

Regional Forum Report

This year's Regional Forum was a well-attended and informative event. Many issues were examined, some hard questions asked, and many excellent reports/workshops took place.

As folks began to arrive on Friday, it was "old home week" all over the hotel. Many of the people I had gotten to know over the years in AA service were there and were absolutely delighted to see each other again. It was also time to catch up on the projects folks were working on and to share insights into what worked and what hadn't.

Friday night it began to appear that the only folks who were going to be at the microphones all weekend were the folks from Northern and Southern Minnesota. Saturday took care of that and the AA's from the other areas in the region took their place at the microphones as well.

If you have never been to a Regional Forum, it is an excellent place to get a cross-section view of AA service. Everyone is there. Brand new GSR's as well as seasoned Trustees and GSO staff members. What is truly amazing is the core sense of dedication to AA that pervades the event regardless of who one talks to. Nobody can lay claim to a higher dedication to Alcoholics Anonymous than anyone else present. For the person who is new to all this, it can seem to be overly intense at times.

From the perspective of the Website Committee, I was interested in a number of issues that were likely to be discussed, as well as some of the workshops that were held. I was curious how the project to put back issues on-line at the Grapevine was proceeding, what was being done with regard to placing the Big Book on the GSO website, and what was happening with the database being developed by the Records Department.

Before I go any further I want to note that the presentations done by staff members Elaine and Bill were very well done. After their presentations (Bill on the GSO in general, and Elaine on the support staff), I suspect many in the audience had a much better understanding of the physical layout of the GSO as well as a better "feel" for how it all functioned.

I spoke with Bill about getting the two presentations (PowerPoint) to put on the Area 36 website. Bill explained that they are working on a "virtual tour" of the General Service Office, and suggested that we wait for that and then simply link to it. I found that to be an excellent suggestion.

Greg M., the General Manager, also did an excellent job of walking folks through the operational/financial aspects of the General Service Office. I would have asked Greg for his presentations as well, however it was the kind of presentations that is hard to present without the associated

commentary and questions. All I can suggest is attendance at the next one in Great Falls, Montana in 2005.

In listening to presentations and talking with our Regional Trustee, Ted S., it seems the Grapevine archival project (to put all past issues of the Grapevine on the web) is moving along at a good pace. At some point we may want to link to this from within the Grapevine Committee page on our website.

Desmond T., the Grapevine Executive editor also gave a very animated presentation about how the Grapevine comes together and some of the aspects that are considered by the staff and editorial committee when putting the magazine together. Unfortunately, we were also told that he will be leaving the Grapevine and that a search for a new Executive Editor will be underway.

I sat in the R & R workshop (Register and Report) that focused on the new database being developed by the Records Department at GSO. Elaine gave an excellent presentation on how it functions and some of the thoughts that went into its development. I was concerned – in light of our intention to use it for the Meeting Locator – about how well we would be able to use its data. But after the workshop I was confident that it would work well for the Website Committee as well as the Group Records Secretary. It certainly has the potential to streamline a lot of tedious work for many people.

The attendees were pleasantly surprised to see that a number of Canadian service folks were in attendance as well. Their sharing at the microphones was always well received and helpful. On Sunday morning, when past Regional Trustees are asked to speak, there were two past Trustees from Canada who shared their service experience with us. It was a bit like having extra frosting on the cake.

All in all, the Regional Forum was a productive, informative, and inspiring time for me, and I suspect many others.

Dennis B.

Website Committee Chairperson