

## **Delegate's Report of Attendance – 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference**

My name is Frank, and I am an alcoholic. I currently serve Area 12 (the state of Delaware) as the Panel 60 delegate. The 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference was held in Rye, New York from April 17<sup>th</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010. For the 60<sup>th</sup> time we did much the same as occurred at that first Conference in 1951. The 93 delegates from the U.S. and Canada; the Trustees; the Directors of our two Corporations, A.A. World Services and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc; along with 14 General Service Office and Grapevine staff assembled. We heard reports from members of the General Service Board; from our two corporations; and from the General Service Office. We heard presentations by fellow delegates on this year's Conference theme: "***Practicing A.A.'s Principles – the Pathway to Unity***"; we had sharing sessions titled "What's on Your Mind"; we were divided into groups and had a 2-hour workshop and sharing session on the conference agenda selection process; we heard delegates report on their work from the 13 Conference Committees that met during the week; and we were asked to consider, debate and vote upon 79 agenda items. The Conference approved 37 committee recommendations that will affect A.A. world-wide and offered 77 additional considerations, 29 of which were referred back to the Trustees for development, revision, or consideration of items for presentation to the 61<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference in 2011.

### **First, the Financial Overview:**

In 2009, the General Service Office received a little over \$6.3 million dollars in contributions; this compares with \$6.5 million received in 2008, a reduction of 2.5% from last year. Of the 61,613 groups in the U.S. and Canada that are currently registered with the General Service Office, 27,295 sent contributions to the General Service Board. That represents 44.3% of registered groups contributing in accordance with our 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition. In comparison, Delaware has 231 groups registered with the General Service Office, 129 of those groups (55.7%) contributed \$36,760. With our 3,565 members, that represents per capita contributions of \$10.50 which is the highest amount of any area in

the United States and second only to Northeast Ontario in Canada that had per capita contributions of \$11.26.

In 2009, Profit from Literature was \$8.2 million dollars compared with profits of \$7 million in 2008. In 2009, 2,212,348 books published by A.A. World Services were distributed; of that amount 1,224,346 Big Books were distributed. Book sales were up 5% from 2008. In comparison, in 2009 only 24,761 copies of the A.A. Service Manual were purchased.

In 2009, the General Service Office realized a profit of \$1.3 million dollars compared to a loss of \$275,000 in 2008. The 2010 budget predicts a profit of a little over 1 million dollars.

The “Prudent Operating Reserve” is defined as an amount equal to the preceding year’s combined operating expenses of A.A. World Services, A.A. Grapevine and the General Fund of the General Services Board. The Reserve Fund stands at \$12 million dollars which represents 9.5 months of operating expenses if there were no further contributions or book sales.

### **The A.A. Grapevine:**

The A.A. Grapevine continues to struggle. The Grapevine does not receive revenue from ads or contributions from groups or individual members. It supports its operations through the sale of subscriptions, books, and other items. In 2009, the magazine lost \$132,594. In the past 15 years subscriptions have dropped from 120,000 in 1995 to 95,752 in February 2010. Since the year 2000, Grapevine staff was reduced from 27 to its current 11 full-time and 3 part-time employees. Last year, A.A. Grapevine increased the yearly subscription price to \$27 to catch up with escalating expenses due to inflation, postage, and pension funding. Assuming circulation stays on budget; the price increase is expected to help the Grapevine break even in 2011. Until then, the Grapevine will have to draw money from the Reserve Fund to help cover operating expenses and catch up with updating technology in 2010. Grapevine withdrawals from

the Reserve Fund since the last conference include \$50,000 in November 2009 and \$138,000 in February 2010. An additional \$246,000 may be needed in 2010 to cover the projected budget deficit. Some of the factors that may be contributing to the decline in subscriptions are:

- The information and technology revolution. (Readers have been getting information from the internet at an increasing rate)
- 65% of former subscribers have indicated a lack of leisure time for reading
- There is a natural attrition of an aging readership (73% of Grapevine readers are over age 50)
- Free or low-cost issues are available at meetings
- There is no sustained circulation program to build and maintain circulation

To address these issues, the A.A. Grapevine has:

- Updated designs and included more art and articles from younger readers
- Hired a new circulation director to maintain communication and oversee customer service
- Will update the Grapevine's software and design to make the Grapevine web-site more useful and cost-effective and to make on-line ordering easier.
- Grapevine staff has drafted a strategic business plan to explore making Grapevine stories available in digital media.

Ultimately, though, the future of the A.A. Grapevine is in the hands of the Fellowship. Over its 66 year history, the Grapevine has exceeded its operating costs by \$350,000, and broken even 37 of its 66 years.

At the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, attendees approved the Conference Grapevine Committee's recommendation to have delegates poll the Fellowship on the following questions:

- What is the value of the Grapevine magazine to you?
- How do you use the Grapevine magazine?

- What would you like to change about the Grapevine magazine?
- What do you think the purpose of the Grapevine magazine should be?

The delegates got together and prepared a questionnaire with these and other questions on the Grapevine. Your opinions and suggestions are requested. Copies will be available at district meetings and area assemblies that I attend. Please take time to complete the form and return it to me or your DCM. Your name is not required. The Area web-master is working on an on-line survey form that you can complete on the [www.delawareaa.org](http://www.delawareaa.org) web-site. Your response will automatically be forwarded to my email address. I will ensure that responses are submitted to the A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board by December 31st, 2010, so they can be included as background material for the 2011 Conference Committee on the Grapevine. In addition, if you subscribe to the Grapevine, the magazine will be sending out a separate survey later this year.

So how many subscribers to we have in Delaware? Of the nearly 3,600 members, in May 2010, there were 283 subscriptions for 387 copies of the Grapevine. However, that is a significant reduction from the 446 subscriptions we had in the year 2000

### **LaVina:**

LaViña is the Spanish language version of the Grapevine. It was created at the request of the General Service Conference in 1995 and is funded by the General Service Board. LaViña is published every other month and in 2009 had a circulation of 9,663 copies which is down from 10,404 copies in 2008. In 2009, LaViña lost \$54,000, an improvement from a loss of \$76,000 in 2008. In the past year, LaVina hired a new editor and bilingual production assistant to improve the magazine and communication with its readers.

In 2009, several districts in southeast Texas and in Kansas submitted a proposal to have LaViña published in color and be staple-free so that it could be taken into correctional facilities like the A.A. Grapevine. In a 2010 report from the LaViña staff they noted that in the last year after the update to four color printing, article submissions doubled. The report stated that if LaViña were published with parity of the A.A. Grapevine, i.e. 64 pages, staple-free, and full color, the Spanish language A.A. community would step forward to support the magazine. Start-up costs for a full color magazine for the first year were estimated to be \$84,000.

After much debate, the Conference approved the Grapevine Conference Committee recommendation that LaViña achieve spiritual parity with the A.A. Grapevine, in the following manner:

- *Publish LaViña as a bimonthly, perfect-bound, black-and-white, 68-page issue at an additional estimated cost of \$21,400 per year for one year, beginning in 2011, followed by a year of review and assessment in 2012. The results of this review and assessment will be brought to the 2013 Conference Committee on the A.A. Grapevine.*

### **On-Line Contribution Program:**

During 2009, approximately 76,058 contributions were processed by the General Service Office. In order to make sending contributions to the General Service Board easier and perhaps encourage the 56% of our registered groups who are not doing so to practice the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, the General Service Office has developed an on-line contributions program. Contributions on-line is an internet/web application that allows A.A. members to contribute to the General Service Board via the internet using credit cards and by electronic bank draft, a.k.a. "e-check". For maximum protection of member information and financial transaction security, AAWS purchased an extended validation certificate from VeriSign. This certificate ensures that all information that is sent between a member's web browser and the A.A. Member Contributions website is protected by strong encryption technology.

The Contributions Online Program is accessed from the [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) website.

The online contributions program is scheduled to go live early June 2010. Although self-help screens are available within the program, more information on using the program will be forthcoming from the General Service Office. I will also let you know when the program is available.

Now to the detailed business conducted at the Conference. We have already covered the recommendations offered by the Grapevine Conference Committee, but there are more committees.

The Conference received reports from two different Committee bodies. First there are the 13 Trustee Committees that meet several times throughout the year to discuss business that was forwarded to them by the Fellowship or by past Conferences. There are also 13 Conference Committees. Conference Committees are staffed by 8 – 10 delegates who are drawn from the hat prior to each new conference. Delegates serve their two-year term assigned to one of these committees. I was assigned to the Trustees Committee. During the first two days of the conference week, the committees meet each morning for three or more hours to discuss agenda items that were assigned to their committee. Their findings are then reported to the full conference as a recommendation which requires debate and vote; or as an additional consideration which often requires more work by the trustees or General Service Office staff. Here are the major points that were covered by the conference:

### **Conference Committee Reports**

#### **Corrections**

The Corrections Committee Reviewed four pamphlets regarding corrections facilities:

- ***“It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell.”***
- ***“Carrying the Message into Correctional Facilities”***
- ***“A.A. in Correctional Facilities”***
- ***“A Message to Corrections Professionals”***

And suggested the following language revisions to the appropriate pamphlet:

- **“Deciding to participate in Corrections Twelfth Step work is an important individual decision. A.A. members should carefully read all paperwork required by correctional facilities, and fully understand and be willing to comply with all rules/regulations prior to commencing such work.”**
- **“Policy matters include deciding when and where the group is to meet; and setting the conditions under which visiting A.A. members may attend these meetings, including any required volunteer orientation and forms that must be completed.”**
- **“Since regulations *can and do vary*, A.A. members will need to be specifically informed about the rules/regulations of each facility they will enter. To that end, good communication between corrections administrators and local A.A. committees is essential.”**

### **Finance**

**A.** The following issue was discussed at length at various district meetings and the area assemblies last year and I forwarded Area 12's group conscience on this matter. The Finance Committee reviewed input from the Fellowship gathered by the trustees' Finance Committee on the following:

**1. If we continue to use literature profits to partially fund services, should there be a limit?**

**2. If there is a limit how do we continue to pay for services if there is a shortfall in contributions?**

The committee recognized that the majority of the sharing of the Fellowship was not in favor of a limit. The committee does not recommend that a specific limit should be placed on the use of literature profits to fund services. From all input gathered, the committee found that the Fellowship agrees with the Trustee's policy on self support which was affirmed at the 2009 Conference. I believe it is necessary for us to know what the "Self-Support Policy" is so I included it here:

**Self-Support of the World Services of Alcoholics Anonymous**

**The A.A. spiritual principle of self-support enables us to pursue our primary purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic with a shared sense of responsibility for our lifesaving work and without interference or financial dependence on outsiders. From our Fellowship's earliest days, the expenses of the General Service Office, and the world services provided by it, have exceeded the amount derived from contributions of A.A. groups and members. As a result, providing these needed services has necessarily been supported in part by income from the sale of A.A. literature. It is the policy of the General Service Board that income from literature sales should only be in amounts required to allow continued provision of vitally needed services and maintenance of a prudent reserve fund. We hope that the day will come when AA groups and members, through their contributions, will be able to fund fully the services provided by the General Service Office. If that is achieved, revenues from literature sales will only be needed in amounts necessary to cover the actual costs associated with literature production and to maintain a prudent reserve fund.**

**B.** The Committee discussed revisions to the pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" and voted to return the pamphlet to the Trustee's Literature Committee to consider revising or removing the pie charts.

The Conference also approved adding the following to the pamphlet:

**Q. Can our group make financial contributions to A.A. Grapevine?**

**A. No. A.A. Grapevine Inc. is not set up to take contributions from groups or individuals. Groups and individual members support the Grapevine by purchasing subscriptions to the Grapevine and La Viña magazines and purchasing other Grapevine publications and using them in their Twelfth Step work.**

### **Literature**

**A.** The revised pamphlet “The A.A. Member – Medications and Other Drugs,” was returned to the trustees’ Literature Committee for additional discussion and report back to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.

**B.** The revised pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” was approved.

**C.** The Conference approved that the trustees’ Committee on Literature develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous, and bring a draft or progress report to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.

**D.** The Conference approved a recommendation regarding closed meetings in the pamphlet **“Frequently Asked Questions about A.A.”** to read:

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**“A closed meeting is for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and have a desire to stop drinking. Closed meetings give members an opportunity to discuss particular phases of their alcoholic problem that can be understood best only by other alcoholics.”**

**E.** The Conference approved that the trustees’ Literature Committee update the pamphlet **“A.A. and the Armed Services”** to include recent experiences from members on active duty and a section which focuses on veterans of the armed

services, and that the range of experiences be reflected in the title of the pamphlet. A draft or progress report will be brought to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.

F. The Committee received a request to consider updating some language in *Living Sober*. However, because it was written by a now-deceased member of the Fellowship, questions arose as to if it is appropriate to change the language. The Conference approved that the Trustees' Committee on Literature review the booklet *Living Sober* and present a report to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.

G. The committee considered a request that the video, *"Your General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure"* be revised and updated and took no action. The committee noted that there was no widely expressed need for a new video and that the information in the video was still relevant and useful in describing the A.A. service structure

H. The committee considered a request to develop a book on the "History of Early Pioneer Women in A.A." and took no action. The committee expressed appreciation for the request but considered that there was not a widely expressed need for a Conference-approved book on the history of early pioneer women in A.A.

### **Policy & Admissions:**

The Conference approved the committee's recommendation that the General Service Conference conduct a thorough inventory of itself and that a **Conference Inventory Planning Committee** be established to develop a comprehensive inventory plan to bring forward to the 2011 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions for consideration, along with an estimated cost for conducting the inventory.

## Public Information

A. The Conference approved the 2010 television public service announcement, “My World”, developed by the trustees’ Public Information Committee, and also approved the Committee’s recommendation that this PSA be centrally distributed, tracked and evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$35,000.

B. The committee reviewed all of the current A.A. TV public service announcements and agreed with the report of the trustees’ Public Information Committee that found them all to be relevant and useful

C. The Conference approved a revision to the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity,” to read:

***“A.A. members generally think it unwise to break the anonymity of a member even after his or her death, but in each situation, the final decision must rest with the family. A.A. members, though, are in agreement that the anonymity of still-living A.A. members should be respected in obituaries or in any type of printed remembrance or death notice.”***

D. A new A.A. Video for Young People titled “Animation” was approved. The Young People’s series now has a total of four videos.

E. The Conference approved the Committee’s recommendation that the trustees’ Public Information Committee report back to the 2011Conference with a draft policy on showing or not showing faces of actors who are portraying A.A. members or potential A.A. members in Conference approved visual media, reviewing and taking into consideration targeted audiences for all available A.A. tapes and videos.

## **Report & Charter**

- A.** The Committee recommended several minor revisions to the A.A. Service Manual.
- B.** The Conference approved the committee's recommendation to add a description of the role of "**trustees emeriti**" to *The A.A. Service Manual*.
- C.** The committee considered a request that *The A.A. Service Manual* "be reprinted only as necessary and consider publishing every three to five years with changes being sent as inserts to existing manuals," and took no action. The committee noted the importance of publishing *The A.A. Service Manual* annually and that it be as current and accurate as possible.

## **Treatment Facilities**

The committee reviewed and accepted the progress report from the trustees' Committee on the proposed Special Needs recovery pamphlet.

## **Trustees**

The Conference approved the committee's recommendations for slates of trustees and officers for the General Service Board; and new directors for A.A. World Services, and the A.A. Grapevine that were submitted by the Trustee's Nominating Committee. Election of these officers took place at the General Service Board Meeting that immediately followed the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> Conference on April 24, 2010. Basically, all the trustees just change committee assignments every year, except for our Chairman of the Board, Ward Ewing, Class A Trustee, and the manager of our General Service Office, Phyllis H. Also elected at the conference were two new regional trustees for Eastern Canada and the Pacific Region.

## **Archives**

The committee accepted the report from the trustees' Archives Committee on the Feasibility of Developing a Self-guided Tour of G.S.O.'s Archives. The report included information from the archivist on the new Digital Archives Exhibit, which will be launched on the Archives portal of G.S.O.'s web site at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

## **International Conventions/Regional Forums**

The conference heard reports on the upcoming International Convention in San Antonio:

- As of late May, over 41,000 people have registered for the Convention so far. About half of those have pre-purchased the souvenir edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* and the Special Issue of the Grapevine magazine.
- Preparations are in place for the anonymity-protected broadcast of the Friday night Flag Ceremony. Invitations have already been sent to many of the flag bearers who were selected at random from registered A.A. members from each country.
- For the second time, registration for an International Convention was made available online. While paper communications continue in order to make sure everyone has access to International Convention information, a large percentage of our attendees registered and made housing reservations online.
- Notices are being included in Convention materials and meeting formats to emphasize A.A.'s anonymity Traditions to attendees

- Efforts are being made to insure that attendees are prepared for the Convention experience, and understand the challenges of weather and of getting around very large facilities.

All of the actions taken at the 60<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference are posted on the Area 12 web-site at [www.delawareaa.org](http://www.delawareaa.org) and can be viewed at any time. The Final Report on the General Service Conference will be available in late August and I have ordered a sufficient quantity so that every group will have copies available.

This year the conference ended on Friday at midnight. I would also like you to know that the staff at the General Service Office is a remarkable group of people. There are 87 employees, many of whom are alcoholic. The work that was done by them to prepare for this conference as well as the work they do throughout the year in helping to carry the message is outstanding.

Representing the members of the Fellowship from Delaware at the Conference is indeed an honor. I thank all of those who participated in this year's Area 12 mini-conference for sharing their opinions on the various agenda items and helping me to prepare for the Conference. I am available to answer any questions you may. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be of service.

Frank Z.  
Panel 60/Area 12  
Delegate