

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: Leadership - "I am Responsible"

When I was asked to write an article for the newsletter I was willing; then I was told the article was to be about Leadership and I was crestfallen because leadership in A.A. is a difficult subject. Tradition Two states we have no leaders in A.A., only trusted servants. *'The only authority in our organization is a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience.'*

Of course our organization does have members who function in leadership roles at the group, district, area and world service levels. These are our trusted servants and they serve on a rotating basis. It is necessary and I am grateful for their service.

To help me evaluate what my involvement with leadership has been in the program I love, I began by looking up the definition of the word "leadership"

1. *The action of leading a group of people or organization.*
2. *Creates an inspiring vision of the future. Motivates and inspires people to engage with that vision.*

My name is Marg, I am an alcoholic and I have been a grateful member of A.A. for 35 years. I have never thought of myself as a leader. Perhaps the second definition is more pertinent to my experience; what I have received and what I

have been able to give back.

When I came to this program I remember how broken I was. At my first meeting I felt uncomfortable and hopeless, yet it was there that I derived that first ray of hope. I did not like the meeting that first night but I did identify as others shared their experience, strength and hope and I knew deep inside that these people understood and that I wanted what they had. They were leading me. It was baby steps in the beginning as they

"I have never thought of myself as a leader"

showed me how to live a different way. I got a sponsor. She taught me

to serve. In the beginning it was helping to clean up after the meeting. Then it was coming early to make coffee and greet people at the door. Eventually I joined a group and began to chair meetings. She led me .

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One day I realized I was looking forward to going to a meeting. I felt I belonged. This was a feeling I had not experienced in a very long time. I learned how to implement the Twelve Steps, and the Twelve Traditions into my life. I learned to practice these principles in all my affairs ; work, home and daily life. Soon after that I began to sponsor other women. I learned to carry the message of the miracle that happened in my own life.

During these years I became a trusted servant at the group and, occasionally, at the district level. Over the years it has been my privilege to serve as Secretary, Treasurer, Grapevine Representative, Alternate G.S.R. and G.S.R. I have also shared my story at open meetings, when asked.

I have never served at the area level nor have I ever had a leadership role of great importance. The way of life I learned around the tables of A.A. and a God of my understanding have provided me with happiness, serenity and peace of mind . I still belong to a group and I attend two to three meetings a week. I still have a sponsor and I still sponsor others. I do this because I was taught by the leadership of those who came before me that that is one way to show my gratitude. It is in giving that we receive.

I do not think of myself as a leader but I do think of myself as someone who has a responsibility to give back. Members were there for me when I came and it is important that I am there for the newcomer.

Marg B.
Alternate G.S.R., District 6

A.A. Trivia Challenge

1. The first issue of the A.A. Grapevine was published in June of what year?
 - a) 1944
 - b) 1951
 - c) 1946

2. Which statement best describes Tradition 8?
 - a) Service centers may employ special workers.
 - b) We may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
 - c) Leaders are trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. What word is used most frequently in the Appendix entitled Spiritual Experience?
 - a) God
 - b) Spiritual
 - c) Change
 - d) Serenity

Answers on Page 5

Area 86 Focus

Published twice a year by
Western Ontario General Service.
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This is really a good topic as I believe that it involves my evolution upon coming into A.A. When I arrived at the doors of A.A. several years ago, I was a broken man - spiritually, financially and morally. I was in a state where my own self-interests were the only things that mattered to me. I was not to be trusted and I would give a falsehood when the truth would have served me better.

At this time I had no knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first responsible thing that I had done in a long time was to go to a Treatment Centre in Chicago on June 18, 1990. Mind you, I did not recognize this at the time.

I arrived at Parkridge Lutheran Hospital and my journey into sobriety began. I learned several things at the hospital over 35 days. The first lesson I learned came in the form of a conversation with a chap from the south side of Chicago who demonstrated the concept that one alcoholic can reach out to another and understand them without consideration of race, education or occupation.

The second lesson came in the form of talking to a lot of people and finding out that most of the 225 people at the hospital were there on repeat visits. I asked them why this was the case and they said that they quit going to meetings and did not get a sponsor. I made a promise to myself that I would get a sponsor and go to meetings when I got back to Barrie and Orillia, not having a clue on how important that this was going to be.

I got to go to my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous on July 5 and, of course, it was in a church basement. I remember a nice lady touching my arm and saying *"sit down, you are one of us."* Something happened at that moment and has been with me at every A.A. meeting I have attended since.

I picked a sponsor on my third meeting and

had the honour of being with him for 20 years. He allowed me the opportunity to grow in the fellowship as long as I followed certain guidelines. I agreed as I really enjoyed his company. I officially lost the career that I had put such great store in and had to take a job with my father as he was the only one who would give me a job.

My dad expected that when you gave your word you gave your word. In April of 1998 I was doing a job with my dad. Usually my dad and I seemed to fight or disagree on how to do something. On this particular day, we both seemed to give a little and we complimented each other on the job being done. From that day until his death

on December 5, 2004 I never had another argument with my dad and this is truly one of the greatest miracles in A.A. for me.

On the 4th weekend in October of 1996 I attended my first Assembly and, as is the case for many things

for me, I had no idea what I was getting into. I am forever grateful for the members who took the time to guide me in the ways of service. I have had the honour of serving in a number of positions. Currently, I have the honour of serving as the Bridging the Gap Sub-Committee Chair for Area 86. For me, the involvement in the service structure has broadened my life and truly made me feel part of in a larger sense.

Whenever I give my word I try to keep it to the best of my ability. Sometimes life intrudes and I try to use what I have been taught in A.A. to solve these situations. I believe that responsibility evolves by staying involved in A.A.

Bob T.
Bridging the Gap Sub-Committee Chair, Area 86

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Focus: My Journey Into Service

I remember entering the rooms of A.A. for the first time. I was terrified and knew I was done. I knew alcohol no longer worked for me. My life was out of control. If I didn't do something soon, I was going to die.

I remained in that state, barely existing and hanging on by my finger tips for months. I had picked up a bit of hope from my first A.A. meeting so I returned there week after week. I found a sponsor and started working on the steps but I was moving too fast, with not enough honesty.

I moved to Bracebridge and continued my practice of attending one meeting a week - whether I needed it or not. What a joke that was! I hung around the program wondering when I would start to feel better. My panic attacks were picking up and eventually I had to accept outside help. Still I came to the local A.A. meeting weekly and occasionally included one additional meeting. Finally, I got a another sponsor and things started to improve.

I can't remember how I found out there was more to A.A. than my own personal sobriety but I heard there was such a thing as the "business" of A.A. and something called "G.S.O." This was totally new to me. I found out that I could "join" the meeting I was attending and become a member. I started attending our group business meeting. What a surprise that was! I guess I thought someone waved their magic wand and the meetings were instantly set up, coffee was made and people were at the door.

At first I sat like blob in the business meetings, unable to take anything on. All confidence in myself was gone. I felt I couldn't take on any responsibility. I was too scared.

Eventually I was talked into trying the secre-

tary's position. Even though my profession in the business world was Executive Assistant, my ability was greatly diminished by shaking, trembling hands, especially when taking dictation.

Gradually, ever so gradually, I tried different positions in my group. What a boost to my morale to actually do something positive that was being accepted by my fellow alcoholics! I eventually became the Alternate G.S.R. This entailed going to District meetings and trying to make sense of them.

This was followed by taking on the position of G.S.R. and conducting business meetings at my home group. I was still very much afraid but seeing some improvement in me. The G.S.R. position was quite difficult because not all members of my group were as anxious to hear the business end of A.A. as I was.

The biggest turning point in service for me was when I became the Treatment Chair for my District. I read the workbook and stepped up to the challenge. How very rewarding it was to take the bull by the horns and become responsible! The response in the community was so very encouraging and I felt as if, for the first time, I was giving back.

The next challenge was to stand for Alternate D.C.M. followed by the D.C.M. position. By this time I was really listening to those around me who had gone ahead of me into the business of A.A. Dealing with so many personalities at the District table was not easy but afforded me one more huge learning curve.

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*"I had picked up
a bit of hope from my
first A.A. meeting so I returned
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Focus: My Journey Into Service

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I listened when I was told to get a Service Sponsor. I picked someone who had done what I was doing and who had solid sobriety. I listened to all the stories about their experiences. I heard all about the laughter, the excitement and the different people they were meeting. I wanted that. But that meant I had to work for it. And so, I did.

While being involved in Treatment at the Area level I became very much aware of the importance of our Bridging the Gap program. People were going into treatment centres and correctional facilities only to come out and die as a result of alcoholism. If they had only gone to a meeting when they came out! And so, Bridging the Gap became my next love.

Eventually I had to consider the possibility of standing for a position as an Area Officer. My first response to considering that move was: *"I can't do it. I am not good enough!"* I was told, *"Let your name stand and your Higher Power will decide whether or not you should be in that position."* That is what I did.

I absolutely love being in service in A.A.! There is no question that it saved my life. The busier I am in A.A., the happier I am. The people I have met are incredible! What an absolute honour it is to be a part of the A.A. service structure. I owe A.A. my life so I say a big THANK YOU to all of you!

Pat S.
Chair, Area 86 Panel 66

A.A. Trivia Answers

1. a) 1944 - A new issue has come out every month since that time.
2. a) Service centers may employ special workers.
3. a) Change - This word appears 5 times in the Appendix.

AREA OFFICERS

Delegate: Fredy M.

Alternate Delegate: Dale S.

Chair: Pat S.

Treasurer: Sandi W.

Secretary/Registrar: Chris S.

Comments, feedback or articles contact:

www.area86A.A.org

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Focus: Tradition Two & Concept IX

Tradition Two

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.”

***Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions page 132*

The spirit of rotation ensures the group will have fewer problems with individual members “governing or directing” how the group runs. Elected positions within the group are accountable to the group as a whole and as such hold no overall authority to make changes on their own. Lively discussion in a business meeting is often the sign of group conscience in action!

From the Tradition Two Checklist:*

- Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, A.A. committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
- Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with A.A. Twelfth Step jobs or other A.A. responsibility?
- Do I look for credit in my A.A. jobs? Praise for my A.A. ideas?
- Do I have to save face in group discussion, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work cheerfully along with it?
- Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at A.A. chores?
- In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

**The Traditions checklist was originally published in the A.A. Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Traditions 1969-1971. The Concepts checklist discussion points were developed by an A.A. group and further developed by the trustees' Literature Committee. Full pages of each can be found under the Service Material section on the General Service Office website at www.AA.org*

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Concept IX **A.A. Service Manual 2015-2016 pg 34

This Concept begins with “*Good Service Leaders, along with sound and appropriate methods for choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.*” In 1959, Bill W. shared in *The A.A. Grapevine* his thoughts on good leaders:

“A leader in A.A. service is therefore a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job When a leader powerdrives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgement of his own – well, he really isn’t a leader at all.”

Service in A.A. begins with the group electing the G.S.R. who elects the D.C.M. Both elect the Area Committee Members and Delegates. This is why the role of the G.S.R. is so important in our fellowship. It truly begins in the Home Group! “*Tolerance, responsibility, flexibility and vision*” are all needed attributes of leadership.

“Every sponsor is necessarily a leader.” Never underestimate the impact you, as an individual, can have on another person or on the fellowship as a whole.

From the Concept IX Checklist:*

- Do we discuss how we can best strengthen the composition and leadership of our future trusted servants?
- Do we recognize the need for group officers? What is our criteria for election? Do we sometimes give a position to someone “because it would be good for them?”
- Do I set a positive leadership example?

Deb G, Newsletter Editor

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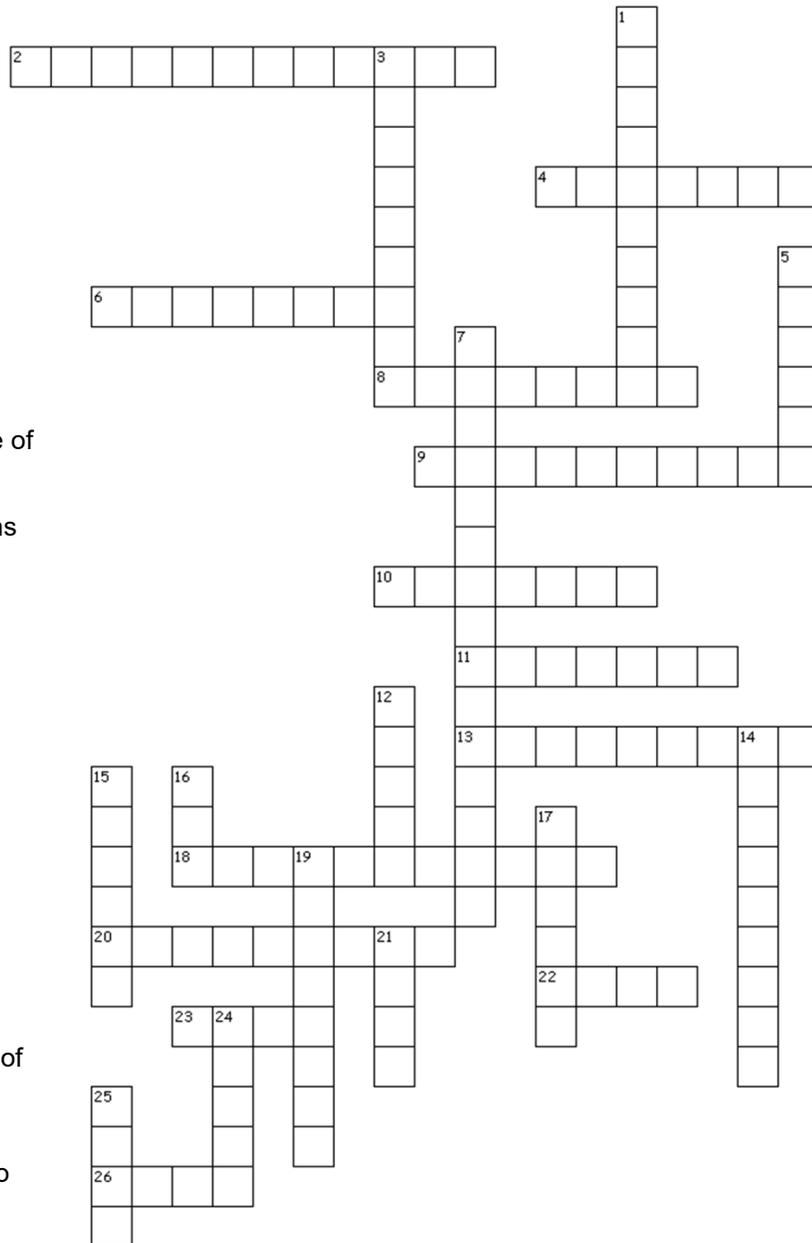
Focus: A.A. Crossword

ACROSS

- 2. One of the Four Horsemen
- 4. Freedom from _____
- 6. "Daily _____"
- 8. Experience, _____ and hope
- 9. _____ is the answer to all my problems
- 10. Road of Happy _____
- 11. Sister Mary _____
- 13. Chapter - We _____
- 18. Most of our experiences are of a " _____ variety"
- 20. Jack _____ Article
- 22. One of the seven deadly sins
- 23. _____ 62
- 26. _____ Does It

DOWN

- 1. Our #1 offender
- 3. Chapter - To _____
- 5. Word that appears twice in a slogan
- 7. Five syllable word for sloth
- 12. The _____ Fact
- 14. Sixth Step refers to defects of _____
- 15. Dr Silkworth's middle name
- 16. A.A. Comes of _____
- 17. Name of award presented to A.A. in 1951
- 19. _____ prior to investigation
- 21. _____ Thatcher
- 24. Recovery, _____ and Service
- 25. Happy, Joyous and _____



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Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

visit www.area86AA.org ([Area Info/Surveys Section](#)) for updates

May 13th, 2017 - District 3

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
210 Silvercreek Pkwy North, Guelph ON N1H 7P8
Accommodations are at the Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton
725 Imperial Road North, Guelph ON N1K 1X4
Call 519-821-2144 and Book under "WOGS"
Room Rates are \$109.99 and held until April 12, 2017
Meeting starts at 10:00am

August 12, 2017 - District 9

Georgian Shores United Church
997 4th Avenue E., Owen Sound ON N4K 2N9
Meeting starts at 10:00am
More information to follow

Fall Assembly - November 3, 4 and 5, 2017

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kitchener
105 King Street East, Kitchener ON N2G 2K8
Check reservation code on Area 86 website closer to Assembly date
Rates are \$119.00 plus tax and will be held until October 4, 2017
Over 200 free parking spots available for overnight guests.
Rooms can be booked on line at reservations@cpcw-hotel.com
or by calling 1-519-744-4141 or 1-877-408-6665.
Registration starts at 8:00am

**** Agenda Items must be received by the Area Chair on or before September 4, 2017 ****

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.