

# The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86 focus



## How has Service enhanced your sobriety?

### How Service Expands My Sobriety

In early sobriety I had to make the difficult journey from being separate from everyone and everything to allowing myself to be embraced by the love and structure of our fellowship. I could go weeks without any significant human interaction or any framework to my life. Avoidance of people and accountability had become my default mode.

The concept of service is based on doing things for the greater good, and placing the needs of others ahead of my own selfish and self-destructive behaviours. In the 9 weeks I spent in treatment this process began with daily chores. A sense of unity with the other men and a feeling of usefulness began to take hold. A deeply satisfying sense of purpose began to emerge.

I jumped into post treatment AA life with both feet, fully committed to live by the principles laid out in our 12 steps and traditions. Every opportunity I had to serve was a gift that would keep me accountable and included. At 3 months I started chairing a morning meeting in Guelph. It had been a long time since I was responsible for much of anything. I needed to

show up early and set up because others needed that meeting as much as I did. The feelings of being valued and welcome I experienced then cemented my bonds to the fellowship during those difficult months when so many newcomers drift away. It was the magical beginning of recovery in action.

I chaired a meeting at my home group a week after my six-month anniversary

**Service has bonded me to the fellowship in ways that I never dreamed possible.**

because that was the required amount of sobriety set out in our SOP's. Every opportunity that came my way for service I jumped at. Answering the AA phone and becoming an Alt. GSR

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at 2 years to becoming DCM 2 years ago are just a continuation of, for me, a very necessary journey of action in recovery. It gets me past old thinking and behaviours that isolate and separate me from the love and joy that is our fellowship.

The notions I had of service above the group level being filled with gigantic egos and self-important people have been shattered. Today, in service, I find myself surrounded by hundreds of people who show me the beauty of humility and a deep gratitude for the gift of service in Alcoholics Anonymous. I have learned that the person setting up chairs at their home group is equally as vital as our elected delegates. I have learned that the group conscience is far more important than being convinced of my own personal feelings of rightness. I am on a lifetime journey learning to play nicely with others and living with humility and an abiding sense of gratitude. I love the fact that the further you go in AA service you simply become a servant to more people while allowing the truly important work of one AA member talking to another to continue.

I have found serenity in service despite myself. I have learned to be less self seeking. I see others serving with great humility and love and am deeply inspired. Service has bonded me to the fellowship in ways that I never dreamed possible. In my experience the principals of recovery and unity cannot stand unless supported by the third legacy of service. Service in AA is my pathway to a more robust recovery that keeps me immersed in the fellowship and away from destructive selfishness and isolation.

Trevor W. District 3 DCM

**I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw that life was service.  
I acted and behold, service was joy.  
-Rabindranath Tagore**

### Service Is About What I Give

**M**y name is Rhonda and I am a grateful, sober and relatively sane recovering alcoholic. Writing about how service has enhanced my recovery is kind of tough. Not because I haven't grown in service, or learned a number of things through my experiences in service. It's tough because for me, service isn't about what I get. It truly is about what I can give. My activities in service have been done out of obedience to my Higher Power, not out of what I want. At least that is the case for me today.

When I moved back to Windsor from Oro-Medonte back in 2012, I went through a series of experiences that all had "rejection" as their main theme. That was an emotionally challenging time, to say the least, but from those experiences I learned to break free of the need for approval (I learned also that I did have a couple of really true friends). Around the same time I was active in my home group as their GSR and had ample opportunities to practice my new-found freedom.

To Thine Own Self Be True say the chips we give out to newcomers (and to those of us who slipped and slid for years). Personally I think that expression would be better off if it were handed out on tokens to alcoholics who remain active in District Service for their first year or two. When I was newly sober I hadn't a clue who I was, so there wasn't a chance I could "be true to myself" but once I had a few years sober, practicing this principle amid other opinionated alcoholics, from within the ring of District service helped me to grow a ton.

One thing I worked hard on at the District level was learning to use language that was more respectful and non-judgemental. I learned how to respectfully disagree. I also learned how to listen and by listening, I found that my own strong and sometimes harsh or critical opinions started to

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soften and change. I learned that there were often a number of worthy perspectives on any one issue. Through this I came to realize there is an Infinite Wisdom that exists within our Fellowship. A Wisdom that is far greater than the sum of its parts and, it is a joy to see this Wisdom ultimately being expressed through our Group Conscience (and despite our (sometimes) incredible egos).

Getting back to what I said earlier, my work in service, at least in the past 6 or 7 years has been about serving my Higher Power, and not about what I want. I know that this motivation is what helped me weather some of the more challenging times. The kind of times when others have said “who needs this” and quit, I hung in because I knew Who I was doing it for. I truly believe that I won’t stay sober without giving back. I value my sobriety and that is why I stay in service. I have said from my earliest service experiences that the Service Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous is deeply spiritual in its Essence. I whole-heartedly believe this to be true. It is deeply spiritual in it’s essence, not on the surface. I am involved in Service out of gratitude for what I have been given and as long as I remain rightly motivated, I believe I will continue to see beautiful things happen within our Fellowship. The more I give, the more I come to know joy.

Yours in Love and Service  
Rhonda S.



**Service & Sobriety**

**S**am an alcoholic is a statement that I would not say let alone admit when I first came through the doors of A.A. I came to A.A. kicking and screaming, not because I thought I had a

**A.A. Trivia Challenge**

**1. Name the four horsemen.**

- (a) *Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tex Ritter, and John Wayne*
- (b) *Bill W., Dr. Bob, Dr. William Silkworth, and Dr. E.M. Jellinek*
- (c) *terror, bewilderment, frustration, despair*

**2. What are the essentials of recovery?**

- (a) *recovery, unity, and service*
- (b) *willingness, honesty, and open mindedness*
- (c) *abstinence, service, and fellowship*

**3. What is the central fact of our lives today?**

- (a) *we are not drinking*
- (b) *the absolute certainty that Our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous*
- (c) *we are members of Alcoholics Anonymous*

drinking problem but because I was told to attend. I was told many times that my drinking was a problem, but I was of the opinion that if the world left me alone then I would be OK.

I am so glad that no one asked me to predict what life would be like 25 years after coming here for I would have sold myself short. I never believed it when the long timers told me that if I practised the principles of A.A. in all my affairs and lived to the best of my ability the 12 Steps that I would realize a life beyond my wildest dreams. This promised life along with the 12 Guarantees (often referred to as the Promises) have all materialized.

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There is no doubt in my mind that this has largely been due to my involvement in service. My sponsor, who introduced me to service, made sure that I did not forsake living the 12 Steps while being active in service. It was following my introduction into service at the group level that I come to understand what Bill W. meant when he stated in A.A.'s Legacy of Service "..., an A.A. Service is anything whatever 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...."

I heard in the rooms of A.A. the discussion topics such as Honesty, Commitment, Patience, Tolerance along with what I used to feel were platitudes while others called them slogans. I heard others state their opinions on these topics and I could regurgitate their explanations, but it

was in service that I learnt how to put these principles to practical use. I just have to think back to those heated discussions held at the District Table or even some of those motion debates at the Area Assemblies. Patience, Tolerance and Acceptance become a must if I wished to happily live in a world of service.

It is in service that I came to know that it

**It is in service that I came to know that it was my Ego that told me to take a job while it was Humility that allowed me to carry it through.**

was my Ego that told me to take a job while it was Humility that allowed me to carry it through. It was in service that I come to appreciate the

term Commitment for it is so easy for me to pretend to care but I could not pretend to show up.

It has been in service that I have met a group of people who have freely given of themselves without any thought of reward so that the information reaches the still suffering alcoholic along with being there for a one on one commitment.

Today I realize that if I wish contented sobriety, I must make sure that my triangle is balanced. This is done by living the 12 Steps, practising the principles in all my affairs and to be of maximum service to God and my fellow man even if it is only to provide a shoulder to cry on.

Yours in love, service and fellowship

Percy G  
Panel 62

### AREA OFFICERS

**Area Delegate:** Dale S.

**Area Alternate Delegate:** Sandi W.

**Area Chair:** Jeff S.

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**Area Secretary/Registrar:** Janice F.

Comments, feedback or articles contact:

[www.area86aa.org](http://www.area86aa.org)

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*Focus: How has Service enhanced your sobriety?*

**How Has Service Helped My Sobriety?**

When you serve there is a heart change that happens. When I first started to serve, I was doing it for myself, to keep busy, to do something. Over time my heart changed to serve others with gratitude and thankfulness. God wants us to be thrilled in him, not fearful of Him, God brought me to AA to hear the message that He wanted me to hear. He has trained me up to help the suffering alcoholic, whether I cleanup, setup, make coffee, or do other service work, I try to do it with thanks. It has been my experience that when I help or serve, I do it with a purpose to serve those who need it, expecting nothing in return, but in fact my sobriety is enhanced because of it. As we know things need to be done, service positions need to be filled so that meetings can carry the message. This allows the message of hope to go out to those that need to hear the same message I have. God through AA has given me a new life, it has transformed me to know who I am, why I am here and how I can help. For this I am eternally grateful. I love to serve in any capacity that I can because I also want those who are suffering to have the same privilege I have had. I want to be one of those old timers who says, with wisdom, “come early next week and help me setup”. This is where we learn about what really matters, relationships are the key. I have met so many people through service that it amazes me, I was once a loner, liked isolation, but now because of

.....service positions need to be filled so that meetings can carry the message.

service I have freedom. Thanks to AA service, it has enhanced my sobriety to be set free from self and to be part of.

Tim R.



**How Being In Service Enhanced My Sobriety**

How has being in service enhanced my sobriety?

The simple answer would be significantly. I arrived in AA 6 months after having stopped drinking on my own. I went to a Treatment Centre in Chicago on June 20, 1990 and met my first volunteer to the treatment Centre a week later. This event at the time was not important to me but many years later the significance of this event was shown to me when I did the same type of service to a Treatment Centre in my area.

I returned from the Treatment Centre to join the Orillia Fri/Sun Group as was suggested and I am still a member. At that time I asked a man to be my sponsor. I was content to just come and be part of the meeting not understanding that by shaking hands at the door or doing the readings was an important part in giving back. For the next 5 years I was content to come to meetings, chair, greet, speak and do readings.

**AA Trivia Answers**

(a) *terror, bewilderment, frustration, despair*

(b) *willingness, honesty, and open mindedness*

(b) *the absolute certainty that Our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous*

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On Oct 6, 1996 I returned from a business venture that did not go well. One week later I was at home when a phone call came in and Jean S was there greeting me and 5 seconds later George S. was greeting me. I knew something was afoot. The couple were the old timers of the group and said that the group needed a representative from the group to be at the Assembly. I did not want to go but they persevered and I went to my first Area Assembly in Oct 1996. I arrived at the assembly and was greeted by a couple of members that I knew. By the end of the weekend I knew that I had found the missing piece of staying in AA. I realize I was starting to move away from AA as I didn't really see the reason for staying. The service structure drew me to be beyond myself as it does today. That weekend ignited a new desire to be more involved. I accepted the position of GSR on returning from the Assembly.

I started attending district meetings and brought the information back to the group or took the groups information to the district. I started opening and chairing more meetings. In addition to going to the district meetings I started going to the Treatment Centre and took part when asked, instead of passing it on to someone else. On Jan 1, 2000 I became Alt DCM. It was a watching role, a very interesting situation for a person like me. On Jan 1, 2002 I became DCM and found the role interesting and challenging. I came to understand that all people have a voice at the table whether I agree with them or not. My job was to allow people to grow in their positions. Some circumstances happened that gave me the time for the next 4 years to step away from the district and assembly.

I became GSR again in 2008(9) and 2012(13), District treasurer 2010(11). This was a good role as some of the work that I had done outside AA could be put to use. I was DCM 2014(15) for a second time. The role was more challenging as I was starting to understand how important it was to

train and pass on our knowledge to the next person. I became Bridging The Gap Chair 2016 and gained a new awareness of how small the world of AA actually is. I came to realize how important it is for the hand of AA always to be there especially for the newcomer coming out of Treatment Centre's and Corrections. I became treatment chair and now realize how much we need to be part of the institutions so that the newcomer has a chance. When we give our word that we are going to be there we must show up. The path in service has changed my life. I have a purpose and that I am forever thankful for. I realize I can never give back for what has been given to me. I have no idea what is in store for me but I am all in. I am responsible when anyone anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible.

Bob T.  
Treatment Chair



### *Area 86 Focus*

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Website: [www.area86aa.org](http://www.area86aa.org)

#### Editor:

Newsletter Chair: Pam F.

#### Contributors:

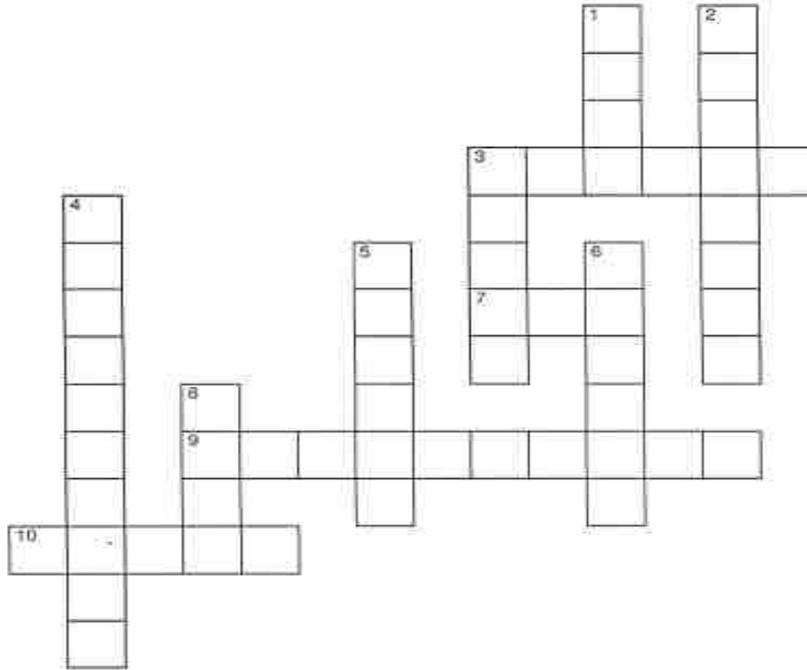
Trevor W., Rhonda S., Percy G., Tim R.,  
Bob T., Ann Marie L., Pam F.

#### Contact Information:

[Newsletter-website@area86aa.org](mailto:Newsletter-website@area86aa.org)

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## *Focus: A.A. Puzzle Fun!!*



**Across:**

- 3. the only requirement to become a member of AA is the \_\_\_\_\_ to stop drinking.
- 7. how many people do you need to have an AA meeting?

- 9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the answer to ALL my problems today.
- 10. complete this phrase..higher \_\_\_\_\_

**Down:**

- 1. what is Bill W.'s wives first name?
- 2. made a searching and \_\_\_\_\_ moral inventory of ourselves.
- 3. where alcohol will take you, jails, institutions and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. AA has Twelve Steps and Twelve \_\_\_\_\_.

- 5. we shall not \_\_\_\_\_ the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
- 6. If you can't do "One Day At A Time" then Do One \_\_\_\_\_ At A Time.
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_ to believe.

- 8. Came
- 9. Acceptance
- 10. Power

- 4. Traditions
- 5. Forget
- 6. Moment
- 7. Two

- 1. Lots
- 2. Fearless
- 3. Desire

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## *Focus:* How has Service enhanced your sobriety?

### How Service Enhanced My Sobriety

I often say that I am humbly proud. It seems like quite a paradox and I suppose it's one of the metaphors we have in A.A. However, I am Proud to belong to A.A. and I have acquired the humility it takes to belong here. When I was asked to write a story for the Focus News Letter on how "Service has enhanced my sobriety" it was with extreme gratitude that I thank Pam for the invitation to share. I also have to thank A.A. for giving me a life, one that I never would have dreamed possible.

Our 5th Tradition tells me that "Each group has but one primary purpose to carry its message to the Alcoholic who still suffers" There are many, many different ways to do this. Firstly I got a Home group and then a sponsor. I worked the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. My sponsor told me that this is what I had to do in order for me to be of service to other women. She told me that I would help other women. My first initial reaction was "What?;", I can't help myself, how am I going to help other women? Of course my Higher Power knew what he was doing because he put my sponsor in my life to teach me. Thank you God!! By this time I already knew what a home group was and that things didn't get done by osmosis. Sign up, show up, set up. Then came that dreaded business meeting that I was told was mandatory for me to attend. Well I balked at it being on the 2nd Wednesday of each month and asked why we couldn't have it once a month. Daaaahhhh!

I slowly became familiar with the various positions at the group level and tried all the hats on. Then came the GSR position. I was voted into the GSR position which I thought was very prestigious position, only to find out I

was representing my groups conscience, not my own. I was acting like a mail man, as my service sponsor so fondly would remind me. Another shot of humility!

A couple year term to go on to Alt DCM. Once again, here I am shadowing the DCM. Another 2 year term finally DCM of the district only to be directed by the groups. By this time I had found out how to be a pretty good referee, take direction and humble myself to be a trusted servant.

I have had the honour and the privilege to have been invited to serve on many different committees and try those hats on. I attend our Assemblies and Area Committee meetings and encourage anyone to come out and attend. It's a wonderful way to observe our fellowship in motion.

That takes me to today. I have the absolute privilege to serve as Accessibilities/Remote Communities sub-committee chair. Everything I do in Alcoholics Anonymous is an honour and a privilege.

All of this wouldn't be possible without the help of my first sponsor, bringing me up in A.A. Taking me through the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. My service sponsor showing me the ropes in service. As well there are many people that I have been fortunate to meet in my travels that have shared a little of their service experience with me.

When I came into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous I thought I knew everything! I didn't know I knew nothing and you people had to teach me everything. I continue to learn and grow in my recovery and have to thank the people that came before me. Hopefully I can teach some of those to come.

Service has enhanced my sobriety by leaps and bounds. There are far too many things that I have benefited from to mention. Being in balance with each side of the triangle is

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the best place for me to be. It allows me to find the totalities of my needs and freely give what was so freely given to me.

I guess you can say that I'm a Humbly proud grateful alcoholic. I am a member of the Burlington Central Group, in Burlington. (just in case the name didn't give it away) We are a literature-based group. We get down to the solution. We meet on Wednesday evening at 6:30 where we study the Big Books first 164 pages and Friday where we study the Twelve and Twelve with a Tradition once a month. If you're in the Burlington area, please come and visit us. That's where you will find me greeting at the door on most Wednesday and Friday evenings being of service to my home group.

Yours in Love and service,  
Ann Marie L.  
Accessibilities/Remote Communities Sub-  
committee chair  
Area 86 Panel 68



### **A Note From The Editor**

As the Newsletter/Website Chair for Area 86 Panel 68 I have gained an experience that will be forever irreplaceable. I have found it to be true that just as your term is done you have finally got a handle on the position. I am very grateful to Area 86 Members for allowing me to be a trusted servant. It will be bittersweet to move on from this position as I have really enjoyed reading and publishing the stories in the newsletter. Thanks to all the members who have shared their experience, strength & hope through their personal stories in the Focus Newsletter.

Being part of the transformation of the website was also a great experience as it taught me to trust the process and have faith. It has really been an honour to serve with all the Panel 68 Committee; it is great to see how people can work together for the greater good.

Service and Sobriety

I was 1 year sober when I was honoured to be elected to a position in District 14. I have been in service ever since and I am a true believer that getting involved helps me more than I help A.A. I enjoy being of service as it gets me out of me and keeps me in the Center of the program and less self-Centered. This allows me to gain and attain humility, to be trusted and trustworthy, and it keeps my emotional sobriety in line. Service is all about giving away what was so freely given to me. I can be a useful member of A.A. and of society and keep living one day at a time.

I am learning that confidence is achieved by being able to listen - without talking, taking advice - without judgement, and trusting the process. Believing in one's self comes from having faith in a higher power. I know without my Higher Power I could not have done this job or any job without being full of fear. I have faith today that everything happens the exact way it is supposed to.

When it comes time to elect the new Area 86 Committee don't be afraid to let your hand go up. It has been a great opportunity to be of service for Area 86 and I am sure if you let your hand go up you can have the same experience. Again, thanks for allowing me to be your Trusted Servant for panel 68.

Yours in Love and Service  
Pam F.  
Newsletter/Website Chair  
Area 86 Panel 68

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## Area 86 Calendar

How has Service enhanced your sobriety?

visit [www.http://area86aa.org/district-events.html](http://www.area86aa.org/district-events.html)

## Upcoming Area 86 Meetings & Assemblies

### Area 86 Committee Meeting December 7, 2019 District 18

#### Area 86 Committee Meeting

Will be held at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church 73 Queen ST E.(Hespeler) Cambridge ON N3C 2A9 Entrance at Rear of Building. Meeting starts at 10 a.m. Accommodations are at the Cambridge Hotel & Conference Centre 700 Hespeler Rd. Cambridge ON.

N3H 5L8 Phone 519 622-1505 or 1 866 622-1505 Rooms are \$129.00 a night plus tax for Friday December 6 2019 Booking code is Area 86 Conference rooms will be held until November 6th. Continental Breakfast provided

### Area 86 Committee Meeting January 11, 2020

Will be held at the Perkins Centre 1429 Main St. E. Hamilton ON L8K 2V2 Meeting starts at 10 a.m. Entrance through the front. Accommodation arrangements have been made at the Sandman Hotel 560 Centennial Parkway N Hamilton ON L8E 0G2 Rooms are for Friday January 10th 2020 at \$129.00 a night plus tax rooms will be held until December 9 2019 booking code is District 10 ACM

### Area 86 Spring Assembly Crown Plaza Kitchener March 20th-22nd, 2020

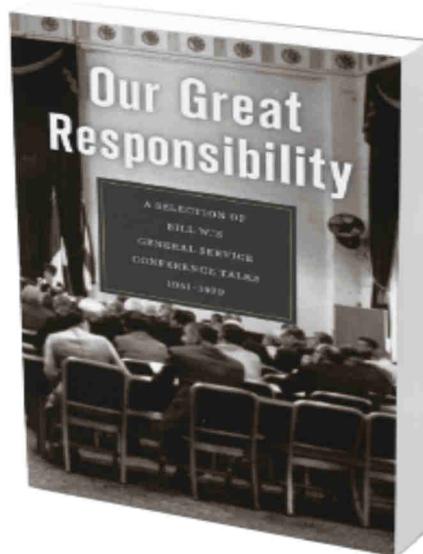
Preconference Spring Assembly 105 King St E. Kitchener, ON. N2G 2K8.

Rate is \$125.00 plus tax and will be held until February 22nd 2020. Rooms can be booked online at [reservations@cpkw-hotel.com](mailto:reservations@cpkw-hotel.com) or by calling 1 519 744-4141 or 1 877 408-6665 booking code is WOG.

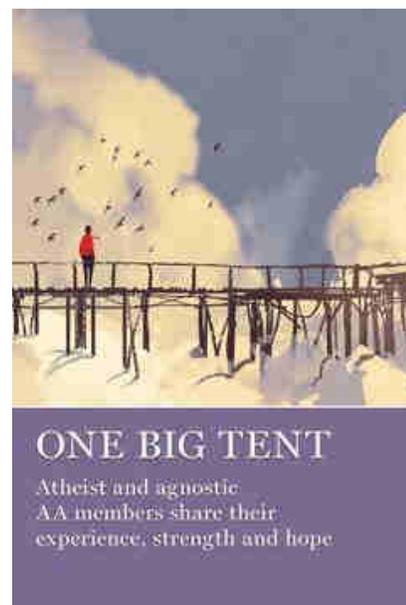
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### The Meeting Guide



Brought to you by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Meeting Guide is a free of charge meeting finder app for iOS and Android that provides meeting information from A.A. service entities in an easy-to-access format.

Meeting Guide syncs with area, district, intergroup/central offices and international General Service Office websites (some of which are listed on [A.A. Near You](#)), relaying meeting information from more than 300 A.A. service entities directly to you. Over 100,000 weekly meetings are currently listed, and the information is refreshed twice daily.

This app gives A.A. service entities full control of their local meeting information while collecting it in one place, making it easy for anyone to find a meeting. Local entities provide their meeting information voluntarily. Meeting Guide users can suggest additions or corrections to meeting listings by using links provided within the app to contact the local service entity responsible for the information.

#### **New & Enhanced Features**

- Search — Find A.A. meetings by name or location, in addition to day and time
- Daily Reflections — a selection of reflections by and for A.A. members
- Enhanced location functionality
- Expanded user interface, with a new menu bar and “Contact” feature.
- “News” — Learn about events at the General Service Office (G.S.O.) and Grapevine, as well as information about updates within the app.

To learn how to get your local A.A. website connected, please visit our [support site for A.A. web servants](#).

For additional questions please contact [appsupport@aa.org](mailto:appsupport@aa.org)

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