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# OUR COMMON WELFARE

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 Maryland General Service

## Conference a joyful experience for first-time delegate – also, a lot of work

Terry P., Area Delegate, Panel 74

Each year in April our General Service Conference convenes, typically in the New York City area. Making their way to this conference are Area Delegates, Regional and General Service Trustees, Non-trustee directors and a host of General Service Office (GSO) staff; some may travel from just another borough in NYC, but for most it's a plane or a train ride away. This year our longest travelers were two trustees from the UK General Service Board who attended as guests. I was just a few hours away by car, which makes it a lot easier to pack since I can just throw it all in the back.

As this was my first time attending the conference, like all of the Panel 74 delegates, we were advised to get a briefcase with wheels to carry our books, as we would walk a lot between meetings. We all looked like kids showing up for the first grade with our identical mobile briefcases. It is really an eye-opening event, with a lot of work and coordination by the amazing GSO

staff. They were set up and ready to

go and were very welcoming to everyone. We all had a lot of smiles and, I'm sure, some deep gratitude in our hearts as we enthusiastically prepared for work throughout the week and to give back to the program and the fellowship.

As with the conference theme this year,



Delegates from 93 Areas in the U.S. and Canada gathered in Brooklyn April 14-20 and worked long hours to conduct the business of Alcoholics Anonymous. (Note: Can of Red Bull on table, far left.)

“Connecting with Unity, Love, and Service,” I could really feel that vibe as I began to meet trusted servants from all corners of the U.S. and Canada. There is a large volume of material to get through at the conference, and this year started off promptly on Sunday morning with reports from our boards and board committees. As you can imagine, with all the moving parts of Alcoholics Anonymous, this is the one chance each year where we can sit together in the same room and share information, as well as ask questions about how our three corporate boards, two staffs (GSO and *Grapevine*), and numerous committees are performing this life-saving work that we all do.

The conference is a professional affair, and out of respect for the members of our fellowship, we dress and act accordingly. After all, it is serious business we are affecting. But at the same time, we take a great amount of joy from it, knowing what is

See **Conference** on page 2





The venue for the Conference was in Brooklyn, near 192 Clinton Ave., where Bill W. lived when he took his last drink.

“The people who lived there asked us not to make a spectacle in front of their home,” Terry P. said during his report-back on May 18. “Asking alcoholics not to make a spectacle? For me, it was a powerful emotion to think that we are talking about Bill’s writings a few blocks from where he took his last drink.”

**Conference** continued from page 1

at stake and how we may be saving someone’s life.

On Monday, we got into committee work and reviewed the agenda items of our respective committees. I have the honor of serving on the literature committee, which is tasked with reviewing our recovery literature and acting on suggestions from the fellowship regarding new literature or updates to existing literature. After the committee meetings, Wednesday through Friday are reserved for committee reports. Each committee brings their recommendations and suggestions to the conference. We vote on the recommendations and review the suggestions. If approved by a two-thirds vote, called substantial unanimity, a recommendation becomes a binding advisory action for the trustees to act upon. Suggestions are just that—suggested actions, but non-binding.

I felt extremely lucky not only to be representing Area 29 but also to have the experience of doing service in Area 29 for the past dozen or so years. In our area, we conduct our assemblies similarly to how the conference operates. Through our Conference Agenda Review Committees (CARCs), we review conference agenda items just as we did in our committee

meetings in New York. I felt very prepared and familiar with the process.

I hope you will take the time to review the Delegate report, which is available on our website, [marylandaa.org](http://marylandaa.org), or that you were able to

To see a Powerpoint of Terry P.’s detailed Conference report-back, including financials, click here:

**[Delegate Report](#)**

# 74th General Service Conference

April 14-20, 2004

134	members
93	delegates
18	trustees (12 alcoholic; 6 non-alcoholic)
7	non-trustee directors
16	General Service Office and <i>Grapevine</i> staff
58	average age
76	oldest
28	youngest
23	average length of sobriety
18	average length of service
117	proposed agenda items
92	items on final agenda
15	advisory actions approved

attend one of the in-person report-backs I have given. Reach out to me or touch base with your District Committee Member if you have questions or would like more information.

It’s a shame that a delegate’s term is only two years, because now, having been to my first conference, I feel I will be even more effective at my next conference. But that will be my last one, of course. So, if you are wondering if some day you may stand for and be elected as area delegate, if you can really do that job, well, if you have been doing service in Area 29, you are ready to be a delegate.



The A.A.

# Service Structure: Our Fellowship's arteries & veins

Frank M., Area Chair, Panel 74

For us to survive, blood must flow through the body. When the blood flow is cut off, that part of the body dies. So it is with our beloved fellowship. The heart pumps the blood, which leaves via the arteries and returns via the veins.

I like to think of our service structure very much like that. The groups are really the beating heart of A.A. Groups keep A.A. alive and growing. The GSR (General Service Representative) is that vital link between the group and the rest of A.A. The GSR brings the group's conscience to the district and the area and brings back to the group what's happening at the district, area, conference, GSO (General Service Office), AAWS (A.A. World Services) and *Grapevine/La Vina*.

In other words, without a GSR, the group is not informed and the rest of the service structure is not informed. The group is left with no voice and vote in what is happening in Alcoholics Anonymous.

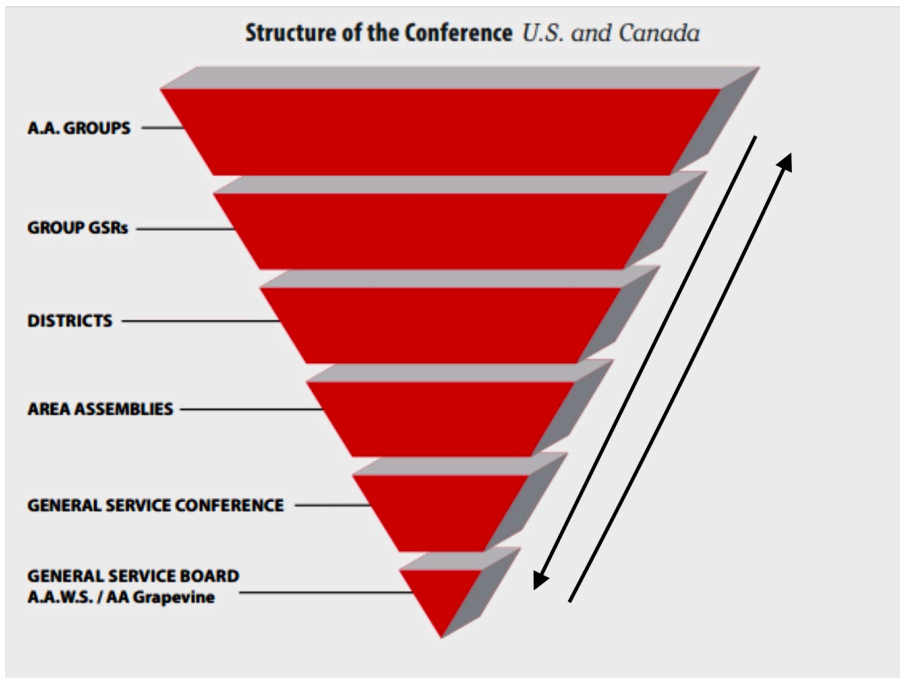
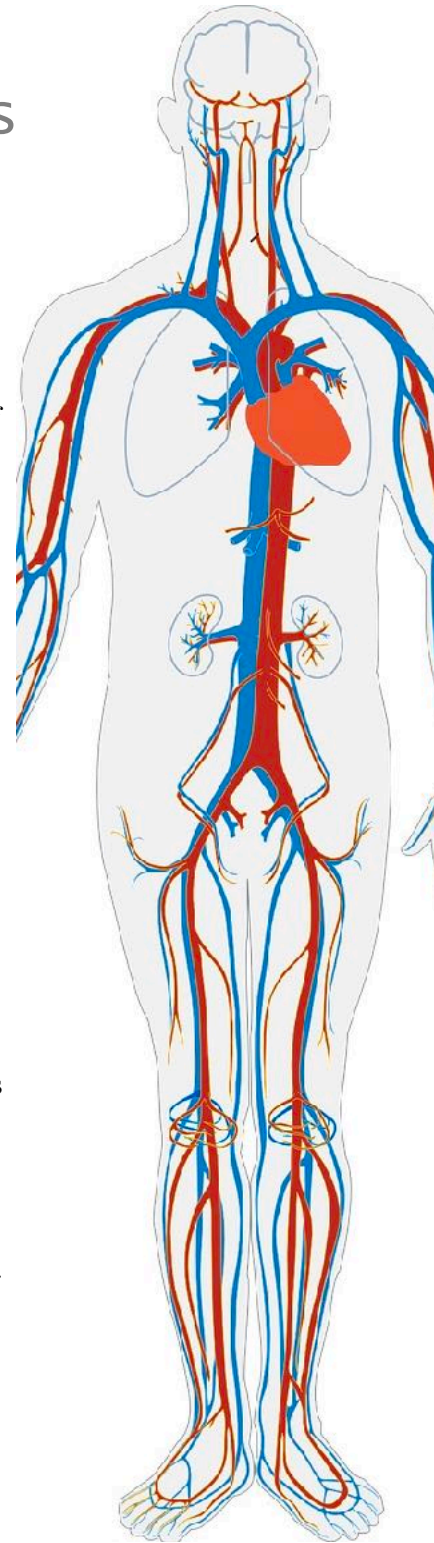
The service structure is a beautiful thing. Here are the arteries and veins of A.A. When it is functioning A.A. is vibrant, alive and full of energy.

During the pandemic years, the Area faced many challenges to keep that lifeblood flowing. Yet, Area 29 and A.A. as a whole made sure the heart (the group) didn't stop beating. Interestingly, out of the pandemic, A.A. learned and grew – online meetings and online groups were formed. Hybrid meetings happened. In Area 29, anyone could dial in and participate in an Assembly or Committee meeting.

The questions and challenges I leave you with: Does your group have a GSR? Are you

informed about what's happening as it's happening or after the fact? Is the blood flowing up and down the service triangle to your group?

Get informed. Get involved. Be sure your group heart is truly beating, keeping our beloved fellowship growing, thriving and carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.



# OUR COMMON WELFARE

**“Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” (Tradition 1)**

*Our Common Welfare* is the newsletter for Area 29 Maryland General Service, published quarterly to foster unity and cultivate communication among A.A. members, groups, districts, and Intergroups within the MGS Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. *OCW* aims to encourage service and carry the A.A. message by publishing A.A.-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength and hope, and members' encounters with service at every level.

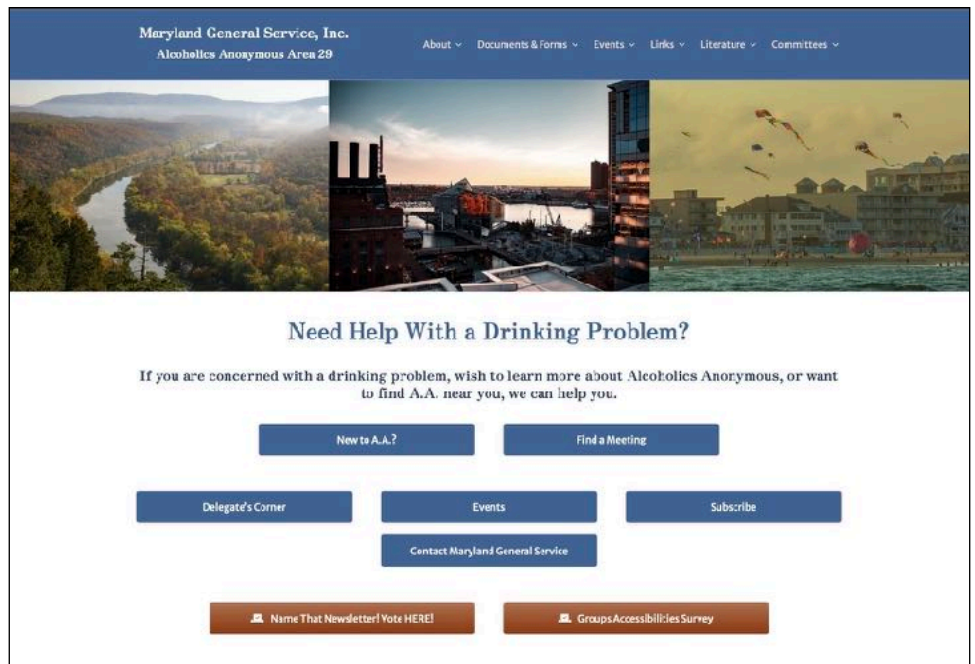
Nothing published in *OCW* should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or A.A. policy, and publication does not constitute endorsement by the newsletter, Area 29, Intergroup, Districts, local groups, or A.A. as a whole.

## Submission Guidelines

Submissions are welcome, including anonymity-protected photos, graphics, drawings, and articles. Written submissions can be up to 500 words – shorter is fine, too. All submissions will be reviewed by the Newsletter Committee Chair and may be edited for length and clarity.

Send submissions and calendar items to [margenser@marylandaa.org](mailto:margenser@marylandaa.org).

**Feedback is welcome...**and encouraged. Let us know what you think. What else would you like to see in the newsletter?



Check out our recently revamped website at [marylandaa.org](http://marylandaa.org) or click here:

[Maryland General Service](http://MarylandGeneralService.org)

## A Note from your Treasurer....

**Brigitte F**, Area Treasurer, Panel 74

As the current Treasurer for Area 29, I find it immensely gratifying and humbling to have the opportunity to process the dozens of 7<sup>th</sup> tradition group contributions received each month to support the services provided by our Area Committees and serving officers.

Unfortunately, many groups are continuing to send their contributions to our former P.O. box, rather than use the current Frederick address. This past month, I received two large, forwarded envelopes containing 15 such contributions, some of them dating back to March and April! Naturally I processed them as quickly as possible and sent out acknowledgements, along with Clip and Send sheets that include our current address.

A reminder: when sending your Group Contributions, please include your Group Name and number, using our current address:

Maryland General Service  
P.O. Box 1834  
Frederick, MD 21702

Thank you for your support! Contact me at any time at [treasurer@marylandaa.org](mailto:treasurer@marylandaa.org).

# Membership survey sheds light on who's coming to A.A. – and who's not

Kurt W., past Delegate, Panel 72

One of the great pleasures I got to experience when serving as delegate was visiting groups and collecting data for our membership survey in 2022, our first since 2014. And I was thrilled to get a sneak peek at some of the data during the General Service Conference in 2023. Now the results are available for all to see on [AA.org](http://AA.org).



In recent years I've wondered about the composition of our membership. Who's coming? Who's going? Who's visiting, but not staying? While the results confirmed many of my expectations, there were some surprises. And as always with such surveys, there were opportunities to reflect upon the results.

It seems that we as a fellowship are getting older and staying sober longer. Does this mean we are having great success at staying sober and thus living longer? Or are we not attracting newcomers and younger members?

We are still mostly male, almost 2/3 of our membership. I find this curious. Why do we not attract females and those who identify as other in proportion to our population?

One of the bright spots of the survey data was noting that we've had great success reaching Hispanic and Native American alcoholics. Their membership rate has more than doubled since 2014, a major success, although undoubtedly more can be done.

We've had less success reaching out to the African American and Canadian communities, with their membership in our fellowship still well below their percentage in our population.

My favorite question of all was "What got you here?" And unsurprisingly, the most popular answer was "A.A. Member". It seems good old-fashioned 12<sup>th</sup> Step work is alive and well, and the best way to help newcomers.

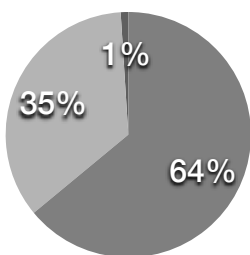
Having seen this data, I've made it my personal resolution to do better at reaching out to newcomers, even those who don't look or sound like me.

While it's good to know that 12<sup>th</sup> Step work is alive and well, I wonder if we can do more to make our literature and digital content more accessible in terms of availability and reliability. How can we reach those alcoholics we've not yet reached, attracting them to visit so we can do that vital 12<sup>th</sup> Step work. And what can we do to make sure those who visit for the first time stay?

I hope all in our fellowship will look at the membership survey data, forming your own conclusions and questions.

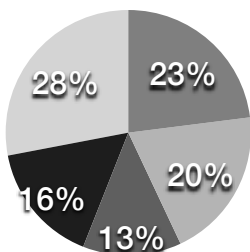
**Gender**

- Male
- Female
- Other



**Length of sobriety**

- <1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- >20 years



[2022 Membership Survey](#)

## A.A. RESOURCES

[box 459](#)

General Service Office Newsletter  
[aa.org/box-459](http://aa.org/box-459)

A.A. Grapevine PODCAST



[www.aagrapevine.org/podcast](http://www.aagrapevine.org/podcast)

Meeting Guide App



[aa.org/meeting-guide-app](http://aa.org/meeting-guide-app)

A.A. on YouTube



[YouTube.com/@alcoholicsanonymouse1373](https://www.youtube.com/@alcoholicsanonymouse1373)

A.A. World Services Literature



[onlineliterature.aa.org](http://onlineliterature.aa.org)



# Fourth-Step workshop a success – again

How many pizzas did it take to feed 50 recovering alcoholics who participated in the popular District 35 workshop on April 20?

Jeanine W., Chair, Area Workshop Committee, Panel 74

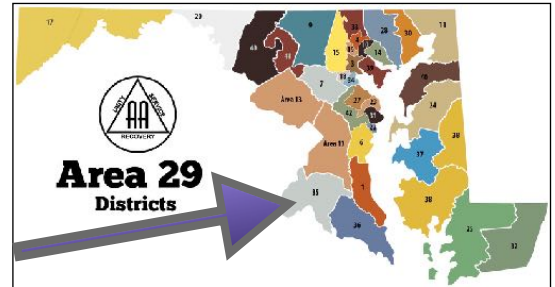
We went through 15 pizzas!

District 35 has held this workshop annually for at least the past 20 years, and this year's event started at 11:30 a.m. with food and fellowship. Dan W., our DCM, made some opening remarks about District 35's purpose, asked folks to ask if their home group had a GSR, and thanked those who helped.

Just after noon, our presenter, John W., conducted an "interactive" Fourth Step explanation – interactive meaning people could ask questions as he was presenting. He gave examples of resentments (people, institutions and/or principles); fears; and sex conduct. There was also an "Ask It Basket" for people to ask questions anonymously.

Dan W. DCM, asked questions from the basket during the presentation at points when he felt it was relevant to that part of the presentation. The presentation lasted about 90 minutes, with a break in between.

Attendees were given a notebook, pen, and a glossary of words contained in the Fourth and Fifth Step. There was also a handout of pages 63-71 for those who did not bring their Big Book.



The Area 29 Workshop Chair, Jeanine W., set up a literature rack with pamphlets.

District 35 also set up several poster boards:

- District 35 – what it is and what it does;
- MGS (Maryland General Service) – what it is and what it does;
- The CARC Process;
- The Service Structure of AA ; and
- Info on Intergroups especially the SMIA (Southern Maryland Intergroup Association).



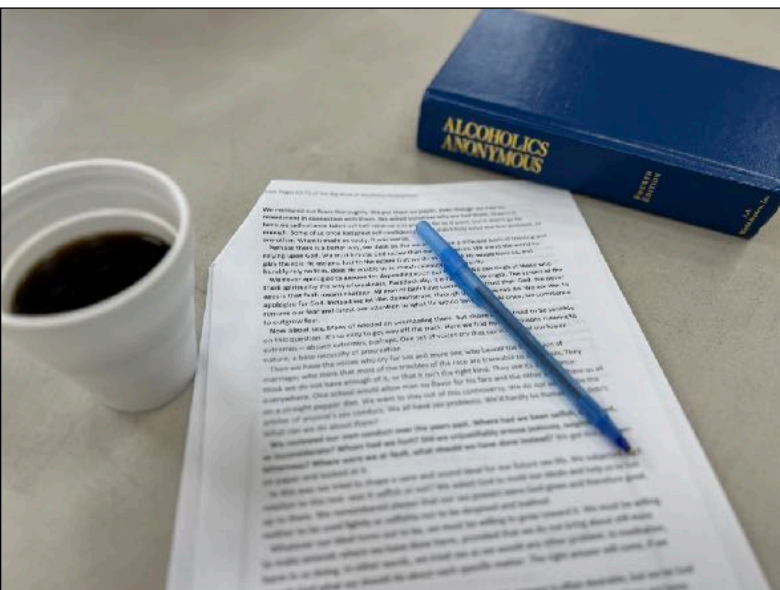
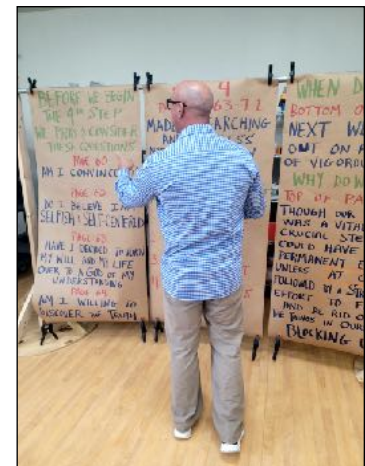
Books were given as door prizes. They were awarded at the beginning, during the break, and at the end. The door prizes were: *AA Comes of Age*; *As Bill Sees It*, and *Pass It On*.

The workshop ended about 2 p.m.

We received 29 evaluation forms. There were no negative comments. The respondents agreed that the workshop length, format and handouts were suitable. Most attendees heard about the workshop through a meeting announcement or the flyer.

Craig W., a past DCM of District 35, wrote on his eval form: "Very powerful format that clearly identifies each part of the Fourth Step." And "Should be a must attendance for sponsors and newcomers." Many just anonymously wrote Awesome! Or Very Good!

When asked what type of workshop they would like to attend, most answered a Step i.e. Sixth and Seventh, Twelfth, or Eleventh.





# Game Night draws sober crowd for fellowship, fun

“We are not a glum lot!”

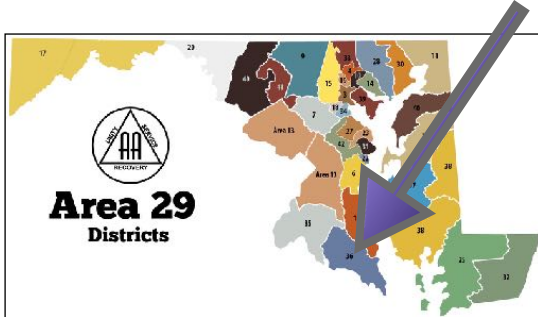
Mary F., District 36

Close to 50 people attended a “game night” at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Leonardtown in April, a first-time event hosted by District 36, St. Mary’s County.

The event, designed to show newcomers that they can have fun in sobriety and to give older A.A. members the chance to fellowship with each other, took place from 7 to 9 p.m. on April 27.

Participants brought lots of different games – Scrabble, Rummikub, Checkers, Uno, and decks of playing cards, as well as other board and card games. Everyone had a great time! We decided that next time we would extend the timeframe and play even longer. There was food, fun and plenty of fellowship.

The Game Night idea came about after card parties at Mary F.’s home. People started hearing about the card parties and thought it might be fun to rent a hall so that anyone who wanted to play could attend.



Then in March of this year, Pat S. became chair of a newly formed Events Committee, formerly the Workshop Committee. Workshops had been falling in attendance in recent years, so we decided that an all-inclusive events committee should take its place and potentially attract more people.

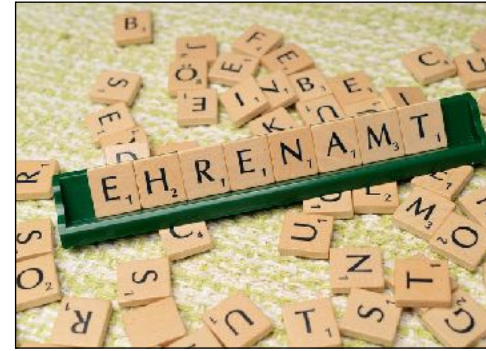
Also on the committee are: District 36 DCM, Melissa W., Michele B., Karen G., and Mary F., who facilitated the game night. District 36 provided drinks and snacks, playing cards and some board games.

In 2020, when COVID drove us out of our meeting places, isolation was a problem, so it’s great to be able to see each other again, face to face. As it’s stated in the Big Book, “We are not a glum lot.” We certainly weren’t at Game Night! More Game Nights are being planned.

District 36 is a very active district. In years past we have had an annual picnic, and we hold annual Christmas and New Year’s Alcothons, as well as many workshops. Other events that have been held include, a History Symposium, chaired by Pat S., when an Akron historian came and spoke on the history of the Oxford Group. His presentation was great, and the event was well planned and well attended.

Plans for future events to be held by District 36 will depend on what people want to do. A second planning meeting of the Events Committee is scheduled, and we are coming up with an events calendar so people can make plans in advance to attend.

We look forward to finding out what events people want and then making it happen with help from volunteers and the support from our District.





# TREASURES FROM THE PAST

Archives Committee taking stock of Area 29 historical items

**Diane F.**, Co-Chair, Area Archives Committee, Panel 74

The Archives is a means by which we collect, preserve and share the meaningful heritage of our Fellowship. It is by the collection and sharing of these important historical documents that our gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous is deepened and we provide a legacy for those to come.

Archives Chair Linda J. and I continue to sort and compile many Area 29 documents located at the 857 Club, 100 S. Haven Street in Baltimore. Our first visit was just to purview the space located there, and boy was it overwhelming. On that particular trip home we discussed the gravity of the project and realized we were actually inspired!! Our images of what needed to be started began to percolate.

On our second visit we came with more acid-free boxes, cover sleeves for the boxes to list items contained in the boxes, pens, and sticky notes. We

got busy going through boxes and reorganizing documents by a familiar category. We were able to sort, compile and organize over a dozen boxes. We will complete the

sorting on the next visit and then begin the arduous task of “inventorying” the items in the boxes. We are taking baby steps on organizing the space so Area 29 members can access our beloved Archives.

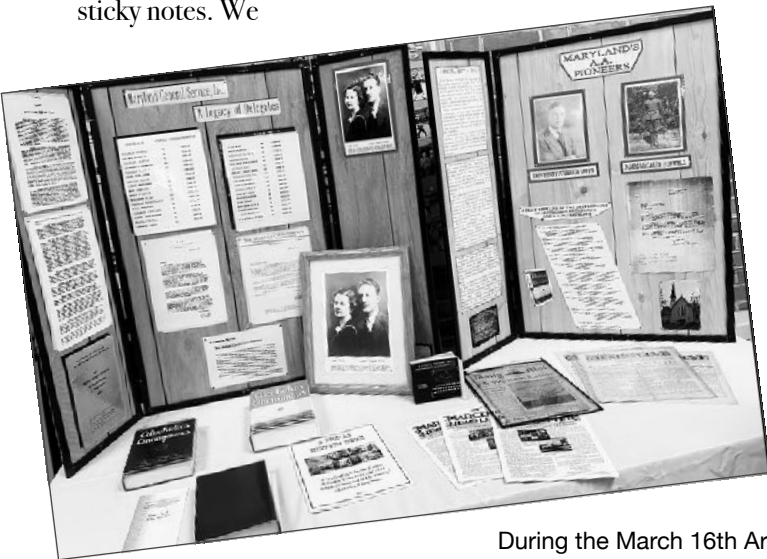
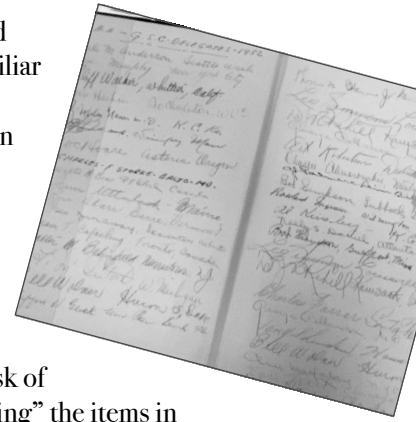
Archiving these documents is fun when you discover documents/items from the past and are able to share that information with the Area. Linda and I have found items we’d like to display with the Archives Committee table at Area events. Stay tuned for some “fun” discoveries!!

For those of you interested in helping with Archives, we haven’t forgotten you. We are in the early stages of organization and we look forward to involving all who find A.A. history important and just plain fun.

We also wanted to remind those Districts that have archivable materials to let us know at [archives@marylandaa.org](mailto:archives@marylandaa.org). Our committee is keeping an informational spreadsheet for Area 29 on Archives within the Area.

“Whenever a society or civilization perishes, there is always one condition present. They forgot where they came from.”

—Carl Sandburg



During the March 16th Area 29 Assembly, Archives Committee Chair Linda J. and Co-Chair Diane F. gave a 20-minute presentation, showing several items they have found so far among 40-plus boxes in storage at the 857 Club in Baltimore. Pictured are a display at the Assembly (bottom left), a first-edition Big Book, signed by all the delegates at the first A.A. General Service Conference, and a 1952 photo of Maryland’s first delegate (bottom right).





# On the origins of A.A.

## A book review of *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*

Brigitte F., Area Treasurer, Panel 74

*Alcoholics Comes of Age* calls itself “a brief history of A.A.” but is absolutely crammed with fascinating information describing the origins of A.A. in Akron and New York City and how from there the fellowship grew and spread across the country and globally. Through the lens of the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, A.A. co-founder Bill W. explains how the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for World Service evolved, including the process of launching the Big Book to more effectively share our program of recovery to all who want it.

In Part One, Bill writes in depth about the historic St. Louis Convention, which commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of A.A.’s founding and was the watershed moment when The General Service Conference officially took over the custody and stewardship of Alcoholics Anonymous from founders Bill and Dr. Bob. The section is a veritable Who’s Who of everyone involved in those pioneering days of A.A. in Akron and New York.

While I was familiar with the Jack Anderson article about A.A., journalist Elrick B. Daviss was news to me. A feature writer, his series of articles about A.A. ran in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper in the summer of 1939 resulting in “a new period for A.A., the era of mass production of sobriety” ... aka the rise of the sponsorship model for the program. Bill W. explains, “It was soon evident that a scheme of personal sponsorship would have to be devised for the new people. Each prospect was assigned an older A.A., who visited him at his home or in the hospital, instructed him on A.A. principles and conducted him to his first meeting ... Brand new A.A.s sober only a month or even a week, had to sponsor alcoholics still drying up in the hospitals.” Reading accounts like this and many others in this book, I was once again amazed and filled with gratitude at the resilience with which this program has withstood the early and ongoing challenges, from both outside and within our fellowship. Clearly a Higher Power has guided and protected this fellowship since its earliest days!

The “meat and potatoes” of the book really can be found in Part Two, which hones in on each of our Three Legacies. In “Recovery: the First Legacy” Bill relates his own story of

recovery, the historic meeting with Dr. Bob, the inevitable split from the Oxford Group, and the humbling realization that as of 1937 about 40 alcoholics had managed to stay bone dry. “As we carefully rechecked this score, it suddenly burst upon us that a new light was shining into the dark world of the alcoholic.” Lines like these cannot fail to move the reader.

In “Unity: The Second Legacy,” Bill writes how the Traditions were born from experience and necessity, to help keep this fragile new organization from splintering into a million

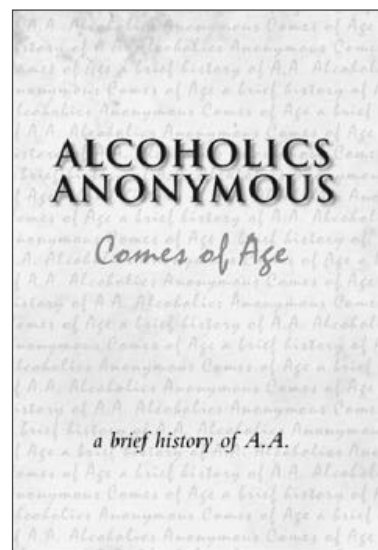
pieces.

“We have evolved a set of traditional principles by which we live and work together and relate ourselves as a fellowship

to the world around us,” he writes ... going on to say, “It was not always so.” The necessity of The Traditions emerged during A.A.’s adolescence in the mid-1940s. “We confess that we have character defects as a society (A.A.) and that these defects threaten us continually ... the Twelve Traditions are to group survival and harmony what A.A.’s Twelve Steps are to each member’s sobriety and peace of mind.” Early fears that our fellowship would be destroyed by relapses and inappropriate relationships turned out to be unfounded – but were replaced with the realization that the desires for power, domination and money were palpable threats. Our common welfare – and our primary purpose – are paramount.

“Service: The Third Legacy” hones in on our Twelve Step work and, in particular, the process of how our beloved Big Book came into being, not without many challenges from both within and outside the fellowship.

“Clearly a Higher Power has guided and protected this fellowship since its earliest days!”



### Book review

See **Book Review** on page 10

# District 19 workshop addresses history of literature

Jeanine W., Chair, Area Workshop Committee, Panel 74

District 19 hosted a three-hour workshop in May to discuss some of A.A.'s literature and local A.A. history.

Called "Connecting the Past to the Present," the event included presentations on the history of the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*; the progress of the Big Book in Plain Language: How and Why, and Maryland and Local History of A.A. from a Service Perspective.

Thirty-two people attended.

First, Grant S. talked about the history of the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, or *12 & 12*.

Some things I found interesting:

Bill Wilson was bothered by the lack of

humility and maturity demonstrated at the first International Convention in 1950, as there was much talk

about A.A. "regenerating

the world." He decided he had two options: Redo the Big Book (which he knew would be controversial, even at that time) or write a new book emphasizing the Traditions.

He put together a team that included Tom Powers (one of his sponsees) and Betty Love, who was a research assistant and worked on the Manhattan Project. (Hank Parkhurst and Ruth Hock, who assisted in writing the Big Book, were not available.) The Traditions section was written first. Bill decided to add the Steps in fear that no one would want to read about just the Traditions. He also consulted Fr. John Ford (Ed Dowling was not available), a sober Jesuit and theologian. Some of Fr. Ford's suggestions were taken; others were not.

It's interesting to note that the chapter on the first Step talks about defeat and humiliation, and the chapter on Tradition Twelve, which ends the book, states that "anonymity is real

humility at work." The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are a progression from humiliation to humility.

Many members at the time were not unhappy with the content but were dissatisfied with the writing style — they felt it was too conversational. However, that was the intent.

Next, Terry P., Delegate, Panel 74, talked about the forthcoming Big Book in Plain Language. Some points of interest:

The members asked for a book at a lower reading level. No changes were made to the wording of the Steps or Traditions, but there is an appendix with a

table, giving an explanation of each.

Other changes: The jaywalker is now female. The chapter "To Wives" is called "To Partners." Also, the word 'addiction' was removed from the draft, as members consider alcoholism as a disease/allergy. For many, the term 'addiction' is linked to drugs, which is not our primary purpose.

Terry emphasized that it is not a replacement of our current Big Book. It is an additional piece of literature to be used as a tool for accessing Alcoholics Anonymous.

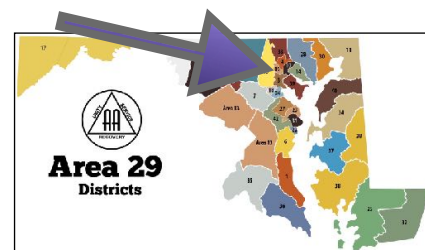
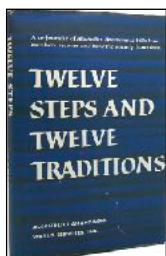
Finally, Susan K., a former Baltimore Intergroup administrator, gave a presentation called, "Maryland and Local History of A.A. from a Service Perspective."

She said that the Baltimore Intergroup (Baltimore Intergroup Council of A.A.) was the sixth intergroup to form. There was also a discussion on the controversial issue of court slips — a judge was 'sentencing' people to A.A. She also spoke about segregation and the start of the first A.A. meeting for people of color (the Druid Hill Group). It was formed in 1947 and still exists today.

Howard, a well known New Jersey psychiatrist, who said there were too many "you musts" in the manuscript ... Thanks to him, these were replaced with "suggestions" and "we oughts" ... much more effective for people who don't like being told what to do.

The last third of the book is a series of essays written by several A.A. friends, all of them notable in their fields. Each writes about their association with A.A. Dr. Silkworth's is particularly interesting.

This is a book to be savored and cherished as an invaluable source of A.A. early history.



“ The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are a progression from humiliation to humility.”

## Book Review continued from page 9

From within because of so many different opinions (surprise!) and from without because of financial challenges. Bill admits that during the process of debating a title for the Big Book, he briefly considered calling it "The B.W. Movement".

He writes, "I whispered this idea to a few friends and promptly got slapped down." Thank God for our friends in this fellowship!

Dozens of people, including nonalcoholics, helped prepare the original Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. A critically important suggestion came from Dr.

Would you like to review a piece of A.A. literature for Our Common Welfare? Choose a book and send a review of up to 500 words to [margenser@marylandaa.org](mailto:margenser@marylandaa.org).



# Service conference includes a sweet surprise

## Sponsor-sponsee complete Fourth Step during NERAASA in February

Rex R., Chair, Area Intergroup Liaison Committee

Attending my first Northeast Regional A.A. Service Assembly (NERAASA) in Hershey, Pennsylvania, where chocolate is King, provided me with a surprisingly sweet double treat. Not only did I participate in my first NERAASA but also had an unexpected spiritual experience with sponsee, Jeff.



Representatives of the Northeast region, gather to discuss General Service Conference related issues and concerns affecting A.A. as a whole, as well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity and service common to the areas of the Northeast Region. I connected with numerous A.A.'ers across the region in sharing and fellowship, many with years of sobriety, several with similar stories to myself.

To provide a snippet of my story, I drank somewhere between moderate to heavy for nearly 35 years, the last 10 being uncontrollably the worst with consequences falling upon me like rain and gathering water at my feet like a rising tide. Unbeknownst to me, I had traveled well past the stages of denial, justification and rationalization and headlong into the abyss of delusion, where the implications of my drinking were no longer visible to me any longer.

A wise A.A.'er told me about the consequences that drive us to A.A... and yes, it got "That Bad!" The three "L's" – Law, Love and Liver; legal problems, failed marriage, and mounting health issues surrounded me like police cars at a bank robbery gone wrong. Like any good alcoholic, if one is good, all three must be better. I did all three to the best of my ability. But for the grace and mercy of the God of my understanding and some power

of the universe much greater than me, did I find my way into the rooms and begin my recovery journey.

Leading and following by example as I had been shown by my compassionate yet grizzled sponsor, a sponsee called me and asked if he could join me for a NERASSA session or two to understand it and what I was doing. His curiosity, determination and gumption, clearly revealed, inspired me to certainly meet him at his level of motivation, and I extended a hand and invitation for him to join me. It has been my experience that a sponsor-sponsee relationship is two-way, and when both parties are highly motivated, magical, spiritual and divinely-inspired results are possible.



Jeff came to NERASSA just to see what it was all about – there were no stated intentions to do Step work. Upon arrival and during the session, I was inspired to ask him if he had his computer with him – we had previously completed Steps 1 through 3. To my surprise he said he did. I then asked if he had his 4<sup>th</sup> step on the computer, he did. We excused ourselves and found an unoccupied conference room, pulled up a third vacant chair, symbolizing a God seat, held hands, and said a prayer blessing, asking for guidance as we proceeded.

His 4<sup>th</sup>-step table was in depth and detail, making an alcoholic of my type proud and awestruck. We honestly proceeded with people, institutions, places and things as they related to resentments, fear and sex behaviors. We uncovered their causes and conditions and his part in

each, unpacking and for our understanding looking at who we are and who we would like to become. Together the fears fell, our Creator drew nearer, wrapped in our individual spiritual beliefs, we shared a spiritual experience together.

We concluded by holding hands and saying another prayer blessing and thanking the God of our understanding for walking with both of us as we moved together, alone and at perfect peace and ease.

Who knew attendance at NERASSA in the chocolate capital of the world would be the sweetest ever?

REVIEW OF RESENTMENTS			
"In dealing with resentments, we put them on paper..." (page 64, Big Book)			
COLUMN 1 I am resentful at:	COLUMN 2 The cause:	COLUMN 3 Affects my:	COLUMN 4 What was my part?
"We listed people, institutions or Principles with whom I am angry" (Big Book, pg. 64)	"We asked ourselves why we were angry" (Big Book, pg. 64)	"On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it self-esteem, security, ambitions, our personal or sex relations" (Big Book, pg. 65) What are my feelings?	"...we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?" (Big Book, pg. 67) What did I do with my feelings?

# PI and CPC committees

**Kathi K.**, Area Public Information Committee Chair, Panel 74

The Area 29 Public Information Committee, working with the Cooperation with Professionals and Accessibilities committees, has been averaging one table exhibition per month since January.

This means that we have been taking A.A. resources on the road making our literature available to Maryland professionals and the public alike.

With each event we are meeting and establishing professional relationships to ensure that they are equipped with all of our resources.

- In March, we presented a workshop at the **Hagerstown Intergroup (HAIG)** on the topic of **Stepping into Service**. This was a cold and rainy day where over 30 A.A. members from the Hagerstown area came out to learn about service in A.A. We'd like to thank Maggie for the invitation!
- There we connected with Rashid, the new HAIG CPC Chair who volunteered to staff a table with us at the **University of Maryland School of Nursing**. He was helpful greeting visitors and handing out the pamphlet "Is A.A. for You?" which embodies the 12 Questions. Guests were able to get a stamp on their passport after visiting each table. This was a four-hour event. Parking was included, as was a very nice catered lunch.
- There we met a group of sober students called "**Scholars for Recovery**" [umaryland.edu/recovery](http://umaryland.edu/recovery), and they invited us to come speak to their group on May 6 from 6-7 p.m. We invited Annapolis Area Intergroup CPC Chair Jack S. for this event, and together we were able to introduce them to A.A. from the perspective of three additional A.A. member medical professionals.

Of the 10 events planned to date, three have required a fee, anywhere from \$500 - \$1,500 per table. We are always looking to cooperate with Area Intergroups, Hispanic A.A. and Al Anon on these events, as our partnership with all three at the **B'More Healthy Expo**

[bmorehealthyexpo.com](http://bmorehealthyexpo.com) was a successful collaborative event. We have two large events on the horizon that may require significant funding, and we should know in a few weeks if we receive an invitation.

- In the A.A. virtual world, we have connected with the **International CPC/PI Working Group** [eastsideaa.org/events/national-p-i-c-p-c-working-group-meeting](http://eastsideaa.org/events/national-p-i-c-p-c-working-group-meeting) and will be informing our Maryland healthcare professionals about a July 17 event for **Nurses for Recovery: a Presentation of Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholism**.



**The purpose of A.A. Public Information is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is achieved in the following three ways:**

- 1. Through informing the general public about the A.A. program.**
- 2. Through reaching "the third person," whose work is or may be involved with the active alcoholic. (Sometimes this function is handled through the CPC Committee.)**
- 3. By keeping the Fellowship well-informed, so that members and groups may carry the message more effectively.**



# stay busy through spring



- In April, we attended the **Third Annual Online Virtual Addictions and Recovery Conference** by the Anne Arundel County Department of Mental Health. We did not present A.A. materials but got many ideas.

- Also in April, we expanded our knowledge base to The Value of Cooperative Relationships with Community Coalitions. There was an incredibly powerful half-hour presentation on the potential found in getting involved in local coalitions, including what is a coalition and how the hand of A.A. can be extended through them. Coalitions mentioned: The Salvation Army, PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team) CARE (youth) NAMI, LIMA (part of the Court).

- In May, we attended the **Military Safety Day and Resiliency Fair – Fort Meade** – The purpose of this event is to provide resources, information, and exhibits that will improve the quality of life, wellness, and safety for our military, retirees, and DOD civilian personnel. This is our third year participating in Safety & Resiliency with Fort Meade, and we hope to continue making sure that A.A. resources are included when they talk about substance use.

- Our most recent event in June 2024 was the **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Maryland Conference on Problem Gambling** [mdproblemgambling.com/conference-2024](https://mdproblemgambling.com/conference-2024). This annual statewide learning forum brings together national and local experts in the field of problem gambling, as well as Maryland State and local policy makers, community leaders, behavioral health providers, and other community health professionals. This gave us an opportunity to have A.A. present in the conversation when they presented on recovery-related topics.

We are always open to your suggestions and ideas. Just like our A.A. Outreach committees, we are all on the A.A. Public Information Committee. There are many ways you can be a part of the effectiveness of our Public Information distribution.

Placing pamphlet racks in public venues is a great way to support AA's Public Information goals and make information about Alcoholics Anonymous more accessible to those who may need it.

## 1. **Identify Suitable Locations:**

- Doctor's offices and clinics
- Community centers
- Libraries
- Colleges and universities
- Coffee shops
- Local businesses (like restaurants, bookstores, or gyms)
- Laundromats or other community gathering places

2. **Seek Permission:** Contact the management or administration of the venue. Explain the purpose of AA's literature and how it can benefit individuals seeking help for alcohol-related issues.

3. **Provide Information:** Be prepared to provide information about Alcoholics Anonymous, such as what AA is, what services it offers, and how it helps individuals struggling with alcohol addiction. This helps reassure venue managers that AA's literature is relevant and beneficial.

4. **Regular Maintenance:** Commit to regularly maintaining the pamphlet rack. Ensure it remains stocked with up-to-date AA literature and is in good condition.

5. **Engage with the Community:** Consider organizing informational sessions or talks about AA at the venue to further raise awareness and provide support to those in need.

# To serve in A.A. is simple: Show up. Learn.

## Corrections Conference Day of Sharing set for Oct. 12

Scott B., Area Corrections Chair, Panel 74

**D**o you remember your first step? For me, it was that one about getting in the car with a group of people I didn't even know. Two months in and we were traveling from event to event. There were all-day alcaathons on the Dual Highway in Hagerstown, breakfast in Cumberland, cookouts in Columbia, along with at least one meeting every single day. How was I to know that was the beginning of a life of sobriety and service?

Today I would not trade any of it. I have traveled all across this state. I used to say I journeyed from Finzel to Pocomoke City. But, this journey was rarely my idea. I was often voluntold. Many times it wasn't even my sponsor who was volunteering my participation.

Thus began a life of unwitting service. First it was within my homegroup. There was that usual rotation: greeter, coffee maker, secretary, and ultimately treasurer by a drunk like me. Then I was elected GSR – unanimous and unopposed even.

“What’s a GSR?” I asked. Swift came the reply: There’s a pamphlet on that. I read the pamphlet. Funny, they didn’t mention anything about attending District meetings and Area Assemblies. But, I attended anyway because that’s what the pamphlet said to do. Not long thereafter I was DCM. Believe it or not, as DCM I worked diligently to disband my own District and have it absorbed by a neighboring District. An Area ad-hoc committee was formed to do that work. I became a member of that Area ad-hoc redistricting committee.

Our fellowship lives and thrives by committee. Achieving consensus is not always easy. But, I have learned along the way that in achieving consensus we usually wind up with a better and more practical solution than the one I had in mind. And, only at the conclusion of the committee’s work do I finally feel reasonably qualified to serve on that committee.

And so it is today. Last rotation I was invited to be your Area Corrections Committee Chairperson. I’m thinking: Why me? My first instinct was to protest that I had little to no experience in Corrections work. But, I intuitively knew without asking what my service and Step sponsors would say. With reflection it became apparent that my tasks were to: Find the people with that experience, grow that experience, and allow that committee to function. In many ways, I was simply there to start the meeting on time, take notes, end the meeting on

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**“I learned that the key is willingness. Willingness to simply serve, willingness to try new things, and willingness to listen to the group (or committee) conscience.”**

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time, and to report the committee’s work. So, why not me?

Area service seems to be my niche. The Area Committee allows me to dream big, reigns me in when needed, and ultimately carries our message. I learned that the key is willingness. Willingness to simply serve, willingness to try new things, and willingness to listen to the group (or committee) conscience.

Who knew that the first step for me and my sobriety was to simply get in the car? From that day to this I have not found it necessary to drink if I simply let our services begin with me.

**AREA 29**  
**CORRECTIONS CONFERENCE**  
**DAY OF SHARING**

**LET IT BEGIN WITH ME**

**LUNCH~DOOR PRIZES~FELLOWSHIP THIS IS A FREE EVENT!**  
**Saturday, October 12**  
**United Methodist Church**  
**731 Benfield Road**  
**Severna Park, MD**

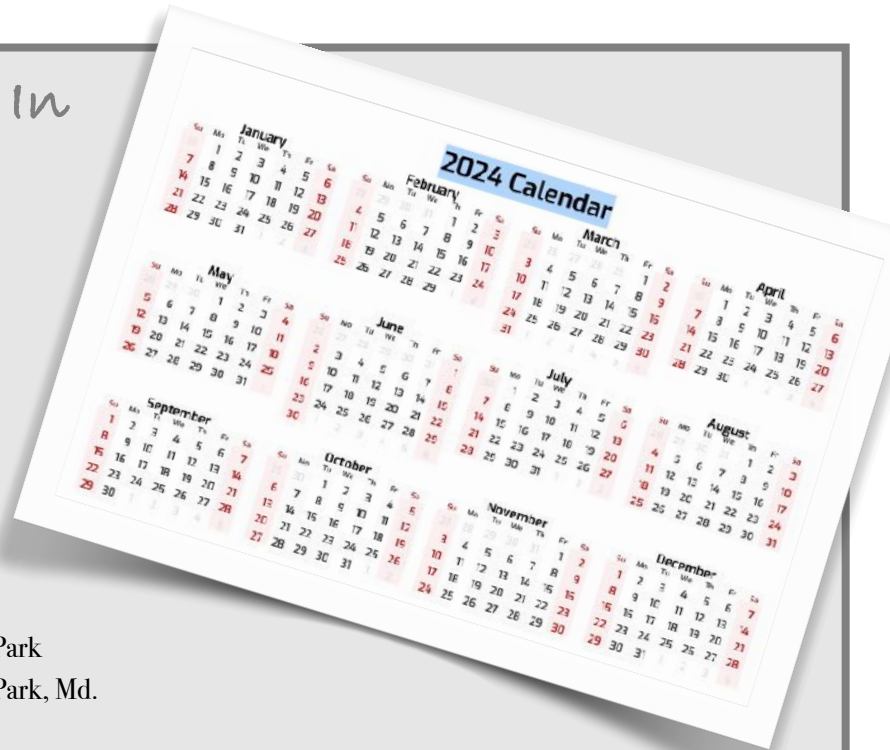
**8:00 - 9:00 AM Registration, Coffee, Doughnuts, Fellowship**  
**9:00 - 11:15 AM Panel Discussions**  
**11:15 - 1:00 PM Lunch & Fellowship (lunch is provided)**  
**3:15 - 5:00 PM Former Persons in Custody Panel**

**Questions? Contact Scott B. [corrections@marylandaa.org](mailto:corrections@marylandaa.org)**

The Corrections Conference Day of Sharing is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12, at Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park. Lunch will be served. This is a free event. Contact Scott B. with questions, [corrections@marylandaa.org](mailto:corrections@marylandaa.org)



# What's happening next in Area 29?



- **Aug. 17** – Area Assembly, Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Sept. 14** – Area Committee or Assembly (held virtually if there is urgent Area business).
- **Oct. 12** – Corrections Conference Day of Sharing 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Oct. 19** – Area Assembly, Area Inventory, Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Nov. 16** – Area Committee, location TBD.
- **Dec. 14** – Area Assembly, location TBD.

• Since this was a webinar, I

All Assemblies and Committee meetings are accessible via Zoom.

[Zoom Link](#)

See Area 29's online Events page for more events and information at [marylandaa.org/events](http://marylandaa.org/events)



## Area Officers, Panel 74

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Delegate – Terry P.</b>     | <a href="mailto:delegate@marylandaa.org">delegate@marylandaa.org</a>       |
| <b>Alt. Delegate – Lori M.</b> | <a href="mailto:altdelegate@marylandaa.org">altdelegate@marylandaa.org</a> |
| <b>Chair – Frank M.</b>        | <a href="mailto:chair@marylandaa.org">chair@marylandaa.org</a>             |
| <b>Secretary – Joe R.</b>      | <a href="mailto:secretary@marylandaa.org">secretary@marylandaa.org</a>     |
| <b>Treasurer – Brigitte F.</b> | <a href="mailto:treasurer@marylandaa.org">treasurer@marylandaa.org</a>     |

**Area 29**  
Maryland General Service

<b>11</b>	Intergroups
<b>34</b>	Districts
<b>886</b>	Active groups
<b>19</b>	Committees
<b>4</b>	Committee meetings / year
<b>5</b>	Assemblies / year

# Goal: Hit a meeting in every state

So far, Western Maryland man has been to 42 – and counting

Wendell F., Western Maryland Intergroup

The Promises Club is a small, red, repurposed church in Newport, Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. As I climb the narrow stairs I encounter a half window into the kitchen, where I get a cup of coffee. Long tables stretch from the kitchen into the former sanctuary. Behind them is a pool table, under the common-sense sign “No Pool Playing During Meetings.”

The noon meeting proceeds in a familiar fashion. Someone reads “How It Works,” then the Traditions and that day’s *Daily Reflection*. We discuss the meditation, congratulate a member on 60 days sober, and point out different ways in which the A.A. program has supported our sobriety journeys.

By the time we say the closing prayer, I have met a dozen people who are staying sober with the help of A.A. And I’ve been to a meeting in 42 states – the most recent, Kentucky.

In early sobriety I was taught that getting to a meeting each day applied when I was traveling. *Especially* when I was traveling. I love to travel, and it wasn’t too long before I’d been to meetings in each state between D.C. and New York, as well as vacation meetings in the Bahamas and Paris (where a friend from my Brooklyn home group greeted me as I walked in).

Some A.A. meetings are big, like the packed stadiums I’ve shared with tens of thousands at international conventions in California, Minnesota, and Ontario. Some are small and intimate, like the time the meeting place in Manhattan was locked and the three of us who’d misread the schedule went to a nearby diner and worked with a newcomer.



Murals on the walls of the Promises Club in Newport, Ky. Kentucky is one of 42 states where Wendell F. has attended A.A. meetings.

A.A. meetings are in stunningly beautiful places, like the south rim of the Grand Canyon, or a circle of folding chairs on a Florida beach. They happen in unexpected places and times, like the 6 a.m. meeting in a converted disco that’s now the Anchorage Alano club.

The message of recovery is ubiquitous: With the help of other alcoholics and our higher powers, we don’t drink. We change our entire lives with the guidance of the 12 steps and the experience, strength and hope of others living lives of recovery.

“Whether in Alaska or on the Salerno beachhead, their dependence on a higher power worked,” the *I2 & I2* tells us. And there’s a Philadelphia meeting named “Salerno Beachhead,” where this has been true for over 40 years.

I went to the Kentucky meeting on the way back from Indiana, which I hadn’t known I wanted to visit until I saw a solar eclipse map. The Batesville, Indiana, town library, where a meeting was scheduled, was “Closed for Eclipse” on the day of my visit, but I’d attended a meeting the night before just up the road in Oldenburg.

I don’t know exactly what I want to see in the eight states I haven’t visited yet – the Dakotas, Arkansas, Idaho, Michigan, Utah, Mississippi or Hawaii. Yet. But I surely hope the road of happy destiny takes me to these places to meet some more of us.

