grace and my continued willingness this, and other miracles, shall come to pass.

Paul H., Past Delegate, Panel 52, Area 86

A.A. Trivia Challenge

- Where and when is the next A.A.
 International Convention being held?
- 2. What was Dr Bob's nickname?
- 3. When and where was Bill W.'s last message presented?
- 4. Who authored the "Twenty-Four Hours A Day" book?
- 5. What two groups in Area 86 recently celebrated their 70th Anniversary?

Answers on Page 9

Area 86 Focus

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focus: Safety in A.A.

have been a member of AA for 26 years; I am female and prefer to remain anonymous for personal and safety reasons. I have two examples that I witnessed and was directly involved in. Not surprisingly the two men involved were around at the same time and were known to associate with each other.

The first man: A man came to a meeting with the story that he was a truck driver for a moving company on the east coast. He said he was sober for two years and that his partner/spare driver was a heavy drinker. He got fed up and quit after unloading one day. He had no place to stay. A male A.A. member took him in and gave him some work. When he left he owed this A.A. member several hundred dollars.

I was about 2 years sober at this time and I spent some time with him. I learned that I was attracted to fear and, believe me, I got scared. I came away unhurt only by the grace of God. He told me he had murdered his father and I believed him. I called the A.A. man that had taken him in a few days later and learned about the money owing and that this man disappeared the day after he spoke to me. That A.A. man and I both learned from this.

The second man: I received a call from a Sexual Assault Center asking if I would come in and speak with them. I had done some group work there in my early recovery and the woman who called knew I was a member of A.A. When I went to see her she told me there was a man wanted for a rape in Nova Scotia. He was known to prey on vulnerable women in A.A. She showed me a picture and I recognized him. I did not know what to do. The word "Anonymity" screamed in my head. This woman wanted me to go with her to the police. I told her I would think about it. As God would have it that very night I saw him sitting on a stone wall in the Queen St. area with a woman that was more a girl than a woman. She

had been coming around to A.A. I believe she lived in a Group Home or what they called Second Level Lodging. She had a mental health issue and was very sweet and also very vulnerable. I thought "what am I going to do, wait until he rapes someone here before I come forward?"

I went to the police with this woman and identified the man. He lived on the same street as I did. I gave this information as well as said he was frequenting A.A. meetings. The police could not arrest him because he was not on a Canada Wide Warrant. However the word "rapist" showed up in chalk on the side of the rooming house he was in. He disappeared as well.

I struggled with both of these things for a long time. I do not regret doing what was right. I know there are folks in A.A. who have broken the law and alcohol was a major factor. These folks get sober, get honest and get well. We need to keep an eye on our most vulnerable members and I think a few members can pull a suspected predator aside and have a chat. If the person is only there for a bad reason he/she will disappear.

As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, you want to be aware that not all those who attend A.A. meetings have only sobriety in mind. Some members may try to take advantage of other members in various ways, such as:

- sexual harassment or sexual attack
- » pressuring members to join a religious group
- borrowing money
- selling goods for personal gain
- offering investment schemes
- >> theft of group funds

Should any of these situations arise for you, here is one suggested way of handling them: Talk to your sponsor and to other members and raise the matter at a group conscience meeting. Take care that you aren't just passing on rumors. Make sure you have well-established facts to work with.

"Annie"

Focus: A.A. International Convention Reflections



2015 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous July 2nd to 5th - Atlanta, Georgia

"80 Years - Happy, Joyous and Free"

From the moment we walked from the gate into the terminal at the Atlanta airport I could see, hear and feel that Alcoholics Anonymous was about to take over the city. I knew this International Convention was going to be more special than the previous two I've attended as I was in the company of my wife, Kathryn, our almost three year old son, Jacob, and my Mom.

We spent Friday exploring the city and venues. The atmosphere inside the Congress Centre was absolutely electric. Going up or down the escalators people were high-fiving each other, hollering and laughing with excitement and I couldn't help but get into the fun of it. That evening we attended the Flag Ceremony at the Georgia Dome. It was great to see Bob F. from Area 86 carrying our Canadian flag with pride.

Saturday morning was one that I will never forget. I got to the Congress Centre "the most amazing and early. As I was eating a breakfast sandwich I couldn't help but notice a truly God-given moments were running into my felman walking down the hallway by low Area 86 friends. It the main entrance. I ran out to really proved to me that greet him. It was Luc, the Area 90 Area 86 Rocks." Northwest Quebec Delegate. We shared a hug and some tears of gratitude. As I was on my way to share my experience, strength and hope at an 11:00am meeting called "Twelve Concepts: The Icing on the Cake of Recovery. Unity and Service." I ran into a new friend from Napanee, Ontario. He had served overseas in our Military and was also on his way to speak. He noticed my name tag said

"Victoria Harbour" on it and, as it turned out, he has family living in the same town. We exchanged cards and a big hug. I believe God, as I understand Him, put those two people in my path that morning and these sort of experiences happened all weekend long.

Speaking at the International Convention was an incredibly humbling experience and it was also the first time I spoke in front of my Mom. I don't think the tears of joy stopped for the whole twenty minutes I was at the podium. The room was full to capacity with many friends and supporters there. It was almost like being at home. In fact, I felt at home.

The weekend flew by. I loved the crowds and atmosphere around the Convention. The streets of Atlanta were full of sober alcoholics. Even the police officers directing the crowds and traffic were laughing and having a good time.

I ran into many people I knew throughout the weekend in Atlanta from other International Conventions and service functions I have attended. It was nice to see and chat with them but the most amazing and truly God-given moments were running into my fellow Area 86 friends. It really proved to me that *Area 86 Rocks*.

I really am blessed to be a part of Alcoholics Anonymous and want to thank all of the people who have been there for me throughout my sobriety and for showing me how to live One Day at a Time. If you have never been to an International Convention, I

hope my story will inspire you to attend. I know my first convention changed my life.

Hope to see you all in Detroit in 2020 to celebrate 85 years of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you for my sobriety and my life.

May God bless you and keep you, Chris S.

Focus: A.A. International Convention Reflections

We came from all over, in all modes of transportation. An estimated 57,000 people descended on Atlanta by plane, train, bus, Harleys and a couple beat up ten speeds from Alabama. Travel stories are symbolic of our journey in the Fellowship and I enjoyed meeting the group who, about five hours outside of Atlanta, came across another van load of laughing passengers with a 'One Day at a Time' bumper sticker. The passengers switched up their seats to enjoy a new meeting with new stories for the final stretch of the journey.

It's difficult to describe the energy, pulse, and gratitude that exists at an International. Laughter and tears were common. We liked to hoot, holler and high five as we crossed the street and thank the smiling but weary looking traffic cop but then, later at the Georgia Dome meeting and thousands strong, tears streamed

down cheeks as the sonorous and deeply affecting Serenity Prayer was recited. Marked up program books, scribbled phone numbers, hugs for busy volunteers in bright green t-shirts, impromptu meetings

on MARTA transit – we absolutely embodied the theme of *Happy*, *Joyous and Free*.

This was my fifth International Convention. The sentimental but exciting reunion of friends from Israel, Florida, Washington, Chicago, California, Vancouver and England humbled me greatly as I appreciated once again how far reaching our Fellowship is. As we've done since our first International together, John K from Haifa, Israel and I gave out our Canadian "AA, eh!" pins and I loved seeing them everywhere! I tried my best to get one to a member from Ghana, the latest country to receive their translated Big Book.

The opening ceremony Friday night was absolutely electric with love and excitement as we watched honoured A.A. members carry their country's flag in the traditional procession. The Saturday Night Oldtimers meeting was fantastic as we listened to 12 members with over 50 (yes, 50!) years of sobriety and laughed along with the Mexican oldtimer who got the giggles during his precious 5 minutes at the podium.

I had tears of joy for Jason, the temporarily released prisoner who shared his powerful story of recovery Sunday morning. In a conversation with G.S.O. Convention Coordinator, Eva S. shared that arrangements for his release took about a year and that it, in itself, is a story of God's coincidences and fortuitous meetings of the right people coming together at the right time. God and A.A. often work like that.

I wanted in on the service action so I arrived at 7:30am Saturday morning for my 4 hour

volunteer shift that turned into 6 and could have gone longer. Along with my new friend, Trevor from Santa Crus, CA, we directed the steady stream of

human traffic and had an amazing time greeting friends and strangers alike. Trevor, almost 3 years sober, is happy and content in his new life — he has a baby on the way and started his new job as a high school teacher the Monday he returned home!

Deeply moving for me was listening to Sister Judith Ann Karam. Oh behalf of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, and in recognition of the work of Sister Ignatia, Judith Ann accepted the 35th millionth Big Book and told a wonderful

Continued on page 8

These articles deal with current topics of interest within Area 86. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of A.A. as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.

"It's difficult to describe the

energy, pulse, and gratitude

that exists at an International."

focus: Bridging the gap

Bridging the Gap (B.T.G.) is a service offered to provide temporary contact to alcoholics being released from treatment or correctional facilities by introducing them to Alcoholics Anonymous in their home communities.

B.T.G. efforts date back as far as 1939 in Cleveland, Ohio. In the mid 70's, members of A.A. became increasingly aware that many alcoholics were leaving treatment programs, not making it to the rooms of A.A. and, consequently, not managing to stay sober. Efforts have continued over the years to create a World Wide Temporary Contact Program and to develop B.T.G. weekend workshops as well as a resource library.

A great deal of energy, effort and love has been put into building the B.T.G. program in Area 86 during the last few years, resulting in hundreds of bridges. The following letter from an exinmate shows that the efforts to further build the program have not been in vain.

I am an ex-Inmate of a Federal Prison in Canada. I began my A.A. Journey while in Prison. Alcohol was a large factor in my criminal offence. I had already lost my wife, house and job due to abuse of alcohol so I felt it was time to sober up.

My cell mate who was also in prison for an alcohol related offence suggested that we attend an A.A. meeting one night in the chapel boardroom of this prison. I agreed to go with him.

At the meeting everyone shook my hand and welcomed me. This gave me a good feeling as I'd recently been feeling depressed. Upon hearing another inmate's story, it sounded like my story. A.A. is where I felt welcome and where I belonged.

At this meeting I noticed three unfamiliar faces. I was informed these were outside A.A. volunteers who would come to share our meetings with us. I immediately had great respect

and love for these people who put up with being searched by the guard when visiting us just to help us in our sobriety. I felt these A.A. volunteers were the most dedicated men and women in Canada to come into prison to help me, a criminal, to stay sober.

Our little prison A.A. group was greatly assisted by the volunteers who had a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with us. Unfortunately we could have only one A.A. meeting a week as other prison groups also wanted to use the chapel boardroom for their meetings. My A.A. was the highlight of the week.

When my time came to be released from prison I spoke to an outside volunteer about continuing my A.A. Journey on the outside. This volunteer informed me about the Bridging the Gap Program. This program helps a correctional inmate or a patient of a medical facility to get in touch with A.A. Groups in his/her community.

My Bridging the Gap representative got in touch with me soon after my release from prison. He took me to several meetings in my area and he found me a willing sponsor. I now have a home group and I also attend meetings at other A.A. groups as well. As an ex-inmate I found that Bridging the Gap program really helped me. I am staying sober and I will keep coming back. Good Luck and God Bless you all.

Terry R. Niagara Area A.A.

Responsibility Pledge

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.

focus: Bridging the gap

"It is so important that

the volunteer reach out

on the day the woman

is released."

am a very grateful alcoholic named Gillian, and being of service to Alcoholics Anonymous in ANY capacity continues to save my life on a daily basis. By the Grace of God, and the help that I have received from this wonderful fellowship, I have not had that first fatal drink today. And this has been true for me since January 28th 2009.

After a year of sobriety my sponsor encouraged me to carry the A.A. message into The Vanier Correctional Center for Women here in Milton. I quickly found that this is where my passion lies. I volunteered to fill the vacant Corrections Chair position at the District level and have been joyfully doing so for the past 5 years.

The Bridging the Gap program was really being highlighted at our Area Assemblies, Service Days, and Round Ups which, in turn, inspired us to promote it as much as we could at the meetings.

With the help of a lot of A.A. volunteers, dedicated to carrying the message, I am happy to report that we have filled close to 600 requests from inmates at Vanier in the past 4yrs. We put on 2 meetings a week in 3 different units and can host anywhere from 2 to 25 women at each meeting.

We know the day that they are released is a very slippery slope. They are left thinking "Do I try and find a meeting?" or "Do I call my friends that I haven't seen for ages?" A very slippery slope, indeed.

That's where Bridging the Gap comes in. The inmate fills out a form prior to release with their name, address after release and a phone number where they can be reached. This could be anywhere from a couple of days to 3 months before they are getting out. When I receive the forms I find someone in their town or area from a volunteer contact list who will call them and offer to take them to a meeting. It is so important that

the volunteer reach out on the day the woman is released and, if no contact is made, we ask that they keep trying for a couple of days.

Most of the woman are from Toronto, Niagara, Kingston and Mississauga. We don't follow up with them. I destroy the request forms as last names are used and we need to protect their anonymity where A.A. and Vanier are concerned. We bridge them and then leave the rest up to God.

I do know of one success story though - Michele W. from Midland. She came back to this area for a 25 year medallion celebration and let us know that she had just celebrated 1 year her-

self. I think she has around 4years of continuous sobriety now and has since moved to the Yukon! She spoke at the Dunville Camp-out and at our Area Assembly a couple of years ago. She just loves giving back. I am proud to call her my friend and she is a shining example

of B.T.G. in action.

It's witnessing moments like these that leave me feeling blessed, humble, and extremely grateful. I will be rotating out as the Corrections Chairperson and will be standing for a newly created Bridging the Gap position in January.

I worked serving alcohol for over 30 years and drove drunk almost every day. I feel God directed me to Corrections to give me a chance to make my amends. I got away without impaired charges, without killing someone and now I get the privilege of carrying the message to those who were not so lucky. Who knows what God has in store for me next, but if I can give back in any way, it would be my pleasure. Literally!

Yours In Loving Service, Gillian R.

Focus: Trivia Answers/International Convention Reflections

Continued from page 2 ...

A.A. Trivia Answers

- 1. The next A.A. International Convention will be held in Detroit in 2020. *Hope to see you there!*
- 2. Dr Bob"s nickname was 'Smitty'.
- 3. Bill W.'s last message was presented at the New York Intergroup Association Annual Dinner on October 10, 1970 by his wife, Lois. Bill was in the hospital at the time and could not attend. Approximately 2,200 A.A. members and guests attended the banguet held at the New York Hilton.
- 4. Richmond Walker was the author of the well known book. He originally wrote this material on small cards he carried in his pocket to aid him in his own sobriety. In 1948, he compiled his book at the request of the A.A. group in Daytona Beach, Florida which they printed on the printing press at the county courthouse and began distributing all over the country. The book sold over 80,000 copies during the first ten years!
- The Leamington Group celebrated their 70th Anniversary on Sunday, September 13th and the Stratford Group celebrated their 70th on Tuesday, September 29th. Thank you for keeping your doors open for 7 decades!

Continued from page 5 ...

International Conference Reflections

story with humour and affection about how, as a teenager, she watched our Sister Ignatia work tirelessly alongside Dr. Bob in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous. As I looked around the stadium I was in awe of the result of the work of those who came before me.

A weekend of laughter and tears left me emotionally drained. An International Convention is often described as life changing and this one was no different; as I returned home to my busy sober life of family, work and A.A., I prayed for the still suffering alcoholic and hoped that maybe, just maybe, his journey would lead him to Detroit in 2020.

It can't come soon enough!

Yours in Service, Nancy W.

AREA OFFICERS

Area Delegate: Jim W.

Area Alternate Delegate: Fredy M.

Area Chair: Dale S.

Area Treasurer: Paul M.

Area Secretary/Registrar: Pat S.

Comments, feedback or articles contact:

www.area86aa.org

Focus: Staying Sober Over the Holidays

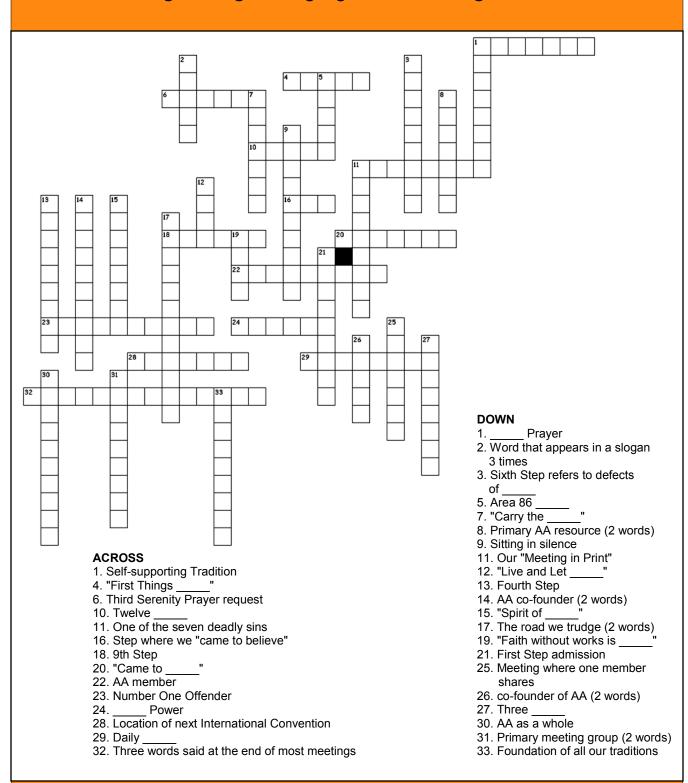
The holidays can be a period of emotional highs and lows. Here are a few suggestions to achieve a happy, sober holiday season:

- Make Time to Take Time. Take some quiet time each day and work on an attitude of gratitude. Plan relaxation and meditation into your day, even for a few minutes.. As our Big Book tells us, "What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." This is a great time to focus on doing what you need to do for your daily reprieve.
- "Play the tape forward". If you start romanticizing the "good old days" when drinking was fun, play the tape forward and think about what happened the last few times you drank.
- Don't overindulge. Go easy on holiday sweets and follow a balanced diet. Monitor your intake of caffeine, nicotine and sugar. Exercise regularly to help maintain your energy level amid a busier schedule. Get plenty of sleep. Fatigue is a stressor that can bring us to a HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely and Tired).
- 4. Take your own car to events so you can arrive late and leave early. Better yet, bring a carload of A.A. friends to events! There is strength in numbers!
- Enhance your support system. Holidays are a good time to reach out more frequently to your sponsor, home group and other A.A. members.
- 6. Have your sponsor and A.A. friends on speed dial in case you need to make an emergency support phone call. Be sure to pick up the phone first!

- 7. **Learn to say "no"** in a way that is comfortable for you and avoid any events that put you at risk. Don't expose yourself to unnecessary temptations, such as gatherings where alcohol is the center of entertainment. If there are people who have a negative influence on you, avoid them.
- 8. Find new ways to celebrate. Create some new symbols and rituals that will help redefine a joyful holiday season. Many Area 86 communities offer a location where members can meet up for meetings and fellowship on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Find out what special events are taking place in your District.
- 9. Focus on your recovery program. Holidays are an important time to focus on your recovery and a perfect time to attend more meetings and work with newcomers in the spirit of giving back all that has been freely given to you. As our Big Book tells us, "Nothing insures immunity from drinking as much as intensive work with other alcoholics."



focus: focus: A.A. Crossword fun!!



focus: fditor's Muse

The irony is not lost on me that the time has come for me to rotate out of a service position that I didn't believe I could or wanted to do. I mean, who really wants to run around bothering fellow members of Alcoholics Anonymous to tell their stories? Would anyone truly want to have to decide if the Delegate's article should be cut for the GSR's article because it better follows the theme of the edition? What is this language that uses terms like 'java script' and 'font' and how exactly does one come to conclude that cerulean blue looks better as a border than chartreuse? One is from Star Trek and the other is a brand of wine or a kind of fishing lure, right?

These were just a few questions that crossed my mind during my service as Website/ Newsletter Chair. And then there were issues like workshops and deadlines to ponder. The pressure that comes with that kind of thinking is comparable to explaining why you're not quite sure where the car is or how come the rest of these hockey team's husbands came home from the tournament three days ago. But still I trudged the Road of Happy Destiny that has re-routed its' way through Service.

I couldn't fully comprehend what was happening two years ago when I found my hand mysteriously in the air standing for a position outside of my comfort zone. I had already stood for two positions I thought were much more suited to my experience and abilities but both my peers and Higher Power seemed to disagree. It was said at the beginning of the elections that if you're willing to serve let your name stand. It more than stood. It stuck and when the results were read and I had been elected to the position I immediately sought out and put into practice what I had been taught: pray and ask for help.

A wonderful thing happens in A.A. if you are genuine and ask questions and that wonderful thing is called "Action". I asked for help to best serve the still suffering alcoholic and Area 86

showed me the way. In fact, you fine folk were on it like a \$1.00 ice cream social. As a result of your efforts and contributions, these last four issues of Focus have ranged in topics from concepts to crosswords and from traditions to trivia as well as your personal sharings of experience, strength and hope. Thank you Area 86!

It is my hope that everyone who is given the opportunity can enjoy and enrich their sobriety as much as I thought I wasn't going to. When I first began my journey in recovery and then carried on through and into service I was given sage advice to "keep it simple" which for me isn't a stretch. And so, simply said, "Thanks for the opportunity to be of service!"

Yours Humbly in Love and Service, Jeff S.



"I had a layover in Omaha ... which led to a hangover in Des Moines."

Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

December 5, 2015 - District 12

Westminster Church
180 Queenston Street
St. Catharines, ON L2R 2Z7
Meeting starts at 10am
Accommodations are at the Days Inn
89 Meadowvale Drive, St Catharines, ON L2N 3Z8
Call 1-877-688-2324 ext. 4 and Book under "WOGS"
Room Rates are \$109.00 plus tax
Rooms are held until Wednesday November 4th, 2015

January 16, 2016 - District 22

Details to follow - visit www.area86aa.org for updates

** Pre-Conference Spring Assembly - March 18 - 20, 2016 **

London Hilton

300 King Street, (King St & Wellington St North), London, ON Phone 1-800-210-9336 or 1-800-445-8667

Rooms are to be booked under a Group Reservation <u>yet to be determined</u>
Contact Area Chair, Dale S., at chaira86p64@bell.net for more information before booking
Rooms must be booked on or before February 19th, 2016
to receive the preferred room rate (\$119.00/night + 13% HST = \$134.47)
and <u>must</u> be booked under the Group Reservation.
Register for rooms on the Area 86 website (www.area86aa.org) or contact the London Hilton.

Register for rooms on the Area 86 website (www.area86aa.org) or contact the London Hilton Registration begins at 8 a.m.

* Agenda items must be received by the Area Chairperson on or before January 19, 2016 *

Declaration of Unity

This we owe to A.A.'s future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on A.A. unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.

Area 86 website: www.area86aa.org