



VOL. XXX, Issue 2
Spring 2016

Seeds of Service

The WPA Area 60 newsletter is published quarterly by the Area Committee. It is for AA members only. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily that of the Area Committee or Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

We hope *Seeds of Service* will be a useful reference for GSR reports.

Distribution

Paper copies are distributed to DCM's at each quarterly meeting for redistribution to AA groups through their GSRs. A digital copy (PDF) of the newsletter is available at www.wpaarea60.org. It can also be sent electronically to DCMs and GSRs, if the Area Registrar has a correct email address.

Submission Guidelines

Suggested length is 250 to 400 words. Material should be generally relevant to the theme, and may be edited for clarity and length. All material submitted on time is reviewed, selected by topic, and may appear, based on available space. The newsletter does not publish song lyrics, tributes to individuals, prayers, plays, or anything unrelated to AA or that violates the principles of AA.

Please include your first name and last initial, home group, and district.

Submissions may be emailed to newsletter@wpaarea60.org.

Write for SoS

The 2016 theme for the General Service Conference is "Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions, and Concepts."

Summer 2016, "Connecting with AA as a Whole" (deadline 7/25)

Fall 2016, "Conscious Contact with Our Higher Power(s)" (deadline 11/14)

Connecting to Others

Staying Connected

Charles V, SCI Fayette



Staying connected with AA and its members is very important for an alcoholic because this fellowship of men and women gives us the opportunity to heal and grow in our recovery from addiction. By connecting with dedicated AA members and following the steps to sobriety, we have a chance of staying positive during our recovery. It is refreshing to be able to go to a place where we are understood. These people believe in a set of principles that allow us to grow, people who believe that a Power greater than themselves could restore their sanity, if they just turn their lives and will over to God as they understood him.

My experience at the SCI Fayette rooms was a true blessing to me. The people were truthful and honest, who were always open to help me eliminate the pain I was going through, to embrace and encourage me as I admitted my wrongdoings. The unconditional love in the rooms gave me a better understanding of the importance of reaching peaks of spiritual awareness. Through my spiritual awakenings, my life is made manageable. The spirit of AA unity keeps us focused, giving us yet another day to do great things without alcohol. I choose to stay connected to the spirit which has saved and continues to save my life, both inside and outside the AA rooms.

Home Group 101

Margie S, District 23 DCM

On Saturday, March 19, District 23 hosted a workshop dealing with issues faced by home groups. Chaired by Alternate DCM Steve B, it was the third Saturday morning workshop District 23 has presented over the past 18 months. The first workshop was on the Twelve Traditions, the second workshop focused on Anonymity, and this workshop was entitled "Safety and Respect." There were four panels and the subjects included: *Crosstalk*, *Thirteenth Stepping*, *Diversity*, and *Who Can We Ask to Leave a Meeting?*. These topics for the all three of the workshops were suggested by AA members in District 23.

Text boxes containing information from each of the Home Group 101 panels appear throughout this issue of *Seeds of Service*.

A Season of New Beginnings

Chad U, Area 60 Newsletter Editor

Hello. My name's Chad U, and I'm an alcoholic. I'm also the GSR for the Good Orderly Direction Group in District 14, and the new Area 60 newsletter editor.

When I first heard that *Seeds of Service* was looking for a new editor, I thought, "I could do that — I've been a professional editor for years," but something stopped me from stepping up. It seemed prideful and hasty: after all, I've only been around a short time, and to put myself out here for a service position like this seemed to stink of pridefulness. So, I did nothing... until at the 2016 Get Away Weekend, I heard that *SoS* might be going "dark" from the lack of an editor. That's when it seemed like my Higher Power slapped me on the back of the head and said, "Okay, you're up. **Now**, go volunteer."

So, here we are. They say in the Pittsburgh area that "the closest distance between two points is usually under construction," and that's definitely true of this issue of the newsletter. We're under construction — or more accurately, *reconstruction* — and ask your indulgence as we work the kinks out. And that seems like a pretty good metaphor for recovery, too.

This month's theme is "connecting with others," and in this editorial, I'd like to share something that has helped me to do that.

Today, I **only share ESH in a meeting**. If I don't know something from it having happened to me, I don't talk about it. I pass — I save my thoughts, opinions, judgments, and gossip for over coffee later. I won't just quote the Big Book about a thing if I haven't lived it.

I'll share the story of my **experience** of the topic (even if it's just that I'm afraid), what **strength** was necessary to meet that challenge (and how I sought or found that strength), and the **hope** I have discovered in the process of meeting or overcoming that challenge.

As long as I am willing to share my ESH honestly and openly with others, making a connection with them has been much, much easier. People come up to ask me advice, to share their own advice, or even just to chew the fat after meetings (or out in the world) when I share this way.

Give it a try.

On My Bookshelf...

Jean M, Past Delegate, Area 60, Panel 61

So, why do we need Guidelines, anyway? The answer is found on page 2 of the *Area 60 of Western Pennsylvania General Service, Inc. Guidelines*: "The following Area 60 Guidelines are an extension of the suggestions in the AA Service Manual. They reflect the customs and traditions formulated through the years of Area 60's history. They are based on the experience of the past and hope for the future. These Guidelines embody a clarification of duties and procedures to improve communication and general services to the AA groups in Area 60."

Past Delegate Lois C, Area 60, Panel 43, wrote on Concept 10 for a presentation that she was giving at NERC in October 1993: "Western PA Area 60 currently has a problem related to this Concept. We have no guidelines that define the scope of area officers' or service coordinators' responsibilities. I can remember when our Panel 35 delegate suggested area guidelines. Like many others, I said, 'We don't need them -- we've got the Service Manual. Let's not get too organized.' I've changed my tune! Of late, we've been relying on tradition -- particularly past motions of the area committee -- but we only have meeting minutes from the last ten years."

Bill W, speaking at the Texas State Convention in June 1954, said he wrote the Big Book so that "the message wouldn't get garbled." This theme was repeated over and over, as evidenced by our AA literature today. In the current *Box 4-5-9*, Spring 2016, it says that "always aware of the need for structure to guide AA's growth, AA cofounder Bill W began thinking in the 1960s about a worldwide service meeting, where older AA countries could share their experience with newer, sometimes floundering service structures, and in 1969, the first world service meeting was held in New York City." Bill W wound up his essay on Concept 10 with: "Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to recognize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and discharge their clear responsibilities."

The Area 60 Guidelines attempt to do just that, at all levels of the General Service Structure in Area 60, from GSR to Delegate. They simplify the process of defining our activities, beginning with describing our Area meetings and continuing through educational activities such as Days of Sharing and the annual Get Away Weekend.

The Area 60 Guidelines can be found, downloaded, and printed on the Area 60 Website < wpaarea60.org >, under *Information/Forms*. The Area Chairperson has paper copies that can be distributed, also.

Home Group 101: Crosstalk

The Irwin Back to Basics Group presented the panel on Crosstalk. Discussion centered on that while sharing experience strength and hope can be helpful, giving advice to someone directly or commenting in a negative manner about someone else's sharing can be detrimental. One AA remarked, "The long-timers used to say, 'My opinion might kill you, but my experience, strength, and hope can save your life'." Another AA pointed out it may not always good to say things like "What Sandy said really resonated with me," because if several speakers reference others by name, those new to the fellowship or who don't attend that meeting on a regular basis may perceive cliqueness, thinking everyone already knows each other, and feeling left out. Articles on crosstalk from the *Grapevine* and *Box 4-5-9* were referenced as well.

For the Alcoholic, There is No Substitute for the Fellowship of Those Actively Engaged in Their Recovery

Michael C, SCI Greene

Our old lives and friends were not really interested in keeping us sober. There are many new friends in AA, a new way of life, and certainly a lot of wonderful experiences.

Before I arrived at the door of AA, I had spent a great deal of time trying to become someone that wasn't really me. Being unable to accept myself, I sought others' acceptance. I wanted people to provide me the acceptance and love I lacked for myself. The by-product of that desire was *resentments*: resenting others because they would not respond the way I wanted them to.

After entering the rooms of AA and being embraced wholly by the fellowship, I discovered that I no longer had to pretend to be what I was not. I was shown genuine love and respect, with no strings attached. I found that I did not need to create and hold resentments anymore. That's what we do in AA: provide unconditional acceptance and love.

I encourage the newcomer to accept the extended hand and say "Hi!" You'll discover that we all have so much in common – I've never felt out-of-place at meetings. AAs understand that we're not perfect, but that doesn't stop us from striving for it, one day at a time. Join us in AA and experience the genuine warmth, caring, and acceptance that awaits you! You have a lot to contribute too! Come introduce yourself, and experience the life-changing friendships in AA.

District 16 Day of Sharing

Saturday, June 25, 2016

Church of the Nazarene, 202 Mayfield Road, Clarion, PA 16214

Doors open 9 am until done; \$5 donation at door covers dinner; 50/50 drawing; speakers' panel on recovery, unity, and service.

For more information, contact DCM Rick G (814.673.4516) or Alt DCM Marty T (814.463.5029).

The Meeting After the Meeting

Jody K, Area 60 Secretary



One of the things that drew me into service, as well as the study of Traditions and Concepts, wasn't the meetings I was attending so much as "the meeting after the meeting." On Fridays, it was held at Perkins; on Tuesdays, it was the Meadows Dairy; and on Saturday nights (my home group night), it was Pizza Town – very easy for the newcomers to find us, as it was situated directly between the six-pack place and the liquor store.

We may have had 20 or 25 people at the meeting ten or so years ago, but sometimes, even more would show up for pizza. Dave may have had his grandkids and Paul may have had a hockey game, but they always knew where we would be after the AA meeting.



It was such a reliable tradition that we once got a call from a member who hadn't been around in awhile. He was sitting in a convenience store parking lot, drunk, having that moment of clarity which has saved so many of us. Two or three guys, our Delegate included (he may have been DCM or Alt DCM then), drove the 20 miles to the next town and got the guy into detox.

Folks at the restaurant figured out who we were and what we did. It was cool with them: we tipped well. Dr. Bob once said that we really shouldn't be anonymous in our communities, else how could those who needed us find us? We didn't print up flyers to distribute around town or give on-the-street interviews – we just showed up to eat breakfast at 10 pm, get frozen yogurt, or enjoy some pizza.



Some of us were very young in recovery, thin-skinned and carrying around a few resentments, so when the know-it-all old-timer spouted something we disagreed with, we'd grab our Big Books and Service Manuals and dig through them to prove him wrong, reading to each other over half-finished omelets and slices of cheesesteak pizza. Today, I have to acknowledge how much he taught us by sending us running to the literature.

In those days of heavily-attended "meetings after the meeting," many of us served in our home groups and districts. If we weren't greeters at the door, we were going to jail meetings, stocking literature racks at the district magistrate's office, or giving GSR or Grapevine reports. Participation in our district meetings is way down from those days, and *I don't think it's a coincidence* that there are fewer people coming to "meetings after the meeting." But which one – service work or "the meeting after the meeting" – feeds the other? Or is it just the connection itself?



The connection we have to each other as alcoholics cultivates a sense of responsibility to what brought us together in the first place – Alcoholics Anonymous – and our absolute duty to preserve it for those to come.

This is the Path We Found

Art C, District 24, Baden Sunday Meeting

I went to an AA anniversary dinner that I saw listed in the local event flyer, a distance away from my normal circle of meetings. I thought that I might hear a great speaker, and meet some new people.

I didn't know anyone there, except maybe just a few faces that I may have seen once or twice in the past. Normally, I approach people before I sit down to listen, but I wanted to observe this meeting as if I were a newcomer. The reception that I got when I arrived was slight. I saw people collected in their small groups. I felt like I didn't want to bother them as they talked – they didn't seem to be approachable. I felt out of place, I felt awkward.

When the meeting started, a man came forward and told the story of how the group started years before. He said it used to be a big AA group, with many long-timers and newcomers, but was smaller now.

When the speaker was introduced, it sounded like they hadn't seen him in awhile. He said he used to come to that meeting quite a bit, after a counselor had suggested AA to him. He talked about the men who were there when he came in; those men helped him learn about his denial of his alcoholism. He mentioned that you have to give it away in order to keep it. I wondered what it was he was giving me as I listened for substance in his words. I listened hard, afraid I was judging him too quickly. At the end of his talk, he thanked everyone for listening to him, and the chairman thanked him for being a good leader.

What I did not hear was practicing the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I did not hear of a Power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity (but he did mention that God was doing for him what he could not do for himself). I did not hear anything of prayer and meditation. I did not hear the word “hope” mentioned at all.

If I had heard this speaker when I was a newcomer, I would have been very confused. There is a line in the Big Book which says the inventory was ours, not the other man's, so I questioned myself.

Am I welcoming to newcomers at meetings, and especially at my home group? Do I mention the power of prayer when I lead or share? Have I invited my Higher Power to guide my thoughts and words? Am I furthering Alcoholics Anonymous by sharing its ideals and principles? Am I practicing the 12th Step – can someone take something from when I share? Or am I only saying, “when I got here, those guys that were here when I came really taught me a lot”?

The reality is that we are those men and women now. It is up to us to teach the newer members how to incorporate AA into our daily lives, to become less focused on ourselves, to consider the impact we may or may not be making. If I am a newcomer (and in many ways, I was a newcomer to that anniversary), please share with me what you have found, and show me how to find it too.

Home Group 101: Welcoming Diversity

The KISS Group presented on Diversity in the rooms, referencing some of our literature (several AA pamphlets, some of which were available at the workshop at no charge) and discussing our Third Tradition: “The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.” This reinforced the fact that everyone is welcome in AA regardless of their race, color, creed, religion, or sexual orientation. It is our responsibility to make anyone who has a desire to stop drinking feel at home.

Selfishness vs. Open-mindedness

Jason F, SCI Fayette

"Connecting with others" is an aspect of life, divided by two traits of humanity: *selfishness* and *open-mindedness*. Our relationships with others (and the well-being of our self) are affected on a daily basis by choosing to apply one or the other.

Unfortunately, we as humans feed off the chaos and negativity of others, as sharks follow blood. As the saying goes, "misery loves company."

We are not born this way. Our Higher Power allows us this gift of life, awarding us a fresh start of innocence. There comes a time when the sin of envy takes its toll, which then shuts doors that we once opened and lets stubbornness to come into play.

If criticism would be taken as positive reinforcement instead of a personal attack to be defended against, how then would the world have been? When did it become that asking for help shows signs of weakness? Are we so self-centered to believe that advice given from others is automatically wrong?

Most people are granted five senses at the gift of life. The ability to hear is one of them. Our Higher Power gifts this to us for a reason. But it is up to us at the beginning of each day to apply and use this beneficial and effective tool. We are fortunate that no matter how many poor decisions, impulsive actions, and instant gratifications we have made, another gift is offered: forgiveness. When the time comes that looking in the mirror is not compelling, then and only then do we reunite and reconnect, allowing communication to come back to us. Becoming humble, realizing that there are other people in the world to help, is the first step towards a better way of life.

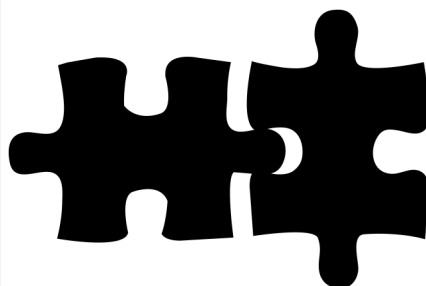
Advice and opinions are not just our own. They belong to everyone. Getting unwanted advice is better than "to need it and not have it." It is never too late to change. But changing for the better will only take place if I open the doors to connecting and communicating with others. I believe this fact: "everything begins and ends with me and my decision-making, and it is up to me which path in life to follow."

How I Connect with Other AA Members

Scott A, SCI Fayette

I feel as an alcoholic I can relate to someone who shares the same issues and problems as me. When I first came to AA, I was shocked to hear people talk about their alcoholism and how much I related to what they said. I thought it was just me who felt like that, but now I realize our problems are similar. Especially when I speak about my low self-esteem, how I always put myself down, how I tried to self-destruct when things are great, or how I always listened to that negative self-talk going on in my head. Today, it feels *good* when someone thanks me for sharing after a meeting. It's an awesome feeling knowing I helped someone somehow, and it helps me share my pain.

This is truly one alcoholic helping another. When someone has the strength to speak from their heart and share their pain, maybe it helps another alcoholic down the road open up to their own painful experiences. At meetings, I have often seen and experienced this.



I see AA as a brotherhood. We share a unique bond: we are alcoholics and lived through insanity. We may be rich or poor, black or white, different religions, homeless or doctors, but alcohol shows no prejudice.

It will take us to bad places or even rock-bottoms. I was lucky my rock-bottom did not kill me or anyone else. It brought me to a place where I got my head clear. I saw what I was doing got me nowhere. I saw I needed to change.

This I found in prison, serving an 8-16 year sentence. Incarceration gave me the time to work on my issues little by little, making changes along the way. Change is hard, but it is absolutely necessary. I've made changes to my thoughts, actions, and behaviors. I had to look for ways to fill the void drinking used to. I found the rooms, the 12 Steps, my church – positive things and people which helped fill that void.

It's not just me anymore, it is *us*. We work together to help each other live sober, productive, and – hopefully – happy lives.

Home Group 101 (*con't*)

The Thirteenth Step

A short skit was presented on "13 Stepping" by the Tuesday 4T's Group. The skit was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and led the way for some serious discussion on the detriments of making passes at or becoming romantically involved with newcomers. People shared their own experience of the negative effects of becoming involved in relationships too early in recovery, even in the rooms. It's a fact that people have relapsed because of this issue, or left the fellowship never to return. Of note was the reminder that 13 Stepping does not happen only to women. Several *Grapevine* articles and the *12 Steps & 12 Traditions* were referenced.

Who Can We Ask to Leave A Meeting?

The last panel given by members of the District 23 H&I Committee was "Who Can We Ask to Leave a Meeting?" A hot-button topic, much of the conversation centered on keeping members safe, not only during the meeting, but when exiting. Solutions ranged from having home group members take a disruptive person to another room for discussion to the need to call the police when things got totally out of control. Our Third Tradition was a large part of this discussion, as was our primary purpose.

Group Conscience

During all of the panels, there was continual reference to the *group conscience*. Various members made suggestions on how their groups had handled situations, which was helpful to groups struggling with these problems. Workshop attendees concluded that a strong group conscience was key to keep these issues in line, and discussion about them at workshops is helpful. Also, as our literature states, *we are all responsible* to make sure our home groups are safe and respectful. If something happens in our home group which makes us uncomfortable, that issue needs to be discussed at a group conscience.

23rd Annual Pennsylvania State Convention

"OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE"

August 5th, 6th, & 7th, 2016

Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg East (Holiday Inn East)

4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111

Katie P
(Austin, TX)

Charlie P
(Austin, TX)

Erik M
(Richmond, VA)

Barbara B
(Queens, NY)

Sara P AFG
(Harrisburg, PA)

Early Convention Registration (due before JULY 15, 2016)

\$22.00 per person

\$60.00 per person for Weekend Package

Late Convention Registration (due after JULY 15, 2016)

\$28.00 per person

\$65.00 per person for Weekend Package

Registration fees pay for hotel, speakers' travel expenses, hospitality, coffee, etc.

Weekend package includes Saturday night banquet and Sunday breakfast, in addition to Convention Registration.

Call toll free 800.637.4817 for hotel reservations. *Room rate*: \$102.00 per night + tax. Please mention the *PA State Convention* when reserving rooms.

For more information, please visit our website < aapastateconvention.com > or contact Sandy B (215.429.5098).

2016 Calendar of Events

Area 60 meetings are held at the
Comfort Inn, 699 Rodi Road, Penn Hills, PA

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Apr 17-23	All Week	General Service Conference, NYC
Sun, May 15	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Area 60 2nd Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Jun 5	9 am	Officer/Coordinator Meeting
Sunday, June 26	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Post-Conference Assembly
Sunday, July 17	9 am	Officer/Coordinator Meeting
Sunday, Aug 14	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Area 60 3rd Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Sept 18	9 am	Officer/Coordinator Meeting
Sunday, Oct 16	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Fall Assembly – Elections
Sunday, Nov 6	9 am	Officer/Coordinator Meeting GAW Planning Meeting
Sunday, Dec 4	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Area 60 4th Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Dec 18	9 am	Officer/Coordinator Meeting GAW Planning Meeting

See All Those _____s to the Right?

*Several service opportunities are available throughout
Western PA Area 60.*

Area Committee members, DCMs, and GSRs are welcome to help spread the word to fill open, needed positions in our service structure. For more information on any open position, please feel free to contact newsletter@wpaarea60.org.



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA AREA 60

ELECTED OFFICERS:

Delegate: George K delegate@wpaarea60.org
Alt Delegate: John K altdelegate@wpaarea60.org
Chairperson: Teresa K chairperson@wpaarea60.org
Alt Chair: John R altchairperson@wpaarea60.org
Secretary: Jody K area60secretary@wpaarea60.org
Treasurer: Mario D treasurer@wpaarea60.org

APPOINTED OFFICERS:

Archivist: Al C archivist@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Treasurer: Barb D treasurer@wpaarea60.org
Registrar: Walter G registrar@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Registrar: _____ registrar@wpaarea60.org
Recording Secretary: Becky C recsec@wpaarea60.org
Newsletter Editor: Chad U newsletter@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Newsletter: _____ newsletter@wpaarea60.org

COORDINATORS:

Archives: Denis M archives@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Archives: _____ archives@wpaarea60.org
Corrections: _____ corrections@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Corrections: Greg W corrections@wpaarea60.org
CPC/PI: _____ pi@wpaarea60.org
Alt. CPC/PI: _____ pi@wpaarea60.org
Grapevine: Thomas C grapevine@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Grapevine: Pat B grapevine@wpaarea60.org
Literature: Rick O literature@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Literature: Marianne H literature@wpaarea60.org
Treatment/SN: _____ treatment@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Treatment/SN: _____ treatment@wpaarea60.org
Website: Hubert H website@wpaarea60.org
Alt. Website: _____ website@wpaarea60.org

AREA 60 WEBSITE

There are many resources on the Area 60 website, including: back issues of the newsletter, flyers for Days of Sharing, the Area 60 calendar, Area 60 Guidelines, pamphlets, service documentation, and more. Direct questions or suggestions to the Website Coordinator at website@wpaarea60.org.

DONATIONS TO AREA 60

Support from groups and individuals is always welcome and appreciated! Make checks payable to:

Area 60 Treasurer
P.O. Box 266
Monroeville, PA 15146