

■ A.A.s in Canada Carry Message of Hope To the Inuit and Their Communities

Ungara Bay takes a big, cold bite out of the top of Quebec. It is there that Eastern Canada regional trustee Bob P., and his fellow A.A. Fraser D., traveled in May. Says Bob: “We went after officials of the communities of the Inuit (which means “people”) invited us to present A.A. to their professionals. Additionally, we would meet with some sober Inuit interested in starting up meetings locally.”

Bob, as an extension of his service work at Quebec’s St. Jérôme Detention Centre, has been carrying the message to Native North Americans for close to 11 years. He and Fraser, who presently is the outside group sponsor of the Inuit A.A. meeting held weekly in the Detention Centre, visited eight communities with populations ranging from as few as 174 people, in Aupaluk, to a high of 2,075, in Kuujuaq.

The trip got off to a warm start despite the cold, Bob reports: “While Fraser, our translator, Willie, and I were waiting for a ride after arriving at Kangiqsualujuaq, a vehicle stopped and a policewoman got out and asked who we were. When I said A.A. and what we were there for, she expressed pleasure and proceeded to talk to us about the serious problems caused by alcohol in that small community of 745 people.” Not long after, Bob recounts, “we were standing in back of an airport taking pictures with a sign showing the name of the airport as backdrop. Again a policewoman drove up, walked up to us and asked what we were doing. When I told her, she just smiled and rested her head on my shoulder.”

In their travels Bob and Fraser met with professionals,

most of them leaders in their communities—mayors, educators, health-care and social workers, corrections personnel, lawyers, and more. “Everywhere we went, the professionals were welcoming,” Bob recalls, “and eager to share problems related to alcohol. In the town of Kuujuaq they told us that approximately 97 percent of the problems they see are related to alcohol.”

In Kangiqsualujuaq the visitors also met with 30 secondary school students. “We played the video ‘A.A. Rap with Us’ for them and the seven professors on hand,” Bob relates. “After the viewing we handed out copies of the pamphlet ‘A.A. for the Teenager’ in the Inuktitut dialect.” Bob and Peter M., the remote communities representative for northwest Quebec, have been working for years to get key A.A. literature translated into Inuktitut. To date, Bob notes, “16 pieces have been translated.”

As they traveled around the horseshoe that forms the rugged Ungara Bay coast, Bob and Fraser met with their fellow A.A.s. At a meeting in another town, Kangiqsujuaq, Bob says, “we decided to add a special touch to our activities by having a one-year anniversary cake for the evening’s celebrant. When Fraser and I went to the Northern store to buy the cake and candle, the cashier asked, ‘Who’s the lucky person to receive that?’ After we explained that the cake was for a local resident, she voiced enthusiasm for A.A. activities in the community—and refused to charge us for the cake.”

That same afternoon the visitors visited the local FM station and arranged with the announcer to air an open talk session about the problems of alcoholism. Says Bob: “For almost an hour, with the help of our translator who could speak Inuktitut, we responded to seven calls. You can still do something spontaneous like that up in Ungara Bay.”

In Inuit communities such as Kangiqsualujuaq, rocks piled high on one another “represent a symbol of unity, of getting things done,” says Bob P. “In the land of the permafrost, where the ground is frozen solid all year long, the positioning of the rocks serves as an often vital form of communication.”



Box 4-5-9 is published bimonthly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2004

Mail address: P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

G.S.O.'s A.A. Web Site: www.aa.org

Subscriptions: Individual, \$3.50 per year; group, \$6.00 for each unit of 10 per year. Check—made payable to A.A.W.S., Inc.—should accompany order.

Looking back on the experience, Bob says he and Fraser “feel an overwhelming gratitude to all the community mayors and their representatives, and members of the communities. They made us feel at home and helped us to connect with professionals and others by being available and providing transportation and other necessities. We could not have achieved what we came to do without them. It is through this cooperation that we will eventually be able to obtain a foothold in this land of permafrost and help the Inuit who suffer from alcoholism to find their way into sobriety.”

It appears the feeling was mutual: Once back home, Bob received a letter of thanks from the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. Wrote Roselyne Ferguson, director of planning and programming: “During almost two weeks you [and Fraser and Willie] travelled to eight communities and met more than a hundred people, youths and elders included. The impact of such effort is tremendous. To carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous with the passion and dedication you have shown is outstanding. As we well know, northern travel, in such a short period, requires great effort, both physically and mentally.”

■ Denver Hosts Intergroup Seminar

The 19th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar this year takes place Sept. 30 through Oct. 3, in Denver, Colorado, at the Doubletree Hotel. The theme is “There Is a Solution.” The Seminar is an opportunity to meet with other special workers and representatives to share on topics relevant to local offices and intergroups.

Registration forms for the event were mailed in March from the host committee to U.S. and Canada central offices and intergroups. For more information about the Seminar, phone Jo N., office manager at Denver’s Central Office, at 303-322-4440, or e-mail her at denveraa@daccaa.org.

■ A Twelfth Stepper Remembered

Back around 1971, Les L., of Clarksdale, Arizona, was a staff sergeant serving with a security unit in Vietnam—“one of the last units to come out of Long Binn, where we were stationed,” he remembers. “I drank a lot, to put it mildly, and one night in Saigon I wound up in jail in a stifling cubbyhole of a cell. I had to stand on tiptoe to breathe air from the slot that served as a window, and it was barely adequate given that the temperature outside was 110 degrees.

“The next day I was all hung over and blue and this fellow, just an acquaintance really—a buck sergeant with my unit, whose name I think was Francis, or maybe Norman—showed up out of nowhere and told the military police that if they would release me to his custody, he’d see to it that I got to some A.A. meetings.”

Suddenly Les found himself free and attending his first A.A. meeting at a medical facility in Saigon, his benefactor beside him. “He told me he was a Canadian serving with the U.S. Army,” Les says, “but that’s about all. As for the meeting, my memory is hazy, except that I was just so happy to get out of jail.”

Afterward the two men returned to their unit, and next day took off for a meeting held on an airstrip. “All I remember about it,” says Les, “is that we had to cut and run because of incoming artillery fire.”

After returning home to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in 1972, Les, still in the Army, continued to drink. “I’d do things like give the troops the day off because I didn’t feel like working,” he says, “and that didn’t endear me to the powers above. Soon I found myself retired from the Army and living on the streets, on the beach, drunk out of my mind before 10 o’clock in the morning. I was so drunk I couldn’t get off a barstool, and there were times I almost drowned in the high tide.”

He bummed from town to town as a homeless drunk for the next seven years. But his exposure to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, though it had been brief and took place years earlier, had made an impression. Francis (or Norman) had planted the seed of hope. “I knew about A.A., thanks to him,” Les explains, “and way in the back of my mind I was aware of a way out of my misery.”

He corked the bottle on August 10, 1980, and has been sober ever since. “My life has been so rich,” Les relates. “In 1987 I married a lady in the Fellowship, Jacque, and today she’s not only my wife but my best friend. I’ve run marathons in 15 cities, including Boston, San Francisco, Las Vegas and St. George, Utah, and slowed down only recently because I’m about to turn 70. I’m very active in my East Desert Group, in Cottonwood, and draw enormous strength from the people in the program. I owe my life 10,000 times over to A.A., and Francis is the one who began to make my recovery happen.”

Alcohólicos Anónimos: A Gateway to Sobriety for Spanish-Speaking Alcoholics

This past spring delegates to the 54th General Service Conference gave the trustees' Literature Committee the green light to develop a third edition of the Spanish-language Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*. The current text, first published by A.A. World Services, Inc. in 1986, it has helped Spanish-speaking alcoholics the world over to transcend language barriers, become comfortably sober in A.A. and feel a part of the Fellowship as a whole.

The first edition of *Alcohólicos Anónimos* contained the basic, 164-page text of the English-language Big Book, setting forth in words of hope and inspiration the A.A. principles of recovery from alcoholism. But unlike the English version, it did not contain personal stories of recovery. That would come later, with publication in 1990 of the second edition, which contains 15 stories, including the Spanish translation of "Dr. Bob's Nightmare," "Alcoholics Anonymous Number Three," and "Women Suffer Too."

The Conference Advisory Action specifies that the new third edition, will be "similar in page count" to the English fourth edition. This means the inclusion of more recovery stories. Recently a letter was sent to all Conference members, intergroup/central offices in U.S./Canada, Spanish district D.C.M.s, and Spanish area, district and group literature chairs, as well as to the general service offices of Spanish-speaking countries, requesting submissions. Those that are selected will, like their predecessors, express in a general way "how it was" during their drinking years, including the denial, alibis and self-delusions; "what happened" to make them turn to A.A. for help; and "how it is" today as they strive to live sober, productive lives.

In the present edition of the Spanish Big Book, the patterns that emerge are as similar as the storytellers are diverse. From the Mexican boozier who was called "little owl," because he slept in the hills at night, and the Ecuadorian ship's officer who crashed on the rocks of alcoholism, to the Puerto Rican drunk who lost his identity, only to gain it back in A.A., their differing tales are the stuff that invites identification.

Among other things, the selection process takes consensus and time. A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote in a 1954 letter to (nonalcoholic) chairman of A.A.'s board of trustees, Bernard Smith, "The story section of the Big Book is far more important than most of us think. It is our principal means of identifying with the reader outside of A.A.; it is the written equivalent of hearing speakers at an A.A. meeting." This holds just as true today, and in expanding the selection of stories it is hoped that it will construct the most effective book possible.

Before the 1980s, when the Spanish-speaking population in the United States and Canada was small, various Spanish versions of the Big Book (sans personal stories)

were in circulation in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico and other Spanish-speaking countries. Spanish editions of Bill W.'s writings and several recovery pamphlets were translated by G.S.O.s in some Spanish-speaking countries as well.

For a time, as A.A.'s Spanish-speaking membership suddenly burgeoned, G.S.O. would purchase some of these translations for distribution to those who wanted them. But there was a big problem: The adaptations didn't always agree and, moreover, contained numerous regionalisms. Take the word "hangover," for instance: Mexicans would rue their *cruda*; Colombians, their *guayabo*; Central Americans, their *goma*; and Ecuadorians, their *chuchaque*. Translators at the General Service Office finally settled on the word *resaca*, which also means "undertow." Used widely in Caribbean countries and throughout Spain, it is generally intelligible to the greatest number of Hispanics.

The 1990 edition of the Spanish Big Book incorporates the version published by A.A. World Services, Inc., in 1986. A standardized translation of the basic text (the forewords, first 164 pages, "Dr. Bob's Nightmare" and the Appendices), it was revised and reviewed by CIATAL (the Iberoamerican Committee on Translations and Adaptations of A.A. Literature), a translations committee formed in the mid-1980s, its members representing Spanish G.S.O.s in both South and Central America and Spain. Together, G.S.O. New York and CIATAL worked to develop a standard Spanish translation and to avoid duplication of effort.

The new Spanish Big Book will reflect current membership, such as the increasing numbers of women and young people. Today, in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico alone, A.A.'s Spanish-speaking members number more than 45,000; they meet in approximately 1,680 groups.

A.A. spread into Spanish-speaking countries in the 1940s. An English-speaking group formed in Mexico in September 1946. Ten years later, the country had its first Spanish-speaking group.

Most A.A. Conference-approved books and literature have Spanish counterparts, as do numerous service pieces and reports. Besides the considerable amount of literature and audiovisual material translated over the last several decades into Spanish, we now have the Spanish-language magazine, *La Viña*, published by the A.A. Grapevine, as well as this newsletter, *Box 4-5-9*. And, increasingly, there are simultaneous translations of English into Spanish at area assemblies and Regional Forums.

As one Spanish-speaking A.A. member in Washington, D.C., has commented, "More and more Spanish-speaking members are becoming part of mainstream A.A., as we dreamed would happen. . . . It all shows what sobriety and A.A. love and unity can do."

Call for Spanish-Language Stories

Spanish-speaking members of Alcoholics Anonymous are invited to send their stories to the General Service Office in New York for consideration for inclusion in a new edition of *Alcohólicos Anónimos*.

The aim of the trustees' Literature Committee is that the stories in the new edition reflect the broad range and diversity of A.A. members today. As stated in the preface to the Big Book, "All changes made over the years in the Big Book. . . have had the same purpose: to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately, and thereby reach more alcoholics." This same thinking applies to changes being made to the Spanish version.

The Literature Committee will review submissions according to these guidelines:

- Stories must be in Spanish, typewritten, no longer than 3,500 words, and double-spaced.
- Deadline for receipt of manuscripts is September 1, 2005.
- The words "Spanish Third Edition" should be written on the outside of the mailing envelope and on the first page of the manuscript.
- Author's full name and mailing address should appear on the first page of the manuscript.

The General Service Office will protect the anonymity of the authors, who should keep a copy of their stories in their own files.

Manuscripts should be mailed to: Literature Coordinator, General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Putting the Focus on Gratitude

November is the time many A.A. members and groups celebrate gratitude. (In Canada, it is October.) Alcoholics know from experience that gratitude works wonders in fostering a good attitude.

The custom of setting aside November to focus on gratitude started in the 1940s, when the General Service Board held small "gratitude dinners," which were replaced in the 1960s by bigger and more elaborate "gratitude luncheons." These affairs, which Bill W. would address, were occasions for A.A. members to express their appreciation for the program. More important, it was A.A.'s opportunity to meet with members of the media to thank them for their sympathetic coverage.

According to a G.S.O. memo at the time, the aim of the functions was, "to advance A.A.'s public relations by bringing editors, publishers, writers and broadcasters in personal contact with sources of reliable information on the movement." The luncheons, which later were deemed

too expensive, ended in 1968.

Why November became Gratitude Month in the U.S. is uncertain. It may have something to do with Bill W.'s mistaken notion for a time that his sobriety began in November, instead of its actual start date of Dec. 11.

There are clear connections to the U.S. Thanksgiving, though. In 1956 and 1957, there were floor actions at the annual General Service Conferences recommending that Thanksgiving week in those years be designated "A.A. Gratitude Week." The floor action suggested that this "be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help worldwide services."

However it was that November became the designated month, A.A.s early on saw that staying grateful was important to staying sober.

Being quick to take credit for what has been a gift also takes its toll. Bill W. once detected in himself a strain of self-congratulation for his contribution to A.A. Seeing that this attitude was cutting him off from his fellow A.A.s, he reflected, "How much better it would have been had I felt gratitude rather than self-satisfaction—gratitude that I had once suffered the pains of alcoholism, gratitude that a miracle of recovery had been worked upon me from above." (Grapevine, July 1946)

Some groups will hold Traditions meetings in November to remind themselves of the rich heritage of A.A. Others do topic meetings on the various aspects of gratitude, such as "gratitude is not passive" or "giving it away." During the year, many members of the Fellowship send a gratitude gift of one or two dollars for each year of sobriety on their anniversaries to their local intergroup/central office or to the General Service Office.

As Bill W. wrote in a letter in 1959, "if you carry the message to others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you."

International Convention

Why Do Some A.A. Events Charge Registration Fees?

With A.A.'s 11th International Convention set for next year in Toronto, a perennial question arises: Why are there registration fees for attending special A.A. events like conferences or conventions? The question is a reasonable one, since there is no charge for A.A. meetings and most other A.A. events. And isn't an International Convention just an A.A. meeting on a grand scale? Why then does it cost \$85 (or \$115 Canadian) to register?

In fact, there are huge expenses related to putting on an event like the International Convention in Toronto, running June 30 to July 3, 2005. These events require

months of planning, preparation, and up-front deposits to hotels and other commercial facilities involved.

Expenses include securing use of a meeting place for 50,000 or more people (in this case, the SkyDome), in addition to other meeting venues like the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Then there is the considerable cost of supplying buses and drivers to shuttle attendees between their hotels and the convention center.

Other expenses include the printing of flyers, registration forms, programs, and the cost of postage. Material in Braille also is produced. Arrangements have to be made for simultaneous translations, plus interpreters for the hearing impaired. Then there is the cost of insurance.

Something as basic as setting up the sound system in the stadium is expensive and A.A. bears the expense of assuring that the SkyDome stadium lighting suits our needs.

Luckily for the organizers and attendees, thousands of A.A. volunteers will contribute their time and energy to the smooth running of the Convention.

A.A. International Conventions are huge undertakings, but for those who have attended them, they are worth every bit of the work and expense involved. Hope to see you in Toronto.

International News

This is the second in a series of international A.A. news items that will appear regularly in *Box 4-5-9*. We will include reports on A.A. activity around the world, reflecting the global reach of the Fellowship.

- Singapore was the site of the First Asia Pacific Institute of Addictions, which took place May 30 to June 3. Representatives from a broad array of fields attended the event, including health care professionals, educators, legal personnel, law enforcement agents, and religious. Local A.A. members provided literature displays, were available to answer questions, and conducted open A.A. meetings. A.A. books and pamphlets were displayed in the 17 languages of the Pacific Rim.

- An A.A. member from the Faroe Islands wrote the General Service Office asking permission to publish and distribute A.A. literature in Faroese, the language of the islands. A.A. member Isak J. reported that the Faroe Islands, a self-governing region of Denmark that sits northwest of Scotland, established a general service office at the end of 2003. According to Isak, A.A. members in the Faroe Islands, which have a population of about 47,000, “are in good spirits and working hard” to build a service structure. Isak’s request was forwarded to the A.A.W.S. Publications Department, which is working with the Faroe Islands G.S.O. on its translation of the Big Book.

- Alcoholics Anonymous in Uganda held its First National Convention in May. Registration had already topped 60 a few weeks prior to the event.

- Mongolia held its First National Convention of A.A., July 7 to 10. The event marked the first general service meeting of all A.A. groups in Mongolia, and its work included building the country’s first service structure. Attendees voted to establish regions and then proceeded to the election of regional trustees. There also were sessions on the history of A.A. in Mongolia, a report on finances, and presentations by representatives of foreign G.S.O.s. Greg M., G.S.O. general manager, and Murray McL., trustee-at-large/Canada, attended the event. The site of the meeting was Terelj, about 40 miles outside of Ulaanbaatar, the capital.

- Thailand’s Intergroup, which was created a year ago in February, has succeeded in its goals of maintaining Thailand’s A.A. Web site (www.aathailand.com), its answering service, and its newspaper announcement. The intergroup has established a Carrying the Message committee to reach members of the Thai community. The intergroup, which is in Bangkok, will also keep an up-to-date list of meetings in the country and publish a newsletter. The office can be reached via e-mail at aathailand@thai.com.

- The General Service Offices of several countries celebrated golden anniversaries in the last couple of years. Among countries that created central offices 50 years or more ago are: Iceland, Belgium, Peru, Finland, and Germany, which established its G.S.O. 55 years ago.

How to Help the Hearing-Impaired Get the Message

Giving the deaf and hearing impaired a soundless way of “listening” at A.A. meetings is a priority of the Santa Clara County Intergroup in Campbell, California. “Recently,” the office reports, “we have made cards on hearing impairment available to groups. The content was written by a member of our staff who is herself hard-of-hearing.”

On one side of the card are suggestions for “Helping the Hearing-Impaired at A.A. Meetings.” Among the points made: “When you speak, stand up; speak in a normal or slightly louder tone of voice than normal. Most hearing-impaired people read lips to a certain extent, whether they realize it or not, so *face your audience*.” Also suggested: “If there is a microphone, please use it. . . . Keep the background noise to a minimum. If you need to get up during the meeting, do so quietly. Don’t talk while someone is speaking. Keep your children quiet. . . . Close the windows and doors to help block out traffic or other outside noise, if possible.”

The other side of the card is devoted to “Understanding Hearing Loss.” Noting that “the hearing-impaired include those who have hearing loss due to genetic reasons, age,

accidents, exposure to loud environments and illness,” the text offers helpful information and tips to hearing A.A.s, among them: “Most hearing loss is not a lateral loss. It is most common for a person to have high-frequency loss at a greater rate than low-frequency loss. A lot of speech sounds, most vowel sounds, and women’s voices are high-frequency sounds. Most background noise is low-frequency. One of the hardest things for a hearing-impaired person to do is to separate sounds, making it extremely difficult for one to understand speech in a noisy environment. Any level of background noise detracts from a hearing-impaired person’s ability to understand speech.”

Explaining that “hearing aids do NOT correct hearing like glasses correct eyesight,” the text adds that “people who wear hearing aids do not have perfect hearing—the aids just make hearing easier for them.” While “sitting in the front of the room can help, it is not always the solution—it depends on the level of background noise and the acoustics of the room.” At the end is a suggestion for the groups: “Why don’t you ask someone you know who is hearing-impaired to speak at your meeting about ways to help him or her hear better.”

For the profoundly deaf, the Northern California intergroup says, “we currently have just one meeting a week with an ASL [American Sign Language] interpreter. It typically includes three or four deaf members out of a total attendance of about 15 people. Because the group is so small, our office usually pays for the interpreters, in accordance with a decision of our Intergroup council. Two other meetings have recently discontinued signing because of the high cost and light attendance.” However, the office points out, “we are constantly looking for effective ways to carry the message to alcoholics who are deaf or have trouble hearing—there are many more of them than any of us would guess.”

■ ‘A Bright Page in A.A. History’ — The Principle of Corporate Poverty

“There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.” We hear these words so often that it is easy to lose sight of just how remarkable they are. Perhaps no other organization in history has gone to such extraordinary lengths to avoid accumulating wealth. We accept no contributions at all from nonmembers or outside institutions — and even limit the amount any one member can give. G.S.O. does not engage in aggressive fund-raising, nor do we borrow. We support ourselves with a combination of members’ contributions and income from sales of A.A. literature. And when, as a Fellowship, we have more money than we need, we take action and get rid of it. In short, A.A.’s atti-

tudes and actions concerning money fly dramatically in the face of conventional wisdom and standard business practice.

In *A.A. Comes of Age* (pp. 110-114), Bill W. described three major temptations the founding members faced as our money tradition evolved. First was the grandiose notion that A.A. should build hospitals and engage in widespread alcohol education. “The second temptation,” he tells us, “veered to the other extreme. We got so scared of money that we went tightwad, half-refusing to support A.A.’s simple but essential . . . services Even now we haven’t quite surmounted this one. . . .

“Our third money temptation was the greatest peril of all three.” A friend of A.A. left the Fellowship \$10,000 in her will — the question was whether or not to accept it. At the time, the Foundation (now the A.A. General Service Board) needed money badly. Groups were not supporting the office, and some feared they never would. The trustees knew of about half a million dollars more already earmarked for A.A. in the wills of wealthy friends — enough to make the Fellowship very rich. “Compared to this prospect,” Bill wrote, “the \$10,000 under consideration was not much, but like the alcoholic’s first drink, it would, if taken, inevitably set up a disastrous chain reaction. Where would that land us? Whoever pays the piper is apt to call the tune. . . . The pressure of that fat treasury would surely tempt the Board to invent all kinds of schemes” that would divert A.A. from its primary purpose, and members might well shrug and say, why bother to contribute?

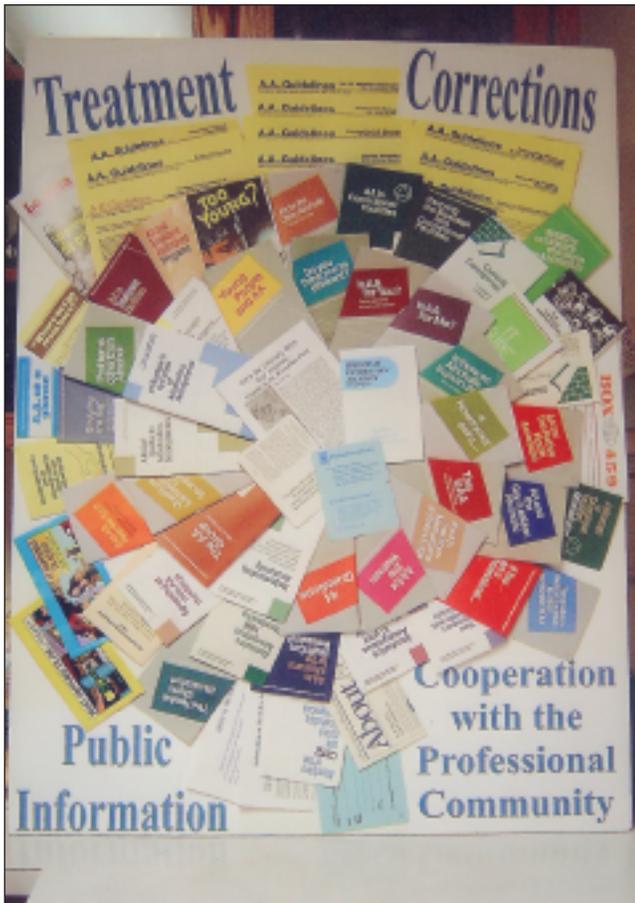
“Then our Trustees wrote a bright page in A.A. history. They declared for the principle that A.A. must always stay poor. Reasonable running expenses plus an ample reserve would henceforth be the Foundation’s financial policy. . . . At that moment, the principle of corporate poverty was firmly and finally embedded in A.A. tradition.”

The principle is clear. Putting it into practice sometimes proves to be complicated. At the group level, of course, it is pretty straightforward: Keep on hand enough money to pay the rent, buy coffee and literature, and continue to hold meetings during tough times — usually, a prudent reserve of about two months’ expenses is enough. Anything more traditionally goes to the district, area, local intergroup, and G.S.O.

At the level of A.A.’s General Service Office, however, practicing corporate poverty is a good deal more complicated. In 1954 the Board of Trustees set up a Reserve Fund whose purpose is to provide adequate financial resources to maintain the essential services of G.S.O. and the Grapevine in case of emergency or disaster, and to cover extraordinary or unexpected expenses. The Reserve Fund is adjusted annually based primarily on group contributions and the sale of A.A. literature. The General Service Conference, along with the trustees’ Finance Committee, monitors the fund closely, and has set an upper limit of no more than one year’s combined operating expenses of A.A. World Services, the A.A. Grapevine and the General Service Board.

In an October 1994 presentation, nonalcoholic trustee and chairman of the board emeritus Gary Glynn talked about the “balancing act” we have taken on: “Too much, and we argue over perilous wealth and power and lose sight of our primary purpose of carrying the message. Too little, and we lose the ability to carry the message at all.” Our trustees can count on the groups, through their Conference delegates, not to let the Fellowship stray from our primary purpose — keeping the size of the Reserve Fund in check is more often the challenge. If our reserves grow too large, trustees and delegates work together to find solutions to bring the total down to an acceptable level.

Even when the Reserve Fund is well within the limit, the dollar amount required to fund our services is impres-



This display of A.A. pamphlets on treatment, corrections, public information, and cooperation with the professional community was created by Paula T., the Literature/Grapevine chair for Area 92, Western Washington. The pamphlets are arranged to reflect the overlapping nature of the work these committees do. “She put a lot of thought into the arrangement,” says delegate Mike M., Panel 54. The display has been on view at Area 92’s service functions, including its spring assembly, and has boosted sales. “We have sold a lot of literature when using it,” says Mike. In response to requests for a similar display from four districts, Paula is in the process of making another one.

sive, and inevitably some groups will ask why they should send any money to G.S.O. In 2003, like most years in recent memory, fewer than half the groups listed with G.S.O. contributed. Since all groups receive exactly the same services whether or not they make contributions, what difference does it make?

In reality, there are some very important differences. When group contributions are high, everyone benefits. Literature prices can remain low, which helps groups carry the message and keeps group expenses down. But in a deeper sense, the differences have nothing to do with dollars and everything to do with spiritual growth. When groups contribute to A.A.’s world services, they become part of what the First Concept calls “the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.” Contributions are as important to the giver as they are to the recipient. Just as being active in service enriches our sobriety, helping to support A.A. services makes every group an integral part of carrying the A.A. message far beyond its own boundaries.

Gary Glynn described corporate poverty as one of the “spiritual and practical principles that assure A.A.’s future. . . . I think in A.A., spiritual and practical are the same thing,” he said. . . . “Anything that is going to be of any practical use to us has to be spiritual as well. . . .” Our ideas about finance, by worldly standards, are completely unworkable. But in that most practical of arenas, the realm of money, our hard-won spiritual principles have brought us through more than six decades and are sure to keep us safe in the decades to come.

■ (Most) Everything You Want To Know About the Long and Short of the Traditions

It is often said that the Twelve Traditions are to group harmony and survival what the Twelve Steps are to each member’s personal recovery. But many A.A.s, even some for whom the Steps are a way of life, view the Traditions vaguely as “a service thing” that doesn’t concern them personally. Even those familiar with the Traditions may find them a puzzlement: Why are there both a long and short form? Which came first? Why, in one Tradition, is the short form longer than the long one? And why, in another instance, are both the same length?

Communication in A.A. has ever been charged with the language of the heart. So it is not surprising that the basic idea for the Traditions came from the struggles of the early members —disparate in almost everything except for their common bond as alcoholics—to arrive at agreement, or group conscience. As early as 1945, A.A. co-founder Bill W. recalled, the stacks of correspondence at Headquarters—now the General Service Office—were

high with requests for help in solving group problems. Importantly, group successes were reported as well. (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p. 203)

An (unidentified) A.A. friend suggested to Bill that all this collective experience could be unified into a set of principles offering tested solutions, so he and his “helpers” at the office got to work. Thus was born the long form of the Traditions as we know them today. After much input from A.A. members and others, they were published in the April 1946 issue of the fledgling Grapevine, then barely two years old.

A year later the Traditions were synthesized into the short form commonly used today. This was done, at the suggestion of Earl T., founder of the first Chicago group, ostensibly so the Traditions would match the Steps in length. But the paring down also occurred because, while few A.A.s found fault with the meanings expressed in the long form, many thought the sentences wordy and difficult to remember. The final draft of the short form was approved by A.A.’s first International Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1950, and these, too, appeared in the Grapevine, which continues the custom to this day.

If the Traditions sometimes seem inconsistent, how surprising is that? After all, they represent the collective experience of literally thousands of A.A. members and their groups. When Bill called A.A. “a benign anarchy,” he wasn’t kidding, because he was using the term in its best sense: “When we had to go into action—to function as groups—we discovered that we also had to become a democracy. . . . All plans for group action had to be approved by the majority. This meant that no single individual could appoint himself to act for his group or for A.A. as a whole. Neither dictatorship nor paternalism was for us.” (*ibid.*, p. 225)

Some examples of inconsistency: The long form of Tradition Two—“For our ultimate purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience”—is shorter than the short form (Are you with us?), which carries the added sentence, “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” And the short form of Tradition Five, “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers,” is nearly identical in content and length to the long form, which says, “Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose*—that of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

Interestingly, the short form of Tradition Eleven states, “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion”; the long form goes further, noting, “Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. . . . There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.”

The long form of the Traditions may be found in the Big Book, (pp. 563-566), *Twelve Steps and Twelve*

Traditions (pp. 189-192) and *The A.A. Service Manual* (p. S13-14). Its shorter counterpart is in the same places, as well as other A.A. books and literature.

Viewed from the distance of more than half a century, the vision of A.A.’s founders and earlytimers in crafting the Traditions is appreciated today by A.A.s everywhere who tell of their gratitude in letters to the General Service Office. The significance of these bedrock principles is perhaps best summed up in “Unity: the Second Legacy” . . . “Ours is not the usual success story; rather it is the story of how, under God’s grace, an unsuspected strength has arisen out of great weakness; of how, under threats of disunity and collapse, world-wide unity and brotherhood have been forged. In the course of this experience 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. These principles are called the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. They represent the distilled experience of our past, and we rely on them to carry us in unity through the challenges and dangers which the future may bring.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p. 79)

C.P.C.

■ A.A. Group Organizes Info Meetings for Court

The Kalamazoo (Michigan) Downtown Group of Alcoholics Anonymous had its hands full dealing with people sent to its meetings by the local court. The so-called “mandated cases” did not know what an A.A. meeting was about, or, in some cases, how to conduct themselves there. More than once, a mandated case would come with his girlfriend and they would use the time to chat. Someone else might get on his cell phone.

They were, in the words of Mike G., chairman of the steering committee of the Kalamazoo Downtown Group, “clueless.”

The problem was acute at the group because of the number of mandated cases, which often runs over 100 a week. The group meets at the Alano Club and has four meetings a day, seven days a week.

Finally, about five years ago, a member of the group approached Judge William B. Schma (nonalcoholic) of the county circuit court with a proposal: A.A. members would lead informational meetings about the Fellowship for defendants in the adult criminal justice system, the source of those most likely to be mandated to attend A.A. meetings.

As Judge Schma remembers it, the A.A. member said, “we are having trouble with these people being hostile

and disruptive.” This behavior likely reflected resentment at being made to attend the meetings. Walking into a meeting cold also meant they were not getting much from the experience. These mandated cases, referred to as “on paper” for the slips of paper they get signed at the meeting to verify their attendance, too often did their required stint in A.A. and then dropped out.

Now, with weekly orientation meetings led by A.A. members firmly established, the situation has turned around. “With this program,” says Mike G., “people aren’t going in blind to A.A. meetings.” He also notices that more people sent from the courts “are ‘getting’ A.A. and continuing to go to meetings even after they are off paper.”

The program is available for adults with substance abuse problems who have been charged with nonviolent felony offenses, plus circuit court probationers and parolees who have been placed in the program as a condition of probation or due to a probation or parole violation.

“We couldn’t do these programs without the help of the Twelfth Step community,” says Judge Schma. “At the same time, though, we don’t get into each other’s business. We respect the anonymity and separateness of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

The informational meetings are held every Tuesday evening and last two hours. The Kalamazoo court requires those in its substance abuse program to attend a series of three such meetings.

The A.A. members follow the same program for each series of three meetings. During the first meeting, the A.A. members tell their stories. In the second meeting, they talk about the Twelve Steps, and at the third meeting, they tell the story of A.A.’s Twelve Traditions.

There are upwards of 50 people in the classes. Court personnel, including probation officers, staff people, and those in security, also sometimes attend.

“We tell them right off the bat to ask as many questions as they like,” says Jim W., an A.A. member in Kalamazoo who has been active in the program since it began. He calls it “a pre-A.A. program.”

The meetings are “strictly informational,” says Jim. “We do not attempt to recruit anyone.”

There are usually three or four A.A. members to help lead the meetings, he says. “Our local Downtown group is the source of many of the speakers,” says Jim.

He agrees that those mandated to attend A.A. meetings are much more likely to stay in A.A. if they first attend the informational meetings. “That is not to say that people don’t run away from it; they do. Or that there aren’t those who laugh at it or dismiss it; there are those, too. But we tell them that they will not be strangers at A.A. meetings, that they can ask for help. And that if they do ask, they will get it.”

When asked if there was any aspect of the program that has come as a surprise, Judge Schma says, “that it has been as big a success as it has been.”

Correctional Facilities

California A.A.s Help Professionals Who Want To Help the Alcoholic

It’s a tradition: Every year since 1972, the Northern California Hospital and Institution (H&I) Conference Committee has been host to professionals whose work touches the lives of alcoholics. This year, reports Steve M., public information chairman of the Northern California H&I Committee, “the 32nd annual spring conference was held in Chico. The purpose, as always, was threefold: (1) to improve mutual understanding and cooperation between A.A. and professionals in an attempt to help the confined alcoholic; (2) to open and maintain communication through workshops, panels and general discussions; and (3) to remain ‘friendly with our friends’ and try to understand where they are coming from and the problems they face.”

This year, Steve notes, the conference panel discussions included former inmates and hospital patients now in A.A., counselors, doctors, judges, lawyers, probation officers, wardens, and the director of the California Department of Corrections. The mayor of Chico also came and presented a proclamation declaring the days of the conference, April 16, 17 and 18, “as days to celebrate Recovery, Unity and Service in Alcoholics Anonymous and Hospital and Institution Service, and to recall those who continue to suffer from alcoholism . . .”

Says Steve: “We were reminded once again of how important it is to carry the message of A.A. into our hospitals and correctional institutions. The nonalcoholic community has seen what happens to people who recover in our Fellowship. Professionals reported that they constantly refer people to our meetings in the hope that they can experience recovery and stop the vicious cycle of alcoholism. They told us how vital it is to get A.A. literature into the hands of still-suffering alcoholics, as well as court personnel, health-care workers and others who are involved with alcoholics so they can learn about the devastation of our disease and the miracle of A.A.”

The H&I conference committee “is an autonomous entity working in tandem with the H&I committee,” Steve explains. “Each functions separately, mainly to ensure that money collected for literature in our slotted ‘pink cans’ is used solely for that purpose—not, say, to put on a conference. Yet the two of them cooperate closely to avoid duplication of effort and the confusion that can cause.”

Lorraine M., who chaired the Chico conference committee, says that the venerable event was started 32 years ago to inform professionals and the confined alcoholic about what A.A. can and can’t do. It has evolved into a large

gathering attended by more than 600 professionals and A.A.s; they share their experience and learn from each other how best to carry the A.A. message of recovery.”

An especially vibrant panel at the conference, Lorraine recalls, “was titled ‘Incarceration or Treatment?’ One speaker, a district attorney, commented on the luck of the draw—how one alcoholic may be sent to treatment while another is imprisoned. He suggested that, with known alcoholic offenders, the courts need to stop dealing with criminal activity in a vacuum and to acknowledge and treat the offenders’ alcoholism as well. The D.A. further pointed out that generally it is legal for judges to mandate treatment for alcoholic offenders instead of jail or prison, providing they have committed no acts of violence.”

Both Lorraine and Steve stress the personal rewards of the conference, each noting, “It helps me stay sober.” Moreover, says Steve, “it acts as a conduit for attracting alcoholics to A.A., and it helps professionals understand and respect our Fellowship and learn about the help we can give them in their efforts to help the alcoholic.”

The conference is held in different locations throughout Northern California in order to reach as many professionals as possible. Next year’s conference will be held in Galt, April 22-24.

P.I.

■ The (Radio) Show Must Go On

The A.A. members in Area 31, Western Massachusetts, take their service commitments seriously. Despite a storm that knocked down trees and utility poles, on a night when authorities were urging people to stay at home, Eileen G. made it to the local radio station to tape a weekly radio program about A.A.

According to Eileen, a member of the Public Information Committee of Area 31, “my father did this radio show 30 years ago. He would do it for stints of three months and never missed a show.” So she wasn’t about to either. On this occasion, she did the show without a speaker, who did not make it.

Called “People Helping People,” the half-hour show has been on the air since the early 1970s. Last year the station, WMAS 1450 AM in Springfield, made a second half-hour slot of airtime available free to Alcoholics Anonymous.

The two shows are taped on Monday nights and air back-to-back on Sunday mornings, from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., every week of the year.

The format is the same for both shows: the host starts by telling the audience a little bit about A.A. history, and then gives the phone number of the local intergroup, plus

a Web address.

The speaker is introduced and shares some of his or her experience, strength and hope. At the end of the show, the host repeats the contact information for A.A. and invites listeners who think they might have a problem with alcohol to get in touch with A.A.

The P.I. committee of Area 31 is considering how it can make best use of the radio time, especially now that it has the extra half hour. “We want the shows to reflect a wide spectrum of recovery,” says Maureen L., chairperson of the committee. She says the broadcast is popular. “If for some reason, the broadcast is a little late getting on the air, we get calls.”

Lining up A.A. members to host the show has not been terribly difficult, says Maureen. “Everybody wants to be on the radio.”

■ Florida TV Stations Welcome P.I. Efforts

An “anonymity letter,” the communication sent annually by G.S.O. to media outlets thanking them for respecting the Fellowship’s principle of anonymity, sparked the interest of a Florida television station.

The station, Telemundo, Channel 40, in Orlando, mailed back to G.S.O. New York the “for more information” postcard that accompanies the anonymity letter.

G.S.O. forwarded the card to Area 14’s (North Florida) Public Information chairperson, Al B., who contacted the Spanish-broadcasting station. The station met with Al, his alternate, and two A.A. members from the local Spanish district. Telemundo expressed interest in A.A.’s Spanish-language P.S.A. “Ya Sabemos Cómo Es” (“We Know What It’s Like”), a copy of which the A.A. members had brought with them.

At the one-hour meeting were the station’s director of public relations and the traffic manager, who is in charge of P.S.A.s. “They were very receptive and very cooperative,” said Al B. “They know that alcoholism is a problem and they were looking to do something if they could.”

The station made two copies of the master P.S.A. Telemundo said it planned to keep one and send the other to its sister station in Tampa.

Soon after the meeting with Telemundo, the A.A. members, including Al, met with another Spanish-broadcasting station, Univision, in nearby Altamonte Springs. “We took the initiative setting up the meeting with Univision,” said Al. He also says the P.I. committee is working on setting up meetings with a couple of other stations.

Telemundo and Univision plan to run the P.S.A. for a year. “Both stations expressed interest in seeing any new P.S.A. that might come out,” said Al. “We have been very happy with the reception our effort have produced.”

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided.

October

- 1-3—*Troy, Michigan*. 17th Annual Tri-County Conference “Miracles Happen.” Write: Ch. Box 721172, Berkley, MI 48072
- 1-3—*Lafayette, Louisiana*. 20th Cajun Country Conference. Write: Ch., Box 3160, Lafayette, LA 70502
- 1-3—*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. 34th Annual NERC. Write: Ch., Box 164, Monessen, PA 15062; www.wpaarea60.org
- 1-3—*Bremerton, Washington*. Western Washington Area 72 Assembly. Write: Ch., 417 E 31st Street, Bremerton, WA 98310-2114
- 1-3—*Osijek, Croatia*. 4th Southeastern Europe Regional Convention. Write: Ch., Student Center SKAC, Palmaticeva 31, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
- 2-3—*Virginia, Minnesota*. Fall Assembly Area 35. Write: Ch., Box 514, Cold Spring, MN 56320
- 8-9—*Montreal, Quebec*. 43rd Area 87 Convention. Write: Ch., 1480 Belanger Street, Suite 101, Montreal, QC H2G 1A7
- 8-10—*Montgomery, Alabama*. Alabama/Northwest Florida Area 1 Assembly. Write Ch., 1314 Stanford Road, Dothan, AL 36305; areaonesecty@aol.com
- 8-10—*Pueblo, Colorado*. Ocsobberfest. Write: Ch., Box 8394, Pueblo, CO 81008
- 8-10—*Davenport, Iowa*. 2004 Area 24 Fall Conference. Write: Ch., Box 4702, Davenport, IA 52805
- 8-10—*South Lake Tahoe, Nevada*. Lake Tahoe Fall Festival. Write: Ch., Box 19307, South Lake Tahoe, CA, 96151-0307
- 14-17—*Amarillo, Texas*. 58th Annual Top of Texas Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 412, Amarillo, Texas 79105
- 15-17—*Paso, Robles, California*. 22ND District Convention. Write: Ch., Box 13308, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
- 15-17—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania*. 62nd Laurel Highland’s Conference. Write: Ch., Box 6, Bovard, PA 15619
- 15-17—*Mackinac Island, Michigan*. The Road of Happy Destiny. Write: Ch., 1500 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48912
- 15-17—*Austin, Minnesota*. Hiawathaland Get-Together. Write: Ch., Box 5792, Rochester, MN 55903
- 15-17—*Salt Lake City, Utah*. Rock-mountain Round-Up. Write: Ch., Box 9152, Ogden, Utah 844409-0152
- 15-17—*Merritt, B.C., Canada*. 31st Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 4242 Lower Nicola, B.C., Canada V0K 1Y0
- 15-17—*Bilibago, Angeles City, Philippines*. 9th Fall International Convention. Write:

- Ch., 1996-A Apt. Marlim Ave., Diamond Subd. Balibago, Angeles City, 2000 Philippines
- 20-24—*Cataluña, Spain*. Costa Brava International English-speaking Convention. Write: Ch., Apartado Correo 157, 17300 Blanes (Girona), Spain; www.aaspain.org
- 21-24—*Jekyll Island, Georgia*. 51st Georgia State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 202, Waynesville, GA 31566
- 22-24—*Santa Barbara, California*. 20th Annual Santa Barbara Convention. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731; www.sbaa.convention.com
- 22-24—*San Bernardino, California*. 17th Annual Inland Empire Convention. Write: Ch., Box 12056, San Bernardino, CA 92423-2056
- 22-24—*St. Cloud, Minnesota*. 22nd Annual St. Cloud Roundup “The Miracle of It”. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302
- 22-24—*Kansas City, Missouri*. Heart of America Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 12839, Overland Park, KS 66282-2839
- 22-24—*Latham Springs, Texas*. 27th Annual Brazos Riverside Conference. Write: Ch., Box 5624, Laguna Park, TX 76644; www.brazosconf.org
- 22-24—*Janesville, Wisconsin*. 53rd Annual Area 75 Fall Conference. Write: Ch., Box 8092, Janesville, WI 53547-8092; www.area75.org
- 22-24—*Rock Springs, Wyoming*. Wyoming Fall Conference. Write: Ch., Box 1172, Rock Springs, WY 82901
- 28-31—*Hagerstown, Maryland*. 20th Annual Area 29 Fall Conference “Love and Service”. Write: Ch., Box 1484, Ellicott City, MD 21041-1484
- 29-30—*Largo, Florida*. Largo’s Step N’ Ahead. Write: Ch., Box 1273 Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785
- 29-31—*Paducah, Kentucky*. 44th Annual Tri-State Convention. Write: Ch., Box 183, Bandana, KY 42022

- 29-31—*Burlington, Massachusetts*. 16th Annual Northeast Regional Woman to Woman Conference. Write: Ch., Box 221, Walpole, MA 02081; www.newomantowoman.org
- 29-31—*Branson, Missouri*. Western Area of Missouri Convention. Write: Ch., Box 91, Niangua, MO 65713

November

- 5-7—*Boulder, Colorado*. Area 10 Winter Assembly. Write: Ch., 102 Vista Lane, Louisville, CO 80027
- 5-7—*Winnipeg, MB, Canada*. 60th Annual Keystone Conference. Write: Ch., 208-323 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2C1 Canada
- 6-7—*New York, New York*. XXVI Convencion Hispana SENY Area 49. Write: Ch., 192 Wyckoff Ave #3L, Brooklyn, NY 11237
- 6-7—*Provo, Utah*. Utah Area 69 Fall Workshop. Write: Ch., 735 E. 2950 N, Provo, Utah 84604
- 13-14—*Trois-Rivières, QC, Canada*. 31e Congrès de Trois-Rivières. Write: Ch., 495 Hart, Trois-Rivières, QC, G9A 4R3, Canada
- 19-21—*Wichita, KS*. 21st Annual Wichita Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 47713, Wichita, KS 67201
- 19-21—*Avignon, France*. 44th Annual National Congress France. Write: Ch., 21 Rue Trousseau, Paris, 75011 France; www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr
- 26-28—*Stamford, Connecticut*. CSCYPAA CT State Conference of Young People. Write: Ch., 514 Dewey St. Bridgeport, CT 06605
- 26-28—*Bloomington, Minnesota*. 64th Founder’s Day Weekend. Write: Ch., Box 8027, Minneapolis, MN 55408-9998; wwwFOUNDERSDAYMN.org

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Box 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. three months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to us:

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20 _____

Name of event: _____

Place (city, state or prov.): _____

For information, write: (exact mailing address) _____

Contact phone # (for office use only): _____

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group’s bulletin board



26-28—*Diamondhead, Mississippi*. 15th Annual Gratitude Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 7851, Gulfport, MS 39507-7851
26-28—Warwick, Bermuda. Annual Convention. Write: Ch., Box 178, Warwick, WRBX Bermuda.
www.alcoholicsanonymous.bm

December

3-5—*Louisville, Kentucky*. Special Forum. Write: Forum Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

January

14-16—*Puerto Vallarta, Mexico*. 3rd Annual Sobriety Under the Sun. Write: Ch., 827 Union Pacific, PMB 078-174, Laredo, Texas 78045-9452;
www.aapvconvention.com
21-23—Mahnomon, Minnesota. Wild Rice Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomon, MN 56557
28-30—Blytheville, Arkansas. 48th Annual Coon Supper. Write: Ch., Box 675, Blytheville, AR 72315