

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: My Journey into Service

My journey into Service began like most of you, by getting a job at the home group. During my second week in Alcoholics Anonymous, I heard about 'getting active' so I asked my sponsor at the time if I could get active in the group. Jack asked about my education status and I replied that I had High School. Jack asked if I had college or university. I said no, but was thinking about it. Jack said, "Wait right here. I have to go and speak to the group elders."

I followed Jack with my eyes over to the corner while he pleaded my case. Arms were waving, heads were shaking and people were staring at me. Jack returned and said that he had managed to get me a job but it had been a tough sell. I was happy that he got me a job. "Ashtrays," he said. "Ashtrays," I groaned. Jack asked if I thought that I could handle it, to which I replied that, yes, I could and then asked, "Why?" Jack stated that the guy working the mop wanted to move up.

Jack told me to arrive at 6pm to set up for the 8:30pm meeting. He explained the chairs had to be set out before the ashtrays were placed around the meeting. We made the cof-

fee and then worked the door as greeters. I was too young in the program to understand that it's when you're in Service that your own healing begins. Being of service to others is a key to sobriety.

After two years of setting up chairs and ashtrays it was time to do something else as new members were looking for jobs as well. On the night of elections at our business meeting I stood for every position available and did not get elected for anything. I had found out afterwards that, as it was put, 'Old Nick who ran the group had all his people in place' so the election was just a formality. I got very discouraged and started to think. We all know that groups have been known to start with a resentment and a coffee pot.

After some investigation I had found a church basement, a night where no other meetings were held in our District as well as an eagerness to be in Service. And so, the Paradise Group was started on May 3rd, 1990 at the intersection of my last drunk.

For the next few years I was the G.S.R. (General Service Representative) and 'Set up Guy' until a few members showed an interest to be of Service as well. At the same time that I was backing away from these duties to let

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.

Focus: My Journey into Service

others get active, my Aunt, who was a member of our fellowship, put my name forward for our local Round Up Committee. For the next 10-15 years I stayed active rotating through all the Committee positions. After Chairing the Round Up you're expected to rotate out and I was looking forward to a little break from Service.

It was exactly one month before rotating out that my sponsor said I was needed to be the Alternate D.C.M. (District Committee Member) for our District as they could not fill the vacancy. Here we go again. I served as Alternate D.C.M. for two years and then let my name stand for D.C.M. I had thought the D.C.M. job was going to be a great one but it turned out to be the toughest test of patience and tolerance that I had ever faced. Eight years ago I had become very disheartened about continuing to be of service in A.A. and also pondered whether or not I was even going to stick around for meetings.

I had discussed everything with my sponsor and he knew that I was ready to walk. Martin showed up at the door one day and said, "Get in the van. We're going on a road trip." With Joe, our driver and G.S.R., we stopped along the way to pick up another Delegate, Dot, and her D.C.M. husband, Tim. Martin was also a Delegate at this time. Twelve hundred miles later we had arrived in Truro, Nova Scotia for my very first Eastern Canada Regional Forum. We all had talked, laughed and shared stories about Service the entire way to Truro. When we got to the Forum my sponsor took me to the main meeting room to look around and that's where he introduced me to his friend, Mary.

*"it's when
you're in Service
that your own
healing begins"*

Mary was an employee at the General Service Office (G.S.O.). She shook my hand and welcomed me to the Eastern Canada Regional Forum and I soon felt 'part of'. The whole weekend was overwhelming and I soon learned the real meaning of Service. We all played our part from making coffee and setting up our group meeting to serving as Chair of A.A.W.S. (A.A. World Services) or Manager of G.S.O. Not once during the entire weekend did I hear, "I can't do it," or "It can't be done." Needless to say, my attitude sure changed for the better.

I have had the opportunity to thank Mary for speaking at one of our Area 86 Assemblies. She has become a good friend over the years and has been a great source of information as well as an inspiration. This past April I attended the 64th General Service Conference as Panel 64 Delegate for Area 86 Western Ontario. What a privilege and honour it is to be of Service! I have heard many say, "*Hang on to your _____, you are in for the ride of your life!*" and the saying is so true - beyond your wildest dreams!!

Mary is retiring this year. I don't know if our paths will ever cross again, but I pray that they will. If you're ever struggling with Service work and are thinking of giving up, I hope you meet your own Mary - someone that will inspire you to stay, become willing to put your hand up and let your Higher Power do the rest.

Yours in Love and Service,

Jim W.
Delegate, Area 86 Western Ontario
Panel 64

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.

Focus: Archives - Why Do We Bother?

That's a very good question, and one I've been asked many times. People wonder why we spend so much money on Archives. They wonder what the actual purpose of Archiving is. Why would anyone waste their time storing away a lot of dusty old papers?

The reason we do it is the same reason we do all our Service work in A.A: *to help the still suffering alcoholic*. On the surface, it is not as obvious as to how Archives helps achieve this when compared to other Subcommittees such as Public Information (P.I.), Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.), the Grapevine, Special Needs/Remote Communities (S.N./R.C.), Treatment, Corrections, Website and Bridging the Gap (B.T.G.). These committees, to one extent or another, deal directly with the public and with alcoholics. So how does Archives help?

Carl Sandburg (an American author) said *"Whenever a society or a civilization perishes, there is always one factor present: they forgot where they came from."* In 1957, Bill W. was very concerned about the state of the paperwork that had been collecting since the Fellowship of A.A. started. He knew that the 12 Traditions grew from the interactions with the fledgling groups as A.A. spread across the U.S. and into Canada. There is a story behind each and every one of our Traditions, and he realized that if we didn't soon get the files or-

ganized, preserved and saved we may lose this information forever. To relate this back to Carl Sandburg's quote, future members of A.A. may not remember why the Traditions were created in the first place, leading us to forget where we came from and possibly perish.

While there are many reasons why A.A. has been successful, in my humble opinion, the key has been *"Singleness of Purpose"*. Simply stated, we are alcoholics who stay sober by passing the recovery message of A.A. on to other alcoholics. Probably the most famous temperance group prior to A.A. was called "The Washingtonian Movement". This movement started in 1840 in Baltimore, Maryland. They helped countless alcoholics recover before branching off to get involved in such things such as prohibition, politics, religion and the abolition of slavery. This branching out was to be their undoing as a program of recovery from alcoholism. They forgot their Primary Purpose!

To sum this all up: If we forget our Primary Purpose, if we forget why the Traditions were created in the first place, our Fellowship will collapse from the inside and we won't be around in the future to help the alcoholic who hasn't even been born yet. This is how Archives helps carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic!

At the Area level we save such things as the Area Committee Meeting and Assembly minutes, which includes reports from the Area Officers and Subcommittee Chairs and (at the Assemblies) the G.S.O. representative, as

*"Whenever a society
or a civilization perishes,
there is always
one factor present:
they forgot where
they came from."*

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.

Focus: Assembly of Support ' - A New D.C.M.'s First Assembly

Hello, my name is Geri and I am an alcoholic with the privilege of serving as D.C.M. for Windsor Essex District 16.

As a new D.C.M., I was anxious about attending my first Assembly as a D.C.M. I had been to many before, but had never had to give a report. This was a first. I wanted to be sure that my report was an accurate reflection of what our District was doing and would also be acceptable to the Area.

In all my years of being sober, I had given many talks in front of large groups of people but somehow this felt different. It wasn't just to be a matter of attending. Not this time. Now it was a matter of assisting with a workshop, reporting a roll call, listening as I had never listened before and giving that D.C.M. report in front of a room full of G.S.R.'s, other D.C.M.'s, the Head Table and what looked like a million eyes and ears, all focused on my report - daunting task, to say the least!

I had first sent a copy of my report to our Area Chair who replied that it was good. That was a relief but, as the time drew nearer to actually giving the report, the alcoholic that dwells within raised her ugly head and fear set in. I decided at that moment to practice some self-talk techniques that I had learned and teach in my professional role as an Addictions Counselor. It didn't work. Then I decided to pretend that I was a Queen

about to give a speech to those who were dying to hear my words. I have a wonderful imagination but that didn't work either.

And then it happened, as it always has for me in A.A. - support and encouragement given by those who have walked the path that now stretched out before me. A text message arrived from a member of my home group, reminding me that we can be "frequently wrong" and that it's ok. And another message, reminding me that it took God 33 years to get me ready to do what I was facing today, which in turn reminded me of something else I had been taught in A.A.: that my Higher Power would never give me more than He and I could handle together, the key word being 'together'. It would seem that I had forgotten that in the moment. I realized that, just like everything else in A.A., I was not facing this task

alone. As I looked around the room, I saw others from District 16, smiling and giving me the thumbs up sign. I saw it in their faces and felt their support in my soul and the fear began to subside.

As I approached the podium, I was greeted with a smile from the Chair. And as I looked out into the sea of faces, in my memory I saw the face of an old friend, now gone, who had once erased my fears when I stood at the podium at the convention I had chaired in 1990. He had made me laugh that day.

"This is A.A. - members reaching out to others."

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.

Focus: Assembly of Support ' - A New D.C.M.'s First Assembly

And even though he is now gone, his support continued to reach out and calm a shaking soul. And my fear was gone. I gave my report and made it through alive and well.

As I looked into the faces of those listening I felt a surge of gratitude. Here were others, just like me, some who had done what I was doing, who had been where I now stood and who were giving their attention and support just like they had done when I first arrived at the doors of A.A., unsure and scared. And, once again, they would be the strength I would pull from to move through whatever I was facing.

This is A.A. - members reaching out to others. Whether they are in the same room, 125 miles or into eternity, their love and support can span through time and space. As a new D.C.M., this Assembly was an amazing experience and a wonderful reminder of the strength, love and support of our Fellowship.

In Gratitude for my life and the Courage those in A.A. give to me,

Geri K.
D.C.M., District 16

Area 86 Trivia Challenge

1. In what year was Area 86 established?
2. Area 86 is one of how many Areas within the Eastern Canada Region of A.A.?
 - a) 7
 - b) 9
 - c) 10
3. In what city was the first A.A. Group formed within what we now know to be Area 86?

Area 86 / Focus

Published twice a year by
Western Ontario General Service.

Website: www.area86aa.org

Editor:

Newsletter Chair Jeff S.

Contributors:

Jim W., John P., Geri K., and Heidi P.

Contact information:

wogsa86@vaxxine.com

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.

Focus: The Concepts - What do They Have to Do with Us?

I asked myself this question the first time I heard them read around the room at a Service meeting. I believed they only pertained to matters in New York and wondered if this was just another example of members claiming humility and stroking their egos? I let my name stand to be an Alternate G.S.R. and read the prerequisite material: *Dr. Bob and the Good Old-timers*, *A.A. Comes of Age*, and our Service Manual (which I was told was excellent reading if I was having trouble sleeping). The aforementioned literature was a great source of information and history as well as measuring sticks for what we seemed to struggle with now and were trying to accomplish in the near future but I continued to question why we persisted to read the 12 Concepts at the meetings when most members were confused about their significance.

Like most things in A.A., I only became aware of their deep spiritual relevance when pertained directly to me. A member of our District Committee brought up the question of why we had not been giving an interpretation of a Concept at each meeting, as we had done in the past. By this time, I had moved on to the position of G.S.R. and had somehow volunteered myself to share my interpretation of the agreed upon Concept. It was time for me to have a more in-depth

look at these things called the 12 Concepts.

I learned that the Concepts were written by our co-founder Bill W in 1962. They evolved from over 20 years of experience in dealing with A.A.'s service structure and in conducting its world affairs. They came about only after much reflection and consultation. By this time A.A. had some legitimacy

“Like most things in A.A., I only became aware of their deep spiritual relevance when it pertained directly to me.”

and all the inherent problems that go along with it. While researching and finding the work more intriguing and far from boring, I discovered that the drunks needed to not only learn to live among the civilians but also needed to have some ground rules on how, through our shared

experience, to accomplish this and how to continue to do this so we could best conduct ourselves in the future.

Our founder had the foresight to realize that, although some of the Principles were already being practiced and implemented, there was a need for them to be drafted. A.A. had gone through a maturation process and, like most businesses, there needed to be checks and balances in place in order for us to continue to best serve the still suffering alcoholic.

Anonymous Contribution - Area 86 Member

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.

Focus: Archives (continued)

continued from Page 3 ...

well as whatever business we conduct at these gatherings. We also save all the financial reports we receive from our Area Treasurer. We save the notes taken at the various Assembly Workshops. We have also recently started to save the General Service Conference Manuals, which our Area Delegates receive when they go to New York for the Annual General Service Conference. We don't save "mementos" of any sort. The Area Assembly has decided this type of thing is best saved by the various District Archives.

Why do we save all this stuff? Mostly as a reference for future committees. We can look back at motions presented, noting why they were brought forward and why the votes were either for or against them. We can look at Subcommittees and see what worked well and what needs improvement in order to move forward. We can look at our finances and see how much money was spent to do the business of the Area over the years and we can see if there are possible ways to cut back on money being spent or if we need to spend more on a particular item or Committee that needs it.

Saving our history is the way we can prevent making the same mistakes over and over again and is the way we can ensure the A.A. program will still be in existence for future generations of Alcoholics.

Yours in historical service,
John P.
Area 86 Archives Chair
Panel 64

Area 86 Trivia Answers

1. 1958
2. C - there are 10 Areas within the Eastern Canada Region of A.A.
3. Windsor, Ontario. The Windsor Group started on October 22, 1943. It was the first group of A.A. in Windsor, Ontario and the second group of A.A. in Canada. Their first meeting was held at the board room of the Walsh Advertising Company.

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

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.

Area 86 Calendar

Upcoming Area 86 Meetings

January 17, 2015 - District 2

St Mark's Lutheran Church, 825 King St. West, Kitchener Ontario N2G 1E3
Accommodation at the Comfort Inn, 190 Weber St. North, Waterloo ON N2J 3H4
Rooms are booked under WOGS. Call 1-519-747-9400
Block will be held until December 9, 2014. Rates are \$105.99 plus tax.
Meeting starts at 10am.

May 9, 2015 - District 6

August 8, 2015 - District 5

December 5, 2015 - District 12

C.E.R.A.A.S.A. 2015 - February 20 - 22, 2015

Canadian Eastern Region A.A. Service Assembly

Novotel Toronto Mississauga Centre, 3670 Hurontario Street, Mississauga
Hotel registration can be made by calling (905) 896-1000.
Rooms should be booked under reservation code "CERAASA"
to receive the discounted group rate of \$99.00 (plus tax) per night.
Hosted by Area 83, this bi-yearly event will focus
on the upcoming General Service Conference.
Registration is FREE and all are welcome!
Visit www.cerassa.org for more information and to register on-line.

Pre-Conference Spring Assembly - March 20 - 22, 2015

London Hilton, 300 King Street, (King St & Wellington St. N), London, Ontario
Phone 1-800-210-9336 or 1-800-445-8667
Rooms are to be booked under a Group Reservation that is yet to be determined.
Please contact Area Chair, Dale S., at chaira86p64@bell.net for more information before booking.
Rooms must be booked on or before February 20th, 2015
to receive the 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 January 20, 2015 **