



# Concepts



*Northern DL Area 20 Newsletter*  
*Winter 2017*

Hello my name is Kelly L,  
Delegate panel 66 Northern Illinois Area  
20, Grapevine Committee.

I picked the topic "Principles Before Personalities" since this was and sometimes still is one I have to work on and pray about often. One of the definitions of principle is a rule or code of conduct. We in Alcoholics Anonymous have thirty six rules of conduct, or principles we need to live by. "Personality" means the distinctive individual qualities of a person, collectively. You don't have to be in A.A. to know that there are many, many different personalities that everyone deals with on a daily basis. In Step 12 it says to practice these principles in all our affairs. Practicing those first twelve principles wasn't too hard since they were taking care of the glaring character defects and making things right with others and my higher power, and remembering that everything is a daily reprieve contingent on my spiritual maintenance. For me this means for example, talking to my sponsor about all the steps before making amends and applying this to not only volunteer service for the fellowship of A.A. but to relationships with work and family. I've heard that it is easy to practice the principles of A.A. in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, but if others are not in the fellowship, that is when I really have to work them. The work place at times is also relatively easier

## **From the Chair**

**Hello Everyone,**

**I wrote this when I thought that the Concepts article was going to be printed before the Assembly. I was later told that the printing of the Concepts was being pushed back so some of the below is already out of date.**

**Thank you so much for allowing me to be the Area Chair for the past two years. I am writing to let you know how much I have enjoyed this opportunity and privilege. Also, I would like you to know that at the Winter Assembly on December 9th, 2017, Districts from Area 20 – Northern Illinois have the opportunity to bid on the 2019 Illinois State Conference.**

**If you have never been part of a conference committee you don't know what you're missing. Fun, fellowship, spiritual growth and personal recovery growth. My first opportunity to participate in a conference was back in 2006 when I was part of the Decorating Committee. I got hooked on being a part of.**

**Also at the Winter Assembly we will be able to find out more about the "Area Inventory" being presented by the ad hoc, Area Inventory Committee.**

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Comments, suggestions, subscription requests, and experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:  
Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see Concepts online at: <http://www.aa-nia.org>

The current address for the NIA Treasurer is:

PO Box 524  
Crystal Lake, IL 60039-0524

CONCEPTS is a confidential document. It should be used and distributed within the Fellowship.

## Editor's Corner

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen

So I have much to report this quarter. We have a new co-editor, Jessica R. She is more qualified to do Concepts than I am, in my opinion. The co-editor is responsible for the development of the mailing list. This will be her first issue. Next year I will be stepping down from editor. Jessica would like to be editor. We will need a new co-editor. Contact Chris, Jessica, or me if you are interested.

Last spring an ad hoc committee was created to do an Area inventory. I was part of that committee. I like to think we did a good job. We spent hours discussing each question, crafting the wording, and trying to cover all issues. But we are human. So if we didn't cover a question you think is important there is a question at the end of survey that gives you a chance to voice that. You may not be able to answer all the questions. That is ok. We want your input on the questions you can answer. You can fill the form out and mail it to the address at the bottom of the survey or you can go to the NIA website for the direct link to fill out the survey online. This survey is why your Concepts is late this quarter. Inventory is a necessary part of recovery. It is too important to be eclipsed by the holidays. And so Concepts comes out late this quarter so that you may give the survey your full attention.

I was also privileged to go to the Forum, thanks to all of you. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Your Concepts editor, Heather S.

*The Report and Charter Committee has the “draft” copy of the Area Handbook on our website at [www.aa-nia.org](http://www.aa-nia.org). This committee has worked more than three years to organize our handbook so that it is easy for us to use. When you have the time, please log in and check out what you need to know for your own committee and see what you think so that you can make an informed decision when you vote.*

*Next year we start a new panel of Trusted Servants to Area 20. This will be a time full of questions and excitement. (Another reason to read the handbook.) At the January 13th, 2018 Committee Meeting being held at the Lord of Life Church in La Fox, IL we will have a Service Orientation Workshop. I have found this to be a fun event. Several of the people in our area will have a presentation explaining the who/what/where/why and the how come of what we do. Remember, what we do keeps up sober and helps the still suffering alcoholic. Those are the reasons why we are here. So, please be there and let everyone know that this is an open event for all AAs in Area 20.*

*Again, thank you for allowing me to serve.  
Marilyn F.*

*Panel 66, Area Chair*



for me, since I am fairly sure that others are not working a 12 step program.

It says in Tradition 12: “At this altitude (press, radio, films, and television), anonymity – 100 percent anonymity – was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities without exception.” I have to be willing to give up my need for attention/money and be humble enough to do the work of the fellowship without expecting anything in return. The way I understand this tradition is that humility prevails in all our actions related to the fellowship.

Putting principles before personalities means withholding judgment. We all have buttons and we all get our buttons pushed when others rub us the wrong way. We all know the people who got to us – the person who was loud and wouldn’t stop talking; the guy who kept gossiping and badmouthing others; the young man who knew it all and couldn’t hear anyone. So, yeah, we’ve all run headlong into types of people that irritate and annoy us. This is exactly where the “principles before personalities” comes into play. The trick is to see the bigger picture, to see how our own sobriety is tied to following the highest principles; to think first and don’t take the bait.

So, to me “principles before personalities” is simply letting people be where they are and who they are, showing them respect just as another human being. Some of the principles that most of us try to practice are honesty, willingness, faith, trust, forgiving, patience, kindness and the list goes on and on. When we or rather I,

practice these principles in all areas of my life, they allow me to treat folks the way I would want to be treated. And with that being said, I feel like it is living by the “Golden Rule”, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

In the book Dr. Bob and the Good Old-Timers, it mentions the plaque that was on Dr. Bob’s desk defining humility. It read, “Perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.”

Having humility to that extent is something I would love to have. Since becoming involved in general service at the area level the last few years and a delegate the last two, I believe I have gotten what I heard the old timers mentioned tough skin. Not only do I feel my skin got tougher, but I also got a softer heart towards others which helps me with humility.

I also believe that the 12th Tradition is closely interlinked with the 1st and 2nd Traditions where our common welfare should come first (rather than our only personal one) and that our Higher Power is our sole conductor through group conscience (not our sole

conscience) as we are but trusted servants. Well, we already know our own personality traits the ones that violate the principles we’d like to honor and adopt. That’s one reason we work the steps. The clash is obvious there. But it’s harder to see our own part when the personalities of others block communication and understanding.

Each and every one of us gets recovery through the fellowship and part of recovery goes through carrying the message to the still suffering. So I believe that the key message here is to focus on the message of strength and hope rather than our own accomplishments or run riot wills. It is not about who we are, what we did or what we can do, but how we are a messenger for recovery. I would like to close with the last part of Tradition 12 the long form, “that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil is; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

Thank you for allowing me to share with you.



## **First International AA Corrections Conference**

**Please allow me to share my experience at the event in its infancy.**

**As a long time AA Corrections team member it would only be logical that I would attend. For many reasons, but most importantly to see old friends and make new ones.**

**There was no theme to this event. Many had questioned if it would really happen. How ironic that AA started because of correction work in the court room. Ebby Thatcher was "bridged" from going to jail to being released into the hands of Roland Hazard and Cebra G. He carried the message to Bill W. So why shouldn't we have a Fellowship wide communications link for this work?**

**St. Louis was chosen. The initial seed money was \$200 from the Chairman's pocket. A committee was put together, World Service put together an Advisory Committee. Site was chose. The first thoughts were there would be 75 in attendance. (They missed that mark - the final count was around 375)**

**Well it came off with 34 US States and Canadian Providences, as well as Puerto Rico. (and La Fox is too far to go to Assemblies) No roof on his house, no power, and he still puts his fellow**

**alcoholics first. I search my soul - How about you?**

**Before I get into the 'meat', let me first talk of some of the learning opportunities. How do you prepare a hospitality room aimed at 75 when 375 show up? The hotel conference center, like most, has those large folding panel dividers. In the middle of the Friday night speaker meeting it was realized that those panels needed to open to accommodate for seating. The chant became 'take those walls down'. Maybe this became the unofficial theme of the Conference.**

**The topics for the individual sessions included:**

- \*What got us to go inside?**
- \*Women in Corrections Service**
- \*What if we are the only game in town/Issues other than alcohol**
- \*A little help from hour friends**
- \*Bottom raisers**
- \*View of AA from the inside out**
- \*Long Timers in Corrections**
- \*AA in prisons in the Silicon Age**
- \*Keeping our commitments**
- \*Identify/not compare**
- \*Open Mic sharing by those who found AA behind the walls**
- \*Do's and Don'ts of Correction Service**
- \*Inside Sponsorship/How inmates can help each other**
- \*Meetings in Local Jails/DUI Courts/ Probation/ Parole offices.**

My take away was to remember that those alcoholics on the inside are no different than myself. They do not need to be preached to but allowed the freedom to free themselves. Also I was reminded once again that I am one amongst many and a few small sacrifices that I make may help one more to become free.

I hope this Conference may become an inspiration to others. A lady from Canada was/is making a monthly trek from her home to Attica, New York to the maximum security facility to provide a meeting for the men inside. She crosses the border check points and crosses the 'yard'. Her words, "My brothers on the inside would never let anything happen to me. Without me there is no meeting." This is full day commitment for her. So what is an hour or two? So what if they are on stand down when we arrive!

One little final story. I was seated next to the final speaker at the banquet table. We did not discuss our stories and if we did I would not have been writing this. In his final talk he spoke of being in Leavenworth, Kansas at the Federal Prison for a felony he committed. A fellow inmate got him started on the AA path. But he was too new to discover that AA was stronger in that facility than he thought. Around the time of his movement to do his State time, Area 25 (Kansas) had its State Corrections

Conference "behind the walls" of the facility. I was there and I introduced the Chairman of that Conference to the speaker. It gets no better.

It is not our job to judge. It is not our job to take down the physical walls. Our job is to allow the incarcerated to take down 'their walls' in order that they may be free. Either on the inside or the outside. It is far more than a structural wall. Many walls exist and many need respected.

One of the keynote speakers was Nancy McCarthy (Class A Trustee who works in the Corrections field) Nancy spoke of how we could use our video material to help carry the message as a training tool for facility staff. The staff has a requirement for documented training annually. They become more familiar with us and trust grows stronger. Also she mentioned using the Probation offices to facilitate digital links behind the wall. Many that otherwise cannot meet the clearance requirement can be included. Also this lessens some of the added training requirements being imposed on us. See your District or Area CPC committee to become involved.

The next Corrections Conference will be in Portland, Maine in November 2018

Submitted by Bill W.



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### Angels

*From the deepest valleys,  
to the tallest peaks...  
there are Angels in our midst.  
Through the darkest alleys,  
on the meanest streets...*

*Angels do indeed exist.  
There are Angels all around  
us,  
There are Angels everywhere.  
They're hiding in plain sight,  
You'll never know they're there.*

*From the earth below,  
to the Heavens above...  
as far as the eye can see  
Angels are the couriers of love,  
from God to you and me.*

*They are the immortal,  
messengers of God,  
Fore ever guarding over us...  
Angels are mysterious  
Angels are Anonymous...*

Gordon R 8/15/2017



### **East Central Regional Forum**

So the Area Assembly paid for me to go to the East Central Regional Forum and I believe, as such, I should give some kind of report giving what I learned and showing the money spent sending me was well spent. I think the most important result was one of the women that went with me is now a GSR, and another is asking me about Area service.

Originally I was going to write about the big topic of the forum, which was the law suit in which AAWS and the General Service Board were trying to recover the original printer's copy of the manuscript for the Big Book. I spent a lot of time listening to a lot of fear. Yes, a law suit is not following the Traditions. And for AA to bring a law suit breaks more Traditions. One woman had a list of all she thought were being broken: 1, 2 and 10 were the ones I remember. I believe she had more. What struck me in common with many of comments was the inherent suspicion and distrust. The Trustees are very qualified in many ways. They have the best intentions for AA on a personal level, not just a professional interest. And very few people seemed to trust the Trustees. Ironical they are called trustees and nobody trusts them.

Apparently no one trusts God either. A bunch of drunks couldn't keep this thing together. We fight

amongst ourselves too much. That God is working in and through us to keep Alcoholics Anonymous together is very apparent to me. Yet that trust in God was lacking in the sharing sessions.

Recently I received an email saying that AAWS had applied for a dismissal of the case. So all the unpleasant, fearful commentary was unnecessary. God takes care of us when we let go. And so I move on to what was the best part for me, the part that made me feel a part of something so awesome I cannot fully comprehend the scope of Alcoholics Anonymous. I went to the workshop on AA publishing. There is a highly qualified gentleman, whose name I would love to tell you but I didn't keep track of my program.

So some excellent news on the catalogue. It will hopefully become more usable. The Spanish and English versions of pamphlets will be grouped together so I will not have to learn Spanish to buy literature in Spanish. GSO would like your ideas, if you have any, on making the catalogue better. (212) 870-3400 All the audio books are being converted so that they can be used across all platforms. There will be streaming. I didn't ask a lot of questions about this because I don't really use this kind of thing but for those who listen on their phone to speakers on YouTube this will be another great source of material. The long form of the Concepts will be recorded and will be available for



streaming at AA.org. This recording will include the essays Bill wrote that accompany each Concept.

Video productions of the Big Book and 12&12 in ASL are being made for the deaf.

Apparently there is a publishing industry standard of practice for people with low vision. The current large print Big Book doesn't adhere to those standards. I mentioned that across the printing of the large print Big Book there are variations. This is not a standard practice. The ink and color of paper make a difference in the readability of large print for those with low vision. Since Alcoholics Anonymous should adhere to best industry practices the new printings of the large print Big Book will be more readable. I was most pleased with this as I am a frequent user of the large print Big Books in my Big Book study group.

There is evaluation of the cover of the pamphlets. It is felt that the cover should reflect the content. So instead of plain colored cover we currently have there will be drawings. If you would like to make suggestions please call GSO. (212) 870-3400 So the most awesome part for me was the discussion on the Big Book translations. In 1995 the General Service Conference set a standard for the translation of the Big Book. First the in-country committee translates Chapter 5. This is submitted to World Services for review. More than one person reviews the translation for content. Sometimes it takes more than one sentence to communicate in

another language what has been communicated in English in one sentence. Chapter 5 is used as a test. If the committee can successfully communicate the ideas in Chapter 5 then they continue with the work. If the translation of Chapter 5 meets with approval then the in-country committee translates the Doctor's Opinion, the first 164 pages, and Dr. Bob's Nightmare. The country can have the stories that are in the English Big Book or there may be stories from the country.

If the translation has the Doctor's Opinion, the first 164 pages, and Dr. Bob's Nightmare and are properly translated then the country receives a license to print the Big Book at no charge. This is not the standard practice in the publishing world. Usually everyone has to have a piece of the financial pie. That is not the case in AA.

Most countries support their headquarters through sale of the translated Big Book and other literature. Venezuela is the only country who does not fund their headquarters through sale of literature.

The Big Book is currently translated into 92 languages. Awesome! There are 25 different languages available in India. Recently Punjabi became available through the General Service Office in New York. Apparently, people were visiting India and buying up Punjabi Big Books to bring back to the US and Canada. GSO contacted the India headquarters to see how the Punjabi translation could be sold in North America. And now the Punjabi Big Book is available through GSO.

The gentleman gave an example of the process with the Russian Big Book. 3 people worked weekly for 6 years to retranslate the Big Book to Russian. Originally the group of three said they had to all agree on a particular translation of a passage. But this proved to be too difficult and they went to majority rule. This group developed software to compare the two texts. And now GSO uses that software. The Russian service conference approved the new translation unanimously.

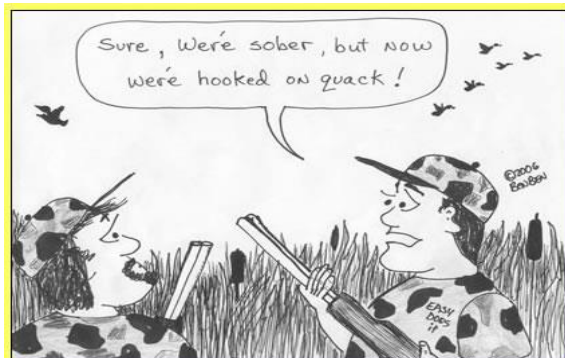
The highly qualified gentleman, who is a recovering alcoholic, was most touched by the translation to Titi(?), a language spoken in Ghana. One woman started the project. She worked for two years. She then rotated and another woman worked for 2 years at the translation. In total 3 women worked on the translation. There were 600 copies printed. And all were hand bound in leather. GSO has a copy.

Another woman also spoke at this workshop. She was working on making the website more user friendly. I remember when it was less user friendly than the website is right now. It was quite awful to navigate the first AA.org. After the institution of the new website with the people across the top things were better. But the website has become more than just a place for an alcoholic to find a meeting. People go there to look for information on all sorts of issues.

Much has been added, and sometimes without much ability to access the information on the site. The search feature will be updated to make the website more user friendly. She actually showed us how to get to the forms for group changes, but I couldn't repeat it when I went to show someone else. ☺ If you have any suggestions please call (212) 870-3400.

Alcoholics Anonymous is truly global. The language of the heart universal. And it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of something so all encompassing. Thank you for sending me to the Forum.

Heather S., Concepts editor



Hooked on quack



Drunk Simulator

## Rule 62



Live each day as if it were your last --  
Eventually, you will be right!



The way to become an Old-Timer --Don't  
drink and don't die!

Definition of an alcoholic: when things  
get worse faster than you can lower your  
standards.

Definition of forgiveness: giving up hope  
for a better past.



Dear Lord, so far today I've done  
all right. I haven't gossiped, lost  
my temper, and been greedy,  
grumpy, nasty, selfish, or  
overindulgent. But in a few  
minutes, God, I'm going to get  
out of bed, and then I'm  
probably going to need a lot more  
help.



Dear Northern Illinois AA Members,

In AA, the Group Conscience is the ultimate authority over our AA business affairs and operating decisions. However, with respect to AA District and AA Area business, the voice of each group is only expressed through the elected General Service Representative (GSR) who attends and votes at both the local district meetings as well as the Area Assemblies. The collective voice of Area 20 is then expressed through our elected Delegate, who then carries the Area 20 conscience to the General Service Conference in New York each spring.

It is the goal of our Northern Illinois Area 20 committee that our Area 20 business be done in a way that provides maximum service to our Area Groups and Districts. Ideally, all the Groups in Northern Illinois would participate in our Area 20 Business so that our Area Conscience reflects the voice of as much of our membership as possible.

As in the past, Area 20 has occasionally conducted an inventory of itself, with input from our groups, to see where we can improve, make necessary changes, and better understand how we may be of service to our members. Our hope is that this inventory process will result in more Groups being represented and heard in our Area 20 Business meetings. AA works better when we have the participation from as many of our members as possible. We know through our AA experience that 'Participation is the Key to Harmony.'

Please take a few minutes to complete the following inventory questions. You may find it beneficial to review as a group in your next business meeting. We welcome as much input as possible from our Fellowship so that our Northern Illinois Area 20 business meetings can represent all of AA in Northern Illinois and we can 'join together in brotherly and harmonious action' to make sure our fellowship is preserved for alcoholics now and in the future.

- 1) What is your current AA service position? (@ Group, District, and/or Area)
- 2) Is your group represented at Area business meetings/Assemblies? If not why?
- 3) What could Area 20 do to make business meetings/Assemblies more efficient and productive?
- 4) Do you feel the Service Committee Break-out Sessions at Assemblies encourages participation and/or attendance?
- 5) What can the Area do to better support the District Service Committees?
- 6) If you attended Area Assemblies in the past and are no longer, would you please share why?

- 7) Does your group understand how the Area 20 agenda is developed?
- 8) Does your group GSR understand their role at Area 20? If not why?
- 9) Do you feel the GSR's are included in Area business? If not why?
- 10) Is your group represented at:  
☐ District      ☐ Area Assembly      ☐ Pre-General Service Conference Workshop
- 11) Do you know who your Area and District trusted servants are?
- 12) Does your group understand the issues that the Area and Districts address?
- 13) Do you understand Area 20's finance system called Primary Purpose Financing?
- 14) Is Area 20 accumulating funds for no stated AA purpose? If yes, please explain?
- 15) With 1 being most important, please rate the importance of the following sources in finding information about your service position. \_\_\_\_ Area Handbook  
\_\_\_\_ Service Manual      \_\_\_\_ Area Website      \_\_\_\_ AA.org  
\_\_\_\_ Other internet resources      \_\_\_\_ past and present servants  
\_\_\_\_ District workshops      \_\_\_\_ Area workshops      \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) What can Area 20 do to make Area Workshops more effective?
- 17) What topics of Workshops would you like to see the Area sponsor?
- 18) Do you feel there are barriers to full participation by any member of NIA 20?  
If so please explain.
- 19) What is Area 20's greatest strength?
- 20) What is Area 20's greatest opportunity for improvement?

The next set of questions address the timing of the Area Events in the spring. In 2010 Area 20 combined the Spring Assembly and Spring Conference and created the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop as a stand-alone event. Currently the GSR is asked to attend 5 events/year: 4 Assemblies and the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop. Currently the Spring Assembly is combined with a Spring Conference and

the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop is approximately 2 weeks after the Spring Assembly/Conference. Your answers to the following questions will help our fellowship create an event or events that would best serve Area 20.

- 21) Does the current schedule of Area events encourage or discourage participation?
- 22) Does the current schedule of conferences and assemblies interfere with attendance at the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop?
- 23) The Spring Conference and Spring Assembly were combined in 2010 to increase participation in the Assembly. Do you think this has been effective?
- 24) Should Area 20 consider moving what is currently called the Spring Conference to a different time of year?
- 25) What do you currently attend? ☐ Spring Conference ☐ Spring Assembly  
☐ Pre-General Service Conference Workshop ☐ Summer Assembly  
☐ Fall Assembly ☐ Winter Assembly
- 26) Ideally what schedule of events would you like to see in the spring?
- ☐ No Spring Conference
- ☐ Spring Conference without Assembly
- ☐ Spring Conference with Assembly
- ☐ Spring Conference program that includes the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop
- ☐ Spring Conference with the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop on Saturday and the Assembly on Sunday
- ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_
- 27) Is there any comment you would like to add, not addressed in this inventory?

Mail to: Area 20 Inventory, PO Box 163, Ringwood IL 60072  
or  
Submit answers on interactive form on the web: <http://aa-nia.org/>



## Announcements

**Jan 27** pm Workshop: Steps 6 & 7 10:00 am – 12:00 @ Christ Church of Oak Brook 501 Oak Brook Rd, Oak Brook IL SW corner of 31st and York Rd.

**Jan 27** Hinkley 21st Anniv. Pork Chop Dinner Fellowship @ 4pm. Serving @ 4:30 @ First United Methodist Church 801 Sycamore Hinkley IL contact David – 312.618.2466 or Ken – 630.715.5406

**April 7** Pre-General Service Conference Workshop. Lord of Life Church 40 W 605 Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

**April 22-28** General Service Conference New York, New York.

**May 12** Spring Committee meeting Lord of Life Church 40 W 605 Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

**June 9** Summer Assembly Lord of Life Church 40 W 605 Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

**Aug 4** Summer Committee meeting Lord of Life Church 40 W 605 Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

**Aug 17-19** 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Illinois State Conference



## 2018 Spring Conference & Assembly

Hosted by Districts 10, 11, 12

## “People Who Normally Would Not Mix”

March 23<sup>rd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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**Questions? Volunteer? Contact Us!**

Co-Chair: John P – 773-540-5164

Registration: John C. – 815-308-8169



