



The Beacon Weekly

100 Grove St.,
Suite 314
Worcester MA
01605
(508) 752-9000

aaworcester.org

Intergroup Office
Is **CLOSED** until
further notice.

Please call the office
number (shown
above) or email the
Office Manager
(shown below) for
any assistance
needed.

The Beacon Weekly Staff

1/2020 — 12/2020

Editor:

John Mcl
beacon@
aaworcester.org

Office Manager:

Brandy H
officemanager@
aaworcester.org

Contributing Editor:

The Cyber Sot

Keep the chain
going— Pass this
Along

Let us know how
we are doing—
beacon@

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

How G.S.O Keeps “Carrying the Message” Despite Unprecedented Obstacles

“...it was a first: never in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous had the General Service Office — whose antecedents stretch all the way back to the late 1930s and Bill W.’s small office at Hon- or Dealers in Newark, N.J. — been forced to shutter its doors.”

“As a result of Coronavirus (COVID-19), New York State has shut down 100% of operations of ‘nonessential’ businesses/ organizations,” the announcement posted to aa.org read. “The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY is closed, effective March 20, 2020, until further notice.”

Continued on page 9

Marking Time, One Chip at a Time

When I hit 30 days, my first sponsor, Bob B., a wise and spiritual man, called me a chip whore.

He was right.

I collected as many chips as I could during my “chip week,” hitting as many meetings as possible. And I kept them all on a key chain. I might not have had a lot of time, but I sure had a lot of chips.

I did the same at 60 days, and 90. Then came that long, dry spell to six months. Then nine. Finally, one year. Forget plas- tic... bronze! Then nothing for a year. An entire year!

Continued on page 7

The opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does the publication of any article imply an endorsement by either A.A., General Services nor Intergroup.



WAI's VIRTUAL LOCAL MEETING SUPPORT APP SOME AREA MEETINGS RESUMING IN-PERSON

<https://so7ey.glideapp.io/>

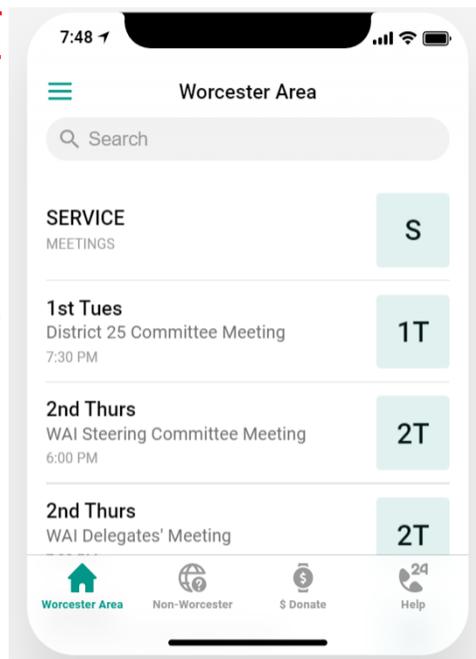


QR CODE
Scan with camera to install WAI app – (QR Code App required)

Worcester Area Intergroup's home page features a Virtual Meeting box with a link to a Web App for WAI activities. There is also spreadsheet listing Virtual A.A. meetings in Massachusetts, and the Worcester area.

<https://bit.ly/2WlpfBD> (left tab) The spreadsheet's left tab includes links to **185** meetings in the Central Mass. and surrounding areas, **some of which are resuming in-person meetings**. The **center tab** lists local meetings planning to resume, or, meetings which are new.

Some meetings have plans resume to 'in-person' status—these are highlighted in yellow in the 'Notes' column on the right. [see illustration below]



Groups planing to resume in-person meetings, please let Worcester Intergroup know so the WAI list can be updated. The spreadsheet includes a third tab (the **right** tab) listing **65** online meetings in related areas. All meetings setup using the Worcester Intergroup account require a password to keep 'bots and hackers out — The password for attending is **Sober2020**

Eastern Massachusetts Central Service meeting list —

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/12-gRXU_fNZ2ggNxl2KdCbzODwR9mNvVW

350 meetings

PASSWORD protected meetings are highlighted in green. NOTE: Passwords are case-sensitive (please check the Password column).

The HALTline is open 24/7 if you need to talk or have any questions (508) 752-9000

Day	Time (ET)	Meeting Name	Topic/Meeting Format	ZOOM Link	Meeting ID	Password	Phone Number	Notes
Sunday	5:00 PM	Westminster Men's Step It Up	Men's BBSS	https://zoom.us/j/139454238	139 454 238	Sober2020	1 646 558 8656 US	RCA Westminster, MA
Sunday	6:00 PM	Mindfulness in F...		https://zoom.us/j/870951... https://zoom.us/j/32050...			558-8656	It all Starts Here Speaker Discuss Now meeting in person
		Naukeg C...	Open Discussion	https://zoom.us/j/89876477603?pwd=cW1PM...				
		(North B...	Open Discussion	https://zoom.us/j/2288748...	452 288 748	None	1 929 436 2866	Individual Zoom account (vs. Int account)
Sunday	7	Captain Andy's AA Mee	3 meetings per day, pm. 7 days per wee	https://zoom.us/j/7332967...	797 733 2967	None	929-436-2866	Also meeting in person
Sunday	7	Shrewsbury Simple Sp	12 Steps and 12 Tra Discussion	https://zoom.us/j/595536968...	595 536 968	None	1 312 626 6799	Also meeting in person outside,

Worcester Area meeting list

Worcester Area Resumed/New

Yellow Highlight — In-Person Meetings Resuming

Non-Worcester Area meeting list





ALCATHON NEWS!

Worcester Area Intergroup/District 25

On **ZOOM!!!**

We will have the Alcathon room open for the full 36 hours, with commitments for 9 hours each day.

If your Group is interested in doing a Virtual Commitment, please email:

alcathon@aaworcester.org

GRAPEVINE Daily Quote

July 31, 2020

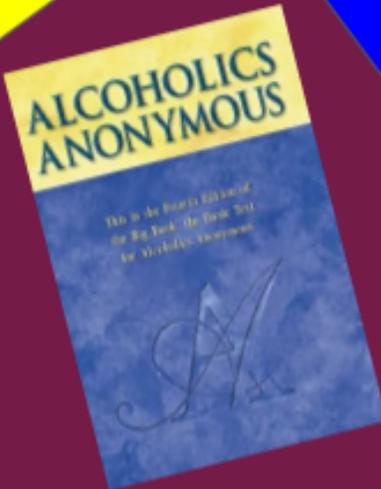
“If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God’s help, continually surrender these hobbling liabilities.”

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W., January 1958, “*The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety*”,
*The Language of the Heart***



Keeping Worcester area sober since 1974!

GIVE TODAY!



WHY WE NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER.

The Worcester Area Intergroup has relied on bookstore sales and group contributions to keep the service organization running. With the physical store location closed since March and groups meeting online, income is down. We are relying more than ever on member contributions to keep the WAI office open to the newcomer and you! We are so appreciative of the member contributions to date, your contribution is what keeps us going.

TWO WAYS TO HELP:

1. Contribute online or by mail!
2. Shop in the online bookstore!

Worcester Area Intergroup

100 Grove Street, Suite 314, Worcester, MA 01605

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there.



WHAT IS AA?

Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of men and women who have had drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE?

Contributions are welcome from members of AA. Due to the 7th tradition we cannot accept donations from people who are not members.

WAI COMMITTEES

- Alcathon
- Corrections
- HALTline
- Public Information
- Social
- The Beacon
- Treatment Facilities
- Website / Technology

For more information, to contribute or shop visit aaworcester.org

CALL US 508.752.9000



Alcoholics
Anonymous®

www.aa.org

General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

475 Riverside Drive, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10115 / Telephone: (212) 870-3400

June 19, 2020

Dear A.A. friends,

We in A.A. – here at G.S.O., along with the rest of the world – continue to experience an unprecedented situation. Without question, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Fellowship, including our organized service structure, is facing enormous challenges, locally and globally. For many of us, the most prominent example is that, for the first time in the 85-year history of our Fellowship, we are navigating the lack of face-to-face meetings. While we have found creative ways to allow for the vital interaction between one alcoholic and another, and welcoming newcomers daily, it is clear that the health crisis has other farreaching consequences.

As we all adapt to the present reality of digital meetings, the question now is, “How do we responsibly practice self-support, our Seventh Tradition?” As we can no longer pass a physical basket, we are working to find ways to support the Fellowship at all levels, from our groups to Intergroups and Central Offices, from our Districts and Areas to the General Service Office itself.

The reality is that even though meetings, Twelfth Step services and operations have shifted to a virtual environment, expenses continue to accumulate during this crisis, which underscores the importance of practicing the Seventh Tradition. Through this crisis, however, we have witnessed the many ways in which the entire A.A. Fellowship has come together to provide ongoing support. Among them:

- Many home groups are still paying rent even though their meetings cannot convene. They are also providing online meetings on platforms that may have associated costs.
- Intergroup/Central Offices are still stocking needed literature and fielding Twelfth Step calls, redirecting A.A. members and those looking for recovery to online meetings.
- Area-level committees are working to keep channels open between the Fellowship and the delegates and board members that make up our General Service Conference, as well as to do public information, corrections and other service.

Continued on page 15



Alcoholics Anonymous, COVID-19 & our Seventh Tradition

Continued from page 5

- G.S.O. in New York is continuing to support all levels of service. Literature still needs to be published and distributed, calls need to be answered, online platforms still need to be updated, and support operations sustained.

In an effort to keep the membership informed during this challenging time we would like to share a brief three-minute video update from Leslie Backus, the Class A (nonalcoholic) treasurer of our General Service Board.

<https://vimeo.com/430834698>

Please feel free to pass this information along to members and groups in your Area to watch on their own time or to play before their online meetings.

We are so grateful for your time and attention, your dedicated service and – always – your generous support.

Yours sincerely, in fellowship,

G. Gregory Tobin General Manager

Alcoholics
Anonymous® | www.aa.org

A PDF of the original letter is available for download here:

https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_VideoCommunicationonSupport-6-19-2020.pdf



Marking Time, One Chip at a Time

Continued from page 1

The agony. I couldn't be the center of attention! No applause. No atta-boys. No chance to flash an aw-shucks smile to show my humility. (NOTE: When I found out that some meetings gave a chip a month for the first year, and one for 18 months as well... I felt cheated!)

Chips and medallions are important. They mark the passing of time and celebrate the milestones, whether it's for 30 days or 30 years. They also give us a chance to stand up at a meeting and thank our Higher Power, the program, our sponsors... and take a bow. They also show the newcomer that the program works. There were times when the thought of being so close to a chip that I could almost feel it kept me sober. It was coupled with how embarrassed I would feel if I had to stand and take another newcomer chip.

By the way, I have given away most of my chips; sometimes to a meeting's chip collection, and sometimes to people I sponsored. When I was turned seven my sponsor gave me the chip his sponsor had given him at seven. I passed it on to one of the people I sponsored. I hope it is still being passed on. That chip has had a lot of good sobriety rubbed into it.

It's because chips are so important – to me and a lot of other people – that I would like to suggest some new chips. Since most meetings today are on Zoom, most chips are virtual chips. You can design one, print it out, and hold it up for the entire meeting to see, and then email it to the recipient.

- **10-Day chip: Double-digit sobriety.** It shows you've run out of fingers to count your days on, so use your toes.
- **100-Day chip: Triple-digit sobriety.** To figure out when this one comes, unless you're a sober centipede, you have to do the math in your head to keep track—or use a convenient cell phone app.
- **1,000-Day chip: Quadruple sobriety.** Depending upon the month you got sober in and if there is a leap year involved, this comes somewhere around month 33, about three months before your 3rd anniversary.
- **10,000-Day chip: Quintuple-digit sobriety.** Again depending upon the month you got sober and how many leap years you have not drunk through, this comes around the seventh or eighth month of your 27th year.
- **100,000-Day chip: Sextuple-digit sobriety.** AA's birthday is June 10, 1935, and it will celebrate 100,000 days (that's 273 years and seven months) on March 25, 2209. It'll be a great party, but I'll probably have to miss it.

Holidays Chip: This celebrates going through every major holiday sober during your first year. You and your sponsor can decide what those holidays are:

Continued on page 8



Marking Time, One Chip at a Time

Continued on page X

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan, Festivus, the 4th of July, Arbor Day, Superbowl Sunday... whatever. By the way, if the Superbowl is one of your major holidays - it is one you can celebrate with a chip... and salsa.

Yes, I've changed my attitude about chips today. They're important, but not as important to me as simply being sober and carrying the A.A. message. Hopefully, that's because some of my first sponsor, Bob B., a wise and spiritual man, rubbed off on to me.

You might even say... (wait for it...) I'm a chip off the old block.

The Cyber Sot

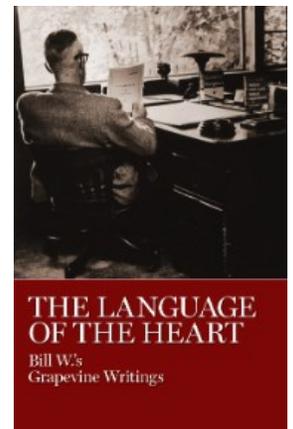
GRAPEVINE Daily Quote

August 1, 2020

“Sometimes we register surprise, shock, and anger when people find fault with AA. We are apt to be disturbed to such an extent that we cannot benefit from constructive criticism. This sort of resentment makes no friends and achieves no constructive purpose. Certainly, this is an area in which we can improve.”

“AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1965, “*Responsibility Is Our Theme*”,

The Language of the Heart



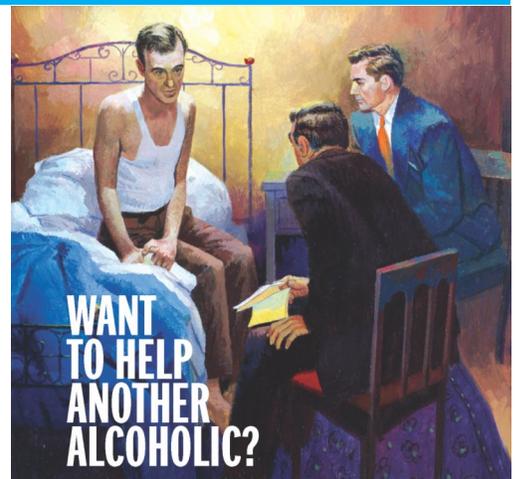
Want To Help Another Alcoholic?

Join Us in our 2020

Carry The Message Project

To learn more, visit our website at aagrapevine.org/carry-the-message

or visit our YouTube channel at youtube.com/aagrapevine



The opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does the publication of any article imply an endorsement by either A.A., General Services nor Intergroup. Comments, questions and articles may be directed to *The Beacon Weekly*. All excerpts & Articles reprinted with permission from AAWS and/or *The Grapevine*.



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 1

Given the toll that COVID-19 was already exacting on the New York metropolitan area, this announcement was not unexpected. Nonetheless, it was a first: never in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous had the General Service Office — whose antecedents stretch all the way back to the late 1930s and Bill W.'s small office at Honor Dealers in Newark, N.J. — been forced to shutter its doors. G.S.O. is home to 95 employees of A.A.W.S., plus a dozen more working for AA Grapevine. These men and women, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, serve a worldwide membership of over two million alcoholics in myriad ways: answering letters, preparing bulletins, keeping prison inmate correspondence flowing, processing group contributions, providing new literature (and keeping older literature up to date), helping prepare for the General Service Conference and World Service Meetings, preserving A.A. history in print and digital archives, and maintaining the aa.org website, in three languages, with its 14 million yearly viewers.

As the pandemic worsened, G.S.O. faced an unprecedented logistical, technical and, yes, spiritual challenge. With employees scattered to their homes, how would it continue to fulfill its original function, as described by Bill W., of being a “point of reference on the globe where our few but important universal services can focus and then radiate to all who wish to be informed or helped”?

Even before the New York shutdown order, says G.S.O. General Manager Greg T., “In the first week in March, we formed a task force comprised of myself and senior management and staff. The welfare of our employees and their families was paramount in all of the thinking and planning.” Working to help G.S.O. prepare for the coming crisis was Stephanie L., G.S.O.'s Senior Director of Administration and Strategy.

“As the news of the health crisis developed,” says Stephanie, “we started to forecast and think about how we could move forward. We actually thought we had more time, which we obviously didn't. The Human Resources department was very important in everything we did. Prior to our closing the office on March 20, we had already said to employees, ‘If you are not comfortable coming in, talk to your supervisor and we'll arrange to ship your equipment now.’ So, actually, from March 13 to March 20, folks exited at their discretion. By March 19, it was very much a skeleton crew here.”

Another major area of concentration, Stephanie relates, was technology. “Our workforce was not necessarily equipped for remote working,” she says. “We looked at the tools we had on hand, ordered printers and monitors, and then the shelter-in-place order came down from the governor [New York governor Andrew Cuomo] and we had to leave quickly. The order for printers and monitors never arrived.

Continued on page 10



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 9

And this was where the true agility of the Information Technology department came in.” G.S.O. Technology Services Director Lorna Graham (nonalcoholic) was only hired to her full-time position on February 3 — just in time for a historic pandemic. It sounds daunting — and it was — but G.S.O did have one important advantage. “By the time I arrived, the team was in the clean-up phase of a multi-year project to migrate to a cloud-based platform for business operations. This meant we didn’t have to give access to servers, and we were able to seamlessly move people to their home offices.” Although, of course, it wasn’t all that seamless. “I joke that laptops were the toilet paper of the business world: as we tried to set people up at home, I discovered you couldn’t get them.” Then there was the issue of the printers and monitors not arriving, and the fact that employees had what Lorna calls “their own tech mini-environments” at home, with different Internet service providers, different equipment and, sometimes, passwords that had been set up by their children — and that no one could remember.

Working with her staff of three — Dmitriy Kerget, Mili Alma-Noyola and Pedro Gonzalez (all nonalcoholic) — Lorna was able to address these issues. Pedro found himself driving to employees’ homes to set up computers and printers and to facilitate connectivity with the office. “This was actually a whole team effort by the entire office,” Lorna says. “Many employees were taking equipment home, so we were coordinating with their department managers to box it up and get it ready. I am really grateful and thankful for my staff, who have worked just tirelessly.”

As for the rest, Lorna says, “We are facing the problems that any other organization with a remote business environment is facing right now. Many people want a monitor or a wireless mouse or a webcam because some of their tech is outdated, and they have to be on Zoom or whatever all day. We’re available to help at any time. We’ve also set up a daily Zoom meeting from 10 to 11 so anyone who has tech difficulties can pop in. Our goal is to continue to be able to respond as nimbly as possible.” The closing of G.S.O. came in a year that was to have featured A.A.’s 2020 International Convention in Detroit, Michigan. Regrettably, the Convention had to be canceled. Michele Grinberg, Class A (nonalcoholic) chair of the General Service Board, says, “This was one of the very early decisions on the table,” in part because of vendor contracts. Greg T. adds that it was “unfortunate, but necessary.” (As it turned out, Detroit became another COVID-19 “hot spot,” and the TCF Center, where the International Convention was to take place, was turned into a 900-bed hospital to care for those ill from the virus.) G.S.O. issued information concerning registration refunds on aa.org; according to Julio E., staff member on the International Conventions assignment, almost 1,000 would-be convention-goers told G.S.O. to keep the money and to contribute it to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous for the U.S. and Canada.

Continued from page 11



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 10

The 70th General Service Conference was scheduled to take place in Rye, New York, during the week of April 18-25, but it became obvious this could not go on as usual either. On March 12, the General Service Board announced a “Virtual General Service Conference,” a decision made in conjunction and consultation with G.S.O. According to Michele, “During the course of about a zillion Zoom calls, the three boards [the General Service Board, A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine] worked together with the Fellowship with a goal of making sure the Conference delegates’ voices were heard and that there would be a meaningful Conference.”

Planning a virtual Conference was a complex undertaking, says Patrick C., staff Conference coordinator. “There are 135 Conference members. You’ve got a delegate from Hawaii and one from Newfoundland, so the time zone difference required us to pare down the daily schedule from no earlier than noon to no later than 7 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.” And how much time could you ask even the most devoted trusted servant to spend hunched over a laptop? “Ultimately, we cut down our traditional seven-day event to four days, six hours a day, with breaks to avoid screen fatigue,” Patrick says.

The complexities continued. With most corporations going to remote operations, virtual conference vendors were booked months in advance, so the decision was made to use Zoom Meeting Room and Zoom Webinar as a platform for the virtual Conference, whose date is now set for May 16-19. (See page 9 for a report and summary of Advisory Actions from the 70th General Service Conference.)

Next steps included deciding what was absolutely the most essential business of the Conference — streamlining it, in other words — without losing what Patrick calls “the spirit of the Conference, the unity and connectivity.” A timesaving example: during the course of a regular Conference, there would normally be written reports from the three corporate boards as well as live presentations by the chair of each board. It was decided to pre-record videos of the board presentations and post them prior to Conference, so that Conference members could stream them beforehand or at their convenience.

All of this has been done remotely, of course — Patrick’s kitchen in northern Manhattan has become a Conference information clearinghouse. From handling voting in a virtual space to determining the optimal tech capabilities of delegates (it turns out only a small percentage have needed to be trained), planning the Conference has been a “unique and fantastic experience,” says Patrick.

“We’ve worked with the board, delegates and G.S.O. staff members, and everybody has been ready at each decision point to do what needs to be done.”

There are other G.S.O. employees inventing solutions to problems they never thought they would have to solve.

Continued from page 12



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 11

A.A.W.S. Mail/Shipping Manager Aubrey Pereira (nonalcoholic) is one. He currently hosts the G.S.O. mailroom right in his Bronx apartment. “A courier service picks up the mail from the Grand Central Station post office box [Box 459] and delivers it to me on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays,” says Aubrey. “On Wednesdays, I go to the post office at 125th Street in Manhattan to get the mail for 475 Riverside Drive, which is the street address of the office. When I go to the post office, I mask up and glove up. I take the mail back to my apartment, and I use a disinfectant spray on it and let it sit for an hour.”

The mail consists of a combination of literature orders, contributions, notices from people who are updating addresses (some still do it on paper) and inmate mail, which goes to Brenda B. on the Corrections desk. There’s also mail for members of the senior management team and staff, and Aubrey either sends this to them via courier service or delivers it over to Zenaida Medina (nonalcoholic), Assistant Director of Finance, who scans it and then emails it to its intended recipient.

Naturally, Aubrey’s days are busy, even though he estimates he is getting half the mail he received prior to the pandemic, probably due to the fact that A.A.s are not meeting in groups or

perhaps even going to the post office. “At some point,” Aubrey says, “we’ll return to some semblance of normalcy. Until then this is how we are dealing with it, just to keep the avenues of communication open to the Fellowship and to not have the mail completely stopped.”

Brenda B., on the Corrections assignment, is one of the beneficiaries of Aubrey’s work. Letters from inmates — 400 a month — arrive at her apartment via the courier service. She replies to each letter. “It depends on the letter and the request. Sometimes they say they are depressed, so I try to be as encouraging as possible.” The materials she might normally include with her replies — literature and copies of Grapevine — are out of reach in the mailroom at the office, but she managed to have a thousand copies of the spring issue of “Sharing From Behind The Walls” — the quarterly newsletter published by the Corrections assignment — shipped to her, and she inserts these with her replies.

Continued from page 13



Teleworking from home — one employee’s set up, including secure access to the office-wide VPN (virtual private network).



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 12

“I also updated the letter with the information that Grapevine is free and available on its website.” When she is not occupied with inmate correspondence, Brenda is busy answering emails and phone calls from the Fellowship. It’s busy, but she’s grateful for two things. One is the chance to help the inmates — “They are our brothers and sisters behind the walls, and any one of us could be in their place.” Another is for her colleagues at G.S.O. “I am super grateful to be part of this wonderful team, making all this work.”

Working remotely has not impeded the goals of the Publishing department in any appreciable way, says Publishing Director David R. “In many ways the department — with its editorial, French and Spanish translation, print and digital production, mailing, warehousing and shipping, order entry, customer service, international licensing and translation review and intellectual property administration divisions — has never been more energized, creatively engaged and ardently committed to doing our part to share A.A.’s message via our literature.” This is not to say it wasn’t a mad scramble for the first three weeks after the office shut down, with nonstop Zoom meetings, including on Saturdays and Sundays. “We moved mountains (and lots of desktops and printers!) to get our telework connections clicking; and with help from our stellar tech services leader, Lorna Graham, this was rather surprisingly painless,” says David. Among the many current publishing projects moving forward is the 2020 catalog of Conference-approved literature and other A.A. material (with new, simplified pricing) — 110,000 copies of which have been printed to be inserted into all orders from A.A.’s literature warehouses. (It is also available as a PDF on aa.org). Newly produced audio book recordings of the Big Book and have recently been posted for listening on aa.org along with DVDs of those books in ASL. In mid-April, work on a “first-ever” project began: the studio recording of A.A. General Service Conference-approved pamphlets as read by professional voice actors. “The first pamphlet recorded in English, was, fittingly enough, ‘Access to A.A.: Members share on overcoming barriers,’” David says. And in an essential change for an age of remote operations, David says, “We have gotten independent legal advice on how to move our international licensing of A.A.W.S.-copyrighted items of literature into streamlined electronic sharing and signing processes,” which will expedite the time-consuming procedure of sending signed documents to and from remote places. In all, David says, “We’ve never been more committed to getting the job done.” At Grapevine, A.A.’s international journal, Publisher Albin Z. and Senior Editor Jon W. decided that the best thing they could do for the Fellowship was to “unlock” issues of Grapevine — normally available only to subscribers — on the new aagrapevine.org website. All A.A. members now have free access to Grapevine issues from January through May 2020. (La Viña issues are free January/February through May/June.) “Grapevine is a place where people in A.A. share their experience, strength and hope,” says Albin. “Making this digitally available to everyone during this crisis can help them to stay connected.”

Continued on page 14



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 13

Grapevine also posts all G.S.O. updates on the COVID-19 crisis on its website and carries pertinent tutorial videos on its YouTube channel, including one on how to prevent the digital platform compared to in-person meetings.” While handling national press inquiries, whenever possible, Racy directed inquiries to local P.I. committees. “There has been some wonderful coordination between local committees and the media,” she adds.

The third wave of media attention came with the advent of trolling attacks on the platforms where A.A.s were meeting. “Responding to these queries means walking a delicate line — sharing the experience of the Fellowship but not acknowledging or endorsing any particular platform,” which could represent a Sixth Tradition break.

In general, Racy feels, we are entering new territory with these widespread digital meetings. “I’m seeing in real time groups having the discussion as to how we can utilize these platforms to carry the message while retaining anonymity. There may in fact be a lack in our current service material that needs to be explored.”

G.S.O. Archivist Michelle Mirza (nonalcoholic) is making sure that none of the history of the pandemic as it relates to A.A. is lost to the Fellowship. She says that, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, news articles were coming in “at warp speed.” She continues, “There is nothing previously that has compared to this — not even 9/11, which was more localized. The very fact that this is affecting meetings globally is daily news. We’re receiving maybe ten news items a day.”

Archives no longer subscribes to a clipping service that sends in articles with A.A.-related topics. “Now we use Google Alerts, indexing certain terms like ‘A.A.’ ‘Big Book,’ etc.,” Michelle says. “We may not capture 100 percent of the articles, but what we miss, the Public Information assignment usually gets, and we work closely and exchange information. We are archiving samples of articles that mention A.A. and meetings or groups, along with ones that reference G.S.O. or intergroup. We are also transcribing some radio programs.”

Michelle and her group collect internal correspondence — sharing from members, as well as staff responses — and external communications sent out by G.S.O. She has also been hearing from a few archivists in California who have started a newsletter and invited local archivists and members to share pandemic-related material. “Five years ago, if we were in this position,” Michelle says, “we would not have been able to function as we are functioning now. The last couple of years, we have been digitizing archives, scanning thousands of documents. Now we are able to do research at home, and we have desktop scanners to help us preserve all of this for the future. We are all really, really busy.”

Jeff W., staff member on the Group Services assignment, says that a good deal of his job

Continued on page 15



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 14

is “to stay in touch with groups and help them be part of the service structure. But there are now literally hundreds or even thousands of new groups on these digital platforms.” And this is not even to mention the established groups that have transitioned to digital platforms.

“The people doing the truly heroic work here,” Jeff says, “are the intergroups, including Online Intergroup of A.A. They are all working tirelessly, coming up with new tech solutions. New York Inter-Group, for instance, has set up a Zoom Enterprise account and allows groups to use it to set up their own accounts for free. It can host groups with as many as a thousand participants per meeting.” (New York Inter-Group says in a note on its website, “Groups continue to run their own meetings, at their regular dates and times, with their usual group format. We simply provide the technology.”)

Jeff feels this is the “really amazing story” of the pandemic — A.A.s going to great lengths to make sure other A.A.s have access to meetings. But he is quick to point out the more difficult side of the steep economic downturn for intergroups. “We are hearing from intergroups that they may not have large enough prudent reserves to survive this — and they are not getting sales from literature as they normally might. Group contributions are down. Some are considering applying for the federal PayCheck Protection Program (PPP) loans for small businesses. They are calling us and asking, ‘How does this fit with the Seventh Tradition?’ “We don’t want to interpret Traditions for them. I provide sharing from delegates and regional trustees and from Archives on matters of finance. I remind them that it’s not just about the Seventh Tradition. The Fifth — keeping the doors open to carry the message — comes into play. As does the Fourth Tradition, concerning autonomy. It’s a tough call.”

Groups, too, are concerned about finances, focusing on the best way to collect Seventh Tradition contributions remotely. Jeff provides them with information about digital options available — in particular a Box 4-5-9 article entitled “Passing the (Digital) Basket” (Winter 2017) — and feels that most groups are solving this problem relatively quickly. Despite all these weighty issues, A.A. will always be A.A. — complaints come in from members about other members smoking during Zoom meetings, which upsets ex-smokers. Or even working out on Zoom calls. Sharing your experience, strength and hope, while on an exercise bike? Who would have thought?

Clement C. is Senior Manager of the new Communications Department, which acts as an internal agency supporting G.S.O., A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and the General Service Board with various communication, digital projects and other initiatives. Like Jeff W., Clement has seen the Fellowship step up during the crisis to find innovative ways to reach out to other A.A.s. “TIAA [Technology in A.A.] Forum is sharing information in all kinds of ways to help people communicate online,” he says.

Continued on page 16



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 15

Clement is on the Meeting Guide app committee (for more on the Meeting Guide, see “The Meeting Guide App,” Box 4-5-9, Fall 2019). “There are separate volunteers who support the app, who are not a part of the service structure,” says Clement. “They were able to add fields to their plug-in with conference call phone numbers and Zoom meeting information. When Josh R., who designed the app, became aware of this, we moved it forward in the committee to get approval to update the information.”

It has been a hectic time for Communications, especially in the first few weeks after the G.S.O. closure. There was new information on aa.org that needed to be updated on a regular basis — information about the closure of the office, the cancellation of the Convention, and the General Service Conference going virtual. Clement and his group worked with the P.I. assignment to create the first press release dealing with virtual meetings and social media. Many people thought G.S.O. was no longer taking literature orders, so a notice was created on how they could use the online store to order.

“It seemed like everything we were saying had a shelf life of two to three days and then needed to be changed,” Clement says. Any organization as tight-knit as the General Service Office lives not just by work alone, but also by human contact. “One of the things I am really most proud about is the communication that we have maintained throughout this time,” says Stephanie L. “We have weekly senior management meetings where we share information with senior leaders. We also have department meetings. I’m very happy with the way we connect and communicate.”

Whether on Zoom, Google Teams or Slack, the internal meetings have become incredibly



Temporary mailroom set up by the A.A.W.S. mail/shipping supervisor in his apartment in the Bronx. The daily mail includes literature orders, contributions, update correspondence and inmate mail.

important to G.S.O. employees isolated in their homes. Greg T. has set up a general manager’s Zoom meeting on a weekly basis; there is usually 100 percent attendance. Dubbed the “huddle,” this meeting is echoed in numerous smaller huddles within departments throughout the week.

Jeff W. says the staff desk rotations have a huddle every day at 1:15.

“Whoever is available can call and share information. It’s serious, because there’s so much new that is happening, but there are also some laughs. This has been one of the lifesavers.”

Continued on page 17



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 16

“One thing obviously missing from all of this,” David R. says, “is the ability to pop into the office next door and have a quick conversation. The success of telework depends on having all of those connections that would be spontaneous during the course of the day in a physical office, those impromptu one-on-ones. So much is happening, but we have the ability to connect with each other so quickly — via Zoom, phone calls, whatever — that I don’t think we have actually lost much of that spontaneity.”

Despite the successful move to remote working, the question lingers: What next?

There are no definitive answers, says Greg T. “I’m only guessing at this point, but by the last week in May or the first week in June, we could be on the path to a partial return. In that case, I would anticipate that our daily schedules would be adjusted to ensure the building is social-distanced.” Coincidentally, G.S.O., currently on the 11th floor at 475 Riverside Drive, had planned to take space on the eighth floor later in the summer, which, should the staff be able to return, will provide the opportunity for more social distancing.

Greg is also aware of concerns about the financial sustainability of the General Service Office. “Obviously, we’ve never been in this position before, but the General Service Board Reserve Fund was created decades ago by our wise and prudent predecessors for just such a moment, to make sure the entire business survives and maintains continuity. In an emergency, the Reserve Fund is funded up to about nine months of operating expenses, and we are going to be drawing down from it over the next three to four months, before we start to get back on our feet again.”

In terms of group contributions, G.S.O. accepts Seventh Tradition contributions via PayPal and will be testing Venmo and other platforms, many of which the groups are already using. As always with Alcoholics Anonymous, “money and spirituality mix in the basket,” even if that basket is a virtual one.

Beau B., of Neptune, N.J., has devoted much of his tenure as a Class B (alcoholic) trustee to working to promote A.A. connection and growth — to finding fresh approaches to helping suffering alcoholics — particularly through technology

“COVID-19 will not stop us from doing A.A.,” he says. “All the way up and down the A.A. triangle, you’re seeing people adapting, finding a way. One thing you’re seeing in groups are these new service roles popping up, practically overnight — for example, the online coordinator who makes sure the meeting is set up properly, so that the leader can lead a meeting. Often these are people who maybe haven’t been involved in service, but they know their way around IT and they show up.”

The current crisis, Beau thinks, is helping us use the Traditions “to think about how we can do things, rather than as reasons why we cannot.

Continued on page 18



Meeting Uncertainty with Resiliency: G.S.O. in the Pandemic

Continued from page 17

Staying at home and attending online meetings may help us redefine singleness of purpose and give us more understanding of those with accessibility issues. Looking at a Zoom meeting in gallery view, Beau says, “We see a quilt of people — everyone in their own homes, the diversity of the members. There is a wall between us, yet not. When meetings end with a closing prayer, it sounds awful and ragged and yet I love it. I feel it as touching and spiritual.”

Stressors abound. A.A.s and their families face the same devastating toll of illness and economic hardship as the rest of the world. Newcomers face difficult hurdles when it comes to connecting with our potentially lifesaving program. But, Beau says, “I am not worried about A.A. being forever changed by this in terms of who we are as a people and what we value the most — carrying the message and helping each other. A.A. thrives in uncertainty. When times are soft and comfortable, we fight about comma placement. In times of trouble, people stand up and show up, and say, ‘Give me a bucket and a shovel.’”

This story is reprinted from the A.A. GSO Publication ‘box 459’ -
News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.®
Vol. 66, No. 2 / Summer 2020

You can find the original article here:

https://www.aa.org/newsletters/en_US/en_box459_summer_2020.pdf

Box 4-5-9 is published quarterly by the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous,
475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, copyright © 2020 by Alcoholics Anonymous
World Services, Inc



Alcoholics Anonymous®

Alcoholics Anonymous, COVID-19 & our Seventh Tradition

A Video Message from Leslie Backus, the Class A (nonalcoholic) treasurer of A.A.'s General Service Board.

“This is a moment when the Fellowship needs to step up.”

In addition to the published open letter from the A.A. General Service Office in

New York (see pages 5 & 6), GSO has provided a link to a video featuring Leslie Backus, the Class A (nonalcoholic) treasurer of its General Service Board. In the video, Backus outlines the multiple and simultaneous challenges A.A.'s New York-based General Service Office is confronting—



- an increased need from alcoholics for help during the pandemic
- a serious drop in contributions and literature sales since the pandemic became widespread, and...
- while GSO was also confronted with the need to revamp or reconfigure how many of its services are delivered to alcoholics

Backus points out that *“...the COVID-19 pandemic...impacts us all...especially how we meet and support each other in A.A.”* She comments that *“... the need is greater now...sales of alcohol are at record highs...the number of emergency room visits from alcohol related incidents is up.”* Backus summarizes the situation simply, saying *“There is a great deal of work for us to do,”* while recognizing that the GSO is located in the *“heart of this pandemic,”* [New York City] and that its *“...employees are working tirelessly to make sure the message of A.A. is out there for all who are seeking help for alcoholism.”*

Continued on page 20



Continued from page 7

“During this unprecedented time, we have had to re-think how we get our message to people.”

Backus says that GSO has been evolving its communications platforms and technologies to reach the still suffering alcoholic. The illustration below highlights ongoing responsibilities that GSO supports for alcoholics in need.

Each Year...



CORRECTIONS

Corrections answers over **~6,500 letters annually**; that's more than 18 letters per day, every day



ARCHIVES

Receives over **1,300 requests**



SHIPPING

Distributes **~8 million** books, pamphlets & audio materials



CONTRIBUTIONS

Receives over **73,000 pieces of mail**

2020 Update COVID-19 Impact

CARRYING THE MESSAGE CONTINUES DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

Over **5,500** pieces of mail delivered to PO Box 459 and 475 Riverside were collected, disinfected, sorted and distributed to the homes of the service assignments, records and contributions.



This is Aubrey's home a.k.a. Alcoholics Anonymous mail sorting room

90 the number of responses to the media/public outlets about how AA has adapted to virtual meeting space/5th Tradition online efforts.

150 the number of A.A. related articles published around the world during COVID-19

Virtual AA meetings successful in Newfoundland and Labrador



The subject of the article above got sober during COVID-19 and has never been to an in-person A.A. meeting

Pandemic or no pandemic, GSO's work to 'carry the message' remains—and is likely needed even more now than it ever was.

Continued on page 21



Continued from page 20

“...our employees are still working tirelessly to make sure that the message of A.A. is out there for all that are seeking help for alcoholism.”

Forced to close the New York office because of the pandemic, GSO’s work to ‘carry the message’ remains...



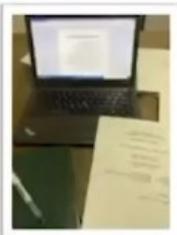
Over 125,000

Alcoholics provided with digital Grapevine subscriptions free of charge

March 2020

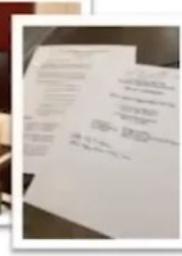
More than 15,000

emails/phone calls answered requesting information or help from GSO, since the office physically closed on March 20.



One

Completely virtual General Service Conference designed from the kitchens, living rooms and home offices across the US and Canada



Despite the pandemic, GSO’s ongoing commitment to help alcoholics and has continued all levels of service during this crisis. As examples, Backus says:

- Literature still needs to be distributed
 - Calls need to be answered
- Online platforms still need to be published

GSO is staffed by employees—and these activities are their work: unlike local Intergroups, GSO’s size means it cannot rely solely on volunteers.

We are responsible... when anyone, anywhere...

Big Book in 71 languages around the world
Further translations are always in process.



Continued on page 22



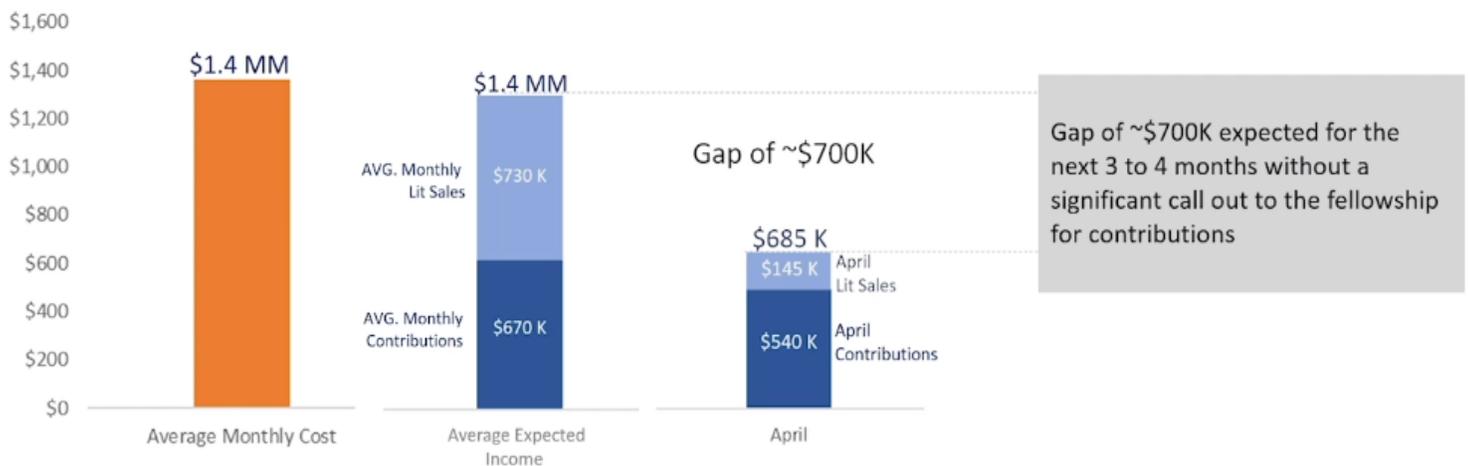
Continued from page 21

“The average monthly cost [to support GSO] is \$1.44 million.”

Backus lays out the current financial situation GSO faces as a result of the effects of the pandemic—a crisis unlike any that A.A. has ever faced. Backus reports that the average monthly cost to support GSO is \$1.44 million—which has been underpinned by monthly revenues derived from a mix of contributions (approximately \$670,000 monthly) and the profits from literature sales (approximately \$730,000 monthly.) (Editor Note: This is very similar to the revenue mix reported several weeks ago by Worcester Intergroup in our June 20 story on its shifting finances.)

“This is how we support the [GSO] office. But, beginning in April, things changed.”

CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION COSTS AND INCOME



Unfortunately, Backus reports that starting in April, GSO received only \$540,000 in monthly contributions (a drop of about 20%), and literature profits plummeted to only \$145,000, an almost 80% decline— which “left a shortfall of almost \$700,000...” At the time, GSO expected “this gap to continue for three or four months without a call to the Fellowship for contributions.”

“We have a prudent Reserve,” notes Backus, which at the end of 2019 covered 9.2 months of GSO operations. The ongoing revenue shortfalls have forced GSO to “take a draw down [of the reserve] of \$3 million,” Backus concedes, adding, “So there’s only seven months remaining in the Reserve.”

Continued from page 23



Continued from page 22

“This is a moment when the Fellowship needs to step up.”

Backus describes the situation simply, saying “This is a moment when the Fellowship needs to step up to be able to take the Seventh Tradition and fully support the services in a way that has never happened before.”

OUR RESERVE FUND – DESIGNED FOR EXACTLY THIS TYPE OF SITUATION



The General Service Board Reserve Fund

In 1954, the Board of Trustees established a Reserve Fund whose principal purpose is to provide the financial resources necessary to continue the essential services of G.S.O. and the Grapevine in the event of emergency or disaster, to fund costs beyond the means of the G.S.O. and the Grapevine, such as major leasehold improvements or technical upgrades, and to allow the General Service Board and its two operating affiliates time to formulate and implement plans needed to adjust to changed economic or other conditions.

S76

“If you are in a position to contribute, we hope you will.”

Backus also points out that the GSO office “...is designing new ways for you to contribute,” - including the scannable bar code examples displayed below.

[Find A.A. Near Me and Contribute](#)

[Contribute to your General Service Office](#)



SCAN ME



SCAN ME

Continued from page 24



Continued from page 23

Backus closes her message on a wishful note—and mentions the need for local A.A. group support, commenting “I hope that you are all safe, that you support your families and your local A.A. Central/Intergroup offices and the General Service Office.” The end of Backus’ presentation displays a Seventh Tradition reminder -

In keeping with A.A.’s Seventh Tradition of self-support, we accept contributions only from A.A. members.

Commentary

It is fair to acknowledge that the current pandemic-created situation is unprecedented, for modern society at large and for Alcoholics Anonymous as well. While we leave the most reliable virus assessments to qualified organizations such as the CDC, the following seem reasonable for many of us to assume:

- At the moment, COVID-19 is sweeping through many U.S. states in an unprecedented number of infections - deaths are approaching 150,000—and will exceed that terrible number fairly soon.
- It does not appear likely that the U.S. will firmly contain COVID-19 in the next 3 or 4 months—August begins in five days—if at all in 2020
 - It appears highly unlikely that in-person A.A. meetings—and the U.S. economy in general—will resume activity anything like ‘normal’ until sometime in 2021 (at least 6 months...?)
 - (Several weeks ago we reported the results from the SF/Marin County Intergroup survey of its fellowship in June, which strongly indicated that the majority of A.A.’s *do not* plan to resume in-person meetings until a COVID-19 vaccine is available—which essentially means 2021.)
- If that outlook is accurate, GSO is facing the draw down of its reserve to a risky operating level if contributions or literature sales do not meaningfully improve; this same assessment may also apply to local Intergroups that operate on essentially the same ‘business model.’
 - Ms. Backus is absolutely correct when she says:
“This is a moment when the Fellowship needs to step up.”



The Eighth Tradition

"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS will never have a professional class. We have gained some understanding of the ancient words, "Freely ye have received, freely give." We have discovered that at the point of professionalism, money and spirituality do not mix. Almost no recovery from alcoholism has ever been brought about by the world's best professionals, whether medical or religious. We do not decry professionalism in other fields, but we accept the sober fact that it does not work for us. Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: our single purpose has always been defeated.

Alcoholics simply will not listen to a paid Twelfth Stepper. Almost from the beginning, we have been positive that face-to-face work with the alcoholic who suffers could be based only on the desire to help and be helped. When an AA talks for money, whether at a meeting or to a single newcomer, it can have a very bad effect on him too. The money motive compromises him and everything he says and does for his prospect. This has always been so obvious that only a very few AAs have ever worked the Twelfth Step for a fee. -- Bill W.

From A.A. Grapevine; December 1952

Illustration from The TWELVE TRADITIONS Illustrated Copyright © 1971 AAWS, Inc.





Psychology Today

Mental Health in a Time of Pandemic

The psychological effects of an outbreak

Sandro Galea M.D.

“Even if we can halt the physical spread of a disease through the expeditious use of quarantine and social distancing, we will still have to contend with its mental health effects in the long-term.”

The ongoing Covid-19 outbreak is in many ways unprecedented, in both the scale of this challenge, the scale of public health response, and the historical context in which all this is unfolding. Covid-19 is the first global pandemic of the social media age, the first of the “alternative facts” era, and is occurring at a moment when politics and society seem to be in a state of accelerated flux.

Yet for all that is new about Covid-19, the disease still behaves like any number of prior epidemics. It is, for example, similar to the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak, an event which created a number of lessons for our present moment. SARS was, in many ways, the best-case scenario for responding to a global infectious threat. The spread of SARS was contained fairly quickly by public health efforts, chiefly through the widespread use of quarantine. But even this relative success still had consequences for health. In 2004, I worked with colleagues on a study of SARS control and the psychological effects of quarantine in Toronto, Canada. We found among quarantined persons a high prevalence of psychological distress, including symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A key takeaway: Even if we can halt the physical spread of a disease through the expeditious use of quarantine and social distancing, we will still have to contend with its mental health effects in the long-term.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-health/202003/mental-health-in-time-pandemic>



10 Mental Health Tips for Coronavirus Social Distancing

Dr. Giuseppe (Bepi) Raviola, director of mental health at Partners In Health, put together a list of key practices to maintain good mental and emotional health for those asked to stay at home in efforts to prevent further spread of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19.

As we enter this new and unprecedented phase of the pandemic, we are inundated with guidelines about how to keep ourselves and our families healthy and virus-free....How do we as individuals and parents cope without driving ourselves and each other crazy?

<https://www.pih.org/article/10-mental-health-tips-coronavirus-social-distancing>



healthline The Best Alcohol Recovery Blogs of 2020

This article includes a list of blogs about sobriety—maybe one will resonate with you...

<https://www.healthline.com/health/best-alcoholism-blogs-of-the-year#7>

These blogs are independently published—and not connected to A.A. in any way.



Straight-up information about addiction and recovery, The Fix is a great resource for facts and support.

Sobercity—a community created for people living a sober life. Connect with people from all walks of life, share stories of recovery, and find support in this community for living a sober lifestyle.



Sober Black Girls Club

Sober Black Girls Club—provides resources and support to Black girls considering a beautiful sober life. For Black girls who are considering putting the bottle down...This community is for you.

Chronicling the journey from “liquid courage to sober courage,” this blog includes real-life stories about alcohol use disorder, relapse, and the journey of recovery.



The Sober School

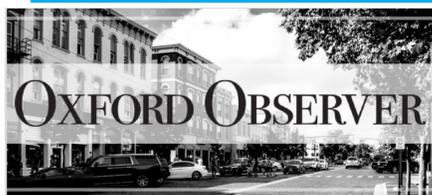
Kate Bee took her last drink in 2013. Since then, she’s been helping women “who want to take a break from booze...”

Queeret is...for introvert queers to share each other’s company in queer, quiet, and sober gatherings called Qalms... thoughtful content about bringing calm and sobriety to queer spaces, plus podcasts, interviews, and event listings.



Recovery Speakers

Recovery Speakers is for people recovering from addiction...including alcohol. They have the largest collection of audio-recorded recovery talks spanning 70 years, and personal recovery stories from bloggers and tips on remaining in recovery.



Alcohol use increases as pandemic and unrest continue

The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by economic fallout and businesses across the country struggling to stay afloat. But for companies selling alcoholic beverages, sales have jumped since the pandemic.

According to data from The Nielsen Corporation, in the third week of March, alcoholic beverage sales were up 54% in stores nationwide — and throughout the month of April, online alcohol sales were up over 400%.

...“We’re seeing less people saving up the alcohol to do it in an event,” Ward said. “Instead we’re seeing every day of the week the same level of problematic drinking. Normally, when we’re following social media, we see peaks around spring break, weekends — Thursday, Friday, Saturday — but now every day of the week we’re seeing it’s pretty equal... They’re having it more frequently throughout the week instead of as one isolated event.”

<http://vitals.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/08/15029060-alcoholic-men-cant-feel-your-pain-heres-why?lite>



Addiction, hope, and recovery in the time of COVID-19

Four summers ago, Frederick Shegog ate a bag of donuts from a dumpster. Homeless and hungry in downtown Philadelphia, he says the sweets replaced a meal he’d have to buy with the last of his cash.

“I wanted that money to save, because I wanted to drink and hopefully I wouldn’t wake up,” he says. Living with an alcohol use disorder, Mr. Shegog had tried 20 different rehabs without success.

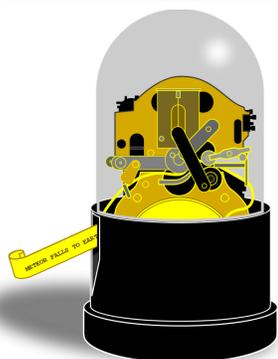
Passed out three days later on the street, he says a man woke him with a cup of water.

“You’re not dying today,” he recalls the stranger’s words.

Mr. Shegog celebrated four years sober last month. He graduated from Delaware County Community College in May with high honors and straight A’s.

The motivational speaker credits his success to his faith in God, and the man who “saved my life” with a call to 911. Virtual resources have helped sustain his recovery during the pandemic, he says, as he joined remote 12-step meetings and therapy for the first time.

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2020/0708/Addiction-hope-and-recovery-in-the-time-of-COVID-19>



The WAI Ticker

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that, I am responsible.

Step Eight:

*“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all.”*

Meeting List Changes



Changes to a meeting name, its time, its format or its location, or
new meetings and groups closings -

Send all meeting changes to: beacon@aaworcester.org and to:
officemanager@aaworcester.org

For meetings resuming in-person, please submit the ‘Meeting
Update Form’ available on the WAI home page



Group or Individual Anniversaries - Announcements or sobriety recognition?

Send Anniversary Info to: beacon@aaworcester.org

Special Events!

A.A. Unity and Service Conference

- ⇒ September 5 and 6, 2020
- ⇒ You need to register to attend, sign up is here:
<https://unityandserviceconference.org/>
- ⇒ See the flyer on page 25



Got a new A.A. event in the works?
Let us know!



Worcester Area Intergroup Faithful Fiver Form

The Faith Fiver idea came about when we remembered that we wasted much more than five dollars each month during our drinking days. “When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat, we give a token that we are grateful for our blessing and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.” Bill W, *Language of the Heart*

YES, I want to help continue to carry our life-saving message of hope.

I will pay: Annually(\$60) Quarterly(\$15) Monthly(\$5)

Here is my contribution of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone number (in case of questions): _____

Please make check payable to: Worcester Area Intergroup, 100 Grove St., Suite
314 Worcester, MA 01605

The Mercury News

**Harriette Cole:
I’m not an alcoholic,
but drinking seems like my only option**

I’m under a lot of stress, and I’m feeling alone

DEAR HARRIETTE: Recently my stress levels have gone up because of the coronavirus, especially the threat of potentially losing my job if another wave hits.

I thought I was in the clear after things seemed to start stabilizing, but the company I work for may not be doing well, and I don’t know what will happen if another wave hits.

I have noticed myself turning to drinking more often than I’d like to admit in order to cope with this stress. I don’t think I am an alcoholic, but I recognize that this behavior could potentially lead to dangerous outcomes.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/07/21/harriette-cole-im-not-an-alcoholic-but-drinking-seems-like-only-option/>



The GRAPEVINE AND LA VIÑA—Carrying the Message



The AA Grapevine, Inc., publisher of the *International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous* and the Spanish language version *La Viña* — monthly publications that share experience, strength, and hope with alcoholics everywhere.

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/>

<http://www.aalavina.org/>

Worcester Area Intergroup’s Online Bookstore

WAI has a new Online Bookstore, enabling local A.A.’s to order coins, books, and cards. The site also includes a printable PDF listing these items, which can be filled out and mailed in if that is more convenient for some buyers.

If you don’t know it, sales of books and other items from the WAI Bookstore helps support local A.A. activities (such as the Intergroup Office and Alcathons), so help the local recovery community by buying your A. A.-related items from the WAI bookstore. Gift certificates are now available for the WAI Bookstore and can be used for anything in the bookstore or for special orders.



Find it here: <http://bookstore.aaworcester.org>

Please remember to close out the transaction after Paypal returns you to the bookstore.

As highlighted in this *Beacon* issue, you support important local WAI recovery programs when you buy A.A. items from the WAI Bookstore.

WAI’s mission has been supporting recovery in Central Mass. for 46 years.

WAI’s ONLINE BOOKIE EXCHANGE

The WAI Bookie Exchange portal enables Bookies from local towns to quickly find groups seeking commitments and/or post a request. Open slots are listed by town.

Contact — BookieXchange.aaworcester.org



Worcester Area Intergroup Information

Until further notice, the Intergroup Steering Committee, District 25 meeting and Intergroup Delegates monthly meeting has been changed to a virtual event—

Information for these meetings is listed at the top of the virtual meeting list at aaworcester.org.

**The Intergroup meetings occur the second THURSDAY of each month.*

District 25 General Service Committee—meets first Tuesday of the month 7:30 pm

District 26 General Service Committee—Madonna of the Holy Rosary Church Hall, 118Theresa St., Fitchburg, meets first Thursday of the month 7:00pm AA members welcome—please come join us!

AREA 30 Eastern Mass. General Service Committee — Belmont / Watertown United Methodist Church 421 Common St., Belmont—4th Wednesday 8:00pm

Intergroup Officers & Committee Chairpersons (as of 8/01/20)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>email address</u>	<u>Bold = new in 2020</u>
Chairperson	Steve O	chair@aaworcester.org	
Alt. Chair	OPEN	altchair@aaworcester.org	
Secretary	Hilary D	secretary@aaworcester.org	
Alt. Secretary	OPEN	altsecretary@aaworcester.org	
Treasurer	Ted K	treasurer@aaworcester.org	
Alt. Treasurer	OPEN	alttreasurer@aaworcester.org	
Trustee	Fred F.	trustee1@aaworcester.org	
Trustee	Kim N.	trustee2@aaworcester.org	
Trustee	Alice B.	trustee3@aaworcester.org	
Trustee	Emily D.	trustee4@aaworcester.org	
Office Manager	Brandy H.	officemanager@aaworcester.org	
Alcathon (WAI)	Brandy H.	alcathon@aaworcester.org	
Beacon Editor	John Mcl	beacon@aaworcester.org	
Treatment Facilities	Raymond M.	treatment@aaworcester.org	
Corrections	Steve O.	corrections@aaworcester.org	
HALTline	Donna H.	haltline@aaworcester.org	
Liaison to District 25	Steve O.		
Liaison to District 26	Jenn C.		
Liaison to Area 30	Jim B.		
Public Information	Alice B.	pichair@aaworcester.org	
Social Committee	Jeff W.	social@aaworcester.org	
Webmaster	Fred F.	webmaster@aaworcester.org	
Bookie Exchange	Bill S. & Fred F.	bookieexchange@aaworcester.org	



12 Step Volunteer Application

Name (First name and last initial): _____

Telephone Number: _____

Towns you will accept calls from: _____

Hours that you are available: _____

I wish to help (please circle *all* that apply): Males Only Females Only Both

Ages I am willing to work with people ages:

Teens 20 to 30 30 to 40 40 to 50 50 to 60 Over 60

I am willing to (please circle):

Talk to a person on the phone Go to a persons home to talk * Give rides to AA Meetings
Give rides to Detox * Meet someone at a meeting

Other (please specify) _____

**It is suggested that a person NOT make a Twelfth Step call alone to help an alcoholic who is still suffering. Also you should NOT drive a wet drunk to a treatment facility (detox) without having another A.A. member with you. If you circled either of these items, please be sure that you have another member of A.A. that is available and willing to go along with you.*

Anniversary Donation

Name: _____

City/Home Group: _____

Sobriety Date: _____ Amt. Enclosed: _____

Mail to: **Worcester Area Intergroup**—address on page 1. All Anniversaries submitted will be published the month following submission. Please contact the newsletter Editor at beacon@aaworcester.org if an Anniversary has not been published for two months following submission.

HALT LINE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

The Intergroup HALT line needs volunteers to cover open time slots. The HALT line is there to assist any alcoholic needing to find a meeting. This is service work that really matters.

See the flyer on page 38



Online Intergroup—Online Meetings Directory

<http://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php>



The Directory lists different meeting formats—Regular, Men/Women, Men only, Women only, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Blind/Visually Impaired, Loners Internationalists, Atheist/Agnostic, Regional / Ethnic, Profession Specific, Closed or Open

The Online Intergroup aids its member groups in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Find a Meeting—Local or Anywhere!

Find a local meeting fast on a Map, a grid, or on a list!

MeetingMap.aaWorcester.org

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Meeting Guide

The official Meeting Guide is a free of charge meeting finder app for iOS and Android that provides meeting information from A.A. service entities in an easy-to-access format. Meeting Guide syncs with area, district, intergroup/central offices and international General Service Office websites (some of which are listed on A.A. Near You), relaying meeting information from more than 300 A.A. service entities directly to you. Over 100,000 weekly meetings are currently listed, and the information is refreshed twice daily. This app gives A.A. service entities full control of their local meeting information while collecting it in one place, making it easy for anyone to find a meeting.



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.meetingguide>

[apps.apple.com > app > meeting-guide](https://apps.apple.com/app/meeting-guide)

Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google LLC. The App Store and iOS are registered trademarks of Apple Inc.

NEED HELP? A.A. Worcester Intergroup offers in-depth user training called *Zoom Trooper Boot Camp* — training assistance for using Zoom — please contact Brandy, WAI Office Manager, for info: officemanager@aaworcester.org (508) 752-9000

Worcester Intergroup Service Opportunities—Step Up!

Worcester Intergroup has three open positions (see page 20). For A.A.'s seeking an opportunity to serve — Please contact: officemanager@aaworcester.org for more info



SUPPORT LOCAL VIRTUAL MEETINGS and WAI

One element in online meetings which *is* different is that the digital world needs a special method to ‘*Pass the (Virtual) Basket*’ for the Seventh Tradition. Online hosting—(such as Zoom meetings) - cost money to operate, and area A.A. activities still need support to provide ongoing services, so a link to a contribution page is included http://aaworcester.org/contribution_page.html on www.aaworcester.org.

Please help keep local A.A. resources available for the alcoholic who still suffers. Payment services charge WAI a *per transaction* fee - so when using them, please contribute less frequently but in larger amounts—reducing transaction fees. The contribution page offers PayPal or Square Cash/Cash App payment options, and both offer an app for download.



<https://www.paypal.com/>



Square

[\\$WAIintergroup](#)

Of course, these stone-age paper sheets work just fine also.....



You can specify that your contribution be credited to your home group—and acknowledge that in your transaction. If your group is looking to add digital contributions, this link offers an overview for adding a digital 7th Tradition capability to a group — [https://](https://aasfmarin.org/online-contributions-your-digital-7th-tradition-guide-to-best-practices)

aasfmarin.org/online-contributions-your-digital-7th-tradition-guide-to-best-practices

Many thanks to our fellow A.A.’s for continuing to support WAI’s mission of service to alcoholics in Central Massachusetts.

GRAPEVINE Daily Quote

August 2, 2020

“You never know until you go out to meet it what any given day is going to be, but the way you go to meet it surely makes a difference.”

“*The Christmas Fighters*,” Quogue, N.Y., December 1963, *AA Grapevine*



A Guide to using Zoom as a Virtual Meeting Platform

Highlights from the New York Intergroup’s suggestions for developing and managing virtual meetings using Zoom

<https://www.nyintergroup.org/remote-meetings/join-the-nyig-zoom-meeting-room/what-is-the-aa-zoom-room/nyig-zoom-room-support/>

The NYC Intergroup offers a helpful guide for using Zoom as a virtual meeting platform, addressing topics such as Account Setup, How to use Zoom, Guide for Meeting Chairs, Managing anonymity in virtual meetings, and Member and Group resources.

Zoom also offers support videos and other resources—explore <https://support.zoom.us>

Virtual Meetings face their own challenges

Some A.A. groups hosting virtual meetings on Zoom have had problems with internet trolls who are jumping into public Zoom calls and using the screen-sharing feature to project graphic (and sometimes pornographic) content to unwitting conference participants, forcing hosts to shut down their events. This practice is apparently called “Zoom Bombing.”

The Inter-Group Association of A.A. New York offers a helpful 4 page guide, ‘NYIG Toolkit for Handling Unwanted Meeting Disruptions’ [download: https://www.nyintergroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NYIG_Zoom-Protection-Guide_033020.pdf]

Zoom also offers a security guide - How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event — [<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/>]

WAI’s ZOOM WARRIOR COMMITTEE TO THE RESCUE!!

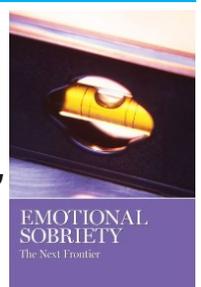
Worcester Intergroup’s new committee—The ZOOM Warriors— consists of 12 Zoom Warriors and 2 Honorary Warriors, along with over 70 Zoom Troopers, who’s mission is to help keep local A.A. meetings going when our physical locations are closed by giving technical support to groups adding online sessions. Need help? The Warriors have a useful guide to Zoom, and, offer training assistance for using Zoom — contact Brandy, WAI Office Manager, for info: officemanager@aaworcester.org (508) 752-9000

GRAPEVINE Daily Quote

July 30, 2020

“Because each of us at any moment, is the sum total of every choice he or she has ever made, it is not sheer fantasy to expect each day to be the very best day we have yet lived .”

*“Savoring Our Sobriety,” North Hollywood, California, August 1982,
Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier*





Virtual

5th Annual Unity & Service Conference

"Applying our 12 Traditions & 12 Concepts to Real Life"

**September 5-6, 2020 (PDT)
Labor Day Weekend
Concord, CA, USA**



**Pacific
Daylight
Time Zone**

Saturday, September 5

Sunday, September 6

Welcome!

Serenity Prayer & Kickoff

8:45 am

9:00 am

Memoirs of a Judge that Nudged

*Rogelio Flores, Santa Barbara, CA
Retired Judge & Past Class A Trustee*

Contempt Prior to Investigation?

**The 12 Concepts -
"A Spiritual Experience"**
Jennifer D., Wilmington, NC

10-Minute Tradition or Concept Vignette Before Each Main Speaker

10:30 am

Service Panels

Panel 1 - **Young People**
Panel 2 - **Bridging the Gap**
Panel 3 - **Corrections (H & I)
Q&A**

Service Panels

Panel 1 - **Public Info & Cooperation with
Professionals**
Panel 2 - **Intergroup/Hotline**
Panel 3 - **General Service**
Panel 4 - **Sponsorship
Q&A**

12:00 pm

Break

12:30 pm

**Finance & Romance
in AA's Digital Age**

Jennifer D., Wilmington, NC

**Anonymity and Outside Issues:
Right vs. Responsibilities**

Roger W., Vine Grove, KY

10-Minute Tradition or Concept Vignette Before Each Main Speaker

2:00 pm

The Three Legacies and Relationships

Chuck & Beth H., Cary, NC

10-Minute Tradition or Concept Vignette
from an AI-Anon Speaker

*This 2 Hour and 15-Minute Session Includes
a 15-Minute Break at 3 pm Before Concluding at 4:15 pm*

Ask It Basket with Speakers

*Rogelio, Jennifer, Don, Roger,
Chuck & Beth*

3:00 pm

Break

Close with Responsibility Statement

4:30 pm

**Unity vs. Conformity
in the Home Group**

Don L., Bellingham, WA

10-Minute Tradition or Concept Vignette to Open

6:00 pm

Close with Responsibility Statement

Online-Only Event!

Space is Limited.....

Pre-Registration Encouraged!



Registration Link & Contact Info: Unityandserviceconference.org

925.222.5639



HALT Line Volunteers needed

What the HALT line is:

One alcoholic talking to another alcoholic --- Isn't that what A.A. is all about?

One might:

- *Give out meeting time and location information.
- *Talk and/or listen to a sober alcoholic in danger of picking up a drink.
- *Talk and/or listen to a sober alcoholic who is visiting the area.
- *Talk to a "drunk". You may be the link in the chain that could save their life.
- *Refer a caller to the Intergroup Office and inform them of the office hours.

This is a very easy way to do service from the convenience of your own home.

What you need to be a volunteer:

*1 year of sobriety is suggested because the first year needs focus on recovery before such service.

*Meeting lists (we suggest District 26 and Worcester Area). These are available free of charge from Worcester Area Intergroup and are available on the Website www.aaworcester.org or use the App MeetingGuide on your cell phone.



*3 or more hours of time during the week that you will be available to answer calls. This is done from your own home or cell phone. You do not have to answer as A.A. you can simply answer and when asked say you are "Answering for Worcester Area Intergroup, how can I help you?"



Please call Donna H., the HALT Line chair, at 508-735-8559 or email her at donnaaham@charter.net or send an email to haltline@aaworcester.org