

Delegates Corner CERAASA Update

I am powerless over alcohol and a member of the Triangle Action group in Hamilton and my name is Dan. I have the honor and privilege of serving Area 86 as your Panel 74 Delegate and as a member of the Conference Committee for CPC.

I have just returned from Halifax Nova Scotia where I attended the 6th CERAASA assembly representing Area 86 where I gave a CPC presentation and Co-Chaired the Business meeting

The first CERAASA was held in February 22-24, 2013, in Longueuil Quebec with subsequent assemblies held in Mississauga in 2015, Moncton in 2017, Laval in 2019 and St. Catharines in 2023

We had 135 attendees, and I would like to thank the @ 20 members of Area 86 who made the trek to Halifax to support this noble event.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEKEND:

The CERAASA Body:

Agreed that all material being presented orally at CERASSA be submitted to allow sufficient time for translation

Information on the CERAASA be available in English, Spanish and French

Update the CERAASA guidelines to state all translation be of a professional nature

Voted down the proposal that translation cost be covered by the registration fee

Tabled the motion that the Guidelines be updated to reimburse the Trustee and Trustee @ large to attend CERAASA

Respectfully submitted

Dan D.

Delegate

Area 86 Panel 74

CPC Conference Committee

Make Plans to Attend the 2025 A.A. International Convention!

Make plans to attend the 2025 A.A. International Convention scheduled in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Taking place once every five years, the A.A. International Convention marks the anniversary of Bill W.'s first meeting with Dr. Bob and the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935.

A.A. members and their families and friends from around the globe attend the event.

At the International Convention people attend meetings, workshops, dances and events. A highlight of the convention is the traditional flag ceremony to celebrate sobriety worldwide.

Vancouver will welcome A.A. members from around the world for the 2025 International Convention. This will mark the 90th anniversary of the beginning of our Fellowship's founding.

The International Convention will take place from **July 3 - 6, 2025**, at the Vancouver Convention Centre and BC Place Stadium.

For more information go to:

<https://www.aa.org/international-convention>



FOCUS

SPRING 2025 EDITION

The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

OUR THREE LEGACIES

Almost 30 years ago I walked into my first A.A. meeting and not because my life was going spectacular but because a judge told me I need to do something about my drinking. Returning home from that meeting my best friend asked, how was the A.A. meeting? There was a guy crying at the meeting because he had picked up a drink, was making a humble return and all I could think was you people were outright mental defects! At the time I didn't know the Doctors Opinion said that about us but what I do know is what my best friend said. "They're outright mental defects? You just got out of jail, can't see your wife or kids and you're living on the sofa in my basement." That hit me hard, and I did what any good alcoholic does, I found another place to live. I wasn't ready, obviously, but three years later after a twelve-step rehab I joined a home group and felt apart of. The home group I had joined had the slogan, you are no longer alone in front of the podium, and thus the Unity side of our Three Legacies came into view.

You people were talking my language, like getting into trouble and somehow escaping disaster all because of

what you said happened when you took the 12-Steps. That was good news for me, but I'd been damned if I was going to share with any human being some of my escapades. Three years later and like Bill talks about to the tune of paper millions, I had changed jobs, bought a condo, two cars and had a healthy bank account. *(continued on pg.4)*

BECKY

When we come into AA, we are defeated and angry. We are people who have no hope for ourselves for getting out of the hell we are in. Our very first service we need to do, is to ourselves. We need to get out of the fog we are in, and we need to recover from the affects alcohol had on us. And later our hearts and minds will start to recover too.

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AREA 86 FOCUS

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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.

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My first sponsor and first group carried me. My sponsor held me up, as I really was not able to walk on my own. My group was helping me to become a human being again. Their service in recovery saved my life. They asked me to help with the set up of meetings and the closing afterwards. This gave me such a feeling of belonging.

My sponsor always said, that by coming to meetings, you were being of service to others. People could see you changing and growing in the program. When you are in a meeting and it is someone's birthday or getting a chip, look around almost everyone in the room is smiling, loving to see a person recovering.

As time went on, my sponsor moved away, and I began to sponsor others. Unfortunately, I was not successful and four of the five, continued to drink. The fifth girl who was sober, never contacted me. I was trying to be their friend rather than their sponsor. But when I think back, I was being of service, by driving them to meetings and really listening to them.

When I retired, I started to go to a noon meeting every weekday. I was doing quite a bit for the meeting and getting very discouraged with AA. This was all my fault. I was not following the steps and lost contact with my higher power. Not long afterwards, which was just prior to my 10th birthday, I did drink at one of my husband's hockey games. When he saw me, the look of hurt and disgust on his face broke my heart. When we got home, I had to see that same look on my two teenagers. This was nothing compared to the disappointment and disgust I had for myself.

So, the next day, I started my count over again. So today I have 23 years less one day (*or 13 years*) of sobriety. However, I had to go back to the beginning and recover from the physical cravings and then the mental obsession.

I told the girls I was sponsoring that I could no longer be their sponsor. However, I started right away going back to meetings and trying to really listen to others. I loved the group and the people in it had become a second family to me.

Shortly after my one night of drinking, my husband and I decided that we did not want to retire in the Toronto area. We moved to a smaller city outside of London. I was missing my home group in Georgetown (*my second family*) so for about 6 months did not go to any meetings. I lost that sense of serenity I found in going to the meetings, and the feeling of belonging and unity that the sharing in the groups give you.

When I received a call that one of my favourite people in my Georgetown group had committed suicide, I was broken hearted, he was such a loving giving man. I went to a meeting that night and told them of what had brought there that evening. Every single person in that meeting (*who I had never met before*) them gave me their support and love both during the meeting and at the end of it.

"That was when I realized I needed to be going to meetings."

There were many morning meetings which I went to. Found many wonderful friends, and people who have helped me really work through the steps. I have a second sponsor who doesn't need to carry me but has given me guidance and support and the strength that I need to carry myself.

Service is important, and I am a GSR and held various positions in my groups. Different people are good at different things. But for myself, the greatest service I can do is to help a still suffering alcoholic. (*whether or not they are new in the program or been around for a while*)

- Becky S., District Six

MY RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY

I am an alcoholic, an active member in my home group and I currently have the privilege to serve with and for the members in my district as District Committee Member (DCM). I am a cheerleader for service; a 'Worker Bee' in District administration; and the link in the chain of communication that connect the 30 active groups of my District to our Area and AA as a whole.

I wish I could tell you that I was 'all in' from the get-go, and experiencing the sense of fulfillment and usefulness that I know today as the result of participating in our beautiful Legacy of Service.

Here's what really happened. In 2005 I was welcomed into an AA meeting where I was given a coffee, a meeting directory and a few pieces of literature. I heard a woman share how the solution she found in AA changed her existence of misery and shame to a full and contented life. I could certainly identify with the first part of that and was in desperate need of the second.

Beyond the fact that a meeting hall was available with tables, chairs, coffee and people to welcome me; there were many unseen volunteers that participated in my receiving a glimmer of hope that night. Someone arrange a phone line for me to call for help to find the meeting; someone produced and distributed a local meeting directory to the public; someone shared the story that I read in the literature and on and on.

I continued to go to all the meeting on my list, drink the coffee, read the literature and drop some change in the hat not realizing that my contribution was necessary for more than just the coffee and rent.

I got a sponsor and learned to use the steps in my everyday life and shared what I had learned about recovery. I learned enough about the 12 Traditions

to become a member of the AA Police, and regrettably recall glancing at an AA Service Manual and determining it to be unnecessary clutter in our group's box. I believed that I was active in service because I was doing the things at my home group that were rewarded with a party, cake and medallion.

Most of what I heard about service beyond the group was confusing, uninformative and sadly, misinformed and disparaging. Not something I was attracted to!

Quick example. I was about 5 years sober when I enquired at my home group about getting AA information to my doctor. I was told that there was nothing for me or the group to do; that "a lady at the District PICPC [Whatever that is!] looks after that". Not only did I feel helpless in the situation, I had a sense of being unqualified for this level of service.

So for my first 15 years in AA I believed that I was doing all that was necessary. I had no idea that it is my right, and responsibility, to participate in activities that support the recovery meeting and ensure the future of AA. That there are opportunities to experience usefulness and growth beyond the program of Recovery – our two other legacies Unity and Service.

It was during Covid lock down that I accidentally ended up in a 12 Concepts virtual workshop where the presenter

UPCOMING MEETINGS

2025 – 2026

Area Committee Meeting
May 24, 2025
Hosted by District 7
Details TBA

Area Committee Meeting
August, 2025
Anticipated to be Hosted by District 15
Details TBA

2025 Fall Assembly
October 31 – November 2, 2025
Oakville Conference Centre
Holiday Inn & Suites, Oakville, Bronte
2515 / 2525 Wycroft Road
Oakville, Ontario L6L 6P8

Area Committee Meeting
December 2025
Hosted by District 2
Details TBA

Area Committee Meeting
January, 2026 TBA

posed the question: How do you feel about changing the first 164 pages of the Big Book? Being the Big Book thumper that I am, my head almost exploded! I thought: how do I put a stop to that?

The presenter proceeded to explain my rights and responsibilities as an AA member: that I have a say in the decisions made for AA as a whole; that I am encouraged to share my opinion at my home group business meeting, and welcome sit in at the district and area meetings.

I started showing up at the district, got on the contact list, read the correspondence and attending as many online events and workshops as I could. I found my way around the AA website to source the service materials that would help me understand and find opportunities to suit my schedule and aptitudes. I was delighted to find that I could use my marketing skills to serve as the Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community Subcommittee Chair for my district.

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UNITY - SERVICE - RECOVERY

(continued from cover page)

I had arrived! Meetings were replaced by long hours at work and the inability to say no, whenever asked to do, my ego was too big. Consequently, I picked up a drink and thus began the start of another three years of literal hell. I lost the condo, the cars, the bank account was in arrears, and I was barely holding on to the job I had held for six years. The idea that I was o.k. after nine, but it was the tenth drink that got me, baffled my wife, family and friends.

I knew then that if I didn't do something about my drinking, I'd also lose my family who still had hope dad would see the light like those three years of contented sobriety. At the time I was drinking with my neighbours and thought a three month rehab out of town was in order. Upon returning, I again joined a new home group but this time and at my one-year anniversary a fellow A.A. member volun-told me into service and I became the Alternate GSR, then GSR, then Alt P.I. chair and thus started my second side of our legacy into Service. Service is great, I'd never knock it, but without recovery it can be a disaster. The ego told me I was doing well, serving others, meanwhile my poor actions and sometime arrogant behaviour made my then sponsor cringe and wonder like Bill says in his story, if a lunacy commission should be hired. Sobriety is a wonderful thing, but this alcoholic was missing a key ingredient, Recovery. How do I know? Four years sober and walking through a Shoppers Drug Mart a bottle of Scope

mouthwash exclaimed, how you doing? There were days when I had little money or liquor stores were closed and I knew ingestion of mouthwash would tide me over. I told myself, like Jim and the whiskey in milk, if I just put it in my denture dish my dentures would be minty fresh in the morning. The experiment worked, I didn't drink it, but three months later found me in the hospital after drinking two one litre bottles of Listerine. The doctor came into my room puzzled and asked, "why did you drink two one litre bottles of Listerine?" "Because the Scope is too minty" was my reply, but more honestly, I exclaimed "because I'm an alcoholic!"

I never left A.A. and kept coming back gathering lots of desires and one months and finally like Bill says, how dark it is before the dawn, my sponsor passed away from cancer and my Higher Power would put a man in my life that introduced me to the third and I believe the most important part of our Legacies, Recovery. For without it, Unity and Service cannot be truly experienced. My new sponsor brought me through the steps as outlined in our Big Book and 13 years later I am at peace and can look the world in the eye, accepting myself for who and what I am. Another run of the mill ordinary alcoholic living on this mud-ball, trying to do his best by serving others.

Brent O.
DCM
District 19

I AM A MIRACLE

My name is Michele and I am a very grateful alcoholic. I remember the first time I ever heard someone say "grateful alcoholic" and I could not understand who in their right mind would be grateful to have such a horrible disease that causes so much damage? Today I understand and yes, I am grateful. I have a life today that is far beyond anything I had ever imagined, far greater than I ever dreamed possible and it is because of my journey

through alcoholism that got me to where I am now.

April 2, 2015 is my sobriety date. And with the Grace of God I will celebrate 10 years of continuous sobriety. I went through hell to get here but because of the people of AA, a God of my understanding and the love of my family I was able to put the drink down.

My life today is filled with hope which I had none of for many years. I met a wonderful man

in the program and we share sobriety. We were married in our homegroup church surrounded by our AA friends and our family.

For the new comer.....stay and experience the miracle of finding a life far more beautiful than you ever could have imagined it's there waiting for you.

In Love and Service
Michele W.

PETER K.

I'm sorry I was insensitive and irritable and mean to you. I can't even quite explain it fully. The mirror of goodness you put in front of me by nature of your character was part of it.

I used to think I was a good and kind person, but I wasn't. I was living a life of addiction. I couldn't admit it at the time as my massive ego made sure it was impossible for me to see. I always had to be the right person in the room. I had to walk over others to ensure my ego could remain in control of my actions and thoughts. I lived my days lying continuously and could not even fathom the example others set in living life honestly.

Prior to getting completely sober I couldn't imagine life without intoxicants. I couldn't control my compulsions toward intoxication. I hadn't a clue what my days could look like without them.

I could only criticize and find fault with others so I could look good to myself in the mirror.

I wasn't ALL bad but I was nowhere near good enough. I wasn't miserable but I certainly was far from true happiness. I wanted to live life with control but was completely out of control. My hedonism and selfishness forbade me from seeing the true self I could become.

I finally admitted what I never could - I was weak. But then I had a higher thought; I am not weak but no one is stronger than addiction. Once addiction takes hold we become weaker and more vulnerable to the downward spiral that takes humans to the grave if one never asks for help. And asking for help should be so easy but our egos take control and keep us in denial that we are out of control.

"Once I admitted I needed a helping hand the very hand of God reached out and gripped me to lift me back up to a place of control."

It was very dark in my lonely world of addiction and I internalized all my frightening worries and it just got darker and darker. Once I admitted to one single person, the sun came out again. As the sun came back into my soul years of tears and anguish came out and they flowed with every thought of my condition for many days.

I cried through my first AA meeting. I cried for most of my second. Since my first day of sobriety I have been attending every meeting possible, listening to podcasts, reading my AA book, journaling my recovery, studying myself daily and thinking and talking and walking my recovery.

As of yet I have only scratched the surface of the depths I will swim. Getting sober is easy but staying sober is hard and I will be walking this path for my lifetime. But this path is spiritual and repleat with relief, acceptance, serenity, hope, good will, love, true happiness, hard work, empathy, learning, growth and complete honesty. It is wonderful and the most fulfilling endeavor of my life to date.

Every day is better. Every conversation is better. Every moment is better. The outdoors I love so much are better. I am so much better and I can love myself better through loving others better. And it's not just better it's exponentially wonderful.

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At the time, my home group had been without a General Service Representative (GSR) for several years so I nominated myself and was unanimously elected.

I was hooked!!!

I learned that there is such a thing as a service sponsor so I got one! I may be the neediest service sponsee ever! Like my journey in recovery, I need the experience of one who has navigated the unfamiliar, confusing and sometimes challenging bits of service.

I have experienced a profound shift in perspective and now feel deeply connected to something so incredible that words can't justly describe. I get to participate in activities that reach out to the still suffering alcoholic that offers them a solution to their problem and perhaps save a life!

Recently, I got to participate in a Bridging the Gap activity where no less than seven members from Area, District and Groups were involved in ensuring that a woman being released from a corrections facility into our area would have a member reach out and offer to assist her in getting to, and becoming familiar with AA in her area.

When all was said and done and I was reflecting back over the whole deal: the form at the corrections facility; the emails; the phone calls; the in-person meetings; and the seeking out of that one member to make the contact, I thought WOW! This is the hand of AA!

Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

Jaye A., Orillia, ON

SERVICE

One of the greatest gifts I have been given in sobriety is the ability to be of service. Service aligns with the AA principle of “giving back” what was freely given and I was taught early on that it is not only a responsibility, but a privilege.

Service in Alcoholics Anonymous provides a wide range of benefits for me in recovery. Engaging in service enhances my sobriety, strengthens my connections with others, expands my AA family, and provides a sense of purpose.

Service helps me stay engaged with the principles of AA and reinforces my commitment to recovery. By focusing on helping others, I am continually reminded of my own journey and the importance of maintaining sobriety.

As someone who tends to isolate, service has fostered a sense of belonging within the AA community. It has encouraged the development of meaningful relationships with others who share similar struggles and goals. Regular participation in service roles ensures my continued involvement in AA meetings and activities.

By taking on responsibilities in AA, I hold myself accountable to not only my home group, but the entire AA service structure. Acts of service has boosted my self-esteem, provided a sense of accomplishment, and led to feelings of gratitude and a sense of worth.

Being of service has helped give me a sense of purpose and fulfillment, which has counteracted feelings of aimlessness or hopelessness when life

happens. Service shifts my focus from personal struggles to the needs of others. This outward focus alleviates negative emotions like self-pity, resentment, or isolation. Being of service helps when I am feeling restless, irritable, and discontent.

Engaging in service reflects the spiritual principles of AA, such as humility, gratitude, and compassion, attributes I was severely lacking when I was drinking.

I have found that service has deepened my spiritual connection and enhanced my sense of serenity as I have learned to actually practice the principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts.

It allows me to guide and support newcomers in their recovery journey and be an example of the benefits of service, in whatever capacity one pursues. I hope that when I serve, it inspires others to get involved, creating a stronger and more vibrant AA community and ensuring the continuity and growth of AA as a fellowship. Whether it be greeting newcomers and making them feel welcome, chairing a meeting, taking on roles like chairperson, treasurer, or secretary, sponsoring someone, cleaning the toilet, or facilitating a workshop, there is an unlimited number of ways to serve AA.

I would say service in AA is a win-win: it not only helps Alcoholics Anonymous and therefore others in their recovery, but it also strengthens my own sobriety and well-being. It's the gift that keeps on giving!

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I feel the Universe guiding me and I see that these experiences I find myself in, however insignificant they feel, seem predetermined and perfect for what this best version of myself I have never allowed myself to become needs to experience to continue the growth that is propelling me toward constant improvement.

This does not feed my ego. This feeds my desire to be of service to others. I am becoming addicted now to being a force for goodness and my reward is the wonderful feeling inside that fills me with happiness and true contentment.

However I come to these feelings after experiencing true shame and guilt for things I have done and lies I have told and awful truths I have withheld from loved ones. This prose makes it sound poetic and beautiful but that it was not. Not at all, not one bit.

"I now know what it feels to be eaten alive from the inside with guilt and shame and horrible fear. A night of nightmares forced me to admit a horrible truth."

But that admission was rewarded with understanding and love and my relief is what intensified these wonderful thoughts and feelings into the peace of mind I have finally earned.

My life is more than half over and I just now have discovered true hope for my future. I have learned that my heaven on earth exists in the realm of honesty. I never imagined that honesty would be what makes me most happy. Honesty together with hope is what produces my true happiness. And I couldn't truly live this peace without having gone through the addiction and the lying and their tortuous consequences. I could have read about it, heard about it and watched others experience it but without living it these things could never produce this wonderful result.

AA is the best education I never imagined I could get. And I haven't even completed STEP ONE...

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- Peter K.