



SEEDS OF SERVICE



VOL. XXXV, Issue 3
Summer 2020

PANDEMIC EDITION

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on home printers)

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 DCMs at each quarterly meeting for redistribution to AA groups through their GSRs. A PDF copy 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.

Write for SoS

The 2020 theme for the
70th General Service Conference is
"2020: A Clear Vision for You"

Fall 2020 (deadline 10/5)
"Attraction Through Action"

Submission Guidelines

Suggested text length is 150 to 300 words. Artwork should be b&w, less than half a page (3"x5"), and 300 dpi. 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, district, and home group.

Submissions may be emailed to:

newsletter@wpaarea60.org



SERVICE – KEEPING AA RELEVANT

Where's Bob? Stepping Up to the 12th Step

John H, District 14, Sunday Morning Early Birds

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged Western Pennsylvania 12-Steppers—hundreds of groups, and thousands of AAs, face the same problems.

Our meetings have been shuttered. Many just recently in recovery have slipped or relapsed. In addition, some "seasoned" members (i.e., those who have already lived in a few seasons in sobriety) have also relapsed. My friend Michele expressed alarm at a recent Zoom meeting that these seasoned members—highly successful business and professional people—are experiencing relapse in greater numbers than ever before.

"We" has become "I" as we shelter in place, sliding back into the "I" of compulsive thinking. Some of those that have relapsed may have had co-occurring disorders like depression and workaholicism, which might have led them to that place. (The phrase "in all of our affairs" comes to mind.)

Public libraries make the mistake of classifying the Big Book incorrectly into the "self-help" category. AA is not a self-help movement: it is a mutual-aid society. We all have heard that "a sick mind cannot cure a sick mind," and that is why the Fifth Step includes the critical phrase "another human being."

Furthermore, Step 1 includes the word "our"; Step 2, "ourselves" and "us"; Step 3, "our" will and as "we" understood Him; Step 4, "ourselves"; and another seven times in the Steps, "we" or "our" is used. You get the point here that **WE** are making, right?

So how do we reach those new and seasoned alcoholics who are at risk or have retreated back into "I"-thinking?

1. At your next Zoom meeting, ask yourself "Who is missing?" *Where's Bob?*
2. Call them! Does your group secretary maintain a phone list? Get it and start calling! Tell them you miss them. Tell them they count. *It took three meetings before I called my friend Bob who has a couple more years in sobriety than I have. (Thankfully, we heard from Bob on our fourth weekly meeting.)*
3. Ask yourself who **else** is missing.

Expand your Twelfth Step, and tell us your stories of those experiences!

The “New Normal”

Chad U, Area 60 Newsletter Editor

My life has changed. The old ways I did things and how I went through my day, just isn't possible under these new circumstances. In fact, my life will never again work exactly like it did before .

I have to find new ways of doing things. I need to go through my day differently, to look at things from a different angle. My whole approach to life needs to transform in the face of what's going on in my world.

I cannot do this alone, and I have to realize that, deep-down inside. I need help, and I need to help others, so we can all get through this common problem we are having. It's the only way this can work.

The past behind me is gone, and the future that lies ahead is completely new.

Am I talking about alcoholism or the coronavirus pandemic?

Bill Wilson's Providential Trip to Akron, Ohio

Bob S, Area 23 (Richmond, IN)

Bill Wilson arrived in Akron, Ohio, during the spring of 1935 with two important lessons:

1. Bill had divulged to Lois that perhaps he had been a flop at fixing drunks, to which she replied: “But Bill, don't you see? *You're sober!*” (**Being of service to other alcoholics**).
2. Dr. Silkworth also had his say on the situation: he told Bill to stop preaching and start discussing his allergy to alcohol and his seeming inability to stop starting—that he was hopeless not only after the first drink, but also *before* the first drink (**The physical allergy and mental obsession**).

NOTE: It was probable that most of Bill's “clients” had had their fill of sermons at Calvary Mission.

These two lessons were to save Bill's sobriety that May.

Businessman Howard Tompkins of NY's Beer & Company was impressed with Bill's recovery, which led to a job offer related to a proxy fight involving The National Rubber Machine Company in Akron. If Bill pulled this off, he might be company president and back in the chips once again. Things were looking good—but then the tide changed, and it looked like their opponents had won.

Yet there was still hope due to some legal matters. Bill stayed in Akron with the promise that Beer & Company would financially support his efforts. The others he came with returned to NY on Friday, May 10, 1935, leaving Bill alone in a strange city.

The next day, a Saturday afternoon, Bill's apprehension grew as he paced the lobby of Mayflower Hotel wondering what was next. He was down to ten dollars... and bored. The cheerful chatter from the hotel bar certainly seemed inviting! How about enjoying a ginger ale and striking up a conversation—no harm in that! After all, had he not been dry for almost five months? Why, even just a few drinks might be all right!

With that thought, Bill immediately felt a grip of terror about that first drink. He remembered what Lois had told him (lesson #1 above), and realized he needed to talk with another alcoholic, or it was curtains for him.

He saw a directory of local ministers and for no conscious reason phoned a certain Reverend Walter F. Tunks, who turned out to be the strongest Oxford Grouper of all the ministers in Akron. This choice culminated in Bill meeting Dr. Bob—who was involved in the Oxford Group in Akron—the next day.

NOTE: Lois once surmised that Bill's attraction to the Reverend's name might have originated from a popular Vermont expression: “Taking a tunk.” (Taking a walk.)

Was this an occurrence of what Dr. Carl Jung called “synchronicity,” or could it be of a nature more *Providential*?

Being of service—by discussing with other drunks the nature of our shared problem and the nature of AA's common solution—seems as relevant today as it was in May 1935.

Like Milk and Tequila?

Jim G, District 62, Zelig Second Chance

My personal opinion: AA and Facebook are like milk and tequila – they don't mix well.

As churches closed their doors and meetings screeched to a halt, my Facebook feed became flooded with invitations to AA Zoom meetings from across the country. At first, I was alarmed that everyone could see the invitations and that my condition had been revealed to several hundred friends, distant acquaintances, and random bikini models. I was relieved to find that only I could see them. A friend, however, reacted by posting the question, "Why is everyone breaking their anonymity with these AA Zoom invitations?" Some 50 or 60 responders broke their anonymity with comments like, "That's not right," and "It's a personal decision," and possibly the worst: "The Traditions are outdated and no longer necessary." The entire thread was eventually – and thankfully – deleted.

In another case, someone shared an invitation to a Zoom meeting based in Florida and announced on their personal page, "I'm in AA if anyone needs help." A commenter asked, "Doesn't that break our Traditions?" His reply was, "Desperate times require desperate measures." Finally, justification to ignore these pesky guidelines!

Another Facebook post shared a piece written by a columnist for the *New York Times*. The columnist identified herself as a member of AA, and wrote about the pitfalls and the life-saving value of participating in Zoom meetings at a time when real meetings were impossible. The hundreds of comments that followed, from all hues of the spectrum, were mostly horrible – mean-spirited, righteous, insulting, smug, provocative, ill-informed, uninformed, unnecessary. I try to avoid sweeping generalizations and mandates, but *never ever read the comments!*

I believe the Traditions are even more important during desperate times. Often, especially in AA service, the Traditions seem beleaguered. We go over them and over them again. For some, they become an integral part of sobriety. But there are always newcomers. Sometimes there are incidents. So, we go over them again.

For me, the toughest part of incorporating the Traditions is their root in humility. There was a moment—or a culmination of moments—when I realized, "This program, this meeting, this Big Book, this jacket-and-tie appearance at the podium, is not about me, it's about *us*." That, I believe, is the essence of the Twelve Traditions. But humility is not fun. It can be uncomfortable. It's not the easy way, and there sure isn't any personal glory in it.

***But when I can look back at a situation and honestly say, "I did what's best for us,"
I feel assured that I am becoming the person that God would have me be,
rather than the person that I would have me be.***

Save the Dates!

North East Region of Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA)

Feb 26-28, 2021. Pittsburgh, PA.

We need everyone in Area 60's support to host our first NERAASA in 20 years!

Contact **Yvette N** if you are interested in helping out: vette1105@gmail.com



Send your AA questions to our **Virtual Ask-It Basket** at newsletter@wpaarea60.org or from the Area 60 website Newsletter page at <https://www.wpaarea60.org/newsletters/>.



Meetings in a Pandemic

Kathy A, District 22, Attitude Adjustment

I need three meetings a week to stay grateful. So, when the meetings shut down, I knew immediately to get a monthly Zoom account. They weren't the same as regular meetings, but they worked for me.

But something odd started happening in these Zoom meetings. Two three-quarter houses were coming to the meetings and the people in lockdown at the Salvation Army showed up. A few folks from different states were becoming regulars. We all started "zoom-bonding."

When an outside meeting became available, I showed up. But as I was sitting at the meeting, I missed my Zoom crew. I realized that this is a strange time in Alcoholics Anonymous.

For me, the Zoom meetings were magical. We were able to all get so vulnerable with each other. After we all got so close, we're going to continue zooming one night a week, even when the world is back to normal.

I am sure it will fade away, but until then, I am going to enjoy the computer meetings.

Sponsor & Sponsee in the Pandemic

Cynthia P. District 7 DCM

"Hey, do you have a few minutes?" my erstwhile sponsee asked.

"I have more than a few," I replied.

That was the beginning of the conversation I had with her when she wanted help coming back into the fold of AA, in the midst of the quarantine phase of the pandemic. I was excited and happy to hear from her.

I have posed this exact question of sponsoring and being sponsored during the pandemic to a few others in the Fellowship. One member pointed out to me that sponsoring needed to continue as it was a stabilizing factor during this unsettling time. On the opposite end was a member who had gotten out of sponsoring for the duration of the pandemic. Another member found sponsorship to be different and difficult, but willing to do their best.

How to sponsor this sponsee during this time wasn't a problem. She had reached out her hand for help, and I am responsible for the hand of AA to always be there. There was no alternative for me, and I didn't want one.

I found I had more time than ever to talk with her about her upsetting relapse and what she had lost. With the longer-than-usual time we could spend on the phone, I felt closer to her and this warmed my heart and made me grateful.

As time went on, my sponsee suggested a few different ways to meet while staying safe for both of us inside the restrictions of the lockdown. We could Facetime, meet at Zoom meetings, or even wear our masks and observe social distancing by meeting at Walmart to shop together. She also suggested sharing a pizza in her backyard—in lawn chairs six feet apart, wearing masks and gloves. For all that the pandemic threw at us, we could work with and around our circumstances.

All this has shown me that most important element of sponsoring (to me) is time: time to fully hear her, time to talk about options for helping her, and time for me to be as caring of a sponsor as I can be.

How are you dealing with sponsoring—and being sponsored—during these strange and sometimes scary times?

General Service Conference 2020: “What I Saw and Heard and Felt”

Margie S, Area 60 Delegate, Panel 69

What I Saw:

Since I was in my study/spare bedroom, there was not really too much to see. I set up my surroundings to be as comfortable as possible, with a comfy office chair, a tea tray, my small hardcopy of the *12 Traditions*, flanked by my Mad Hatter and Alice bobble heads.

Once the Conference started, as we logged on to Zoom, the tech folks played Motown Music in honor of the International Convention. They just kept rolling through participants as they logged on. Eventually, everybody was dancing, so I got to see what awesome dancers we all are.

Once the Conference started, I kept my screen on speaker view, but put a gallery across the top. I could look at their faces to see if I could get a feel on how others were reacting to specific items....if their video was on.

What I Heard:

An online Conference is very different from an in-person Conference. You are probably getting less than 20% (7% without video) of someone's personality when you are online. There is virtually no body language to be read. (Except for the one Delegate who hooked up a 70-inch big screen TV: we could see his whole body.) But for the rest of us, it was pretty much from the shoulders up, sitting in an office chair.

While I was hearing their words, it was still hard to get peoples' full meaning. Many comments came across as less than loving. Eventually, there was just a lot of chaos. People were speaking at the mic with comments during the Committee reports, when that time was supposed to be for questions. They were also repeating comments and questions at the mic, which is a big no-no at Conference.

Also, there were so many issues with Roberts Rules. People were making *points of order* and *points of information* that were neither of those things. It was so bad during one Committee meeting, with so many people lined up and saying nothing new, that we were unable to vote on a very important item because we only had 45 minutes for discussion, debate, and voting with a hard-stop. By Tuesday evening, when we were to be hard-stopped at 7:15 p.m., the Conference continued until 9:30 p.m.

The schedule was brutal to start with, and the chaos made it worse.

What I Felt:

First, I want to say that I had no expectations going into this of how the Conference would operate. I knew it could be good, bad, or a mixture of both, so I tried not to have any preconceived notions.

I loved signing-in and seeing all my friends from last year. I was pleasantly surprised that Roll Call was again a very spiritual experience. The cool thing about Roll Call was that we got to see each person's face as they said "here." That is not possible when you are in person, because people either have their backs to you or yours to them.

Once we got into the meat of the Conference and Committee work—discussion, debate, and voting—it was all downhill. My Committee meeting went well, and we were satisfied with the amount of work that we completed in the time given. However, the Trustees sprang a large report on us that made us have to forward other items to next year's Conference. Regarding one of our recommendations, we were asked by the interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to change it. Those two things did not—and still do not—sit well with me. I don't think it would have happened at an in-person Conference.

Overall, I felt there was great value in Zoom, and that it could surely be used to settle some issues prior to Conference. However, in reality, my feelings are that you do not get that good democratic caucus, debate, and discussion before voting using Zoom. We alcoholics are people that value talking to each other. One drunk talking to another drunk is a foundation of our program. Participation in the virtual Conference made me realize that sending a Delegate to Conference is worth every penny, and I would like to thank everyone who supported me at both Conferences.

Lastly, I am forever grateful that I was able to be part of AA History as a “Pandemic Delegate.”

Coping with COVID-19

Sherri Lynn D, Area 60 Alternate Newsletter Editor

“We need never deal with our adversities alone as long as we can find another alcoholic in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous,” the Big Book declares. An AA meeting has a way of bringing together people who would not usually mix. We are survivors of a shipwreck, working together to get to the shore. Passengers of different classes and different walks of life, all in the same panic situation. We share one common goal, and we need each other to survive.

Suddenly, in this COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face support systems like going to a meeting evaporated as stay-at-home orders kept us (and might still keep some of us) isolated. We alcoholics have grown reliant on in-person human contact and cross-cultural diversity for our very survival. We follow a program built around the simple idea of alcoholics sharing their experience, strength, and hope; and belong to a community framed by hugs, hand-holding, tight rows of folding chairs, meeting greeters, and face-to-face confessionals.

What we have done in the face of the new reality of COVID-19 isolation is truly remarkable. We began using technology to share our experience, strength, and hope. We began “attending” meetings outside of our communities and—in some cases—outside of our countries. We shared list after list of Zoom meetings and passwords. Now, in the comfort of our home, we can attend a meeting any hour of any day. I deeply appreciate the Zoom meeting chairs and secretaries who make sure to still stick to their format, manage their time, assign their readings, and run the whole thing by the quasi-Robert’s Rules of Order which we have generally adopted.

Yet it is hard to imagine that this model is sustainable. In my opinion (and this may simply be an insurmountable reality of this pandemic right now), the digital meeting is missing two key things: *equal access* and *human contact*. In the pre-pandemic era, our “ticket” into AA was a desire to quit drinking. Today, you need that, plus access to a phone, and not everyone can afford a computer or a smartphone. You also need some basic computer literacy to take advantage of digital AA opportunities. These prerequisites now preclude every alcoholic currently hitting their personal bottoms who lack a phone, a home, or WiFi access. I’m concerned that the closing of in-person meetings and their subsequent migration to digital platforms will probably work to homogenize the groups that went digital, and at least temporarily dismantle others. Hospitals & Institutions panels, where members urgently bring meetings to rehabs and jails, are on hold, too, because AA cannot take in physical meetings to many of these places. I also worry that this isolation will break down the fabric of diversity woven into our recovery culture.

So, yes, things are different. In these uncertain times, with fears running rampant, I am still so grateful to still have a community of friends with whom I can continue to share my feelings, my struggles, my joys – and for a weirdly OK digital platform on which to convene.

Connecting with Others Online

Thaddeus J, District 14, The How & Why (THAW) Group

Since the beginning of March, many parts of our everyday lives have stalled or completely halted—but not alcoholism. COVID-19 wishes it had the power to murder the amount of people alcohol has, but this second disease (coronavirus) has pushed the first disease we deal with on a daily basis (alcoholism) deeper into our homes. The recent life-changes we have all had to make has affected some of us more than others, and has been the direct cause of relapses—or even deaths—in our communities.

What can we do to ensure our sobriety? How can we help those who have succumbed to the pressures of this ever-changing world we live in?

We do what we’ve always done: reach out and help the still sick! The primary purpose of our Fellowship is to be there when someone needs help. Whether on couches, in meeting rooms, or in specialized centers, the connection of one alcoholic working with another creates miracle results that only God can produce. Given the current limitations of group sizes and curfews, one could think that a society like ours—based on personal interaction—would fold, but like any good drunk staring at an empty glass, we found a way to rise to the top!

The use of video-chatting (be on it Zoom, Facebook, or another form of digital communication) has revolutionized the way we alcoholics can spread the word of AA to newcomers while staying accountable for our own personal sobriety. Being able to speak with others from the safety of our homes has given us enormous potential and limitless possibilities. Zooming to and from places all over the world, into treatment centers large and small, or even just between ourselves in our home group, we can connect online with the type of people we need any time of any day.

There are some who say they can’t enjoy video meetings the way they can a traditional one, but for what reason? Making a pot of coffee is a great way to get involved in service work, but what if nobody is there drink it? Sure, it’s nice to pick up a coin, and it’s always good to get a hug from someone, but isn’t knowing that people are staying safe and healthy a great spiritual feeling?

The world is changing around us faster than ever, and we need to adapt, not resist!

Get to Know Area 60!



Two Types of Area Meetings

1. **Quarterly Meeting:** Decides area business. DCMs, Area Officers and Coordinators, past Delegates vote.
2. **Area Assembly:** Elects officers, provides pre-Conference group conscience, hears the Delegate's post-Conference report. GSRs, DCMs, Area Officers and Coordinators, past Delegates vote.

ALL members of the Fellowship are welcome at meetings and assemblies. GSRs are especially encouraged to attend even when they do not have a vote.

Every GSR is potentially a future DCM.

Rules of Order at Area 60 Meetings

- Items for consideration are put on the **agenda**.
- Items are posed to the meeting in the form of a **motion**.
- All motions require a **second**.
- Motions can be *amended, tabled, or moved to a vote*.
- A vote is taken and the **results** are announced. The **minority vote** is allowed to voice its opinion.
- If a member of the majority (those who "won") wishes to **change their vote**, a second vote is held on the motion.
- The result of the second vote stands and the meeting **moves to the next item** for consideration.

What's the "Point of Order?"

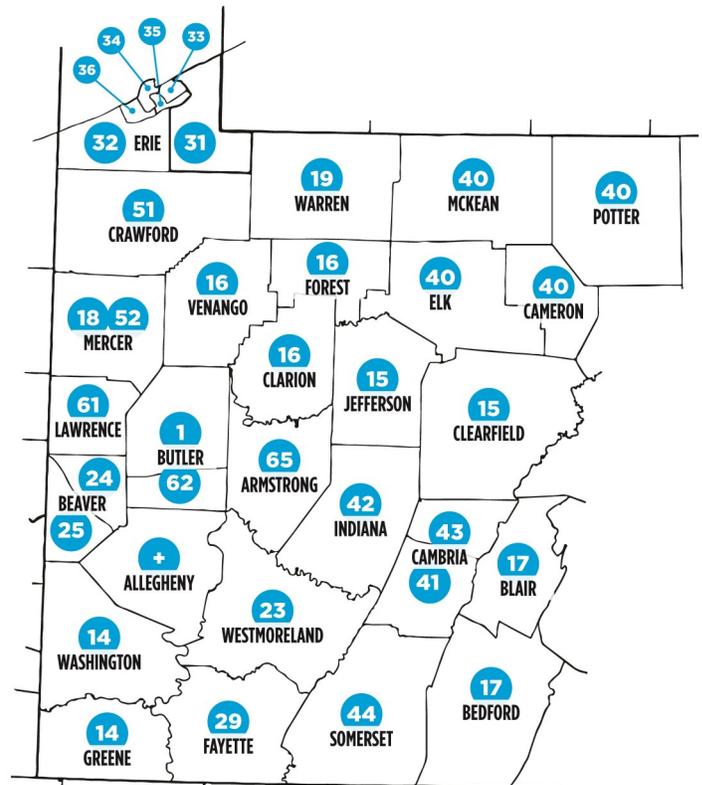
- ◆ To ensure that all voices that wish to be heard are heard.
- ◆ To ensure that no one voice dominates all others.
- ◆ To ensure that everyone gets to speak **once** before another speaks **twice**.
- ◆ To ensure that everyone understands the content of the vote.
- ◆ To ensure that it is clear what actions were taken.
- ◆ To ensure a thorough record of the actions taken.

Motions requiring substantial unanimity of the meeting require a two-thirds majority for approval. In some cases, the minority opinion (the people who "lost" the vote) may be larger than 50% of the vote.

Area 60 Web Calendar

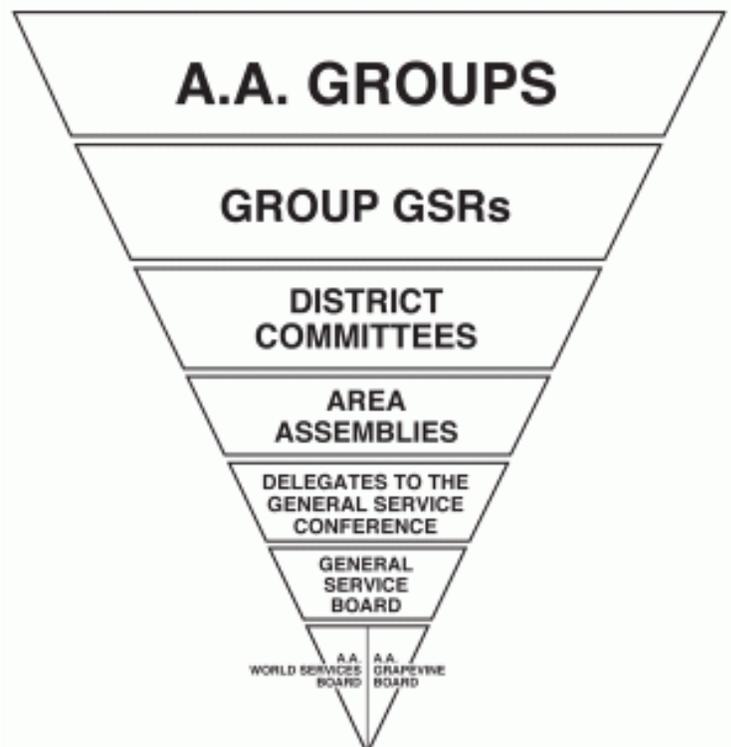
<https://www.wpaarea60.org/calendar/>

Our website has an updated online calendar, which lists service events (Pre-Conference Assembly Weekend, the General Service Conference, assemblies, etc.) in **green**; Area 60-sponsored events (quarterly meetings, Days of Sharing, etc.) in **blue**, and other events of interest to AAs (district-level events, recovery community events, etc.) in **red**.



* Allegheny County: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 70, 71

STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE (U.S. and Canada)



2020 Calendar of Events

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

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sunday, Jun 28	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Post-Conference Assembly <i>via Zoom</i>
Sunday, Jul 12	9 am	Officers/Coordinators Meeting NERAASA Planning Meeting <i>via Zoom</i>
Sunday, Aug 16	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	3 rd Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Sep 20	9 am	Officers/Coordinators Meeting NERAASA Planning Meeting
Sunday, Oct 18	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	Election Assembly
Sunday, Nov 8	9 am	Officers/Coordinators Meeting PCAW Planning Meeting
Sunday, Dec 6	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	4 th Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Dec 13	9 am	Officers/Coordinators Meeting PCAW Planning Meeting
2021		
Sunday, Jan 24	8:30 am Registration 9 am Workshop 10:15 am Meeting	1 st Quarterly Meeting
Sunday, Feb 7	9 am	Officers/Coordinators Meeting PCAW Planning Meeting
Friday–Sunday Feb 26-28	All Weekend	NERAASA
Sunday, Mar 7	9 am	PCAW Planning Meeting

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA AREA 60

ELECTED OFFICERS:

Delegate: Margie S delegate@wpaarea60.org
 Alt Delegate: Jody K altdelegate@wpaarea60.org
 Chairperson: Jon C chairperson@wpaarea60.org
 Alt Chair: Walter G altchairperson@wpaarea60.org
 Secretary: Christa F secretary@wpaarea60.org
 Treasurer: Becky C treasurer@wpaarea60.org

APPOINTED OFFICERS:

Alt. Treasurer: Jane R treasurer@wpaarea60.org
 Archivist: Al C archivist@wpaarea60.org
 Registrar: Jon M registrar@wpaarea60.org
 Recording Secretary: Lori G recsec@wpaarea60.org
 Newsletter Editor: Chad U newsletter@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Newsletter Editor: Sherri Lynn D newsletter@wpaarea60.org

COORDINATORS:

Archives: Wayne S archives@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Archives: John McC archives@wpaarea60.org
 Corrections: Dani M corrections@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Corrections: _____ corrections@wpaarea60.org
 CPC/PI: Maresa S pi@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. CPC/PI: _____ pi@wpaarea60.org
 Grapevine: Jodye H grapevine@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Grapevine: _____ grapevine@wpaarea60.org
 Literature: Dave R literature@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Literature: _____ literature@wpaarea60.org
 Treatment/SN: Nancy H treatment@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Treatment/SN: _____ treatment@wpaarea60.org
 Website: Derrick S 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 473
 Apollo, PA 15613

See Those _____s Above?
Volunteer and learn about Area service!