

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: Sponsorship in Service

S In a few months I will have two years of sobriety and I've been reflecting back on my journey in AA. It started two years ago when I attended my first meeting. In the beginning I learned about some of the things that were suggested, so I got a sponsor and started working the Steps. I thought I was doing great, but after a few months I relapsed. It was then I decided to listen to the other suggestions—get a home group, get involved, and get active.

...get a home group, get involved, and get active.

Shortly after joining a home group I was handed the role of treasurer; it was literally handed to me as a bag of 7th Tradition money tossed my way. Little did I know that this was the beginning of a major turning point in my sobriety. It was my entry into service.

The person who gave me this 'gentle nudge' into service did not stop there. He invited me to attend a District Committee Meeting. When I asked what happens there the response was, "Come and see". So I went... and soon became the GSR of my home group. That same person suggested I attend an Area Assembly, and I found myself on another road trip to 'come and see'. Most of the drive was spent discussing how the groups work, how the districts work, how the area works, etc.

Attending the Area Assembly was one of the best experiences thus far in my program. I went to the GSR workshop, where I learned about having a 'Service Sponsor'. This is someone who guides you in service by sharing his or her experience.

Suddenly, I realized I had an unofficial service sponsor already. He had been filling that role for me before I even knew such a thing existed.

I was asked by the Area Delegate to New York to read the Twelve Steps at the Assembly meeting that evening. My service sponsor often says that his feeling is that when you are asked to do something in the program you should say yes. So, I found the word "Yes" popping out of my mouth before I even thought about it. Luckily this was just before the meeting started so I didn't have much time to be nervous about reading the steps to a crowd of over three hundred people (an experience I won't forget).

I remember introducing myself and saying I was fairly new to the program, but that I was hooked. The experience of attending the Assembly was amazing. In

CONTENTS

P2	Sponsorship in Service cont'd True Inspiration
P3	A.A. Trivia Challenge True Inspiration cont'd From 'Around AA' to 'In AA'
P4	From 'Around AA' to 'In AA' (cont'd) Editor's Note Area Officers
P5	Having a service Sponsor & Being a Service Sponsor
P6	Trivia Answers Having a service Sponsor & Being a Service Sponsor Cont'd
P7	Word Search
P8	Upcoming Events

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Focus: Sponsorship in Service ... (cont'd)
&
True Inspiration

the people there I saw the kind of sobriety I wanted, and I knew I was willing to go to any lengths to get it. Our Area Delegate told me he believes if someone gets involved at his or her first assembly, that person will always come back. In my case that is certainly true; I have now attended three. I am still inspired by the passion I see there.

How fortunate I've been to have these experiences along my AA journey. I continue to be active in service and have had the opportunity to participate in several events in my district. I now serve as the District's Alternate Secretary. I am grateful that I was given that nudge early in my program by my service sponsor. It has allowed me to grow in the program. I enjoy sobriety so much today! I have no idea where I would be now had I not followed those suggestions to "Come and see". I believe that my Higher Power led me down this path and put my service sponsor in place to help guide me.

I encourage others to get involved in service. For me it's about being "in" the program, not just "around" it. When I got involved I was able to stay sober. If you are thinking that service is not important or is for others, I would say "Come and see". You just might like it. Maybe your sobriety will be enhanced by it, as mine has been—in part because of those 'gentle nudges'.

**Yours in Service,
Julie K.**



My name is Debbie and I am an alcoholic. It is a pleasure to submit an article for *Focus* at the request of the new Newsletter Chairperson. Good luck Pam! I know you will do a great job.

The topic — 'Where does my service in sponsorship begin?'—is one that I have been thinking about since it was mentioned at the Area Committee Meeting. In my first year of recovery my

sponsor was adamant that I would pass on what was given to me. I would set up, stick around to clean up, volunteer to chair and do other various 'chores' as I thought of them. I watched her as she moved up in service to become GSR, then overheard her discuss things with her service sponsor; I hadn't been aware that there was a difference between a sponsor and a service sponsor. She filled both roles very well for me. I became the group secretary, then the treasurer. Life got very busy — 12-hour shifts, three kids, a husband. I stayed active in each of my home groups. Later, I became the GSR of my group. It was hard to find others who were interested in Service at the District level. I was part of the Public Information Committee and truly loved speaking in the schools. (I was much younger then!) I was CPC briefly, but stepped down before the end of my term. During those years I didn't have a service sponsor and tended to seek advice from others in service. I studied the Traditions, attended the Assemblies and sat in on the Concepts discussions trying to learn as much as I could by watching others.

After some personal changes in my life a few years ago, I once again became the GSR, then Alt. DCM (one year) then DCM. I knew what was expected of me as a GSR; being DCM was a whole new experience. Uncharted territory! Since I had been attending the Assemblies, I was aware that I could ask questions of those who had gone ahead of me. It was highly recommended that I get a 'service sponsor', so I asked someone whom I had observed moving into various positions and seemed who comfortable with her role.

What is the difference between a sponsor and a service sponsor? The service sponsor relationship primarily works within the Traditions and Concepts, keeping in mind 'principles before personalities' in any service role. It does not usually include much personal information like that which you would share with a sponsor unless it pertains to an issue you may be having that is interfering with doing your job. Discussions may include how to fulfill certain aspects of the role you are in and what is expected at the assemblies and area meetings. Problem solving is another. Now, I don't know about any of you but I

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Focus: True Inspiration ... (cont'd)
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From Around AA to In AA

suffer from what I call "ISK". *I Should Know* is a mental block founded in fear and driven by pride. My service sponsor got calls from me *after* I had made some blunders as DCM. I got a *bit* better in my next position by calling and asking questions *before* I blundered. My commitment to improvement is an ongoing process.

I am now a service sponsor myself and I take the role very seriously. I study the Traditions and the Concepts as I do the Steps. I hope that I am able to instill the joy and yes, the challenges, of dedicating time to serve the fellowship as a whole. I believe Alcoholics Anonymous will be in very good hands in the years to come given the level of participation in my home District 6. We are the future. Let's hold on to it with all our hearts. Service will take us places and have us meet people we never would have believed possible. I know it has for me.

Thank you for my sobriety.....Deb



Wery early in my sobriety someone asked me to help with putting away chairs after a meeting. From there it seemed that I helped clean up after a lot of meetings!

Within a few short weeks I was unknowingly moving from being "around AA" to being "in AA" By 'helping out' I was regaining self-worth and confidence. I was also getting to know people and, without realizing it, that feeling of hopelessness and despair faded. 'Life between my ears' began to change.

In the beginning I uncomfortably hung around before and after meetings, unsure what to say, how to act or whether to stay or leave; I really did not want to talk to anyone. In time, things changed and I found that I actually enjoyed talking to and listening to others—especially that person who was standing all alone --- who reminded me what it was like early in my sobriety.

I believe that I have been blessed by having

I believe that I have been blessed by having many people demonstrate to me how to be of service to others.

A.A. Trivia Challenge

1. Concept I– What was Alcoholic's Anonymous organization referred to as?
 - a) backwards
 - b) upside-down
 - c) conservative
2. Concept II— When did the A.A. Groups confirm the permanent charter for their General Service Conference?
 - a) 1982
 - b) 1955
 - c) 2001
3. Concept III— What does this concept give us?
 - a) equality
 - b) fun
 - c) right of decision

many people demonstrate to me how to be of service to others. It all started when someone asked me to help with chairs—showing me how to be 'in AA.' Soon, I was asked to take over as Literature Chair for our District; they believed I would do a good job and they offered any needed support or help. At the District, I was shown a whole new world. In the past, I considered anything to do with a committee as a complete waste of time. How wrong my thinking had been!

I have been freely gifted your time, understanding, and patience with many opportunities to learn a new way of living --- to

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Focus: From Around AA to In AA (cont'd)
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Editor's Note

experience things outside of my comfort zone. Sometimes I was gently encouraged and sometimes forcefully nudged in the right direction.

As long as I continue to be "in AA" accepting the opportunities to serve, I know that my life will continue to get even better. If I start to coast, relying on what service I have done in the past, then I may lose the sobriety and serenity that I have today. I will quickly become 'stark-raving sober' and again suffer hopelessness.

Today, it is my responsibility to pass on to others that which was given to me. I want to know that that new person is in good hands and not alone anymore. It is a blessing to see people change as a result of giving service. I know AA is working and carrying the message of hope.

**Joe B.
Came To Believe Group**

AREA OFFICERS

Area Delegate: Dale S.

Area Alternate Delegate: Sandi W.

Area Chair: Jeff S.

Area Treasurer: Ken G.

Area Secretary/Registrar: Janice F.

Comments, feedback or articles contact:

www.area86aa.org

Welcome to the first edition of *Focus* for Panel 68. I am an alcoholic and my name is Pam F. I'm also your Newsletter/Website Sub-Committee Chair. I would like to start by saying it is an honour to be elected into any position in Alcoholics Anonymous. I feel very grateful to be the Newsletter/Website chair for Area 86 Panel 68. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

We often talk about Sponsorship in sobriety; we seldom talk about Sponsorship in Service. When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous I had no idea how to live sober and I needed someone to help with that— and that is what my sponsor did. When I got into service in A.A. I wasn't sure how it worked so I needed a Service Sponsor to show me how it works. My Service Sponsor believed in me long before I believed in myself. With the encouragement and confidence of my Service Sponsor I began to believe in me, too.

Without my service sponsor I may not have taken on this position. When I was elected I felt scared. I want to do the best job I can and not make mistakes. Thank God for the understanding individuals who came before me and trusted the process. I know that I can't mess things up beyond repair in two years!

I would like thank those people who came before me and stayed to help me through the times I lacked confidence and faith. I would like to thank those people who are, and have been, in Service who stick around to help the new person coming to the District Meeting or Assembly. I really appreciate those who haven't "just done their time". Thanks for remaining to assist the people who are just starting out.

Yours In Love and Service

Pam F.

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Focus: Having a Service Sponsor & Being a Service Sponsor

 ..A.A. service is anything that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service. (The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Service, page S1)

This quote is also tucked away in the last few pages of the pamphlet Questions & Answers on Sponsorship in the section **Service Sponsorship** (page 25).

Being a service sponsor is also an honour and a privilege. To encourage newcomers to participate and to see them flourish

I can only share *my* experience of having a service sponsor and being a service sponsor.

My biggest challenge when I came through the doors of A.A. was to find a sponsor, a recovery sponsor. I was fortunate enough to commence a new job when I was only 60 days sober, and came to find out that one of my co-workers was also in the program and had been for 22 years! Pat and I talked “program” constantly on our breaks at work. I finally got up the courage to ask her to be my sponsor and I was ever so relieved when she said yes. And so my journey in recovery began.

Fast forward a couple of years – I had had a home group since day one and was very active in the Forest Lakeside Group. I washed ashtrays, greeted people, etc but was also the secretary for the group. Taking minutes was interesting, especially when our GSR would give the report from a District meeting or an Assembly. I was so confused. GSR, DCM, CPC, PI. What the heck was all this? I began asking Pat questions. She gave me *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, and *The Service Manual* and suggested that I read these books. To me they were absolutely fascinating. We then began our study of the Twelve Traditions as well as talking about the Service Manual and she shared her experience in general service. Unbeknownst to me she had served as D.C.M. a number of years back. And so, *my* journey in general service work began.

I was approached by a member of my home group, asking if I would be secretary for the G.S.R. Committee, seeing as how I had been secretary for our group. I had no idea what a G.S.R. Committee even was! I called Pat and she encouraged me to say yes and to give it a try.

And so, I attended my first GSR Committee meeting for District 14 Sarnia-Lambton. And I attended my first Area 86 Western Ontario General Service Assembly shortly thereafter.

Questions, questions, questions!! I had so-o many of them. Pat and I were on the phone a lot in those days. I finally realized that not only was she my sponsor in recovery, she had also become my service sponsor. I was so fortunate to have found someone that was *enthusiastic, positive and knowledgeable* about general service work.

Fast forward a few more years – I was elected to serve Area 86 as secretary. Pat informed me that I would have to seek out someone that had been on the journey I was about to embark – and she knew just the right person – Judy A., who was, at that time serving as Alternate Delegate for Area 86 – *and* she lived in Sarnia. How “coincidental” was that! Judy and I became fast friends. She was so enthusiastic, positive and knowledgeable about general service work that it was contagious. You couldn't help but be enthusiastic and positive as well. I learned so much from Judy, including a better understanding of the 12 Concepts, Operating Procedures for the Area, how important the Service Manual is, and equally important, *trusting the process* - and just how to be an all-round ambassador for general service work.

My service journey to becoming Delegate was not without highs and lows, negatives and positives, but I always had Judy, and Pat as well, reminding me of the spiritual nature of service work, trust the process, and that involvement in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous was an honour and a privilege. Today I know I am truly blessed and that my sobriety has been enhanced immensely.

Being a service sponsor is also an honour and a privilege. To encourage newcomers to participate and

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Focus: Having a Service Sponsor & Being a Service Sponsor (cont'd)

to see them flourish is a pure delight! And, they are not without questions. Some are even not interested in general service work, but I remind them, there is all kinds of service work – from that simple handshake and welcome at the door of your home group, to setting up a meeting, to participating in Round-Ups, Forums and workshops.

Being a service sponsor definitely keeps one on their toes. I try to share with them what was so enthusiastically shared with me - studying Traditions, Concepts, and/or just general procedures gives me a good “brush up” and reminds me just how important the work of Alcoholics Anonymous is.

It is a truly honour and privilege to serve Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yours in love & service

Jan L.
Past Delegate, Area 86 Western Ontario

AA Trivia Answers

1. b) - Alcoholics Anonymous has been called an **upside-down** organization because the “ultimate responsibility and final authority for . . . world services” resides with the groups — rather than with the trustees of the General Service Board or the General Service Office in New York.
2. When, in **1955**, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference — excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter — the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.
3. c) As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the A.A. General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional **“Right of Decision.”**

Area 86 Focus

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 Website: www.area86aa.org

Editor:

Newsletter Chair Pam F.

Contributors

Julie K., Deb G., Joe B., Jan L.

Contact information: webmasterarea86@gmail.com

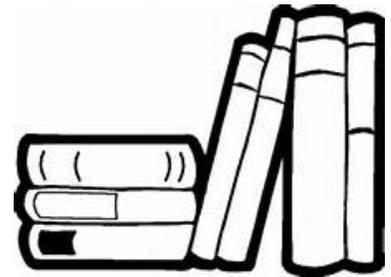


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Focus: A.A. Puzzle Fun!!

H Y B G R Y U D V S E X F Z S
 F R E R A S T U E E T K J S G
 A O L Y E C V I F F O E E W R
 B T I R F W C F M O E N P S A
 S N E A T O O E B Y G C E S C
 T E V S H C R P P N N S T C E
 I V E R T R A D I T I O N S C
 N N J E T Y S L F M A L N H S
 E I R V T P L N O I O N A A E
 N Z E I O I E R C N N R C H I
 C A M N W P P O G D A E O E R
 E E S N O S C O N C E P T S O
 R O C A N G N I T E E M X J T
 R D O E N I V E P A R G I B S
 H I G H E R R K N I H T S U M

- ABSTINENCE
- ACCEPTANCE
- ANNIVERSARY
- ANONYMITY
- BELIEVE
- BIG
- BOOK
- COFFEE
- CONCEPTS
- FEAR
- FINE
- GRACE
- GRAPEVINE
- HIGHER
- POWER
- HOPE
- INVENTORY
- LONG
- TIMER
- MEETING
- MUST
- OPEN
- MIND
- PROMISES
- SPONSOR
- STEPS
- STORIES
- THINK
- TRADITIONS
- WILLINGNESS



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Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

visit www.area86aa.org ([Area Info/Surveys Section](#)) for updates

May 12, 2018—District 25

St Johns United Church, 11 Guelph St.

Georgetown ON L7G 3Z1

Meeting starts at 10 a.m.

Accommodations are for May

11th, 2018 at the Best Western Plus/Milton 161 Chisolm Dr. Milton ON. (905) 875-3818 Room rates are 114.99 plus tax. Reservation code is WOGS.

August 18, 2018 - District 7

More information to follow



Eastern Canadian Regional Forum: July 20th-22nd 2018

Sponsored by the 10 Areas of the

Eastern Canada Region. Being held at the Hotel Le Victorin 19

Boulevard Arthabaska Est, Victoriaville QC G6T 0S4 1 877 845-5344

\$115.00 a night plus tax

Area 88 Southeastern QC.

Fall Assembly—November 2nd -4th 2018

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kitchener, ON

105 King Street East, Kitchener, ON N2G 2K8. \$119.00 a night plus tax.

Agenda Items must be received by Area Chairperson on or before September 3rd, 2018



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.

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