



■ “I Am....”: The New aa.org Website

The General Service Office launched its first website to serve A.A. groups and members in December 1995. While a big step forward at the time, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org (currently aa.org) was essentially a public information tool in three languages, providing a Conference-approved “A.A. Fact File” and a list of addresses for contacting General Service Offices around the world.

The site didn’t stay that way for long. AA.org saw its first redesign in 1997; over the next 20 years there were six more (the last being in 2014), each looking to improve usability and provide new features. However, a communications audit conducted in 2018 focused in on areas where the website “didn’t communicate well with core audiences,” used “A.A. jargon” that confused visitors and newcomers, and was difficult to search.

No longer. The new aa.org, launched on December 20, 2021, after four years of hard work and fruitful intra-G.S.O. collaboration — most of it in the midst of a pandemic — brings together “a look and feel and vision” that captures the heart of G.S.O.’s mission of helping suffering alcoholics, says Lorna Graham (nonalcoholic),

G.S.O.’s Director of Technology Services. “What we have today is a very modern, professional and visually appealing website,” which, crucially, can now be updated in-house so that it remains responsive to the needs of the alcoholics and nonalcoholics alike who regularly visit the site.

Beau B., general service trustee and chair of the A.A.W.S. Technology/Communication/Services committee, explains the complexities facing the team building the new aa.org. “The main purpose of the website is to get people looking for help with alcoholism some information about A.A. and to connect them with A.A. in their specific location. For members, the website is meant to provide them with the information and tools they need to carry the message. But previously [before the new site] we had no idea who was using our website, where they were going, where they came from. When we built the [2014] website that we just replaced, we did so without any information about who was coming to it. There’s also the sheer magnitude of the site. We have well over 4,000 files that are connected one way or another to this website. And in addition to those files, we

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Note on anonymity: From time to time in this publication full names and/or pictures of G.S.O. employees, Class A trustees and other nonalcoholics are used. The anonymity of A.A. members is maintained, as they are identified throughout by first name and last initial only.

have 1,300 A.A. entities in 'A.A. Near You,' all of which need to be connected. This a lot bigger than what you see on a typical organization website."

Julie Gonzalez (nonalcoholic), G.S.O.'s Senior Digital Communications Analyst, recounts the way the team overcame staffing changes as well as the need to switch outside vendors midstream. "We spent a lot of time ironing things out in virtual meetings," she says, "and really took a hard look at what our priorities were for launch. We wanted to make sure that everything we delivered was to the best of our capabilities." What were some of those priorities? "Daily Reflections is the number one feature on the website," Julie says. "It's been our most visited item, followed by the Big Book online, the 'Twelve and Twelve' online, and 'A.A. Near You.' These are top priorities for aa.org because they are the things people use on a daily basis."

With "A.A. Near You," Julie says, the goal was to make it clearer that G.S.O. doesn't provide meeting information through aa.org. "We provide resources that can help you find meetings or local contacts. We want to make sure that people understand that G.S.O. is not open 24 hours a day, so anyone looking for a contact is going to want to speak to someone local," which is what "A.A. Near You" can help with. "In general," Julie says, "we wanted to make things easier to find and more visually appealing. The old site had become cluttered,

and we wanted to open it up and give people some space to visit."

People who do visit will find that the new aa.org makes it much easier to find the information that best suits their needs. Those who click on the heading "I Am" at the top of the home page will find a drop-down that asks if they are "Looking for help with a drinking problem," "An A.A. member," "Trying to help a family member or friend," or "A professional working with alcoholics." In the last case, for instance, a visitor will find a page that shows them the best way to contact A.A. near their location, as well as videos directed to healthcare, legal, corrections and human resources professionals. If someone is seeking help with a drinking problem, they can find a 12-question self-assessment, learn what they might expect at an A.A. meeting, and find A.A. literature.

Creating the new site took intensive and detailed work that including filling in thousands of fields with information, a task that is ongoing. One favorite project that Julie is looking forward to launching is a new FAQs (frequently asked questions) section. "The old website had something like 14 questions," she says. "In time, the new one will have close to 135 questions that we regularly get in the office and that people can really benefit from learning the answers to."

One measure of the success of the new site so far, Lorna says, is that they have had only minor problems with it, "despite thousands and thousands of visits since we launched the site — links that didn't work for some viewers, that kind of thing." She also recognizes that there were some requests for substantive changes that will be reviewed as part of the governance process. She feels it was a true team effort, not only from her own staff — in particular, Dmitriy Kerget, Militza Alma-Noyola and Bruce Hartley (nonalcoholics) — but the entire office.

Tracey G., Digital Project Manager, took the lead on the site content, setting up the pages, audio, video, literature and images. "I started last year in October and got handed the project when the design phase and the actual navigation and landing pages had already been determined," she says. She worked on copy with Lois L., a professional digital strategist and user experience (UX) consultant who advises G.S.O. As with other areas of the site development, accessibility was key. In Tracey's work with Lois, she says, "We wanted to keep the sentences shorter and make the language less formal and easier



An A.A. member

Trying to help a family member or friend

A professional working with alcoholics

to read. Our goal was to be modern and direct, to be friendly and warm and inclusive.”

In getting the copy right, Tracey worked with Ames S., A.A.W.S. Executive Editor and Julia D., Managing Editor; Patrick C., on the Public Information (P.I.) assignment; Jeff W., Staff Coordinator; and Racy J., International Coordinator, who acted as reviewers. It was then simultaneously translated into French and Spanish. “The amount of effort it takes to set up the site in three languages is kind of amazing,” Tracey says. “And the team really came together to do that.”

In addition to the copy, Tracey is happy with the site’s newfound order and consistency, which add to ease of navigation, particularly when 80 percent of people who access aa.org do so from their smart phones. Echoing Lorna, Tracey underscores the importance of the fact that the site, which uses Drupal, a leading open-source content management system, can be updated in-house, which may obviate the need for further extensive revisions.

Ultimately, while consistency, ease of navigation, and the ability to update are important, Tracey feels that the site’s content fulfills the critical function of doing the job of supporting the Fellowship. “People who are doing service can do service better, can reach out to the newcomer more easily.” And it’s informative. The clear and attractive archives section, for instance, “really highlights the timeless treasures we have. Working on the content, I had the opportunity to explore and to learn about A.A. on a whole new level. One memorable example was during copy editing for the Jack Alexander page [Alexander was the author of the 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* article that gave A.A. its first national attention]. There is a section on that page entitled ‘The Follow-Up Article in 1950.’ I didn’t even know there was a second article. I would encourage others to treat the website like a treasure chest — open it up and poke around, maybe pick an area that sounds interesting and explore it.”

Reflecting on the last few years, during which the principal work on the new site was done, Beau B. adds, “During the pandemic, we all witnessed and felt a lot of accessibility issues that many of us have never had before. I’m hoping that what we all learned from that as a Fellowship is reflected and will continue to be reflected on the website, when it comes to accessibility and to

the broader ways in which we can carry the message of hope and recovery. The website is our window for the world to see what A.A. is really all about.”

Bob W., G.S.O. General Manager, who consulted on the website project before assuming his current role, believes the whole odyssey of the site’s creation has been “infused with the spiritual principles of our Fellowship. It was a great example of inclusion, participation and the right of decision — so many things encompassed within servant leadership. From a business perspective, yes, it’s user-friendly and easy to navigate, but it’s also a great Twelfth Step tool because of that. It’s a wonderful example of the point where money and spirituality mix. I’d like to add that I am so proud of the people who were involved. They put in so many hours — all for the love of the Fellowship.”

■ A Rewarding Virtual Day of Sharing at G.S.O.

The 2021 Virtual Day of Sharing, held on December 7 and hosted by the General Service Office, brought together 11 recovery fellowships (including Alcoholics Anonymous) to discuss matters of common interest and collective experience. The first Day of Sharing took place in 1991, and there have been several since attended by representatives of Al-Anon and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), as well as a “Fellowship Day of Sharing” in 2008 that included attendees from Debtors Anonymous (D.A.), Overeaters Anonymous (O.A.) and Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.). This was the first Day of Sharing held since December 2019 (after which the pandemic intervened) and was the first ever held virtually.

G.S.O. General Manager Bob W. kicked off the meeting of like-minded organizations by talking about the importance of cooperation between Twelve Step fellowships and how inspiring he found it to be. “We all share these principles,” he said. “Each one of these organizations has its own singleness of purpose and we all have the spiritual foundation of anonymity.”

The meeting was organized and chaired by Craig W., staff member on the Group Services desk. Part of Craig’s

work involves cooperating throughout the year with other Twelve-Step fellowships, answering queries, and sharing information. He calls the Day of Sharing “one of the best experiences I’ve had in A.A. One member to another, sharing what our organizations are, what they do and don’t do. It was so powerful to learn how much we have in common.”

The 2021 Virtual Day of Sharing was the largest ever held (see box), with 19 representatives of the various fellowships coming together.

A few highlights:

Al-Anon Family Groups, co-founded by Bill W.’s wife Lois W. and Anne B., supports people whose lives have been affected by someone’s drinking. They have groups in 133 countries and a World Service Office in Virginia. A number of fellowships at the Day of Sharing praised Al-Anon’s mobile app, which not only hosts electronic meetings, but is a social app permitting those who identify as Al-Anon members to connect and find hope, as well as a place to keep a digital journal of their recovery. And they felt that Al-Anon was at the forefront in creating a non-geographically-based “virtual area,” in part to handle the growth of electronic meetings within their fellowship.

2021 Day of Sharing attendees

Adult Children of Alcoholics/
Dysfunctional Families
Al-Anon
Alcoholics Anonymous
Cocaine Anonymous
Debtors Anonymous
Families Anonymous
Heroin Anonymous
Narcotics Anonymous
Overeaters Anonymous
Sexaholics Anonymous
Workaholics Anonymous

“We’ve had electronic meetings for many years, but numbers increased dramatically during the pandemic,” says Al-Anon Executive Director Vali F. “We were able to bring to our [2021] Conference a recommendation and a motion to have those groups be recognized as Al-Anon Family Groups, equivalent in all ways to physical groups. That motion was accepted wholeheartedly by our Conference, and it began a process

that will hopefully culminate with what is currently a non-panel area of our electronic groups being accepted as a global electronic area.” She adds: “By attending the Day of Sharing, we feel very much as we do in our personal program — that there are others discussing and working with their fellowships to overcome challenges. It’s just so lovely to share the sense that we are not alone.” In terms of the Al-Anon mobile app, she says, “If there’s a way we can better share the knowledge and experience we have with the mobile app without violating our principles and we can contribute to more people finding help, then that is what we want to do.”

Workaholics Anonymous (W.A.) was founded to address a progressive and fatal disease, one that can culminate in suicides and premature deaths — and one that, ironically, many in the working world see as a positive. W.A. has over 180 groups with several thousand active members worldwide. “The obsession [with work] is what kills us,” says trustee Tom F. It can even be tough for workaholics to become involved in service, since this can trigger their obsession, although according to Tom they have recently “made great progress along the road to healthy service.” Tom sees the Day of Sharing as a “tremendous opportunity for Twelve Step programs to support each other. It was good to hear about A.A.’s Meeting Guide app as well as Al-Anon’s mobile app.” For his part, Tom shared that W.A. has streamlined their literature sales process, automating it and using a print-on-demand process.

Prior to the pandemic, **Narcotics Anonymous** (N.A.) had 76,000 meetings. Unfortunately, according to N.A. Executive Director Anthony E., their income dropped 90 percent after March of 2020, and they were forced to furlough numerous employees. While literature sales are still down, he says, “members have stepped up in a gigantic way and our contributions have doubled.” Still, he continues, “We were operating on a false premise that Covid was going to go away in some fixed timeframe and that doesn’t appear to be true.” On the plus side, N.A. (which has long held recovery meetings and service meetings on virtual platforms) has seen enormous growth in meetings.

Anthony considers N.A. to be at a “watershed moment,” which is why he thinks the Day of Sharing was opportune. “When you have a gathering of so many organizations who operate based on the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and who are able to exchange best practices and challenges, it’s an invaluable opportunity for dialogue.” He was impressed by the commitment to singleness of purpose he saw in the other fellowships. “When it comes to your organization, if you serve a particular population, you want to be vigilant about what you are supposed to be doing. The original A.A. focus on singleness of purpose has helped us all step back and take a look at what we are doing.” Along with learning more about what others are doing when it comes to literature translation and intellectual property issues, the Day of Sharing was “an overwhelming value proposition,” Anthony says.

Founded in 1971, **Families Anonymous** (F.A.) has 185 groups registered in the U.S. and 225 in the international community across six continents. According to Maria S., the chair of their World Service Board, “We feel like we are a ‘best kept’ secret. Our group is for family members and friends who have someone who is suffering from substance abuse disorder — addiction is a family disease, a disease of co-dependency.” Some of the feedback F.A. got from individuals who attended other programs is “about the great literature we have — we

offer approximately 200 titles in our e-store, with some material available as free downloads.”

Maria enjoyed the Day of Sharing. “Everyone was engaged, and it was a wonderful opportunity to reach other people working in the area of recovery. We all share a lot of common challenges during the pandemic, especially those related to engaging our fellowships and decreasing revenue, and it was helpful to hear what the other fellowships are doing. We are all complementary. There is a huge opportunity to learn from what others are doing, rather than reinventing the wheel every time. For instance, the discussion on mobile phone apps was something that made us think, ‘Hey, it would be wonderful if we could license that for a lesser cost.’ I would definitely recommend that Families Anonymous attend again.”

By the end of a day that stretched from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., it was decided that Al-Anon would host the 2023 Day of Sharing, while Narcotics Anonymous would assume that duty the following year. But with a contact list of the other organizations drawn up by Craig W. — who reminded attendees that part of his role at Group Services was to be liaison to other Twelve Step organizations and that keeping in touch was not only welcome but encouraged — there might be no need to wait a full year to continue to share ideas and challenges. Ultimately, Bob. W. says, “It was really a wonderful event. The discussion of singleness of purpose was a pivotal part of the day. On a more general note, it’s fascinating to see what is happening within the other fellowships. There was a real openness of spirit that was heartwarming.”

■ A.A. in the U.K.: 75 years of Sobriety

On March 31, 1947, the first A.A. meeting in Great Britain was held in Room 202 of the Dorchester Hotel in London with seven A.A. members.

Seventy-five years — and two and a half months — later, A.A. Great Britain will celebrate its 75th anniversary this year in Leeds, Yorkshire, with a convention that will begin on Founder’s Day, June 10, and continue to Sunday, June 12. The event looks set to be the largest celebration of A.A. Great Britain has yet seen: the Leeds First Direct Arena can hold 13,000 people, and the organizers are expecting six to eight thousand to attend. The cost for attendance is £35, approximately \$50.

The decision to hold the event was reached at A.A.G.B.’s 2016 General Service Conference by a substantial majority, and its General Service Board was tasked with organizing and running the celebration.

That task falls to Ranjan B., the Chief Executive of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain and General Secretary to the Fellowship of A.A.G.B. and English-speaking meetings of Continental Europe. “The board decides policy,” Ranjan says, “and I decide process.”

Assisting with that process is a subcommittee dedicated to the 75th Convention comprised of several A.A. members. Recently, five members of the subcommittee got together digitally to talk about the event they’ve been planning for five years, now mere months away. The subcommittee is comprised of A.A. members Sandi A., Andrew H., Jim T. and Claire B., along with Angela Varley, a nonalcoholic staff member at Great Britain’s G.S.O.

Why is the event occurring in Leeds? The G.B. General Service Office is located in York, a short train journey away. Leeds is close to the international airport in Manchester, and there is a free bus from the airport to Leeds. The subcommittee members noted sites of local interest for visitors — the York races, the nearby spa town of Harrogate, the fact that Leeds is close to



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On March 31, 1947, the first A.A. meeting in Great Britain was held in Room 202 of the Dorchester Hotel in London with seven A.A. members.

Bronte country, and that June is cricket season. It is also close to Winchester Cathedral, where Bill W. begins his A.A. story.

Of course, the central draw will be the celebration’s main event, the ambitious scale of which reflects the growth of A.A. in Great Britain, which as of 2020 had grown to 4,661 meetings in Great Britain and 723 A.A. groups in Continental Europe.

The arena will house displays dedicated to the history of each of the 16 A.A. regions across Scotland, England and Wales, and including English-speaking meetings in Continental Europe (which became part of the G.B. service structure in 1989). There are also plans for a commemorative book containing historical timelines of the growth of A.A. service within the regions. This book will be included in the registration pack.

(Registrants receive that 75th publication, as well as a lanyard, a pin badge, an A.A. 75th anniversary pen and a bag to carry it all in.)

In addition to celebrating the history of each region, there will be workshops for outreach efforts geared to hospitals, probation programs, and many more. An archive exhibition gallery will feature historic documents and objects, while other spaces in the arena will be dedicated to displays of the history and ongoing work of the board's service committees, from public information to armed services and prisons.

Subcommittee member Andrew H. notes, "The first prison meeting in the U.K. occurred in 1957, at Wakefield Prison, which is within miles of the arena, and there are plans to have the governor of that prison open a meeting."

There will also be a hall dedicated to Al-Anon and a focus on young people in A.A. "to celebrate our common future," as Ranjan says.

And there is more: There will be a Saturday morning "fun run" of 5k or 10k depending on your enthusiasm, and the Thursday before the weekend there will be an early bird meeting for about 400 people at a church near the main venue.

Along with the archives, history, music, dancing, coffee, tea and cakes, several A.A. meetings will offer close to 30 speakers and many opportunities to share. The six main A.A. meetings will be held over the weekend in the large theater-style stadium, while other meetings and activities will be found throughout the arena. At the Sunday oldtimers' meeting, speakers with over 40 years of sobriety will have their names pulled from a hat; eight will be chosen to speak. Subcommittee members hope to have oldtimers from each of the 16 regions in attendance.

Asked what their hopes are for this celebration, the five members of the subcommittee draw on past experiences. Andrew H. speaks of how he hopes the convention "will raise the profile of A.A. in the U.K. and lower the stigma of alcoholism." Jim T. comments, "These lead-up months are quite exciting, but it's even more exciting on the actual weekend. It's quite spiritual."

Angela, the nonalcoholic employee at G.S.O., says that she hopes the event "will consolidate a huge feeling within A.A. to lift it even further. Being all together and sharing together will reinvigorate us."

Sandi A., who is also a trustee of the Board, recalls her first convention in Ireland in 1975, when she was less than enthusiastic about A.A. Three years later she attended the Southern National Convention in the U.K. "I'm looking forward to the 75th anniversary for the feeling that you get — it's like a big blanket being wrapped around you. I love the flag ceremony. It's always a huge family party and I always end up with tears of gratitude."

Noting that two of the five years they've had for planning have been marked with the pandemic, Claire B. says, "I hope that with these difficult couple of years that we integrate service as gratitude in action — an ongoing mode of gratitude."

Ranjan makes the point that this event should be of

particular interest to American A.A. and Al-Anon members because it is "a celebration of the realization of A.A. as a fully global fellowship."

"Covid allowed us to be part of a global fellowship through online platforms," Ranjan says. "And A.A. is thriving in a new way now, because Covid brought in so many people and provided a lifeline. But now we can hold real hands instead of virtual hands."

■ Applications Open — A.A. G.S.O. Staff

Applications are again being sought for a G.S.O. Staff Member. G.S.O. Staff are A.A. members hired for their professional skills who rotate through the various assignments such as Corrections, Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Literature, Conference, etc. They also correspond with A.A.s on all aspects of recovery and service. Additionally, they represent the General Service Office at A.A. functions throughout the U.S. and Canada and provide the primary staff support for the General Service Board and the annual General Service Conference.

Desirable qualifications include excellent communication and organizational skills, good computer skills, as well as the ability to work independently and as a team member. A.A. service experience will also be taken into consideration in addition to a willingness to relocate to New York City, if necessary. **Fluency in French and/or Spanish (written and verbal) is preferred.** A minimum of six years sobriety is required. This opening is currently available.

A.A.W.S. is committed to creating an inclusive and diverse work environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified candidates eligible to work in the United States are encouraged to apply at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/620691/Alcoholics-Anonymous-World-Services-Inc/GSO-Staff-Member>. We will welcome applications up to **April 30, 2022**.

Please address any questions regarding the nature of the job to Jeff W., Staff Coordinator, at staffcoord@aa.org. Questions regarding benefits and related matters should be directed to G.S.O.'s Human Resources Department, at humanresources@aa.org

For additional information regarding General Service Office staff member positions, please see the Feb./March 2005 *Box 4-5-9* article, "G.S.O. Staff Member – A Job Like No Other" (page 3) at https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/en_box459_febmar05.pdf.

We hope you will share this notice with members who are interested in serving on our staff and meet the requirements outlined above.

■ 60 Years ‘Behind the Scenes’: Another Birthday for A.A.’s Twelve Concepts for World Service

Looking back from the vantage point of multiple decades, it can be difficult for A.A.s in 2022 to imagine how tenuous A.A.’s early existence was. Co-founder Bill W. often referred to A.A. in its early days as “a flickering candle,” one that might at any minute “be snuffed out.” Seemingly intractable problems related to money, property and prestige plagued the early members, and the question of how this group of alcoholics could best get along and carry their message to others was paramount in their minds. Yet, despite the initial challenges, the Fellowship proved durable and, with the help of its many friends and supporters, began to take root and grow.

Today, the foundation of A.A. is strong, built on the principles and wisdom of A.A.’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, as represented by the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for World Service. “Wait a minute,” one might say upon hearing that last set of principles, “The Twelve *what?*”

Deeply familiar with the Steps and well-versed in the Traditions, many A.A.s have but a passing acquaintance with the Twelve Concepts. In fact, the Concepts are a

express tolerance, patience and love of each other; principles which could do much to avert friction, indecision and power-driving. These are not really new principles; unconsciously we have been making use of them right along. I simply propose to name them, and if you like them, their scope and application can, over coming years, be fully defined. Here are the words for them: petition, appeal, participation and decision.”

Written by Bill W. to foster and strengthen the Legacy of Service, the Concepts stand as an interpretation of A.A.’s world service structure as it emerged through the Fellowship’s early history and experience. As Bill articulated to the 1960 General Service Conference, “Just as it was vital to codify in Twelve Steps the spiritual side of our program, to codify in Twelve Traditional principles the forces and ideas that would make for unity and discourage disunity, so may it now be necessary to codify those principles and relationships upon which our world service function rests, from the group right up through the trustees of the General Service Board... a stated set of principles and relationships by which we may understand each other, the tasks to be done and the principles for doing them.”

“Not only are the lines of communication clearly drawn in our Twelve Concepts, but we are given methods for communicating that are full of A.A. concern, trust, love, mutual respect, and recognition of the dignity of each individual.”

bit of a mystery throughout the Fellowship. Often considered the province of A.A.’s “service-minded folk,” the Concepts are a group of time-tested principles that actually work day-in and day-out in A.A. groups, districts and areas across the map, as well as in A.A.’s service centers, at the General Service Conference, and with the board of trustees.

Unrecognized as they are by many A.A.s, the principles contained in the Twelve Concepts, such as the “Right of Decision” and the “Right of Appeal,” were hammered out on the anvil of A.A. experience just like the Steps and Traditions were.

Bill W. first introduced the Concepts as “principles” at the 1956 General Service Conference, suggesting that these principles had already been unconsciously practiced in the Fellowship. In his address to the Conference that year, he said:

“So I now offer you four principles that might someday permeate all of A.A.’s services, principles which

As with so many of A.A.’s fundamental principles, agreement did not come easily. In a 1960 letter to Dr. Jack Norris, Class A (non-alcoholic) trustee and chair of the General Service Board at the time, Bill noted, “Each time I’ve attempted to codify and sum up our A.A. experience, considerable differences of opinion have always arisen. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions were — and to a degree, still are — cases in point. It would be neither surprising nor disturbing if the same thing happened in respect to the Concepts.”

As noted in another of Bill’s letters, he worked on the Concepts for about three years before finally submitting them to the Conference. “I found it extremely hard to organize the material. There had to be considerable repetition because often the same operational thing had to be considered from different points of view in different Concepts. I guess I must have worked over these Concepts from five to ten times each.”

Nevertheless, the Twelve Concepts were eventually accepted in 1962 by the General Service Conference after several hours of “vigorous and frequently impassioned discussion.” The 1962 Conference *Final Report* noted that the delegates accepted “Bill’s long-awaited manuscript on ‘Twelve Concepts for World Service’ and recommended that it be distributed initially as a supplement to, and eventually as an integral part of, the Third Legacy Manual.”

As stated in the introduction to the Concepts, which are today still published in combination with the Third Legacy Manual, now known simply as *The A.A. Service Manual*, “These Concepts... aim to record the ‘why’ of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.”

Given the scope of A.A. today and its many vital services, it’s important for members to understand how the world service structure functions and how it developed, through trial and error, through discussion and concern, and above all, through foresight and faith.

As noted by Margaret C., general service trustee at the 1975 General Service Conference, “You and I should know: who has the final authority for world service; how our trustees relate to our business corporations; how we handle the situations fairly if someone disagrees with the majority; how our Conference relates to the board of trustees; why it is so necessary for us to have good rotating leadership; why Conference action should never be personally punitive nor incite public controversy....”

“The Concepts help to insure A.A. unity and do a very beautiful thing for us: They free you and me so we may devote our attention to carrying out our Fellowship’s primary purpose. So, in a sense, the Concepts, too, help to bring recovery to the alcoholic out there, anywhere in the world, who might need our help.”

Writing of the Concepts in a Conference presentation the following year, Sam S., delegate from the South

Florida area, noted the permanent importance of the Concepts to A.A.’s general welfare and how inherent the principles behind the Concepts are to A.A. members, whether they are specifically aware of the Concepts or not. “They tell us that we should never become money- or power-conscious, that we are all equals, that decisions should be made, if possible, only when we are substantially agreed, that our actions should never be judgmental, and that we should act, at all times, as trusted servants only. These Warranties [contained in the Twelfth Concept] are guides for the relationship of the Conference to all of A.A.; but they are guides, too, by which any group of A.A.s, anywhere, can work effectively together to keep our Fellowship safe for those yet to come.

“Not only are the lines of communication clearly drawn in our Twelve Concepts, but we are given methods for communicating that are full of A.A. concern, trust, love, mutual respect, and recognition of the dignity of each individual. Indeed, we find that our Twelve Concepts are the spiritual foundation for all of A.A.’s world services.”

Now in their 60th year of existence, the Concepts have been one of A.A.’s “behind the scenes” forces in guiding the Fellowship to its present level of growth in reaching alcoholics around the world. As Bill himself noted in the 1960 *Final Report*, the Three Legacies of A.A. — Recovery, Unity and Service — in a sense represent “three utter impossibilities that became possible.”

■ Reaching Out to Professionals

Recently a focus group of seven past/present Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees, board members, staff and other mental health professionals, some of whom are members of the Fellowship, gathered via teleconference to discuss an Advisory Action of the 2021 General Service Conference to develop a pamphlet directed to mental health professionals.

In compliance with the Advisory Action that the trustees’ Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee take up development of such a pamphlet, G.S.O.’s C.P.C. coordinator Amy B. assembled the diverse group of professionals for a spirited discussion — the first step in determining how best to create the new pamphlet.

At the outset of the meeting, Amy stressed that this should be “an outward-facing pamphlet for professionals,” noting that the overall goal for the group was to determine the needs of mental health professionals when addressing the suffering alcoholic.

The first question posed to the group was, “What are the barriers to referring or providing information to your clients about A.A.?” Many participants offered their thoughts.

John Kelly, Ph.D., Director of the Recovery Research

Institute Program at Massachusetts General Hospital and co-author of the 2020 Cochrane Institute Study on the efficacy of A.A. (see “Research and Alcoholics Anonymous,” p. 6 in the Fall 2021 edition of *Box 4-5-9*) started the discussion by highlighting the cost-effectiveness of A.A. as a treatment option, while also noting, “There is often confusion about whether A.A. is a spiritual organization or a religious one. When professionals look at A.A. literature, it appears heavy in religious language.”

The challenge of referrals was highlighted by Peter Luongo, Ph.D., Executive Director for the Institute for Research, Education and Training in Addictions and a recently rotated Class A trustee on the General Service Board. “Due to A.A.’s decentralized nature,” he said, “professionals often don’t know how to refer clients, as A.A. has no intake or referral process — meaning the professional will have to have connections with local A.A.”

Leonard M. Blumenthal, a retired treatment administrator in Canada and former Class A trustee and chair of the General Service Board, stressed the importance of anonymity, and the understanding of anonymity on the part of professionals. “Anonymity can have negative consequences, giving the impression that ‘we’ are sending clients to hide in meetings.”

Nancy McCarthy, current Class A trustee, who spent 33 years working for the Missouri Board of Parole in many roles, from probation officer to unit supervisor to district administrator, added, “There is a perception among corrections staff that A.A. is not open to everyone and that it is not diverse.”

Judith Sadora, a licensed marriage and family therapist based in Oregon and Nevada, spoke of the challenge of referring people of color to meetings in remote communities, as well as the need to understand that spirituality and mental health issues have different meanings in different cultures, such as with indigenous peoples and certain communities of color.

“Educating professionals on what A.A. is and what A.A. is not,” was brought up by Vera F., A.A.W.S. non-trustee director, who emphasized why referring those with other substance use disorders “does not work.” It was also brought up that professionals might lack an understanding of the “variety of our members — the young, the old, persons of color and the differences in culture.”

The second question put to the group was, “What clear A.A. message should we be giving to the professionals, and what should be our ongoing message?”

“Alcoholism is the top public health problem in the world, and A.A. is the closest thing to a free lunch for treatment,” said John Kelly. “The ongoing message,” he continued, “should be the distinction between mental health and addiction specialists — there are data points of success with mental illness within A.A.” (Highlighting this point, John Kelly noted that he had to leave the teleconference early to give a talk that same evening to a group of Massachusetts psychiatrists about the science behind the effectiveness of A.A.)

“Recovery [in A.A.] is an evidence-based service,” he continued, “that can serve a person over time, and that is flexible and accessible — both in-person and online — and is free. It works and is an effective way to sustain recovery.”

“This will make you a better professional, and help you do what you do better,” said Peter Luongo. “The use of A.A. resources makes you a better professional — you are providing an option for recovery.”

Further discussion points were that A.A. is a safe place to explore spirituality; that the A.A. principles are indeed in line with professionals’ ethics; and that individuals with a “dual diagnosis” do just as well in A.A. as those who do not. The use of professional language was also recommended when communicating with professionals, with the example of “recovery coach vs. sponsor.”

The final question of the session was, “What do you tell your peers about A.A.?”

“I would cite research and consider the audience,” offered Peter Luongo.

Leonard M. Blumenthal concurred, saying, “It is important to know there is research.”

John Kelly repeated an earlier point: “A.A. does as

well or better [than other forms of treatment] for less money.”

Irene K., past G.S.O. staff member, commented, “Few health professionals know how to talk about alcohol and alcoholism with patients. They don’t seem to know the questions to ask or what to look for. They don’t know the full spectrum of how alcoholism can appear in someone, especially among young people and highly functioning people.”

Bringing the discussion back to the original purpose, Nancy McCarthy noted that the process for the creation of the new pamphlet was that a report of the focus group meeting would go to Conference, with an outline for the pamphlet to follow.

The Hand of A.A.

Recently, a survey was sent to local C.P.C. committees for shared experience on creative ways to carry the A.A. message to professionals, including but not limited to, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Here are some of the responses:

“Whenever I walk into a doctor’s office... I leave a Grapevine in the waiting room.”

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have spoken twice via videoconferencing to a university class titled ‘Anthropology of Addiction and Recovery.’ Each class consisted of about a 20-minute share on our part (what A.A. is and what it isn’t) and a talk... to ease the students’ collective discomfort about attending the open A.A. meetings they are required to attend as part of the course. (They’re not quite sure how they should act around us!) This was followed by a question-and-answer period in which the students at both sessions asked excellent questions, and during which they seemed to have gained a new comfort level with us ‘A.A.-ers’ as well.”

“The RI./C.P.C. Committee was allocated funds to purchase literature for DCMs and their GSRs to distribute to professionals they come in contact with. We called it the S.O.L.D. Project (‘Service Opportunity, Literature Distribution’). This idea also provided increased interest in and awareness of our pamphlets and improved conversation with our Literature Committee.”

“We designed and have begun to implement the Faith Leaders Outreach Program. This program requires minimal in-person contact, made necessary because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even limited personal contact is more effective than sending materials by the U.S. Postal Service, however, since mailed materials often are not received or read by the intended recipients. It also is much less expensive. Its primary purpose, like all of Alcoholics Anonymous, is to carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics. This is being done by providing information about A.A. to faith leaders who come into contact with alcoholics in churches, mosques, synagogues and temples. The term ‘faith leaders’ is used instead of ‘clergy’ to be more inclusive.”

“Our committee is also invited to a local meeting discussing addiction in our town. This meeting gathers all the people in contact with those struggling with addiction — people working with the police, homeless shelters, women’s shelters, charity food providers, etc. This is great way to make A.A. known.”

She highlighted the unique challenge for this topic and, ultimately, the pamphlet itself: “A lot of times the pamphlets and literature we create are for the Fellowship and by the Fellowship, but the professional community doesn’t always understand the Fellowship, nor should they have to.”

Additional means to help carry the A.A. message to professionals were also discussed, including suggestions for the continued use of LinkedIn and other virtual platforms to highlight A.A. It was also noted that utilizing Class A trustees, particularly physicians, could be helpful to present A.A. focused material at peer-attended hospital/clinic “grand rounds”; teaching/academic lectures; specialty society and organized medicine annual conferences; university/college student mental health centers; and to middle and high school district/systems guidance counselors, school psychologists/social workers and nurses.

■ ACM Sought for Literature Committee

Following the 2021 Advisory Action regarding revision of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Native North American Alcoholic,” the trustees’ Literature Committee is seeking to fill the position of an appointed committee member (ACM) and would appreciate any recommendations. The appropriate individual will help to move forward the pamphlet revision process, including the call for stories.

Some of the qualities most desirable for this appointed committee member on the trustees’ Literature Committee are:

- Strong connections with A.A. members from indigenous communities and nations throughout the U.S./Canada service structure, including the Hawaiian indigenous community.
- Solid service experience and the ability to work within the A.A. committee structure.
- Experience and familiarity with the use of technology and communication tools such as videoconferencing, WhatsApp, and similar.
- Availability to attend meetings held by the trustees’ Literature Committee, including General Service Board weekends (usually the last weekend in January, July, and October), as well as one meeting during the General Service Conference in April 2023.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to digest background documentation on a broad range of topics related to A.A.
- Strong experience in carrying the A.A. message through literature.

To obtain a resume form for this opening, please email literature@aa.org or call the Literature desk at G.S.O. at (212) 870-3019. **Deadline for applications is May 31, 2022.**

■ Resumes for Trustee Elections Due January 1, 2023

Two new Class B (alcoholic) regional trustees, from the Northeast and Southwest regions as well as the trustee at-large/Canada will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2023. U.S./Canada area delegates only must send the name and contact information of their candidate to the secretary, trustees’ Nominating Committee. Please email submissions to the secretary, trustees’ Committee on Nominating, G.S.O. at nominating@aa.org. The secretary will forward a link to an Online Resume Sheet or email a PDF form to the candidate to complete. Resumes must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2023 via email or post in the mail: Attn. Secretary, Trustees Nominating Committee, c/o The General Service Office.

The next Northeast regional trustee will fill the position currently held by Francis G. The next trustee from the Southwest region will follow Jimmy D. The next trustee-at-large/Canada will replace Trish L.

In seeking applications for vacancies in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship is committed to creating a large file of qualified applicants that reflect the inclusiveness and diversity of A.A. itself.

A sound A.A. background is a basic qualification for Class B trustees. Ten years of continuous sobriety is desirable but not mandatory. Candidates should be active in both local and area A.A. affairs and because trustees serve the entire Fellowship, they require the background and the willingness to make decisions on matters of broad policy that affect A.A. as a whole.

Since much is asked of the trustees with respect to their time, it is important that trustee candidates understand the commitment of time required. Trustees are expected to attend: three quarterly board weekends, with meetings running from Saturday morning through Monday noon; a quarterly meeting combined with the General Service Conference (seven days) in April/May; and any special meetings of the board. Trustees also serve in rotation for attendance at Regional Forums other than in their own regions. In addition, regional trustees are usually asked to serve two years on either the A.A.W.S. or Grapevine Corporate Boards, which meet more frequently than the General Service Board.

Trustees serve on committees of the General Service Board and may also serve on trustees’ subcommittees or corporate board subcommittees whose work often involves conference calls. They are often invited to participate in regional or area activities, such as service conferences, area assemblies, etc. Trusteeship is for four successive annual terms. Applicants are encouraged to discuss this time commitment with their family and employer. Trustees are reimbursed for travel, hotel and meal expenses.

Fifth Edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous*

Deadline: October 31, 2022 The Preface to the Second Edition of the Big Book explains that revisions to the personal history section of the book were made in order “to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately, and thereby to reach more alcoholics.”

In that spirit, the 2021 General Service Conference recommended that: “a Fifth Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, be developed, including an update of stories to better reflect the current membership, keeping in mind the 1995 Advisory Action:

“The first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forewords, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion’, ‘Dr. Bob’s Nightmare’, and the Appendices remain as is.”

In response to this Advisory Action, the trustees’ Literature Committee is seeking a wide range of A.A. recovery experience of members in the Fellowship.

Recognizing that all stories are of value, the Literature Committee is searching for recovery stories that are from a broad cross-section of our local communities. As Bill writes on page 29 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*: “Our hope is that many alcoholic men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, ‘Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this thing.’”

It is the Literature Committee’s shared hope that any new stories from our current membership will help future alcoholics to identify and find recovery in the pages of a Fifth Edition.

Further information on where to submit your story will be provided to the Fellowship through Box 4-5-9, the A.A. website and more. If you have any questions, please write to 5BBStory@aa.org.

A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic pamphlet

Deadline: October 31, 2022 The trustees’ Literature Committee has opened a call for stories in response to the 2021 General Service Conference Advisory Action regarding the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic,” stating that the pamphlet be updated to include current stories of recovery and a new title that is respectful and inclusive.

The committee is seeking stories of recovery from all African-American, Canadian and Caribbean A.A. members from the English-, French- and Spanish-speaking Black communities in the A.A. structure in the United States and Canada. Stories of recovery may also include:

- Experience, strength and hope
- Steps, Traditions, Concepts
- Sponsorship
- A.A. service
- Safety and racism
- Ethnic, cultural, gender and LGBTQ diversity
- Military
- Black mental health and diverse abilities
- Diversity of social status
- BIPOC A.A. Meetings
- Atheist/agnostics

The suggested format for typed manuscripts is 500-800 words, double spaced, in 12-point font. Handwritten manuscripts should be approximately 5 to 6 pages.

Submit Via Email Email: pamphletstories@aa.org Subject line: “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic”

Fourth Edition of the Big Book *Alcohólicos Anónimos*

Deadline: December 15, 2022 In keeping with the recommendation of the 2021 General Service Conference that “A Fourth Edition of the Spanish-language Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*, be developed, including updated stories that better reflect the current membership, and that a progress report be presented to the 2022 General Service Conference,” the trustees’ Literature Committee is seeking stories of recovery from members of the Hispanic community in the A.A. structure in the United States and Canada.

The committee is seeking stories of recovery from a wide representation of the Hispanic community. Stories of recovery may also include:

- Ethnic, cultural, gender and LGBTQ diversity
- Diversity of social status
- Experiences of sobriety during the pandemic
- Newcomer and oldtimer experiences
- Accessibility experiences
- Spiritual experiences
- A.A. meetings on virtual platforms
- Sobriety and mental health

Suggested format for typed manuscripts is 3,500 words, double-spaced, in 12-point type. Handwritten stories should be approximately 5-6 pages.

Submit Via Email Email: 4LGHistorias@aa.org Subject line: “Fourth Edition Spanish”

Please include your full name, postal and email addresses, and phone number on the first page of your manuscript. The anonymity of all authors will be observed whether or not their story is selected for publication. **Stories written in Spanish, English or French will be accepted.** We suggest you keep a copy of your manuscript for your files. The respective designations *Pamphlet or Fourth Edition* should be written on the envelope and at the top of the first page of the manuscript.

To Submit Via Postal Mail Send to: Attn. Literature Assignment
General Service Office, Box 459
Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Thank you for your participation in the process!

box 459 BULLETIN BOARD

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s — Via G.S.O.

Spring 2022

NOTE: Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, events may be canceled or moved to online formats. Please contact the event coordinators as listed before making your plans.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site. **For any additional information, please use the event contact information provided.**

March

4-6—*Saint Louis Park, Montana.* West Central Regional AA Service Conference; Info: www.westcentralregion.org

17-20—*San Jacinto, California.* Inland Empire AA Convention; Write: Ch., 1307 E. Citrus Avenue, Redlands, CA 92373; Info: www.ieaac.org

18-20—*Atlantic City, New Jersey.* 56th Area 45 Gen. Svc. Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3724, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; Info: <https://area45convention.org>

18-20—*Niagara Falls, New York.* 14th Annual Cataract City Conv. Write: Ch., Box 734, Niagara Falls, NY 14301; Email: niagaraintergroup@gmail.com

25-27—*Ames, Iowa.* Aim for Ames. Write: Ch., Box 2522, Ames, IA 50010; Info: www.aimforames.org

25-27—*Saratoga Springs, New York.* Saratoga Springfest. Write: Ch., 632 Eastline Rd., Ballston Spa, NY 12020; Info: www.saratogaspringfest.org

April

1-3—*Tarrytown, New York.* 2022 SENY Convention. Write: convention@aaaseny.org; Info: <https://www.aaaseny.org>

1-3—*Watertown, South Dakota.* Area 63 Spring Conf. Write: 775 13th St., SE, Huron, SD 57350; Info: www.area63aa.org

14-16—*Tegucigalpa, Honduras.* 40 Convención de Alcohólicos Anónimos en América Central; Info: aadehonduras.org

14-22—*Eureka Springs, Arkansas.* Springtime in the Ozarks. Write: Ch., Box 2577, Eureka Springs, AR 72757; Info: www.springtimeintheozarks.com

22-24—*ChIPLEY, Florida.* Country Round Up. Write: Ch., 412 Triton St., Port St., Joe, Florida 32456

22-24—*Saint Louis, Missouri.* Spring Fling Convention. Info: www.springflingstl.com

29-01—*Erie, Pennsylvania.* Erie Area Spring Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1357, Erie, PA 16512; Info: aaeriepa.org

29-01—*Grants Pass, Oregon.* Rogue Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1741, Grants Pass, OR 97528; Info: www.rogueroundup.com

May

5-7—*Grand Rapids, Minnesota.* 50th Annual Iron Range Get Together. Write: Ch., Box 855, Hibbing, MN 55746

13-15—*Defuniak Springs, Florida.* Sunshine Conv. Write: Ch., Box 837, Defuniak Springs, FL 32432; Email: sunshineconvention@aol.com

13-15—*Helena Mt., Montana.* 2022 Spring Round Up. Write: Ch., 1016 Butte Ave., Helena, Montana 59601

13-15—*Tulsa, Oklahoma.* Area 57 State Conference. Write: Ch., 5800 S Lewis Ave Suite 273, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105

14-15—*Essington, Pennsylvania.* XII Convención Hispana de AA de Pennsylvania. Write: pacohispana2020@gmail.com; Info: <https://paconvencionhispana.org>

20-21—*Manitoulin Island, Ontario Canada.* 49th Rainbow Round Up. Write: Ch., 46 Breton Road Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6B 5W3; Info: www.rainbowroundup.ca

20-21—*Reheboth Beach, Delaware.* Delaware Area 12 State Convention. Write: Ch., PO Box 445, Wilmington, Delaware 19899

20-22—*Ashland, Wisconsin.* Area 74 Spring Conf. Write: Ch., 11090 East Lund Rd., Maple, WI 54854

27-29—*Anaheim, California.* XVI Convención Estatal Hispana de California. Write: Ch., 330 N. State College Blvd. Suite 207, Anaheim, CA 92806; Info: <https://convencionestatalca.org>

27-29—*Houston, Texas.* 59 Asamblea Hispana del Estado de Texas; Register: 281-442-5100, Code: Asamblea Hispana del Estado de Texas

June

3-5—*Sheridan, Wyoming.* Area 76 Spring Conv. Write: Ch., Box 705, Sheridan, WY 82801; Email: Area76SpringConvention2022@gmail.com

10-12—*Kenton, Oklahoma.* 45th Camp Billy Joe Roundup. Write: Ch., 57556 29 Palms Hwy #299, Yucca Valley, CA 92284

24-26—*Shoreline, Washington.* Pacific Northwest Conference. Write: Ch., 20323 19th Ave NE A201, Shoreline, Washington 98155; Info: <https://www.pnc1948.org>

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