

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus - Journey in Service

I am an alcoholic and my name is Geri. I am a proud member of the Friendly Riverside group in Windsor, Ontario. My journey in service began many years ago with a resentment. I had attended an A.A. meeting where someone had said something I didn't like which was nothing new for me at the time. I decided in my complete lack of good judgement that I was going to leave A.A. and you could all take a one way trip to somewhere really, really hot. I was done and wanted no part of you!

"I became more concerned with trying to be a part of A.A."

Shortly after making this decision, I went on a weekend trip to Niagara Falls. Amid a hundred or more people on Lundy's Lane, I heard someone call my name. I couldn't believe it! The voice sounded strangely familiar and sure enough, it was a fellow from A.A. in Windsor. Was there no escape from you people?!?! I found myself telling him all about my resentment and how I was done with A.A. He listened patiently and advised me to pray for those I resented. He also suggested that I talk to my sponsor about service work.

Deep inside I knew he was right and that, without A.A., I would surely die. I returned home and called my sponsor. That same evening was our group business meeting where I was voted in as Alternate GSR before I had a chance to even ask what it was. And then, something strange began to happen. As I got out of myself and into what I could do

for A.A. and my home group, my resentment subsided. I became more concerned with others than just myself. I became more concerned with trying to be a part of A.A. rather than find fault with it. I began to feel needed where I had not felt needed before. I began to learn what it was like to give instead of take and to listen to others rather than demand they listen to me. For the first time I realized the importance of not only carrying A.A.'s life saving message but of being a part of those who strive to keep A.A. alive so that

those who are suffering might find the freedom we have found. I became grateful.

It wasn't long before a hunger was born within my soul to serve wherever and whenever I could. I served as Dance Chair for many dances and sat on many committees. I had the privilege of serving as Chair for the Windsor Essex 1990 Convention.

CONTENTS

- P2 Journey in Service (cont'd) Area Officers
- P3 Journey in Service (cont'd) Trivia Challenge/Contributors
- P4 How Did I Get Here?
- P5 Crossword/Trivia Answers
- P6 Came to Get - Stayed to Give
- P7 Reaping the Benefits Tenfold
- P8 Area Events/Corrections Correspondence Service Info

..... continued on page 2

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Focus: Journey in Service (cont'd)

I went on to serve at the District in a variety of positions, finally having the honour to serve as Panel 64 DCM. Now I am coming to the end of my term as Area 86 Panel 66 Treatment Chair. If you are reading this, then it is November and very close to the end of a 2 year term in service and yet another wonderful highly rewarding experience for me.

Through being of service I have become the person my Higher Power intended me to be. Selfishness has been replaced by a desire to do for others. Stubbornness has been replaced by a desire to cooperate with others. My self-will in insisting stubbornly and arrogantly on getting my own way has been replaced by a willingness to hear what others may think or want.

In service, I have grown. Because of service, I have met many wonderful people that I may never have met at all without serving. Because of service, my sobriety has been enhanced. Because of service, my life has become better and is far richer than I ever could have imagined possible. And most of all, because of the service of others before me, I live. In honour of that, I hope that in some small way I have helped another suffering alcoholic as those who once served helped save me.

I became all that I am as a result of all that you are and the service you once provided to me.

With Respect and Gratitude,
Geri Klingbile
Area 86 Panel 66 Treatment Chair

To speak or write about my thoughts or feelings regarding most things in A. A., I tend to plagiarize the Big Book or the Twelve and Twelve. Please forgive me for phrases that are not my original thoughts; they are what I think and feel absolutely.

Upon entering A.A. at the age of 51, my motto for my entire life had been never to volunteer - ever! I came into the program full of fear, selfish, self-centred and self-absorbed. Hatred, as well as alcohol, oozed out of my every pore. I had stretched the love my husband, son and daughter had for me to the very limits and I isolated myself in the bedroom with my bottle of rum every day.

Another woman and I had been attending classes on how to "manage" our drinking. The instructor was pushing all of us to attend A.A. The other woman did not want to go to A.A. because she really, really, hated all those hugs. Full of apprehension, we went together to an A.A. meeting, to be greeted by a roomful of people laughing and enjoying themselves. Most of those people gave each of us a huge hug and I could see the horror on my friend's face. I, on the other hand, felt that going to A.A. would make me less than pond scum. The love, friendship, and hope radiating from those people saved my life.

A larger woman, with a shaved head, gave me the biggest, caring hug I had ever had in my life. She also had a wonderful full belly laugh. This woman, Liz, was to become my first sponsor and friend. Liz was also a sponsor to many other women in the surrounding area. The members and sponsors in that room that night, and those in every A.A. gathering place every day, are, in my opinion, doing the greatest service work in A.A. The sponsors that give freely of their time, advice and guidance are imperative to the success of A.A. They offer hope and genuine love to those entering the doors of A.A. I love seeing people grow and change in the fellowship.

.....continued on page 3

AREA OFFICERS

Area Delegate: Fredy M.

Area Alternate Delegate: Dale S.

Area Chair: Pat S.

Area Treasurer: Sandi W.

Area Secretary/Registrar: Chris S.

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Focus: My Journey in Service (cont'd) / Trivia Challenge

That first group I joined asked me to make coffee. I thought they were crazy in trusting me to even show up! After a few weeks of making coffee, I was beginning to feel needed and to feel important.

My first sponsor guided me to a better physical state and, eventually, to a better place of mental emotional and spiritual well being. One of the quotes I love is, *"God brought me to A.A., and A.A. brought me God."*

People working at the General Service Office; at the Group, District, and Area levels; all the DCMs, GSRs, Treasurers, Secretaries, Committee Members; and all of the Alternates facilitate the running of the individual groups. Their service work is invaluable and they manage to serve without taking over the groups.

When I came into A.A. I was so frightened of not being accepted, I barely spoke. I went to meeting after meeting and passed when it was my turn to share. My lovely sponsor would tell me that I was serving others just by being there. Others could see the hope and metamorphosis in me which would give hope to them.

My first sponsor moved away and I did not get another one until quite a few years later when I moved back to my hometown. There I discovered a new group of members who became my friends. That sponsor and those new friends also saved my life. When my 32 year-old son died suddenly from a heart attack, they surrounded me with love and support. They reminded me that taking a drink never makes things better. It only makes things worse. Most importantly, they reminded me to stay connected to my Higher Power.

Becky S.
District 6

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.

A.A. Trivia Challenge

1. What is the only requirement for A.A. membership?
2. "Ed the Atheist" is referred to in Tradition 3 of the Twelve and Twelve. Under what title is his personal story published in the Big Book?
3. An additional story in Tradition 3 of the Twelve and Twelve discusses a member who was *"a victim of another addiction even worse stigmatized than alcoholism"*. What stigmatization was he referring to?
4. What early member of A.A. summarized his journey in A.A. as follows: *"Honesty gets us sober and tolerance keeps us that way?"* (paraphrased)
5. What is the suggested "Code" for an A.A. member?

Answers on Page 9

Area 86 Focus

Published twice a year by
Western Ontario General Service.
www.area86aa.org

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Focus: How Did I Get Here?

I suppose the most honest answer to this question can be found in the Big Book. I was finally beaten into a state of reasonableness. In a Detox, and out of answers, I became willing to listen, not wholeheartedly, but I had not come to this place as part of my resume building plan. I was assessed at Detox and it was recommended that I go to treatment. In the past, I had usually sobered up just long enough to get released from jail or post bail. This seemed like a better strategy but I could only manage to stay sober until the toys in the attic took over the asylum in my head deciding it would be a good idea to have a last send-off party for one. This time, nothing happened. No matter what I poured into myself, nothing worked. I was living the alcoholic's nightmare. I was my own buzz-kill.

This time, I entered the treatment centre with a different attitude and, when I left, I continued on to my first A.A. meeting in years. I was in A.A. before as part of a provincially sponsored rehabilitation program. I had been convicted of impaired driving causing death and sentenced to two years in prison. While there, it was suggested that if I wanted parole, I should go to A.A., Four years prior, I had attended one meeting and thought it a religious program so didn't stay around long enough to find out any more. I doubted it would do much for me. As before, I had the internal struggle of wanting out of A.A. more than I wanted to stay in. I was going to A.A. for the wrong reasons: to see what I could get out of it and not what I could put in. I managed to stay sober just long enough to get my parole but, of course, I drank again. I spent the next fifteen years living all the promises that come with active alcoholism.

After a longer than usual bender in 2007, I surfaced for air and that's when I started my recovery. After attending meetings in Hamilton - sometimes 3 a day, for a month or so - a group of radical white-haired ladies from the morning meetings pressured me into getting me one these sponsor things. I prayed because, for some unknown reason, I was doing a little of that too. The first man I asked (and a friend of mine today) refused but directed me to talk to someone that

he was working with - a man I had played hockey with years before. My new sponsor made all the expected suggestions about steps and meetings. He also suggested that, since I'd joined the group, I attend its business meeting. I wasn't sure what that was, but how bad could it be?

My journey began in service there, sitting at the end of a table, when the secretary announced that the group needed a Literature Rep. Six men with one hundred years of sobriety on one side of the table and another one hundred years of sobriety on the other looked at me and smiled. I might be a little slow, but I got it. And so it began.

I have held many different positions within A.A. I was elected Alternate GSR and a week and a half later, the GSR resigned, so I served in that position for 2 years. I then filled the Alternate DCM position for a month and a half and when the DCM rotated out so became DCM for District 21 for 2 years. After that, I stood for two positions at the Area Committee level but wasn't voted in. A member said that if I was willing to serve, I would need to stand for the position out of my comfort zone. Fear was holding me back, but the Big Book says that fear can kill me. So, my journey in publishing and the World Wide Web began. Though confused and apprehensive, I did what I was taught and asked for help, and the hand of AA was there. Two years later, I stood for Area Chair at the Assembly and was defeated.. After my bruised ego recovered on the ride home, I was sure I was finished with all learning and growing. My Al-Anon better half thought I'd be a good fit for Corrections. Uhuh!

As I finish up my term as Corrections Chair for Area 86, let me just say that we come into the world wanting to make a change and, if something changes - no matter how small - then we've done our job. Sometimes that's all it takes to help save the life of a still suffering alcoholic.

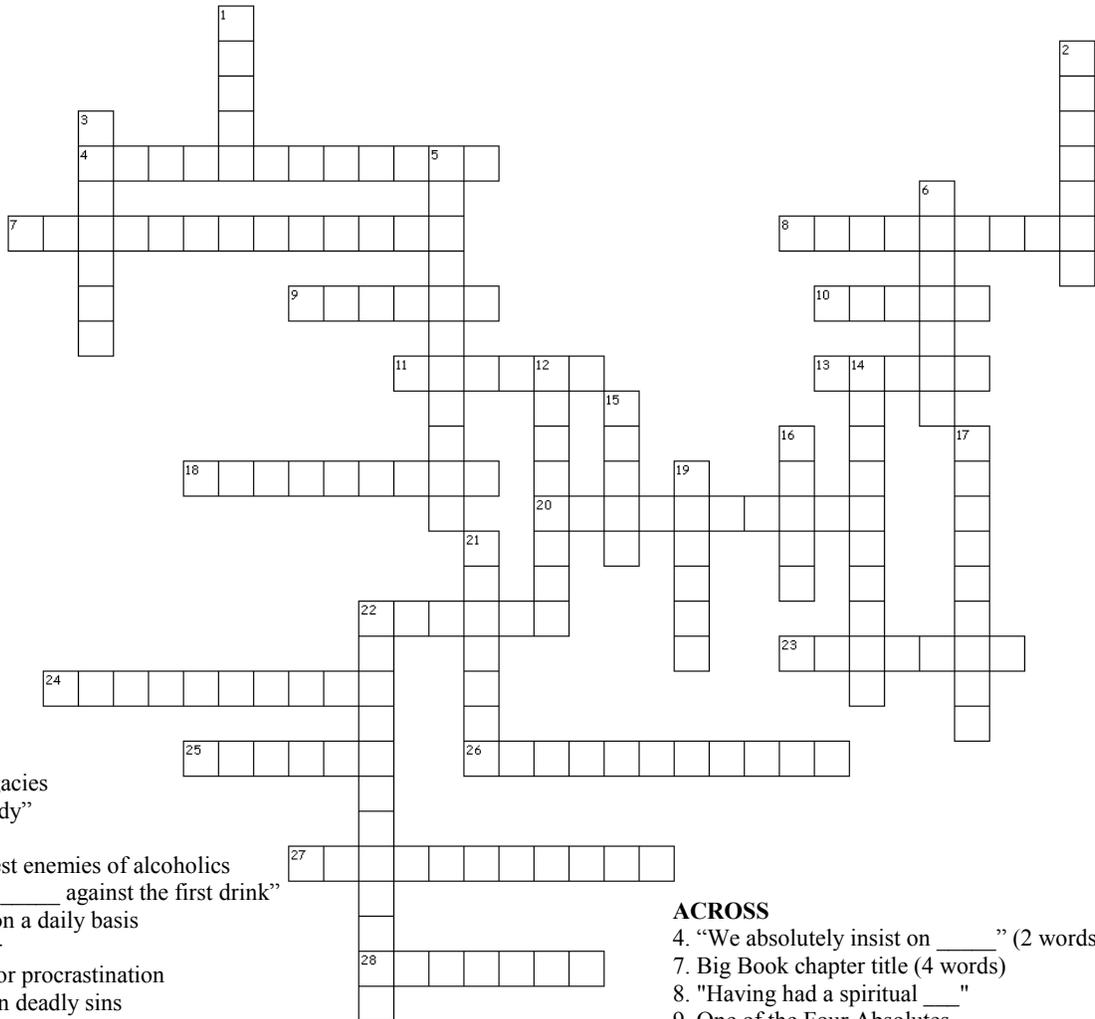
Jeff Stephens
Area 86 Panel 66 Corrections Chair

*** For info on how to become involved in Corrections Service Correspondence (CCS), see page 8. ***

*"Fear was holding me back,
but the Big Book says that
fear can kill me."*

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Focus: Crossword



DOWN

- 1. One of our 3 Legacies
- 2. “_____ of the body”
- 3. Came to _____
- 5. One of the greatest enemies of alcoholics
- 6. “We are without _____ against the first drink”
- 12. What we have on a daily basis
- 14. Our #1 offender
- 15. Another word for procrastination
- 16. One of the seven deadly sins
- 17. Sixth Step refers to defects of _____
- 19. Spiritual _____
- 21. Big Book story “Keys to the _____”
- 22. “_____ and laughter make for usefulness”

ACROSS

- 4. “We absolutely insist on _____” (2 words)
- 7. Big Book chapter title (4 words)
- 8. “Having had a spiritual _____”
- 9. One of the Four Absolutes
- 10. Big Book story “_____ Suffer Too”
- 11. Rowland _____
- 13. _____ in God and clean house
- 18. “_____ of the mind”
- 20. Big Book chapter title (2 words)
- 22. word used most frequently in Spiritual Experience (Appendix)
- 23. AA principle
- 24. Dr _____ and Mr _____ (2 words)
- 25. One of the Four Horsemen
- 26. “_____ of our spiritual condition”
- 27. Root of our troubles
- 28. “Our liquor was but a _____”

A.A. Trivia Answers

- 1. A desire to stop drinking - ref Tradition 3, BB 4th Edⁿ - p562
- 2. The Vicious Cycle - ref BB 4th Edⁿ - p219 - The story is about Jimmy B. “Ed the Atheist” was a pseudonym used in the 12&12.
- 3. He admitted he liked to wear women's clothes.
- 4. Bill W - ref As Bill Sees It - p312
- 5. Love and tolerance of others - ref BB 4th Edⁿ - p84

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Focus: "I Came to Get and I Stayed to Give"

I recall the words of a past delegate when I became the DCM for District 19: *"That's a tough district."* With a smile, I said that I was fully aware as I had been at District 19's table for the previous 4½ years (2 years as Alternate DCM, 2 years as GSR and 6 months in the peanut gallery). I realized coming into the position that I would have challenges but nothing that I had not already experienced. Instead of being discouraged, I embraced the chance to serve a fellowship I had grown to love. I knew that I would do the best I could, and let God do the rest.

It had not always been that way. When I walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous on March 24, 2009, I was one of those people that didn't really want to be here. All I wanted was to stop drinking. Little did I know that this was a program of change and it was me that had to change. I was arrogant and defiant to the core. When I would hear *"Did you get a sponsor? Did you join a group?"* I would think, *"Sheesh!"* I had to get you off my back. And so, I joined a group.

I volunteered for everything - setting up, making coffee, greeting as well as serving as treasurer. I came to find out about the importance of rotation and how it wasn't happening at my home group. The same person was GSR year after year. Hindsight is 20/20. I now know there was no one else who wanted to take on the role of GSR until I got the service itch. With all honesty, I can now see that everything that happens, happens as it should. He was the one that pushed me into service.

As an observer, I sat at the District table for 6 months prior to becoming GSR of my group. And I learned what the proper etiquette was. I observed which groups did what. I observed who was prepared, and who was not. I learned to write a report, hand it in to the District Secretary and have it included in the minutes so that people would know what was happening at my group.

When I was voted in to the position of Alternate DCM, I was an observer once again. Serving in accordance to our Structure and Guidelines, I filled in and chaired when there were no Sub-committee Chairs. I chaired district meetings in the DCM'S absence and filled in at the Area Committee Meeting and Assemblies.

I attended my first Assembly in November of 2011. John C. shared with me that the Steps were grade school, the Traditions high school and the Concepts university. That is one of the little golden nuggets I got out of that Assembly. I can't really say I enjoyed my first Assembly as I was overwhelmed, to say the least. I have attended all the Assemblies since, with the exception of one in 2015 when I was recovering from surgery.

Having attended all the ACM meetings as Alternate DCM and DCM I don't wonder why I am serving. I know that this is where I am supposed to be, especially when I walk into the church basement and see so many people that love to serve just like me.

When I wanted to get into service I asked someone for help, someone that had a passion for service. He accepted graciously to be my service sponsor. I didn't even know that such a thing existed. He remains my service sponsor to this day. He really didn't know what he was getting into with me!

"I have come to understand that it's what I can give, not what I can get"

I will let my name stand for the next panel and if the God of my understanding sees fit that I am elected for a position, I will humbly accept. If not, I will continue to be of service at my home group, greeting making coffee and chairing. This is where you can usually find me Wednesday and Friday nights at 6:30, greeting at the door.

Yours in Love and Service,
Ann Marie L.
DCM, District 19

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Focus: Service - Reaping the Benefits Tenfold

With only one month of sobriety, I remember walking into my home group and the ladies greeting me with a set of keys to the church. My home group was a women's meeting which hosted a Tuesday evening and a Thursday lunch meeting. In handing me the keys, they could not stress enough the importance of my participation in ensuring that the church doors were open, the coffee was on, the meeting was ready, and that I was there to greet people when they arrived.

This single experience ignited in me a feeling of being needed for the first time in years, a feeling that others saw value in my assistance. I felt I had a purpose, and that other individuals could and would trust me to be responsible, accountable and capable of being there for others.

This experience sold me immediately on the importance of giving back and getting out of one's self.

The quality of my sobriety today is directly proportional to the amount that I am giving of myself to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have been blessed with the opportunity to participate in numerous committees, roundups, and conferences. Whenever asked, it is a privilege to share my story with the hope that I may be able to touch someone listening and give them an ounce of hope that maybe life can be different for them too. I am a firm believer that we will never truly understand how we can impact the life of another, and it is essential that we live the program in our daily affairs both inside and outside of the rooms.

The past few years, with thanks to my Higher Power, I have been serving my District in varying capacities to the best of my ability. I try to educate myself, learn from others who have come before me, and ask for help often. There was a time when I believed that there was no power greater than myself. I was the be all-end all-know all. Today,

miraculously, I can and do reach out and ask others for direction and advice.

When I landed in the community I presently reside in with a few twenty four hours under my belt, I knew that I wanted and desperately needed to plant firm, solid roots in the recovery community. Integral to a solid foundation was service work. More than anything I wanted to share my experience with other women; that there was hope and that they too could recover from this seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I knew it was necessary to seek out a

home group and a sponsor. I began coming early and staying late, assisting with setup and tear down, putting my name forward for District commitments, listening to others, sharing my story, and being there to

help the newcomer. In recent years, I have been given the gift of being able to share my experience, strength, and hope with many young women. Seeing lives transform in front of my eyes reassures me time and time again that if we do the possible, God will do the impossible.

Embedding myself in the center of this program has given me a life today beyond my wildest imagination. Every day I witness the beauty of this program. When I get out of my selfish, self-centered self to help others, I reap the benefits ten-fold. It is in giving that I receive. Seven years ago, this alcoholic would not have believed this to be possible.

Today I know in my heart, that not only is service absolutely necessary for individuals and Alcoholics Anonymous to function but for my own personal sobriety.

Stephanie J.
Alternate DCM, District 6

*"we will never truly
understand how we can
impact the life of another"*

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Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

visit www.area86aa.org (District Events Section) for updates

December 2, 2017 - District 14

Area Committee Meeting
 St. Paul's United Church
 360 Devine St, Sarnia, ON N7T 1V1
 Accommodations at Holiday Inn tel: 519-336-4130
 1498 Venetian Blvd, Point Edward, ON N7T 7W6
 10 Standard King rooms (\$99 plus tax) and 10 King Tower rooms (\$115 plus tax)
 Reserved under "AAM"

January 13, 2018 - District 11

Area Committee Meeting
 Unifor Hall
 606 First Street, London ON
 Accommodations at Best Western London Airport Inn & Suites
 2230 Dundas St, London ON N5V 1R5
 20 rooms at the rate of \$112.00 plus tax will be held until December 15, 2017
 2-3 accessible rooms on the first floor
 Complimentary hot buffet breakfast, fitness room and swimming pool
 tel: 519-457-1200

Spring Assembly - March 23, 24 & 25, 2018

Crowne Plaza Hotel - 105 King Street East, Kitchener, ON N2G 2K8
 Over 200 free parking spots available for overnight guests
 Rooms can be booked on line at reservations@cpkw-hotel.com
 or by calling 1-519-744-4141 or 1-877-408-6665
 More information to be updated on www.area86aa.org (District Events Section)

**** CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE in Canada (CCS) ****

A HELPING HAND FOR OUR CONFINED FRIENDS

This invaluable 12 step service, sponsorship through the mail, connects our confined friends behind the walls with outside members. CCS allows our confined members access to the program, insuring the hand of AA is always there. Much talk has been done with little action. Do all of our confined friends know this service exists? Have we done all that we can to carry the message?

WHAT WE CAN NOT DO ALONE....WE CAN DO TOGETHER

For more information on the implementation of CCS in your AREA,
 contact Ruth L at: ccsresponse@gmail.com