

# FOCUS

## The Joy of Service

### The Joy of Service

When I first came to A.A., I was too frightened to even speak at a meeting. I was, like many of us, a shell of a person just putting one foot in front of the other and dead on the inside. At my very first meeting, I met a woman who was to become my sponsor. She gave me a hug like I had never known before. I could feel the love and compassion she had for people suffering with addiction.

After many months of not sharing when it came my turn to speak, I spoke to my sponsor about my feelings of not contributing to the meetings. She told me that I was always contributing and being of service by just coming to the meetings. Although I could not see the changes in myself yet, all of the other members could. They could see a person who was now able to smile and look on life with hope for the future. No new member realizes that they are bringing joy to the other members by just being there. Something happens to us in A.A. where we truly find joy just by seeing a newcomer come in the doors. We find joy every time we see someone receive a chip, every time we are at a birthday meeting, and even every time we hear our stories told as we realize that yes, we are no longer alone.

After a few months, I was asked to open and close the meetings. I was given the key to the meeting room, made coffee, set up the chairs, cleaned and

locked up. The joy I felt from this responsibility was unbelievable. They trusted me, and it gave me a feeling of being useful and belonging.

After some time, I became secretary for the group, and out of all the positions I have had, I enjoy being secretary the most. Currently, I am secretary for my own group and at the District as well. I certainly could use some more computer skills and a longer memory, but everyone seems to welcome me, and once again, it makes me feel part of the group. There is a certain joy in sharing in what is happening within A.A.

At my first group they were looking for a GSR and an Alternate GSR and I became the Alternate GSR. However, the new GSR left after only one week and I became the GSR. What an awakening it was to go to the first District meeting. I really couldn't believe the running of A.A. at the District level. Unfortunately, that very first meeting turned into a battleground, and I was convinced I would never go again. However, I went to the next GSR meeting and was welcomed. I felt that as the spokesperson for our Group, I was making our voice heard.

There were a couple of years when I was really struggling with A.A., and I started going less and less to meetings. Finally, just before my tenth birthday, I drank. I only drank on the one

## The Joy of Service

day, but it was a struggle for me to get back to where I once was emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

It was around this time, I moved to St. Thomas, and I was still taking a break from meetings. The suicide of one of my favourite members in my previous group brought me back to A.A. and I went to my first meeting here in St. Thomas. The people couldn't have been nicer, but I still didn't want to return. After about 7 or 8 months of total insanity, I started to go back to the morning meetings on a regular basis. Once again the people were wonderful and welcoming and they started to bring that joy and serenity back to my life.

At my St. Thomas group, I have been secretary, GSR, and alternate GSR. I am attending the virtual meetings for the District (there are no physical punches online). Myself, I have never participated in anything higher than at the District level. However, I have nothing but admiration for those people who are committee members, DCMs, and Alternate DCMs. The love they must feel for A.A., to take on some tasks that at times must feel thankless, is remarkable. Although A.A. has no leaders, we do need the flow of information up from the groups, to the District, and eventually to New York.

This brings me to whom I believe provides the biggest service in A.A. - the sponsor. A sponsor cannot keep a person sober. Only the person themselves has control of that decision. But without a sponsor, most of us could never have remained sober. A sponsor must feel such joy when they see someone they have been guiding through the program, transform into a loving, caring, and spiritual and human being.

I will be celebrating 10 years of sobriety on March 15 this year. The engraving on my medallion reads 'God brought me to A.A. and

A.A. brought me to God.' My involvement in service continues to strengthen my relationship with my Higher Power. My life is good, and I am happy, joyous, and free.

Becky S.  
New Beginnings, District 6

### A Journey to Service

Hello friends, my name is Melody L. and I am a grateful alcoholic. I can say I am grateful because the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the people in it have shown me a wonderful new way to live, a design for living where I can love myself as well as others, and for that I am grateful. Through A.A. and God's graces, I am sober today and I now have a choice to live in love not fear. That is a choice I did not have when I was still drinking. This new life is a gift, a second chance, one for which I am eternally grateful.

When I look back and reflect on my journey to sobriety... WOW! What an incredible ride! I never want to forget those tortuous days when it was impossible to stay sober even for a day. I felt that unbearably painful hopeless state of mind,

### Table of Contents:

- P. 1 The Joy of Service by Becky S.
- P. 2 A Journey to Service by Melody L.
- P. 4 A Small Part of the A.A. Triangle by Greg I.
- P. 4 The Joy of Service - What a Joy It Is! by Gudrun M
- P. 5 Identifying Feelings and Growth: The Joy of A.A. Service Shawn F.
- P. 7 The Three C's of Service by Al H.
- P. 7 The Joy of Service in A.A. by Gene L.
- P. 8 The Joy of Service Volume 2 by Dan D.
- P. 10 The Joy of Service by Mary L.
- P. 11 The Joy of Service by Kevin K.
- P. 13 Crossword by Heidi P.
- P. 14 Upcoming Events

## The Joy of Service

body, and soul each minute, each hour, each day. It was killing me to drink and it was killing me not to. I felt I was going to die either way.

My daughter started leaving A.A. literature around the house... silent nudges. I had known I was an alcoholic for quite some time, but saying it out loud meant I had to admit it and I did NOT want to be an alcoholic. Thankfully, I reached my bottom and asked my Higher Power for help. I called the A.A. hotline and went to my first meeting the next night. August 26, 2016 is the first day of my wonderful new life.

I remember walking into that first meeting, shaking, frightened, and broken. I approached the door teary eyed and sobbing not knowing what to expect. Going to that meeting was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. Much to my surprise, I was greeted with open arms, smiling faces, and kindness. 'Welcome' and 'You are in the right place' they said! I got a 24-hour chip, some phone numbers, and my journey began. People in the rooms said, 'Don't drink. Go to meetings. Get a sponsor. Join a group and get active.'

At first, I was not completely sold on A.A. However, I could identify with others and their stories which made me realize I was no longer alone. I kept going to meetings and listening. I was able to stay sober 'one day at a time,' and felt hope for the first time in years. Crazy how that happens! I joined a group, found a temporary sponsor, and then a permanent sponsor whom I love and still have today. Joining a group and getting a sponsor made me accountable.

Now to the 'get active' part of my journey. I started making the coffee at my home group meetings, a small task but an important task to us alcoholics! I volunteered to chair meetings and became the group GSR. I offered to be a

temporary sponsor and then a sponsor.

While attending District meetings, I realized there was a need for volunteers. I spoke to my sponsor and we both agreed I was far enough along in my program to commit to some volunteer positions. I volunteered for the phone service and found that helping others strengthened my own sobriety and brought me joy. Helping others reminded me of that place I never want to go back to. I thought if I can help even one person get through that pain, that would be amazing! A position became available at District for a Bridging the Gap chairperson/coordinator and after researching the position and much prayer, I took the position.

Unfortunately, COVID has changed the way we connect with people. The traditional meeting in person, with hugging and holding hands, is no longer acceptable. The fact that we are unable to connect in person and in the traditional way with the still suffering alcoholic, the person coming out of prison, rehab or detox, posed a problem. I remembered what my first meeting was like- my first A.A. contacts, my early sobriety, and how important it was that I felt welcomed. That very first experience with A.A. was a critical part of my story, but how could we achieve that same comfort level during COVID?

I prayed for guidance. My Higher Power sent me down a path I never dreamt I would go. Guided

### Area Officers

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## The Joy of Service

by my Higher Power, I created an online newcomer package which includes brochures, links for online literature and meeting information, as well as contact phone numbers for support. I started a Newcomer Outreach virtual meeting that runs Monday to Friday at 1:00 and Wednesdays at 6:00. Some amazing people chair the meeting, and they provide a welcoming atmosphere, encouragement, and comfort. They answer any questions the newcomer may have and share their experience, strength, and hope. Virtual meetings are definitely a different way to connect with people, but it works. Virtual meetings run all over the world, 24 hours a day, and are accessible to everyone with internet. Alcoholics are starting their journey at meetings, joining groups, getting sponsors, and staying sober all through cyberspace.

I wonder what Bill Wilson would think!

Melody L.  
Bridging the Gap Chairperson for District 1

### A Small Part of the A.A. Triangle

Hello Fellow Alcoholics. I am an alcoholic and my name is Greg. Rhonda, our Area website and newsletter chairperson, asked me to share my experience in service.

I would like to say as honestly as I can that joy hasn't always been the emotion I have felt while serving in Alcoholics Anonymous, but it has been a by-product. I feel that knowledge is key and with close contact with a sponsor and specifically a well informed service sponsor, I have been tutored to learn and respect those who have gone before me and to accept what A.A. is today because of their service in the fellowship. A key book for me was 'A.A. Comes of Age.' This book really brought to light for me the toils of Bill W. and Dr. Bob and how A.A. evolved into what it is today. After getting into A.A.

literature, I truly believe that A.A. and its principles were spiritually inspired. With that said, I humbly don't question them, and must say I am wary of those who do.

When I am asked to serve, I always try to keep it in the back of my mind that I am but a caretaker of what I have been so freely given. Surprisingly for me, I have found the 12 Concepts very interesting in their application to service. I feel very grateful for and passionate about my recovery which Alcoholics Anonymous has given me. For me, understanding how this program came to be, as well as the knowledge I have gained thus far, is a responsibility grounded in respect.

It has been a joy to be but a small part of the A.A. triangle.

Yours in Service,  
Greg I.  
Immediate past DCM District 5

### The Joy of Service - What a Joy It is!

I am an alcoholic called Gudrun. Shortly after saying those words for the very first time, I was lovingly introduced to service work in my first A.A. home group, the Black Forest Group in Lahr, Germany. It was a small Canadian group that hosted a Sunday morning breakfast speaker meeting and I was invited to cook eggs. This group actively practiced all three legacies of our wonderful program and the words 'Service Work is Gratitude in Action' were printed on the cover of a binder holding the meeting material. These words would become my mantra.

That was in 1984. As I grew in sobriety I became involved in different positions at my home group, then at the District and Area levels, referred to differently in the Great Britain Service Structure to which the English-speaking groups in the Continental Europe Region (CER) belong. After

## The Joy of Service

the fall of the Iron Curtain, my home group closed because of the withdrawal of the Canadian Military in Germany. A new job took me to a different part of Germany and to another home group in Alcoholics Anonymous. Adjusting to the new group was not so difficult because I knew many of its members from various service meetings in CER.

It was a very special day when my region elected me as one of their delegates and I was allowed to embark on an unforgettable journey that taught me many valuable life lessons such as remaining patient when debates become heated, listening to all opinions expressed, especially the minority opinion, that agreeing to disagree is wonderfully liberating, and that God as I understand Him will always guide me.

A few years later I was appointed a Class B Trustee to the Great Britain General Service Board where I served on the Literature Committee and was elected Delegate to the World Service Conferences in Auckland, NZ (1998) and New York, N.Y. (2000). To this day my heart is filled with beautiful memories made with so many new friends participating in these events.

A few years ago, upon retiring from my work in Europe, I returned to Canada and was warmly embraced by the members in London A.A. I am a grateful member of the Tuesday North group and currently have the great honour to serve as Panel 69 DCM for District 11.

Who would have thought the simple statement on the meeting book in my first home group and cooking many, many eggs would bring me to meetings throughout the world, where I would meet many happy and joyous members committed to Alcoholics Anonymous in their recovery and dedication to service?

Each position I have had the privilege of

holding in A.A. has given me a chance to grow spiritually and emotionally, to become a much happier human being, and most of all it has allowed me to practice gratitude by giving back a little of what was so freely given to me.

Yours in loving service,

Gudrun M.  
DCM District 11

### Identifying Feelings and Growth: The Joy of A.A. Service

*Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That's the place so many of us A.A. oldsters have come to. And it's a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions, and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know, and want! How to convince our dumb, raging, and hidden "Mr. Hyde" becomes our main task. This quote is from a letter written by Bill W. on the topic of emotional sobriety and is taken from the A.A.W.S. publication: Daily Reflections. A Book of Reflections by A.A. Members for A.A. Members. February 8. Page 47. ©A.A.W.S. Reprinted with permission.*

Many years ago, my job title was service technician. It was for a cable company and I performed service calls. This was done knowing I would receive payment upon completion. Once I became knowledgeable in the field, I would do "off-the-books" jobs. In exchange for this service, a case of beer would be an appropriate payment. I always considered that service should come at a price, almost a requirement. This was how the world worked. If I was going to help anyone, it would certainly require something in return. There were certain exceptions - family, friends, loved ones - but after a while, even my beloved exceptions became burdens. And then, almost completely in the dark, the cost of any helpful rewarding task was too high. I was no longer available. Ever. King Alcohol was

## The Joy of Service

running my show.

I'd like to remember that start. It's true, very real. Exactly how life was some four years ago. Things are much different now. Better. Today however, I'm struggling and I have been for days. Fortunately, I'm not in a position where I would drink. I'm struggling mentally. I have been challenged with writing a piece for an A.A. newsletter. The topic is 'The Joy of A.A. Service'. I'm grateful to have been asked. I was originally very excited and I still am. I just have to regroup and acknowledge my thoughts.

I think I can identify why. I've written a number of paragraphs, but I'm not happy, certainly not joyful. My goal was to write a great reflection of my service experience. My stubborn ego tells me how good I am at expressing myself and my feelings, but here I am, struggling. I want to tell myself that service is joyful. I want my A.A. friends to know that service will bring happiness. It does of course, but it involves time, patience, and a selfless effort. It is challenging to describe. I need to identify my thoughts. I am aware today. I have to be honest.

I came to A.A. seeking recovery. I was welcomed into our fellowship, joined a homegroup, and embraced unity. It was time to give back. Similar to my recovery, A.A. service is a process. I'm never going to grow unless I'm willing to put in the work. I need to acknowledge and recognize my feelings and realize my potential. I must embrace my strengths and weaknesses. This kind of self-appraisal is where growth blossoms.

Am I really going to let people read this? I'm going to be judged. Embarrassed even. Am I scared? Am I living in fear? This is a character defect and I know this today. This challenge can only make me stronger. I need to be brave, courageous. Adversity is a breeding ground for

growth.

I remember when I first started giving back to our program. I simply followed the advice of those who came before me. I started with cleaning up coffee pots after meetings. It was very rare that anyone came and spoke to me. I thought, "What's the point, I should just leave." I didn't drink that day and that alone made life better. I became the literature chair of my home group. I was responsible for picking up medallions at another meeting in the area which was first thing in the morning and half an hour away. It seemed like such an inconvenience. However, I met new people and enjoyed their meeting format. I didn't drink, and life got better.

I recall the first time I spoke. I was so excited. I thought I would do so well. Sometimes things do not go as planned. I was disappointed for days. I'm such a hard critic of myself. By the grace of God, I managed to control my feelings, my emotions and I didn't drink. Life, although never perfect according to my high expectations, got better. The challenges of service keep me close to our program. The closer I am to our program, the more likely I am to stay sober. Life gets better.

First things first, I am an alcoholic and my name is Shawn. For me, the joys of service are mostly intangible. I gain through identifying my feelings,

### Newsletter Committee Members Wanted

#### Currently Seeking:

- ◆ Closet writers, proof-readers, and editors
- ◆ Photography, design and technology buffs
- ◆ Recruiters, enthusiasts, and cheerleaders
- ◆ Team players and mavericks

Must have a passion for Alcoholics Anonymous, a desire to be of service, and a sense of humour.

Contact the Newsletter Chairperson at:  
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## The Joy of Service

both positive and negative. I strengthen my self-awareness. When I am vulnerable, when I face adversity, I learn and grow.

The truly tangible joy of service is my presence and the growth of my fellows. To see my equals restored, working the steps, embracing our program is a gift. To see the promises materializing amongst my fellows is an experience I must not miss. It's an absolute joy to witness. For all of you who keep coming back, thank you. Your presence and participation at meetings helps me more than I could ever help myself.

I am so grateful for our program and our fellowship. I truly love Alcoholics Anonymous. I've been brought back to life. I'm alive today, feeling, learning, growing and loving.

Shawn F.  
Milton Wednesday Night Discussion Group  
District 25

### The Three C's of Service

When I returned to A.A. after a relapse, I was highly motivated to do anything and everything that would help me achieve and maintain sobriety. 'Get involved in service' was a suggestion I had heard over and over again, and I decided to listen and take action this time.

At first, I began with things that came naturally to me - coffee, chairs, and committees. Setting up at my small home group was a pleasure, and I took that responsibility seriously. I felt useful and needed for the first time in a long while. I also took to heart another A.A. suggestion - "Stick with the winners." I was fortunate that the people I gravitated towards this time were deeply involved in the subcommittees of my District, and helping out with our annual Roundup allowed me to experience more fully the power of A.A. and the love of the

fellowship. At the end of each Roundup, I felt exhilarated and inspired in ways I had never felt before in recovery.

Over time, I began to experience the three spiritual "C's" of service - caring, commitment, and confidence. These were attributes that did not come quite so naturally to me. As my experience and perspective became broader, as I became involved in archives and took on the position of grapevine subcommittee chair, I had to dig deeper and deal with personal insecurities and conflicts. But I pushed through with encouragement from my service sponsor and developed a small measure of confidence in my ability to stick with things and see them to the end. At the end of the day, instead of pride, I experienced the joy of working with other alcoholics in unity carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

What I have discovered about service is that it is an ever expanding horizon of possibility. I recently rotated out of my GSR position but find comfort in the fact that there is much work left to be done as I grow in understanding and effectiveness. And three more "C's" to study - the Conference, the Charter, and the Concepts.

A lifetime of learning lies ahead of me.

Al H.  
District 19

### The Joy of Service in A.A.

On April 18th, 2012 I became totally aware of my addiction to alcohol. I was 58 years old and yes, stubborn, as most that will read this are. Coming into A.A. I did not know what to expect. I mean there were people who said they had 6 months without a drink, 5 years sober, and even one with over 40 years of sobriety. With three days being the longest I could stay sober during the last 41 years, these numbers seemed unfathomable. At meetings I watched those people, especially the

## The Joy of Service

ones who appeared to be contented in sobriety. I watched them and saw how they were able to achieve it, and then I followed their footsteps. This brings me to why I am writing this story.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a place where true freedom can be found through living the 12 steps, but it needs to go beyond that. Being truthful, my real freedom came from practicing the three legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous, service, unity, and recovery. I am going to challenge you to consider doing the same. Finding a home group, a sponsor, and digging into service helped me to achieve the life we can all have in the rooms of A.A.

In early recovery, taking down the chairs in my home group of 254 members was not enough. I had to immerse myself in participating in our group's "Days in the Life," a full day of A.A. stories and an in-house understanding of the steps. Then I participated in the fantastic A.A. picnic we have every year which has expanded from when it first began with 10 in attendance, to two years ago where they had over 185 in attendance. Unfortunately, this past year with COVID we were not able to put that event on. In addition, I have been able to fill service positions within the program going from Alternate GSR to GSR, and then becoming the Alternate DCM, and currently the DCM for District 21 – Hamilton and surrounding area.

I also have the good fortune of picking up men at Detox and taking them to and from meetings as well as going into the Barton Street Jail to put on meetings for inside members of A.A. Also, I field calls from the struggling alcoholic inside and outside the rooms by taking telephone calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The true enjoyment I find in 'service' is that complete freedom from the next drink, the enjoyment of helping an A.A. brother or sister

in their recovery, the fun activities of living through A.A., and taking it to the reaches outside of the program.

Today, I am blessed with being just shy of my 9th birthday in our program of recovery and I have the freedom that comes with effort. I wake up throughout the night smiling. I have an ability to remain calm when calamity is all around me, and I feel a sense of peace, knowing that everything will be just fine.

A.A. has helped me to no longer worry about my financial and personal issues in life. I have raised two young, confident boys who today enjoy being around their father. In addition, I am pleased with what A.A. has provided me with and for the work that I must put in, in order to receive the blessings of everyday living.

Finally, I have a desire to reach out when my 2-year term as the District DCM is completed. I sit here today wanting the best for you. Please listen to me and progress through our program of recovery, so you too can reap all the benefits A.A. has to offer.

Yours in love and service,

Gene L  
DCM District 21

### The Joy of Service Volume Two

From our humble beginnings we all wanted to know where we come from, why we are here, and what our purpose is. Through the Christmas season I recall the Christmas hymn 'Joy to the World' that I was fond of as a child and wondered about its meaning.

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King!  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And heaven and nature sing*

## The Joy of Service

*And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.*

In this stanza came a clue as to help solve the mystery of who we are, why we are here, and what our purpose is. The line 'let every heart prepare him room' is the key.

The first part of this is the 12 steps of A.A., a program of education that is composed of trusting God, cleaning house, and helping others.

The practice of these precepts transcends the ego, opens the door for experiencing the true heart, and builds a solid foundation to experience the joy of service. I define service as a function of the soul whereas servility is a function of the ego.

The joy of service is defined as the experience of joyfulness that is derived from the act of service to others that is performed without expecting or desiring any reward for your act of service.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, we generally recognize this as the 12th step, the principle of charity, freely given as freely received. This joyfulness comes from the communion with God and the insights into the true nature of self. Examples of this are wide and deep. The fulfillment of a spiritual goal, the observation of

purely selfless acts, and being there to witness the awakening of friends and colleagues alike exemplify this joy. Service is the inherent nature of our being.

And how do we harness the inherent nature of our being? By answering one of life's most persistent and urgent questions. 'What are we doing for others?'

My experience and service in Alcoholics Anonymous has shown and taught me that the one true pathway to joyfulness is to recognize every day as a God given opportunity to serve. Recognize that we are not serving one person or an organization but the manifestation of God within us, the Great Reality that lies in all of us whether we choose to serve an individual's needs or those of an organization.

As Martin Luther King stated, 'If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.' Alcoholics Anonymous is the ideal venue to see this through to fruition. How does one do that? By volunteering!

In time I slowly began to realize (and am realizing) that all the functions I have performed in Alcoholics Anonymous have value. It's like a jigsaw puzzle. Without one piece, the puzzle is incomplete.

From my earliest beginnings as the chairman of the group through set up and tear down of meetings and all the duties that fall in between to representing the group at the District and Intergroup through representing the District at the Area and the Inter-District at A.A.W.S. and now serving Area 86 as Secretary/ Registrar, I have learned that 'meeting makers do indeed make it.' It is those who help make the meeting(s) possible who are the ones with the best chance of long-term sobriety.

To paraphrase Tom S., Panel 36 Delegate, the

### Submit An Article To The Focus

The Focus Newsletter is published twice a year, and is usually distributed in print, at each Area Assembly. In addition to the printed version there is also an electronic version which can be downloaded from the area website [www.Area86AA.org](http://www.Area86AA.org), and can also be passed along through the DCM's. The service related topic for each newsletter is announced long before the Area Assemblies and articles are written by members of Area 86. Participation is encouraged and appreciated.

Thoughts, ideas and opinions expressed in articles included in the Focus are strictly those of the author and may not reflect those held by AA as a whole, the Editor or members of the Area Committee. Similarly, inclusion in this newsletter does not constitute or imply endorsement.

## The Joy of Service

highest position you can attain in A.A. is sobriety, and service is the ideal pathway to maintain and improve our relationship with God.

In my sobriety, I have experienced many forms of joyfulness in both the celebration of life and the advent of the death of a family member.

Both these experiences and many others would have been missed or diluted if it wasn't for the sobriety I have awakened to in Alcoholics Anonymous through the practice of the 12 steps coupled with ongoing service work within and outside the fellowship.

I will close with a quote from Lord of the Rings:

*From the ashes a fire shall be woken,  
A light from the shadows shall spring;  
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,  
The crownless again shall be king...  
Reforge the sword.*

Thanking you for my sobriety and a life worth living.

I remain,

Dan D.  
Area 86 Secretary  
District Somewhere

### The Joy of Service

If you had asked me even a year ago to submit some thoughts on service, I honestly don't think I would have considered making the effort. Laziness is still my default, but my love for A.A. has egged me on to give it a go. I also have a sponsor who has such a love for service that is contagious. She planted a seed in my heart many years ago which finally seems to be sprouting. I'll be forever grateful to her for this, especially in these times where we need to work hard to stick together and to include our

newcomers.

In the beginning, service gave me a sense of responsibility and commitment to something. Direction, really. An agenda. Something I'd not felt or had in many years. Many things happened for me while I was concentrating on my tasks. I was learning how to interact with others again, sober. I was starting to understand bits and pieces of the program. People were remembering my name and I was receiving all the smiles and hugs that I could stand, another thing I hadn't realized I needed.

As my confidence grew, so did the responsibility level in my service positions. My homegroup had an impressive list of positions available, something for everyone. Becoming group secretary was a turning point for me. It got me into the thick of things such as meeting newcomers, getting to connect faces to names, and getting up to present our announcements weekly – things I never pictured being able to do, especially sober.

I'm hoping to become our GSR next year and represent my homegroup at the District table. Taking in a broader view of service encourages me to try and appreciate the size and diversity of our Fellowship. It's amazing to think that we're global and unified on our path.

It never fails that on a night when I feel like watching a rerun on tv and curling up far away from people, it turns out I have volunteered to chair a meeting or help with setup. I'm always so glad that I did. Service keeps me in the middle of Alcoholics Anonymous. Right where I want and need to be.

Mary L.  
Alternate GSR District 19

**Webmaster wanted:** Seeking an AA member with stable sobriety and some website experience to help with Area website.. Email: [webmaster@Area86aa.org](mailto:webmaster@Area86aa.org)

## The Joy of Service

Fellowship Group, Oakville

### The Joy of Service

Hi Area 86. My name is Kevin and I'm an alcoholic. I came to A.A. in 1989, broken, filled with terror, frustration, bewilderment, and despair. I was completely disconnected from family and friends, from self, and any kind of power other than alcohol. I could no longer imagine my life with alcohol or without it. I was desperate. In A.A., I found a fellowship of kind, accepting, loving, non-judgmental people with a sincere desire to be helpful. They all agreed on a common solution which gave me enough hope to attend the next meeting. I chose a sponsor from those people and started on the Steps.

After a couple of years of meetings and recovery, my sponsor suggested A.A. service work. It sounded to me like we need a GSR and you are it. Things were different then and nobody had ever heard of political correctness. He didn't send me to my first District meeting. He took me. That first meeting was poorly attended (6 or 8 people) and I was introduced to Bill F. and Max P. It seemed to me that these two guys had been in their positions of DCM and Secretary and Treasurer since the time of the dinosaurs. Enthusiasm for service was low it seemed.

I started to attend these meetings regularly and some assemblies as well. Nobody could afford motel rooms, so GSRs would pile into cars and drive back and forth for the weekend. These road trips were fun - attending workshops, learning about A.A. the bigger picture, and of course making new connections with people all over Ontario. I began to appreciate the Traditions of A.A. for what they were. They were not some mysterious force of unity but became a personal practice for me where I left

all my ideas of who should be there, how groups should be run, and who gets control, parked at the door along with my ego. It was exciting to be at assemblies with hundreds of people with a sincere desire to be more useful and more helpful to A.A. as a whole.

I became interested in P.I. at an assembly workshop on carrying the message of recovery outside the rooms of A.A. With a handful of volunteers who, like me, had no idea what they were doing, we set off. We sent a form letter offering our services to professionals, lawyers, police, doctors, social groups, churches, and public and high schools. We made presentations all over Elgin. The young people were the best. The interest they showed and the questions they asked were amazing. I told my story so many times, it began to make sense to me.

After 11 years, we had pamphlets and meeting lists in the hands of doctors, police, and ministers. We had pamphlet racks in drugstores and hospital emergency rooms and a Big Book in every elementary and high school library that would take one. Lots of schools had us back year after year and the number of students we reached was over 2000.

At my home group, a young 20ish guy approached me to say he was there because he had a problem with alcohol and knew what to do because he remembered me and the presentation at his school. Is there anything more gratifying and joyful than that? I was so lucky to be part of that and my enthusiasm for service grew.

I also did 2 terms as DCM for Elgin District 6 and got to experience a fellowship where the lone voice is heard, where opposition is not kicked to

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The topic for the next **Focus Newsletter** will be: **A.A. Service: What's It All About?** Go to: [www.Area86aa.org/area-86-newsletter-the-focus](http://www.Area86aa.org/area-86-newsletter-the-focus) for more information or to submit an article.

## The Joy of Service

the curb, and where group conscience is the last word. When Bill W. wanted to step away from the leadership of A.A. and allow alcoholics on the Board, he believed that the group conscience of spiritually based people with correct motives would always be God's will. Bill believed this with everything he was because of his own experience, and so do I.

In his story, Dr. Bob gives the number one reason for dedicating his life to A.A. as a sense of duty. I feel that sense of duty. Where did it come from? A sponsor who led by example? The people in service whose gratitude and humility may have rubbed off on me? Maybe it was always in me, unused - that joyous feeling of having taken part in all 3 legacies or the freedom of doing what I ought to do because I want to do it. I don't have any idea. But all those experiences changed me for the better into the man I am today. In service I connected with a host of lifelong friends. Like all my recovery, it was never about what I thought or how I felt or what I believed. It has always been about what I do.

A few weeks into the first COVID lockdown, I was missing contact with my home group members. I had just received 27 Big Books from my old book study group that had folded. I asked my homies if they would like to come out to my place where there is lots of room to social distance and have a campfire meeting. Of course they would, but could they bring some new people? What a joy. We ran that meeting beginning in early June until it was too cold to do so, and there are only a few Big Books left. All were put in the hands of those who wanted and needed them. What an honour and a privilege to introduce new people to this loving and non-judgemental Fellowship of hope that I experienced. It was so great to introduce them to the program and share our belief in the solution with each other and newcomers in very trying times.

My sponsor says I am still doing service work. I don't know about that. It was just a joy and great experience for me. Maybe God and you people put that sense of duty so deeply in me. I don't recognize it as service. It's just another experience I was open to and something I could do. My service was a growing and joyful experience, and I thank you for it with all my heart.

The responsibility declaration says that 'I am responsible.' AA does not survive without the service structure, and it needs to be there for my kids, my grandkids, and for yours. It's not somebody else's job. So let's work all sides of the triangle of AA so that our design for living is sound and complete.

In closing, I would pass on what a dear member told me early on. Just stay a little longer and try a little harder.

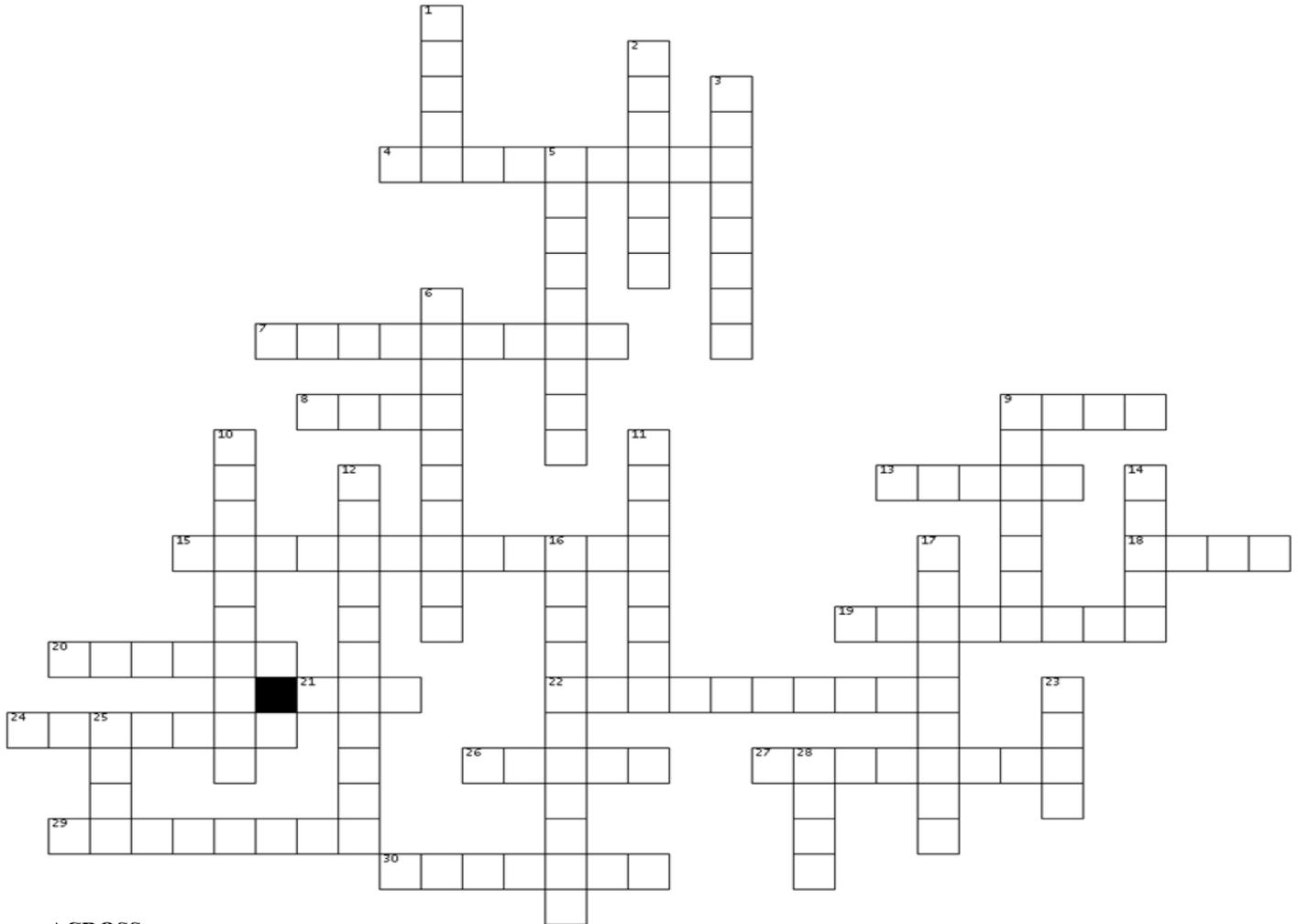
In love and I guess still in service,

Kevin K.  
Lost Legs Group, District 6.

### Many thanks to all who participated in this edition:

Kathy H	Editor	D. 6
Jean S.	Editor	D. 3
Heidi P	Editor, Crossword and Design	D. 1
Karen F.	Design	D. 18
Becky S.	Contributor	D. 6
Melody L.	Contributor	D. 1
Greg I.	Contributor	D. 5
Gudrun M.	Contributor	D. 11
Shawn F.	Contributor	D. 25
Al H.	Contributor	D. 19
Gene L.	Contributor	D. 21
Dan D.	Contributor	D. 21
Mary L.	Contributor	D. 19
Kevin K.	Contributor	D. 6
Rhonda S.	Newsletter Committee Chairperson	D. 16

## The Joy of Service



### ACROSS

4. Sixth Step refers to defects of \_\_\_\_\_
7. aka "Our Meeting in Print"
8. Word that appears twice in a slogan
9. First name of the third member of A.A.
13. Word that appears in a slogan three times
15. One of the Four Horsemen
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Thatcher
19. \_\_\_\_\_ prior to investigation
20. Dr Silkworth's middle name
21. A.A. Comes of \_\_\_\_\_
22. "Each group should be \_\_\_\_\_"
24. Our real purpose is to be of maximum \_\_\_\_\_
26. Recovery, \_\_\_\_\_ and Service
27. What we have on a daily basis
29. Our triangle represents our "Three \_\_\_\_\_"
30. First name of person who visited Carl Jung for help

### DOWN

1. One of the seven deadly sins
2. Road of Happy \_\_\_\_\_
3. Experience, \_\_\_\_\_ and Hope
5. "Having had a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_"
6. Our #1 Offender
9. Freedom from \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is the answer to all my problems
11. "\_\_\_\_\_ prior to investigation"
12. "Honesty Open-mindedness and \_\_\_\_\_"
14. The \_\_\_\_\_ Fact
16. Most of our experiences are of a "\_\_\_\_\_ variety"
17. Chapter 4 - We \_\_\_\_\_
23. Happy, Joyous and \_\_\_\_\_
25. \_\_\_\_\_ 62
28. \_\_\_\_\_ Does It

Thoughts, ideas and opinions expressed in articles included in the Focus are strictly those of the author and may not reflect those held by AA as a whole, the Editor or members of the Area Committee. Similarly, inclusion in this newsletter does not constitute or imply endorsement.

# The Joy of Service

## Upcoming Events



**The 71st General Service Conference** will take place April 18 - April 24  
 The Theme Is: **A.A. In a Time of Change**  
 The Conference will take place via a virtual platform. Only Area Delegates; Trustees and A.A.W.S and A.A. Grapevine Employees are the only eligible participants.



**Area Committee Meeting** May 8, 2021 Via a Virtual Platform



**Fall Area Assembly** Nov 6-7, 2021

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter and to those who have done so in the past. We would like to know that our collective efforts are shared widely throughout the Fellowship. Please pass this copy on to other members in our awesome Area.

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Rhonda S.	Newsletter Committee Chairperson	D. 16

### Fall Newsletter 2021 Submissions wanted!!

The topic for the Fall Focus will be: **“A.A. Service: What’s it All About?”** Service in A.A. is anything we do to help our fellow members and the still suffering alcoholic and we would like to hear about your experience with ‘service’ in AA. Perhaps the service of others got you through a really tough time or maybe service helped you grow in ways you hadn’t expected. Whatever your experience, we want to hear about it.

To learn more about the Area 86 Newsletter, visit: [www.Area86aa.org/area-86-newsletter-the-focus](http://www.Area86aa.org/area-86-newsletter-the-focus)

Do you like writing, editing, cheer-leading, photography, design or enjoy creating puzzles? If so, then you may want to join our Newsletter Committee. Email Rhonda at: [WebNews@Area86aa.org](mailto:WebNews@Area86aa.org) to learn more about how you can be of service.



Thoughts, ideas and opinions expressed in articles included in the Focus are strictly those of the author and may not reflect those held by AA as a whole, the Editor or members of the Area Committee. Similarly, inclusion in this newsletter does not constitute or imply endorsement.