



The Pigeon



Your Area Delegate's Report

In my last article I began by saying things were slowing down a bit. Well, that was short-lived. I'll begin this report by letting you know things are gearing up again for the next General Service Conference to be held in New York on April 18 – April 24, 2004. As your delegate, I will be in attendance at this conference. I will also be in attendance at the General Service Board and trustee committee meetings held in New York January 30 – February 2, 2004.

At the conference last April I was elected by the other delegates serving on the Literature Committee to serve as the chair for the committee at the 2004 conference. This means that all delegate committee chairs have been invited to attend this board weekend the end of January. So, I will be traveling to New York in January and then back to the General Service Conference in April.

Speaking of conferences. Please send in your registration for our Twenty-Third Annual Area 36 Service Conference to be held in Owatonna on January 17 and 18, 2004. The theme this year is the same as the General Service Conference theme (it is every year), "Our Singleness of Purpose — The Cornerstone of A.A." There will be some great discussion and lots of fellowship. Don't forget the GSR Orientation, DCM Orientation

and Committee Chair Orientation on Saturday morning from 9:00-11:00. Hope to see you all there!

The West Central Regional Conference is also just around the corner, March 5, 6 & 7, 2004 in Cheyenne, Wyoming at the Hitchin Post Inn. The theme for this conference is also, "Our Singleness of Purpose — The Cornerstone of A.A." Flyers are circulating with registration and hotel information, and there is also information on the area website at www.area36.org.

At the General Service Conference in April in New York the eight delegates from our region, along with an equal number of voters – one-half from the Trustees' Nominating Committee and one-half from the Conference Committee on Trustees will be electing a new West Central Regional Trustee. At our area assembly in October we elected our area's trustee nominee, Dennis B. I have sent the nominee letter and resume to the secretary for the Trustees' Nominating Committee, and Dennis will join the other area nominees from our region for consideration as trustee. I'd like to thank Ted S. who has served as our Regional Trustee the past four years. This service position demands an enormous time commitment, and I appreciate the time and the responsibility to serve that Ted has graciously given our

fellowship. Thanks Ted!

I have also submitted the two proposed agenda items the October assembly approved with overwhelming unanimity to be considered by the 2004 General Service Conference. I have asked that these proposals be sent, as written, to the appropriate trustees committee and conference committee for consideration by the entire conference body. These proposals read:

"Consider request to develop a booklet for teenagers similar to booklets *Living Sober, Came to Believe* and *A.A. in Prison – Inmate to Inmate*."

Background: Over the last several years, our area has seen a significant increase in the number of young people attaining and maintaining sobriety. Our younger members have identified the need for a piece of recovery literature to help carry the A.A. message to teenage newcomers.

Next proposal reads:

"Consider request to develop a consistent policy stating, "All Conference members shall be allowed to view or examine (non-service) materials submitted for Conference approval prior to deliberation and voting at the General Service Conference. This includes an item of literature, a collection of work, a film, video, or any other statement." This policy should be included with all infor-

mation discussing "Conference Approved" literature."

Background: The importance of A.A.'s literature is stated in Concept XI, "Our literature is a principal means by which A.A. recovery, unity and service are facilitated." The very first sentence of Concept I reads: "The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services – those special elements of over-all service activity which make it possible for our Society to function as a whole." What aspect of "over-all service activity" could be more important than our A.A. literature? At the level of activities which "make it possible for our Society to function as a whole", the fellowship's final authority can only be heard through the voice of an **informed** group conscience as expressed by the General Service Conference. The only way all 135 voting members of the Conference can become an **informed** group conscience is by seeing and reviewing what they are being asked to discuss and decide upon. The **informed** group conscience of the General Service Conference can then truly ensure that the basic message we have to carry is

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Your Alternate Area Chairperson's Report

Greetings from the SMAA Finance Committee! Representatives from three/four districts met as a Finance Committee in Mankato on December 6th. The committee reported happenings within their districts regarding finance, which included discussion on literature purchased and meetings brought into treatment and correctional facilities throughout southern Minnesota.

The purpose of the Finance Committee is to set in place the most efficient guidelines for use of the contributions sent by southern Minnesota groups with the express intention of facilitating Twelfth Step work with those whose professions and lives touch those that may need and want Alcoholics Anonymous.

There were no agenda items brought to the Finance Committee for discussion this committee meeting, so our focus was on Section 7 of the Financial policy and explanation of the necessary Reserve Fund and Operating Fund guidelines set down in the policy.

The current balance of GSO's reserve fund is approximately ten months' operating expenses. SMAA's reserve fund is to be at approximately seven months' of the annual operating budget. Many home groups set an adequate reserve to ensure the lights and the coffee would be on, even if contributions were weak for some unforeseen reason. It has been the experience of many A.A. groups to be a prudent, wise use of group funds.

As a committee, we also reviewed the communications on group contributions and orders filled for the Pink Can Plan program.

A part of that service work is travel to and from SMAA functions. In continuing the discussion regarding the SMAA's mileage reimbursement rate, a district has requested a pro/con discussion about mileage reimbursement at the March Area Assembly. Our Area Chairperson will be coordinating

the presenters of this discussion.

In reading notes from the East Central Regional Forum, it was thought provoking to read General Service Board Chair and Class A Trustee Elaine McDowell's response to a question regarding whether dark spots still remain around the world, spots where there may be still suffering alcoholics that do not know of the miracle we have found. Her response was that we should look around us, where we can make a potential impact. Where are the "dark spots" in southern Minnesota: down the street, around the next corner, in a neighboring community,... perhaps next door? It is the responsibility of our SMAA service structure to prudently use group contributions to penetrate those dark spots, bringing hope where before there was only hopelessness.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve!

Regards,
Sonja H.

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