

June 19, 2010

2010 NIA SUMMER ASSEMBLY **DELEGATE'S REPORT**

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Fellowship of the Northern Illinois Area as your Delegate to the 60th General Service Conference.

60th GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The theme of this year's 60th General Service Conference is "**Practicing AA's Principles – the Pathway to Unity.**" In keeping with this theme, my post-GSC reports have focused on four spiritual principles: trust, carrying the message, self-support and anonymity. As with all the principles of our program and as suggested in this year's Conference theme, these principles are meant to be practiced, not contemplated in the abstract.

Trust

In discussing Concept III, Bill W. explained: "Our entire AA program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust AA, and we trust each other. Therefore, we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service." (Twelve Concepts for World Service p.16)

Thankfully, this year's Conference was characterized by a growing sense of openness, responsiveness and trust. Ward Ewing, Chairman of the Board, and Phyliss H., the new General Manager, set the tone for the entire Conference. In Committee and on the floor, Conference members themselves, for the most part, avoided the personal agendas that apparently had led to some of the distrust and divisiveness in the prior year. Actions were taken to address the concerns about the lack of transparency and the ineffectiveness of opportunities for redress arising out of the selection of the General Manager. Executive Sessions of the General Service Board – perceived by some to be secret sessions – have been replaced by a Trustees Sharing Session. Reports for these sessions will be prepared and distributed. Trustees Procedure # 9 for the hiring of the General Manager is to undergo a thorough and comprehensive review. This process is to include contact with those involved in the selection process of the current General Manager. A 12-Step draft procedure for submission of Concept V minority appeals to General Service Conference was reviewed by the 60th Conference members and will be resubmitted to the next Conference for final approval.

Personally, the growth in mutual trust among Delegates and Trustees was best evidenced by the work within the Conference Trustees Committee on which I served. Our work as a committee was thorough. Our questions concerning the slates of Trustees, Directors and Officers and other matters were answered directly by Rogelio Flores, Chair of the Trustees Nominating Committee. More than one Panel 59 Delegate told me that in 2009 the process of accepting those slates on the Conference floor took 4 hours and involved discussion that bordered on personal attack. This year, the slates were individually approved unanimously in just over ½ hour.

Self-Support

Our Seventh Tradition tells us that “Every AA group out to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” This principle is understood to apply as much to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole as it does to each of our Home Groups.

Last year, the Fellowship was asked to share its experience and views as to whether there should be any limit on the profits from the sale of literature and, if so, how the cost of services should be paid for in the event of a shortfall in contributions. Based on its review of the Fellowship’s sharing, the Conference Finance Committee concluded that the majority of those responding did not favor a limit on literature profits. This conclusion paralleled the viewpoint expressed by a substantial majority of those in Area 20. The Committee also concluded that the Fellowship agreed with the Trustees’ policy on self-support. It states in part: “[I]ncome from literature sales should only be in amounts required to allow continued provision of vitally needed services and maintenance of a prudent reserve fund.”

In 2009, the cost of services provided by the General Service Office to your Home Group and to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic in the United States and throughout the world was \$6.46 per member. Contributions received by the General Service Board to support this effort were \$4.50 per member (from the US and Canada). Contributions to the General Service Board in 2009 by the Fellowship in Northern Illinois were \$3.56 per member - more than 20% less than the overall average.

Overall contributions were down 2.5% from 2008. This past year’s drop was a continuation of the downward trend that began the prior year. We are fortunate that this drop in contributions by the Fellowship was made up for through the purchase of literature by non-AA entities. Hazelton, Borders and others made large purchases in anticipation of last year’s July 1 price increase for the Big Book from \$6.00 to \$8.00. As a result, the purchase of literature by non-AAs increased from 20% of all books sold in 2008 to 30.6% in 2009. At the 60th General Service Conference, it was confirmed that increases in overall revenues in 2009 were primarily due to these pre-price increase literature purchases by non-AAs. As a result, our Reserve Fund balance remains at approximately 9 months of operating expenses – the low end of the acceptable range as previously determined by our Conference.

Carrying the Message

The short form of Tradition Five states: “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.” I selected four actions taken with respect to efforts to carry the message to give you some sense of how your 60th General Service Conference carried out its responsibility in this regard:

1. **“My World”**: The Conference approved centralized distribution of a new Public Service Announcement. This effort finalized action taken at earlier Conferences requesting a PSA that focuses on the diversity of those still suffering from alcoholism.
2. **“Drugs and Other Medications”**: The Conference refused to approve a “final” draft of a revision to this current Conference-approved pamphlet. The request to revise this pamphlet was initiated by a member of the Fellowship in Area 20. A draft of the pamphlet with a rewritten introductory section and new stories was approved with suggestions for finalization last year. The revised pamphlet apparently received closer scrutiny at the 60th Conference. I voted with the majority to send the revision back to the Trustees Committee

for further work. While the revision was an improvement over the current version, the purpose of the pamphlet remains confused and its stories ill-chosen in terms of the message to be carried in a piece of Conference-approved literature.

3. **Spirituality Pamphlet:** The Conference approved the development of “literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in AA.” Those who voted in support of this Advisory Action spoke – some with passion based on personal experience – of the need for inclusiveness of those newcomers who may have difficulty with spiritual aspects of our Program as set out in our Big Book. Some also felt there was a need to explain the spiritual nature of our program to professionals in the medical, social services and judicial fields. I spoke and voted to opposition to this recommendation which was approved with substantial unanimity. The basis for my vote was threefold: 1) The Big Book and current AA literature is adequate to explain the spiritual nature of our program; 2) Such a pamphlet, if intended to ease the fears of a newcomer, cannot replace the need for face-to-face contact of one alcoholic sharing with another; and 3) Atheism and agnosticism, as belief systems, are outside issues – as are all other belief systems – and should not be the subject of AA literature. A draft or progress report is to be brought to the 2011 Conference Literature Committee.
4. **“Animation” - The New Young People Video:** The Conference approved the second AA video by and for young people titled “Animation” with a minor change in format to one informational frame. **THIS VIDEO IS INCREDIBLE!!!** It should be available in late June or July.

Anonymity

The spiritual principle of anonymity embodied in our Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions finds current application in a number of contexts, including not only the more traditional relationships within and among the Fellowship, but also the rapidly evolving modes of communication and interaction on the internet.

The Conference Public Information Committee recommended preparation of a draft policy on the practice of showing full faces of actors portraying AAs or potential AAs in Conference-approved media. The point was effectively made that, in the absence of a defined policy, approval of individual videos and PSAs becomes de facto policy. That Committee also suggested the utilization of workshops, newsletters, panels, delegate reports and area websites to stimulate discussion on how to maintain anonymity in online media and confront the burgeoning number of anonymity breaks on social networking sites.

AA GRAPEVINE SURVEY

Circulation of the AA Grapevine, our meeting in print, continues to decline. The Grapevine Board is attempting to confront the reality of this declining and aging readership and to embrace emerging new technology. As Dorothy H., Class B Trustee and Chairperson of the Grapevine Board, stated in her report:

The AA Grapevine belongs to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and it is the Fellowship that must decide if the Grapevine will be here for the alcoholic “who still stumbles in the darkness.”

To support the efforts of the Grapevine Board, the Conference Grapevine Committee is reaching out to the broadest spectrum of the Fellowship and gathering information with respect to the value of the Grapevine magazine to them and the use they make of it. The Committee is also asking about possible changes to the magazine. A survey covering these topics will be included in the summer edition of the Concepts newsletter. Copies of this survey will also be made available on the NIA website (www.aa-nia.org), at Area Assemblies and Committee meetings and through DCMs.

Whether or not you are currently an AA Grapevine subscriber, please take the time to review and complete the survey. Please return it by November 1 to me by mail or email (delegatpanel60@aa-nia.org), through your DCM or at an upcoming Area event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The 2010 **International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous** will be held on July 1-4 in San Antonio TX. Come join us and celebrate our 75th anniversary. Please consider joining those of us from Area 20 and the other more than 40,000 who have already registered for this fantastic experience.
- The **37th Illinois State Conference**, hosted by Northern Illinois and District 11, will be held on August 20-22 at the Wyndham Lisle Hotel. East Central Regional Trustee and AAWS Trustee Director Pam R. will join us at the conference.

Respectfully submitted

Ray M.
Delegate
Panel 60/Area 20
(Northern Illinois)