

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: The Twelve Concepts and Service

I am an alcoholic, a member of the Mohawk Serenity Group from Brantford in District 1 and my name is Dean.

When I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, *Recovery, Unity and Service* weren't exactly foremost in my mind. I had no idea what they meant. When I hit my bottom and found myself in the rooms of A.A., I wanted to learn how to drink, stay out trouble and, most of all, lay low until stuff stopped hitting the fan.

An amazing thing happened in the process. I got caught up in the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous! A constant bombardment of one-liner sayings I now know as slogans had me hooked and I didn't know it. At first I kept coming back just to hear someone say something nice about me. I did not realize that, like the slogan, I actually did *'Keep Coming Back'!*

The Steps changed me and made me a different person. Right from the get-go, Step One enabled me to admit my problem and realize I was not alone. This is *Recovery*.

The Traditions had the same effect. I still had a problem (alcohol) but realized we must unite in order to make sure the A.A.

Program survives. This is *Unity*.

The 12 Concepts for World Service (aka the Concepts) bring all this together for me. From Concept One I found that ultimate authority and final responsibility comes from the collective conscience of our whole society – a much bigger 'we'.

Concept Two tells me how the fellowship took real control of itself by accepting the 12 Traditions and control of the fellowship from the founders.

Concepts Three, Four and Five give me the tools of the 'Right of Decision', the 'Right of Participation' and the 'Right of Appeal'.

The 'Right of Decision' is an 'along the way' tool I can use if the group conscience sways differently from what I was assigned. I must make sure to explain properly if I change the conscience I was sent with.

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Focus: The Twelve Concepts and Service

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The 'Right of Participation' is a tool that allows and compels me to participate. If the group conscience I carry has not been heard, it is up to me to do so, if necessary.

Concept Five allows me to express my group's conscience even though I'm in the minority. This was probably one of the most used Concepts when I was at the Conference in New York. I saw minorities become majorities and reverse two times - a fantastic process to be a part of although there were some raised eyebrows.

The next three Concepts (Concept Six, Seven and Eight) I found to be an expression of what Alcoholic Anonymous is with respect to us being a Not-For-Profit organization in the State of New York. I didn't understand that until I read the Financial Report of the Final Conference Report. I really understood this better in person at the Conference when I saw it first-hand. There are really too many examples to list here.

As for the next three Concepts (Concept Nine, Ten and Eleven), I found these to be maintenance Concepts. They basically guide us to put the right people in the right places to make sure our fellowship remains strong.

The last concept is Concept Twelve and the Warranties. This Concept I found to be a summation of the principles of our fellowship and reminder of how to keep Alcoholics Anonymous alive and well for the alcoholic that still suffers. This is *Service*.

Dean T.

Past Delegate - Panel 60
Area 86 Western Ontario

A.A. Trivia Challenge

1. How many A.A. International Conventions have been held in Canada?
2. Approximately how many times was G.S.O.'s A.A. website (www.aa.org) visited in 2013?
 - a) 4,700,000
 - b) 5,900,000
 - c) 6,800,000
3. Who was the first female member of A.A.?

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Area 86 / Focus

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Focus: A.A. International Convention - The Joy of Service

The 13th A.A. World Conference was held in San Antonio, Texas in July 2010 to celebrate 75 years of fellowship. It showcased the best of all the fellowship had to offer for the more than 50,000 members who journeyed to San Antonio to experience the event.

My journey began on the Tuesday before the convention so that my colleagues and I could take advantage of lower cost flights and scope out the premises. The convention itself featured a wide range of topics and meetings to meet the needs of the fellowship.

Topics ranging from personal growth (i.e. the steps), traditions, professionals in A.A. and Corporate A.A. were on the agenda for those attending from all parts of the world. The experience was well worth the miles travelled to get to San Antonio.

As Area 86 Archives Chair, I was invited (along with many others) by the Archives Committee in New York to volunteer at the Archives display. This opportunity was, for me, the highlight of the Conference.

Much to my surprise, the Archives display was a focal point and "Wikipedia" of A.A.'s past and present. Members from all over the world shared their knowledge and experiences with us as we humbly tried to add to the showcased history of Alcoholics Anonymous.

"Members from all over the world shared their knowledge and experiences."

I also had the privilege of meeting and sharing with many A.A. Archival colleagues from all over North America who not only made the time pass quickly but made the entire experience illuminating and joyful. Their collective knowledge, coupled with the showcased history of A.A., helped paint a picture of just how delicate the creation of the fellowship was and how many times the DNA of the fellowship hung on a very thin strand.

One of the more tangible benefits experienced from volunteering was that I was fortunate to meet a lady from Green Bay. At one point during our conversation, the topic turned to the Green Bay Packers. I told her that it was on my bucket list to see a Packer game in Green Bay and she informed me she could get tickets. I left her my email address with the hope that this was more than small talk.

To my surprise, I received an email from her a month later saying that she had 4 tickets! All I had to do was send a cheque.

The rest is history. My sponsor told me Service Work always pays off and he was right!

I encourage any one thinking of going to Atlanta for our 80th Anniversary to go and experience what the convention has to offer. You will not be disappointed!

Yours in service,

Dan D.

Alternate DCM
District 21

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Focus: Service - What's Hot!

As an alcoholic, I have found the hardest part of any job is knowing where and when to start. Many years ago, I was told that whenever I am involved in doing a presentation, I must always be aware of the Mini-skirt Principle: keep it short enough to attract interest but long enough to cover the bare essentials. In writing this article about my journey in service, I shall attempt to follow this Principle.

I came through the doors of A.A. on September 8th, 1993 defiant, belligerent and not wanting to be here but told that I had to attend. I remained this way for well over a year and so defiant was I that I would not pick up any sober time chips as I felt that it was none of your business to know how long I had been without alcohol.

Today, I am a firm believer that when the student is ready a teacher appears. It was well after a year that Gary arrived at my door. He was a person with whom I had no common interest except that we both drank in the most unsavory places. Gary, who had joined A.A. three years before me, said we were going to a meeting and told me to jump in his vehicle as, by this time I did not have one. In fact, I was like the little lost snake that did not have a 'pit to hiss in'.

Gary took me to the Freedom Group meeting at the Beaver Creek Federal Correctional Facility. I wondered how I could be of any assistance as I had never been incarcerated.

By continuing to take me to this meeting, I came to realize that, while I may not have anything to offer the inside members, listening to them enabled me to appreciate that it was only by the Grace of a Higher Power taking care of me when I could not take care of myself that I was not also an inside member. I would ask that you keep an open mind when I say that, for me, one meeting on the inside is worth two on the outside. I will be forever grateful for those men who went to the Freedom Group as they were the teachers I needed then and still need today.

After having served as a GSR for the Bracebridge Group, I was elected to the position of Corrections Subcommittee Chair for District 7 and then became the Alternate DCM. At this point, Jim (who I knew from my home group) became my teacher and I continued my journey. We were involved in setting up meetings at Project Turnaround, a secure facility for Young Offenders, and in putting on meetings at the open facility for youths in Gravenhurst.

It was at these meetings that I was able to see the devastation that alcohol and drugs were causing in the lives of young people. In order to obtain funds for their addiction, these young men were doing in their teens what I did not think about doing until my thirties. It's a real 'God prod' when a member who was introduced to A.A. at

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Focus: Service - Whoop Whoop!

these facilities comes up to me at an Assembly or Round-Up and reintroduces themselves. Carrying the message through service - *Whoop Whoop!*

Because of the nightmare I experienced in being the DCM for District 7, I planned to never go any further in service. Looking back, the hardest job in service that I have had was being a DCM. It was as if I had a constant bull's eye pasted to my back and everyone was taking a shot. Today, I believe in the saying, "If you want to make your Higher Power laugh, tell him your plans."

At the final Area Committee meeting in 2005, the Sub-Committee Chairs were to be elected. I had firmly made plans not to run for any position. I was leaving service outside of my home group and the Freedom Group.

Just before the election for the Area Sub-Committee position of Corrections (the last position to be elected), my teachers appeared. A break was called and Panel 54 Delegate, Jan L, and Panel 56 Delegate Elect, Tom V, approached me and asked if I would let my name stand.

I was told to never say "No" in A.A. After some coaxing, I agreed. I had never made a presentation prior to this time and, in my mind, I knew I was not going to win. As it happened, the Area Committee elected me Corrections Sub-Committee Chair for Panel 56!

It was from this point on that I realized that whatever I did for A.A. I was receiving rewards tenfold. The nightmares that I had as DCM were no more. Serenity, contentment and the ability to live comfortably in my own skin on most days became evident. The GSR's of Area 86 elected me to the positions of Secretary-Registrar Panel 58, Alternate Delegate Panel 60 and allowed me to be acclaimed as Delegate in Panel 62.

During these times, I came to the realization that the core of A.A. has not changed since 1935, although the principles may seem to diminish the farther out one goes from that core. It was as Alternate Delegate and Delegate that I realized that one of the main purposes for the trusted servants of A.A. is to protect the integrity

of the A.A. message and the literature carrying that message.

Being able to travel throughout Western Ontario and other locations reeled fantastic rewards. That said, I am glad my recovery sponsor always made me cognizant of the fact that service must complement my taking the steps of recovery and not substitute doing the steps for to do otherwise leaves one without a recovery foundation when the journey in service slows down. **RECOVERY FIRST - SERVICE SECOND.**

"It was from this point on that I realized that whatever I did for A.A. I was receiving rewards tenfold."

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Focus: Service - Who's Who! (continued)

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Today I wonder if it is possible that our fellowship has fallen to the stage that we are now seeking perfection instead of spiritual progress. I hope not, but is it possible? We appear to have such a growing distrust for one another that we forget the principles enunciated in the program.

However, we have the tools to overcome this provided that we get out of self and our righteous attitude. Trust, for me, is giving you the power to hurt me knowing that I have a Higher Power who will fix me.

Unfortunately, I may not have achieved the Mini-skirt Principle but may your Higher Power guide and keep you and, as always, I want to thank you all for allowing me the privilege of participating in your sobriety for, without yours, I would not have mine.

I realize today that each and every one whom I have met in A.A. has been a teacher in one way or another.

Thank you all!

Yours in love, service and fellowship,

Percy G.

Past Delegate - Panel 62
Area 86 Western Ontario

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A.A. Trivia Answers

1. Canada has hosted 3 International Conventions: one in Montreal (1985) and two in Toronto (1965 and 2005). The next Canadian hosted A.A. International Convention will be held in Vancouver in 2025. *Whoo Hoo!*
2. (c) In 2013, the A.A. website was visited 6,819,949 times, for an average of 18,735 visits daily!
3. Sylvia K. of Chicago, Illinois is known to be the first female member of A.A. Her story "*The Keys of the Kingdom*" appears on page 268 in the 4th edition of the Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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

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Focus: A.A. Celebrates 80 years!!

2015 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous



**July 2 - 5, 2015
Atlanta, Georgia
"80 Years – Happy, Joyous and Free"**

Since 1950, A.A. has held an International Convention every five years, beginning with the first one in Cleveland, Ohio. The site of the Convention has always been in the United States or Canada.

Prior to the first International Convention, the Cleveland Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous hosted a Big Meeting in June 1945 to celebrate A.A.'s 10th anniversary. Twenty-five hundred people were in attendance, from 36 states and two Canadian provinces as well as one from Mexico.

The first few conventions marked events of great significance in A.A. history. At the first convention in 1950, A.A. celebrated its 15th Anniversary, adopted its Twelve

Traditions and heard co-founder, Dr. Bob, speak in public for the last time.

Five years later, in St. Louis, Missouri, Bill W. declared that A.A. had 'come of age'. Leadership of A.A. was turned over to the General Service Conference, the structure to which local groups, area committees, and Conference delegates expressed the collective conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Convention incurred a net loss of \$16,000 -an enormous amount of money in those days! Fortunately, the Conventions that followed became financially self-supporting and continue to be to this day.

Today, our International Conventions are primarily known as events to celebrate the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous and seeing the wide-spread results of "carrying the message" from one alcoholic to another.

Over the course of the weekend, A.A. members and guests from around the world will celebrate A.A.'s 80th year with Big Meetings held Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday morning in the Georgia Dome.

Other meetings, scheduled or informal, will take place throughout the weekend in the Georgia World Congress Center and local hotels. A variety of meetings will be held in languages including French, German, Italian, Japanese and Korean. Al-Anon and Alateen have also scheduled an array of daytime activities, including meetings and workshops.

For general information on the celebration of our fellowship's 80th Birthday and International Convention, visit A.A.'s website at www.aa.org.

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Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

May 9, 2015 - District 6

Redeemer Lutheran Church
271 Elm St, St Thomas, ON N5R 5C5
Meeting starts at 10am
Accommodations are at the Comfort Inn
100 Centennial Ave, St Thomas, ON N5R 5B2
Call 1-519-633-4082 - Book under 'WOGS'
Room Rates are \$93.49 and \$97.74 (1st floor) plus tax
Block held until April 8th, 2015

August 8, 2015 - District 5

Grace United Church
310 12th Street, Hanover, ON N4N 1V6
Meeting starts at 10am
Accommodations are at the Traveller's Inn
244 7th Ave, Hanover, ON N4N 2H1
Call 1-800-801-8398 - Book under 'AA 86 Western Ontario'
Room Rates are \$74.00 (1 bed) and \$84.00 (2 beds) plus tax
Block held until July 8, 2015

December 5, 2015 - District 12

Details to be announced at a later date

**** Fall Assembly - October 23, 24 and 25, 2015 ****

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 yet to be determined
Contact Area Chair, Dale S., at chaira86p64@bell.net for more information before booking
Rooms must be booked on or before October 2nd, 2015
to receive preferred room rate (\$119.00/night + 13% HST = \$134.47)
and must be booked under the Group Reservation
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 August 25th, 2015 **

Area 86 website: www.area86aa.org