



MYNAH BIRD

HAWAII AREA #17 NEWSLETTER

PRAASA 2009

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2009
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 Assembly
 Awesome
 Commitment
 Communicate
 Contributing
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Educate
 Enriching
 Enthusiasm
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 General Service
 Golden Gate
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 Inform

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 Unity

SPECIAL PRAASA 2009 EDITION

From our delegate...

“Our Commitment to Carry AA’s Message – Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action”

2009 PRAASA – Oakland, California

It began with my arrival at the Honolulu airport, hanging with a bunch of Hawaii members in route to PRAASA. I experienced a beautiful weekend of love, service, fellowship and gratitude in action! The 42nd Annual Pacific Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly was held in downtown Oakland, CA March 6-8, 2009. This was my 6th PRAASA, and it was such a great honor to be there as your Panel 59 Delegate.

The purpose of PRAASA is to develop greater unity among the members, groups, and Areas of the Pacific Region; to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences; and to provide an opportunity for members to discuss pertinent aspects of AA. The Assembly and the PRAASA committee should always foster the Recovery, Unity and Service legacies of AA.

Early on in General Service, I heard Jeanette F., Panel 51 Delegate, say that PRAASA was the college education of General Service! Having dropped out of school in the 8th grade, I craved any sort of college education in sobriety and so I made it a goal to attend PRAASA one day. In 2004, I attended my first PRAASA. I have gone every year since then, and I have not once been disappointed.

Hawaii Area 17 was well represented with approximately 45 members in attendance! It was hard to get an actual count, as when I did a headcount at our group photo session, many members were downstairs looking for us, when we were upstairs taking the photo! Next year, someone else can be in charge of organizing that, because it was a fiasco. My sincere apologies to those folks who were in a different location for the group picture.

This year, I was told that my PRAASA experience would be different as Delegate, and it certainly was. I was very active!

I met the PRAASA Delegates Advisory Board early Friday morning. We communicated over the last couple of months regarding a request last year at the PRAASA business meeting for the PDAB to consider moving the bid out from 4 years to five. We decided to take no action, and the agenda for this year’s business meeting reflected that decision.

Friday morning before PRAASA began, I attended the early bird AA meeting. I was deeply moved by a past trustee from Japan who shared about how she was resentful of being in service until she attended her first PRAASA and saw the enthusiasm and love we all have for service. She said she then realized she had to take a hard look at herself, and today she is grateful to be in service.

Beginning Friday at 1pm, and finishing up Sunday at 12 pm, there were a total of 7 Panels, and the Delegate Ask It basket. I participated on Panel 1, giving our Area’s highlights alongside the other 14 Pacific Region Delegates. I gave a presentation on Panel 6: “How We Cooperate” on “Our Common Welfare” Saturday afternoon. Finally, Sunday morning I sat on the Panel “Delegates Ask It Basket”, fondly known as “Stump the Delegate”.

Hawaii Area 17 participation - Nora DCM for Kihei District gave a moving and beautiful talk on Special Needs Saturday morning; our Area CPC Chair Judee did a super job chairing Panel 6 Saturday afternoon and we had both our Area Chair Ken and the Puna DCM Develyn leading separate Round Tables on Friday night. Hawaii Area is involved, active and enthusiastic, and you all make my job a pleasure.

It was awesome to meet and get to know the other 14 Pacific Region Delegates. Prior to the first Panel, we met behind the stage. The Panel 58 Delegates went to great length to make us Panel 59 Delegates feel at ease. Later on, at Friday night’s Delegate Round Table we went around the room, introduced ourselves and all shared a little something personal. This Round Table differed vastly from others I had participated in. This truly was preparation for the General Service Conference. There were practical tips shared by the Panel 58 Delegates, including general suggestions about arriving in New York, what to expect at the conference, how to take care of myself, etc.

Our Pacific Region Trustee Madeleine encouraged us to speak our conscience at the Conference, trust the process, keep an open mind and reminded us that we cannot wait for someone else, it’s up to us! On Saturday we had a delegates only lunch, where we talked story and joked, letting off steam. By Saturday afternoon, I was much more relaxed, and was able to have fun!

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At the Saturday night Round Table, I volunteered to be the point of contact for staffing the Pacific Region Hospitality room at the 2010 International Convention in San Antonio, TX. The other Region Delegates will be getting back to me with a tentative count of attendees from their respective Area so I can begin blocking time slots. If you are planning to attend the International, or know folks who are, please let me know. As time draw closer, I will develop a signup sheet for being in service in the hospitality room.

I need to let you all know that I missed Panel 4 at 8:00 am on Saturday morning due to oversleeping. I actually *had* set my alarm the night before for 6:15, but it turned out to be 6:15 PM, not AM! So I shot up in my bed at 8:15, wondering why it was so light in the room! Believe me; it was my full intention to attend each and every session.

I would like to wrap up my report with the thoughts, feelings and opinions I heard and experienced that touched my heart and spirit throughout PRAASA:

An Area at a disadvantage is better than an Area that cannot participate

Let's stay away from rigidity "this is the way it's always been."

Express AA love with your feet.

Service involves sacrifices by our family and loved ones, time and energy, humility and action.

Spirituality is when an Alcoholic gets up, puts his pants on and goes to work.

Utilize, don't analyze.

Sincere desire to be helpful.

Being in deep service.

There are more than 50 General Service Offices worldwide.

Service material is a valuable tool.

A member felt that having so many pamphlets for the "sub-groups" of AA diluted the AA message.

Bill W. Was at one time AAs number one anonymity breaker. Bob was the opposite of Bill. AA learned much from these early anonymity breaks.

Anonymity is personal sacrifice, the primary foundation of our fellowship; when in doubt, leave it out.

I can see a thread of miracles that have connected together and brought me to this moment.

Some tools for those in remote communities are: AA speaker tapes; AA Grapevine audio subscription & online meetings.

How do we share? We share in our n our home group, our district, our Area; and through Area newsletter.

I can get excited easily if want information.

Enthusiastic example: make general service attractive, it starts with me!

The program has been refined by decades of experience.

Nothing stands in the way of our Primary Purpose.

Glad to be here with a couple thousand of my closest friends.

We found the program when we were ready to find it.

Balance between recovery and service, easy to hide in service.

When wondering about an activity, ask yourself if it is helping us carry the message to the Alcoholic who still suffers. If it supports our Primary Purpose, it is probably an AA event. If not, you may need to talk about it some more.

On the need for a piece of literature addressing spirituality, agnostic/atheist, some of the comments that stood out to me:

Be more tolerant sponsors about newcomers' spirituality.

Our sobriety is very precious to every single one of us.

Love and tolerance of others is our code.

The Lord's Prayer is too narrow, what about Buddhists, Muslims and Jews?

An AA member shared she avoided meetings due to the Lord's Prayer, and that the Serenity Prayer is more inclusive.

What about a gender translation of the Big Book? Example: "God would and could if God were sought."

An Agnostic Alcoholic who has 19 years of sobriety shared at the mic: "I am a seeker. Have you all stopped seeking?"

We say we're not affiliated, yet we all join hands and say the Lord's Prayer at the end of the meeting.

The two main points that resonated within my spirit from PRAASA 09 were:

To be useful

It begins with me

I would like to let you know how grateful I am to have experienced this weekend of love and service. I truly recharged

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my service batteries. I feel more connected with AA as a whole, more informed, better educated and most important – of maximum service to God and those about me.

I heard someone say that events like PRAASA are the rebar, cement and glue that hold General Service together. Thank you for this opportunity to be of love and service.

Elizabeth M.
Delegate
Hawaii Area 17 / Panel 59



From our chair....
Aloha Hawaii Area 17/Panel 59,

Mahalo for your support in sending the Area Chair to PRAASA.

Given the honor and privilege to be a member of Hawaii Area 17 at a Pacific Regional event is a gift.

The experience of chairing the Area Chair roundtable on Friday night and then to secretary the roundtable on Saturday, brought a greater light on the blessings we have today.

Thanks to Colin H. our Alt. Chair who served as secretary and my “wingman” for the Friday night roundtable. For the Saturday night roundtable, we were given the experience to secretary for Patti, Alaska Area Chair and practice secretarial service...still practicing!

The opportunity to chat with the PRAASA Committee members and observe the members in service brought a better picture of the task ahead for PRAASA 2010.

Our members that participated in service...“Hawaii No Ka Oi.”

Mahalo,
Ken K.
Area Chair
Hawaii Area 17/ Panel 59



The Homecoming

Who knew that I would be planning vacations around PRAASA? Certainly not me! I arrived a couple of days early to spend time with friends and family, it was a homecoming of sorts for me. I got sober while living in Oakland. It was rough going for me early on and AA was the last house on the block. I was either going to live or I was going to die. I knew that. I hated going to meetings, hated

everyone, and hated me. One night after an excruciatingly long (one hour) meeting I bolted towards the door, I couldn't get to the door fast enough when this big guy standing at the doorway stopped me dead in my tracks. I remember he had a big smile on his face and as his arms stretched out wide I thought, oh hell, he wants a hug... and so he did... as he embraced me warmly he said “I'm glad you're here, keep coming back, I'll see you tomorrow.” I don't ever remember seeing him before. Unbeknownst to him, I had been sitting in that room making plans to get to The Alley, one of my favorite bars just down the street. I could hardly wait for that damn meeting to be over so I could get a drink. Needless to say, I never made it to the bar, those few kind words helped to save my life. That meeting became my home group, and I have been coming back for thousands of days since. Thank you Bob F.

15 years later I'm back in Oakland, I walk out the lobby doors at the Marriott hotel where PRAASA is being held. I am a tourist walking down familiar streets in the area, an old neighborhood in downtown Oakland, the bars in the neighborhood were my old haunts, I puked and blacked out in all of them. The morning is beautiful, I walk down the block to the Farmers Market where I used to shop, there is a chill in the air – ah weather! I walk past rows and rows of brightly colored fruits and vegetables, making my way through the crowd, there in the middle of the square, seated at a table are Keith, Colin, Walter and Scott, soon Ken shows up. They're smiling, I'm smiling, I feel so alive, I have a full heart, I am so very grateful to be living a sober life and to be standing in the company of my sober friends so far away from home. A block away there stands a bookstore where Bob works, the very same man who so kindly took the time to welcome me 15 years ago. Unfortunately he was not working that weekend so I didn't have the opportunity to see him again and thank him personally. I just wanted him to know that what he said mattered, it changed the course of my life. What a debt of gratitude I owe to him, AA and to my home group Kihei Morning Serenity for sending me to my first Assembly and my first PRAASA. Our Pacific Region Trustee Madeleine tells of a delegate from South Africa who shared a simple word that describes Alcoholics Anonymous in his language. It is “ubuntu.” Translated, it means, “I am because you are.” Yup, that pretty much sums it for me too. I love Alcoholics Anonymous, this Fellowship and I am so very grateful for my sobriety, it is truly a privilege to serve you and Hawaii Area. Who knew?

Back to PRAASA; kudos to our Delegate Elizabeth, she made a great presentation and represented us with much grace and humility, Juddee did a great job as the CPC Panel Chair and DCM Nora on the special needs topic, Area 17 rocks! Friday and Saturday are full days, as usual we start early and end late. I attended the Secretary

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MauiFest VI

Sixth Annual MauiFest
International Convention

Sheraton Maui Resort

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Special Speakers:

Donna H.	Huntley, Mt.
Tim H.	Louisville, Ky.
Earl H.	Studio City, CA
Bob L.	Sun City, CA

roundtable on Saturday night, it started at 9:30 pm and ended at 11:30. How is it that at home, I am wiped out by 8 pm and at PRASSA I have boundless energy? Notes from the Secretary Roundtable: *Some Secretaries reduce DCM reports to three sentences. Another handles everything that goes on the website, another records only what they think is important, another sits on other committees and must attend IG and District meetings. One Area gets their minutes 8-11 months later due to translation backlog. All Areas bring a tape recorder. I am so grateful for how we do it here at Area, but then we don't have the challenges that many Areas do. I continue to grow and learn each time I attend these assemblies.*

This is what I heard at PRAASA: **Humility and Sacrifice:** *not something we talk about, something we do. Intuitive thought or action realized. A kind of trudging that wears out shoes. Strive for better. Countless acts of love in AA, who is answering the phones? Accomplishing tasks matched by anonymity, a deeply spiritual program where when two people talk, both lives are saved. **Enthusiasm and Gratitude:** the Spanish presenter said he was so surprised by the support of the English speaking community, he was so grateful. AA is becoming more inclusive. **Language of the Heart:** Share the message of hope and recovery, we hide our secrets, unable to discuss problems, the solution is talking to another AA We have personal experience of finding the way out. **Service Materials:** service materials can be uplifting, more than discussion, they can be carried into action. **Where Money and***

Spirituality Mix: *read the long form of the 7th Tradition. Had no one recovered, none of us would have income. Not much romance in paying the landlord. **Do We Need GSO?** We need right information and education. **Is Self Support About Money?** When we support others, we support AA and ourselves. We all came here to serve our groups, district, area, our actions support AA We give ourselves to AA by car pooling, making brownies, coming to meetings, being present. Self support is about action and participation. It is our responsibility to spread the spirit of action? Are we ready to do that? Get in the car! Anything worth having is worth working for. **From the mic:** Kuniko from Japan: Thanks to contributions I was able to receive my first AA book, contributions paid for services, translations. You helped me that is why I continue to contribute, because of that I am sober. **Posthumous Anonymity:** If in doubt, leave it out. **AA History:** Know what's available, and how to get it. Literature, digital archives, in researching we may be missing the feeling, antidotal experience; that which makes it come alive. Share your experience with the archives or Area newsletter. We already share at meetings, why can't we do this with archives? It is our journey to share. **Is AA Inclusive?** Topic should be is it "exclusive?". Regarding Atheism and Agnostics, 2000-2002 when last discussed at the GSC. AA not a religion, a newcomer would have to really search to find a broad range of literature to find where it is not necessary to find a higher power. Newcomers see God in window shades; meetings close with the Lord's Prayer-Agnostics say they feel unwelcome. 7% growth in AA, is that number good or bad? Is this issue a factor in low numbers? Some people feel pointing out difference leads to disunity. Maybe not creating new literature is an answer but strengthening existing literature. Follow code of love and tolerance. **From the mic:** Lord's prayer probably didn't keep people here but it probably has kept people away. Need gender neutral language "Our Father" for some women who have been abused is very difficult. What are our limitations? For corrections, some require inmates to connect with sponsors one a week, to report rape, is this cooperation or affiliation?*

From the Trustees Panel: Tradition 3: we can welcome everyone, would rather have one person who didn't belong instead of being exclusive. Tradition 5: raffles, car-washes, whatever might not be AA, but if you can't answer the question on how it helps to carry the message then it's probably not AA On chanting: "I really don't need any help reading", if you are chanting, how does that carry the message? What message does that send to the newcomer? Is AA a cult? From a Class A Trustee: service has filled a spiritual void, PRAASA represents the mortar, the glue, rebar, when you get involved unwillingly or willingly you soon realize the responsibilities. Once you start in service you take a leadership by precept and example to every newcomer walking through the door. Times are

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tough now, similar to 1935, listen to seniors, old timers, teach young people how to handle wet drunks. Warranties: basic principles of how we are trying to do this thing, the Warranties count, right of participation. Respect how we differ. Warranties require openness and transparency. First PRAASA, 1976 in Hawaii—a healing place. Thinks of the men who brought him to meetings, thru them he developed a desire to stay sober. People giving so much for the love of others, never better or worse than another AA member, best he could be is sober, when you put money in the basket something happens. In travels all over the world people thank him, thank us. The heartbeat of AA beats all over the world, no matter where, love, gratitude speaks one language. AA has changed but not the program, what has changed is our language. Convey the first drink, think about it, if a train hits you, it is not the caboose that does the damage. Young people coming in don't even know what a caboose is... AA is a continued learning process...

Sunday afternoon we end with the Responsibility Declaration, over a thousand of us in a circle, hand in hand.

I hope to see all of you in L.A. at PRAASA 2010, and see you for sure at PRAASA 2011 in Waikiki!

**In love and service,
Miranda,
Kihei Morning Serenity, Maui
Area Secretary
Area 17, Panel 59**



I went to my first PRAASA in 1988 in Salt Lake City Utah as one of the first two DCMs from Hawaii to be fully funded to attend PRAASA by their District's groups. This year's PRAASA in Oakland was my twenty first PRAASA as I missed one along the way when my wife, Tanya, and I were too poor to send both of us on our own dime. Since I had rotated out as Delegate already and Tanya was still active in Area service, we decided she should go and I stayed home. Every other year, we've both been able to go to the great benefit of our lives inside and outside of AA.

Through the years the purpose of my attendance has changed. As a DCM, as Area Chair and as Delegate and even as a Director and Trustee on the Grapevine Board, I always had some service level to which I felt responsible. Therefore, I was totally diligent, attended every session, took copious notes, participated actively and felt fortunate if I was selected to read, chair, facilitate or make a presentation at a meeting or roundtable. The past 4 years I have attended as a Past Trustee which isn't really a position at all, simply an acknowledgement of past service. Over the last few PRAASAs, a new practice of hav-

ing the Past Trustees share on Sunday morning has become standard practice. While I always enjoyed hearing our Past Trustees speak at Forums and other venues, it's been a different experience for me to be one and to be expected to speak with the other Past Trustees. I always feel a bit uneasy, like there might be somewhat of an expectation to be profound or to address some really significant problem facing AA or to give insights into the historic personalities that have helped shape AA. Not that those concerns would keep me from sharing! No ego problem here! No, it would be really difficult to turn down such a great opportunity to opine in front of the service leaders of the Pacific Region. Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on your perspective, this year Tanya and I had to leave on Sunday morning in order to get back in time to go to work on Monday and so you were all spared my attempt at passing on whatever wisdom I might have tried to share.

Tanya and I make attending PRAASA one of our most important travel priorities each year. Aside from the ever excellent presentations that we really enjoy hearing (and Elizabeth, our Delegate, and Nora, DCM from Kihei, made two of the most outstanding presentations this year), we keep going for three main reasons:

- 1) We are AA service junkies at heart and love hanging out with our AA service junky friends that we have made by being active in service, fulfilling one of the promises in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 7 in the Big Book that we will have a "host of friends".
- 2) Seeing the new service people showing up for their first PRAASA, the way their eyes pop out as they realize what a big thing this AA movement really is, the same way mine bugged out at my first PRAASA, and talking with them around the back of the room about how things are going with them in their service commitment.
- 3) A real sense that countless spiritual sacrifices have been made by innumerable AA members when they dropped their \$2 or two quarters in the basket to provide both Tanya and me with the best possible AA service education and I feel sincerely duty bound to be available if at all possible to try and pass on whatever experience I have gained to anyone who asks for it.

It is such a privilege to serve Alcoholics Anonymous in any capacity and I feel total love and gratitude for the opportunities I have had to serve this incredible fellowship. I could never pay back what has been so generously given to me and for that, I thank you.

**In love and service.
David E.
Past Delegate Hawaii Area 17
Past General Service Trustee**



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PRAASA 2009 was the third PRAASA I have attended and was the most rewarding PRAASA experience I've had so far. My first PRAASA was the 2007 PRAASA in Portland; my second was last year in Anchorage. Don't get me wrong, all were wonderful, but at least for me, the cumulative experience keeps getting richer. I fully expect next year's PRAASA in Los Angeles will be even better.

In Portland and Anchorage I was attending as a GSR for my home group, the Downtown Lunch Group in Honolulu. This year I attended as the chair of Area 17's Website Standing Committee. Last year in Anchorage I was also our Webmaster, but we had not, as yet, created the committee. In fact, in Anchorage I stood at the microphone and asked for help from the body in forming a committee - something many areas had already done. This year I returned to PRAASA, grateful for the help I had received.

PRAASA generally opens at noon on Friday, but on Thursday there is an early bird AA meeting. Each time I have gone I have attended this meeting, but had never spoken. This time I was called on to speak, tag style, by Scotty, one of our previous delegates. I joked that last year I had asked for help forming a committee, this year I was wondering what I had been thinking.

PRAASA isn't a business meeting so much as a sharing session. Panels each day share their experience with issues of the day, often same topics that will be discussed at the upcoming General Service Conference. It is in the evening that I feel some of the most important work gets done however, when we meet in various round tables with our peers. GSRS meet with GSRS, DCMS meet with DCMS, and, this year, I met with other webmasters and web committee members.

Our meeting was held on Friday night, after a dinner break. The work of PRAASA goes on, late into the night. My round table had over a dozen attendees from areas with very different situations. Some, like Western Washington, Area 93, had fully formed committees with a variety of assignments. Others were a committee of one, hoping for help. We here in Area 17 fell somewhere in the middle.

The first order of business was to decide on discussion topics. Ours were:

1. What should be on an area website and what should be restricted? Do we have guidelines?
2. It's often difficult to find a meeting. How can we improve access to meeting info on aa.org?
3. What methods should be use to make web sites more accessible to all?
4. How do we maintain meeting schedules?

5. How can we best split web duties within the website committee?

Discussion was lively and everyone seemed to be enjoying the experience. All the areas present agreed on fundamentals like following the Traditions, but there was a diversity of opinion when it came to implementation.

I think we all agreed that putting information on the web constitutes "publishing" and thus we must be very careful with "anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." Of course we are at a very early stage of web use, so there's bound to be a learning curve in determining what can and should be done.

In discussing the topics having to do with locating meetings there was quite a bit of diversity. Some areas take the responsibility for maintaining a database of meetings; others only provide links to the Intergroups in their areas as we do here in Area 17. There was no sense that one way was better than another, but it certainly was interesting to see how, and perhaps more importantly, why it was done differently in different areas.

Keeping web sites accessible to users with less than the latest computer equipment or who have other needs was the topic I introduced. It is my contention that even if you have dial-up, older equipment, or special needs, you should be able to access most of an AA website. Everyone agreed with this, but when it comes to those with special needs, perhaps someone who needs to be able to have a website read to them, it became less clear. Don't misunderstand, everyone agreed it is a worthwhile goal, but the implementation of sites that can be read clearly by any user may be beyond the capabilities any area. Even large corporations with huge budgets often fail at perfect access. Still it's clear to me that we should strive for ease of access. I'd be interested in hearing from any of you.

As for how duties should be divided again opinions varied, mostly because of the different situations of each area. Some relied on one skilled member doing most everything, others split the duties among many people. Ours is a new committee and I fully expect we will change the way we do things as we progress and learn just how best to serve our own area.

In short, the web round table was an enriching experience and I hope that there is one in Los Angeles in 2010. Just as importantly, I hope we have one here when PRAASA 2011 is held in Honolulu. If that had been the only think I attended while at PRAASA, it would have justified my trip, but there was so much more. More, in fact, than I can put into this short article.

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Suffice it to say that being able to meet with those who do General Service in other areas is a wonderful experience; one I hope everyone can have at some point. Each PRAASA I have attended has really driven home the point that we need each other and no matter how different things may seem at first, we are more alike than different.

Besides PRAASA itself, I had time for some fun while in the Bay Area. I arrived a couple of days early with a bicycle in tow. I'm sure I amused everyone who saw me with my folding bicycle, but I got to ride over the Golden Gate Bridge on a beautifully clear Bay Area day. Now there's something I would never even have dreamed of if I weren't sober. I owe that experience to all you. Thank you for letting me be of service.

Bob H.
Area 17 Webmaster
webmaster@area17aa.org
www.area17aa.org



PRAASA 2009 ~ A Personal Point of View

First, let me say in hindsight that my expectations of Area 06 where I lived for most of my life as well as where I got sober, were unrealistic and quite honestly nearly impossible for any planning committee to meet. Now that I have had some time to reflect and actually process some of my experiences at PRAASA in Oakland, I am happy to report that many of my expectations have become more realistic and my viewpoint is a bit clearer.

Today, I am grateful I have been reminded, once again, where the focus of my personal recovery work needs to be. How often have we heard, "when the student is ready the teacher will appear"? Each PRAASA I have attended has better prepared me for the next teacher in my personal recovery as well as elevating my level of knowledge so I can be more effective and productive in General Service.

My General Service toolbox has some new tools, I will be able to use as the CPC Committee Chair for this panel. I was open just enough to receive them even though I was in what seems like a constant battle with my judgment of everything. At times, the best I could do in the moment to calm my restless and judgmental spirit, was to simply close my eyes for a moment, breathe, say the serenity prayer and be grateful to be part of the Hawaii Area.

This year the highlights of PRAASA were obviously more of a personal nature for me. Reconnecting with people I got sober with 29 years ago, was truly amazing, it made my heart sing. Listening to Hawaii's panel presenters, Elizabeth and Nora was great. They both were well pre-

pared and each presentation was informative and well received. They did us proud!

I was honored to be the chairperson for Panel 6, "How We Cooperate". It was a great experience and I am so grateful to have been asked to be a participant from Area 17. The hardest part was to stand in front of the assembly, with me on both of the huge screens during the Q&A period. It was about half an hour with people at the mic. Can you imagine having to stand there and not make faces as a reaction to what people were saying for that amount of time? All the people who came to the mic were wonderful, thank goodness.

A couple of things I heard that have stayed with me are our Pacific Region Trustee, Madeline's experience with an African gentleman in recovery who used the word "ubuntu" to describe what AA means to him, "I am because you are" and Kihei DCM, Nora who closed her special needs presentation by sharing with us that at meetings for our deaf members, they often touch feet and sign the Serenity Prayer with their hands.

Sharing our experience, strength and hope with people who are also involved in General Service is truly a gift and I am grateful for their wisdom.

I hope to see each of you at the next PRAASA, where we each have the opportunity to be both students and teachers as we meet, grow and travel the path of being in General Service.

With Aloha,
Juddee K.
CPC Committee Chair
Area 17, Panel 59



I was yet again fired up for AA service work at PRAASA 2009. The Trustee Panel stood out most to me. I was impressed by the years of service experience pouring out from the elders of our AA community sitting at the long table on the stage. What grabbed me was that in AA when we assemble we COMMUNICATE, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE. That explains the whole weekend in a nut shell. I have been inspired to be a trustee one day. A goal, hope, direction of staying on this path of serviced sobriety. I thank you for the immeasurable opportunity of being Puna's link to the General Service Structure.

Here are some of the things I heard that weekend.

- Read the Warranties of the General Service Conference basic principles. We need to listen to each other. People get caught in the structural details and have strong differing opinions. People want to be heard. "12 points to insure our future" is what Bill W. first called the Traditions. When we chant in AA, what message are we sending to the new-

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comer? Is it inclusive? If we get too rigid in AA, it'll be uncomfortable for many.

- Lead by example. Repetition is not a sin in this fellowship. Utilize instead of analyze. The circle around the triangle is the history of AA.
- Keep raising your hand to serve. AA changes every year and reminds people how we make those changes depends on us and our responsibility.
- PRAASA makes leaders. We're willing to be here because we want what's best.

I was blown away by the Spanish speaking community presence and how AA is reaching them. As DCM I learned there are guidelines on GSO website for sharing sessions (I have not investigated this yet.) And that other DCMs have meetings on Roberts Rules of Order. Basically it was Awesome. Thank you for recovery, unity and service.

Develyn
DCM Puna, District 12
Area 17, Panel 59



Aloha, my name is Amberly and I'm an alcoholic and I currently serve as the DCM for Tri-Island District 13. This was my first PRAASA I have ever been to and was a little nervous as to what I was going to experience. I went to PRAASA with an open mind, hoping to learn whatever it is God wants me to learn especially if it means I will learn how to better serve my community. However, not only did I learn more in depth about AA as a whole and that it reaches out to so many communities such as non-English speaking communities, blind and disabled persons. The PRAASA experience really opened my eyes to understand first hand that the disease of alcoholism can affect anyone. I also learned a lot about myself, which I did not expect for that to be a part of the equation. I learned that I can become over-whelmed in constant business meetings and that taking breaks not only revives my brain but helps to fellowship with other AA'ers. PRAASA reminded me of my first big experience in AA when I went to the Hawaii state convention within my first 30 days of sobriety. Everything was movin and shakin around me, but taking it all in was exhausting. I am sure I missed a lot at PRAASA, being my first experience there, however what I did take in was that most AA'ers love AA and love that they decided they needed something more out of their lives and chose AA to help them recover from their sickness and became willing to do anything to keep their sobriety, hence becoming GSR's and DCM's and many other service positions at this level. I found that this level of service is another way to keep us interested, growing and learning. To be challenged to do something different and hopefully make a difference in another person's life, one day at a time. I really loved being a part of the Hawaii Team. We were well represented there and made our-

selves known to the convention by being a cheering team anytime any Hawaii Representation stood to speak. Thank God for AA and that this is a program of progress not perfection. I plan to continue to learn and grow and do the best that I can do in my position. I thank my district for sending me on this journey.

Many Mahalos,
Grateful recovering alcoholic Amberly
DCM 13 Tri-Island District



Thank you all for your financial support which gave me the privilege of attending PRAASA 2009 on March 6-8 in Oakland, CA. The total expenditure including airfare, hotel, and banquet was \$700.

I have purchased the PRAASA CD's and all are welcome to use.

There were 1,770 registered members from Alt GSR's to Past Trustees from all of the Western United States. An honorary delegate representing the Yukon Territory was also there and a few members from Japan, including Japan's GSO Manager.

On Friday there were three panel presentations and the DCM Roundtable which I attended.

The first panel the Delegates from each Area shared. The one thing that stood out for me that a majority of the Areas have a lot bi-lingual districts. David F., the delegate from Idaho Area 18 shared how they are digitalizing their archives.

The second panel covered the General Service Conference theme: "Our Commitment to Carry AA's Message – Enthusiasm and Gratitude In Action". (As Bill Sees It pg 9)

Panel three was on Grapevine and Literature: 60% of the literature are pamphlets.

I attended the DCM Roundtable on Friday evening and here are a few questions we discussed/shared:

How do I run a Sub-District Meeting? There are Districts that have sub-districts because of the large number of GSR's represented.

Fund raisers, raffles, etc. Our district does not do fund raisers or raffles. There was mixed reactions to this topic ranging from "this is a violation of our traditions" to "we do it all the time".

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GSR Outreach, General Service. How do we get participation? Heard all the options we thought about and are implementing.

District Newsletter. A handful of districts have a newsletter. One group emails only, very informal about what's going on in their district. Another prints and distributes to groups.

Friday's panel presentations and DCM Roundtable discussion was a great start to PRAASA.

Saturday's three panels covered the following topics:

Panel 4 - Our Commitment to Self-Support

Panel 5 - Changing our Perceptions

Panel 6 - How We Cooperate

There were two presentations that stood out for me. The first was "The Basket – Money and Spirituality", a topic item under Panel 4. I started breaking down the numbers and realized how spiritual the \$2 contribution to the basket really is. \$0.20 of each contribution is made to No Ka Oi District of which \$0.10 is budgeted for my travel to Assemblies, Committee Meetings, and PRAASA. It cost the District \$700 to send me to PRAASA which calculates out to 7,000 times members have contributed to the basket. Receiving that trust is an honor.

The second presentation was made by Nora T on Special Needs. I may be a little biased because she's from Hawaii but I did get quite emotional when she shared about her Grandma.

Highlights of Sunday's Panel 7: Past Trustees' Experience, Strength and Hope:

Ruth J. - We need always to ask ourselves "Are We Carrying the Message?" whenever we do an activity, fundraiser, etc.

Jim E. - "We in Service are the 1st Big Book newcomers read."

George D. - We ask "How long have we been in service, not how long in General Service." George met Bill W. in 1960. It did not keep him sober.

Larry N. - "This meeting would be a lot bigger if you talked less"

Again I wish to thank all of the members who allowed me to attend PRAASA. I will do my best to continue to carry the message so freely given to me.

**Aloha,
Clifford,
DCM No Ka Oi District 5**



PRAASA met and surpassed its expectations. This was my first PRAASA and thoroughly enjoyed it. Being with 1,775 other service junkies was a great experience. I compare the weekend with ordering the best cup of coffee you can buy and getting it from someone with a huge smile and not having to wait at all for it.

The first day wasted no time in getting right into it. The AA meeting before the opening session was great. The 2 topics were Service (of course) and alcoholism in the family. I felt compelled to get up to the mic and share my experience, strength, and hope regarding both topics.

There were representatives from virtually every service structure position: from Alt. GSR all the way up to Class A Trustee. Seeing everyone there sober and happy was such a joy.

The various topics discussed in the different presentations were very informative and really opened my eyes to all the different issues facing Alcoholics Anonymous at this time. Some of them are the same as they were 20 years ago.

Some of the presentations that touched me were: Special Needs by Nora, Young People's, and the multimedia issue.

I hope to make PRAASA every year from here on out. It gave me a much needed AA energy boost!!!

**Humbled to be your servant,
Sean M.
DCM #7, East Hawaii**



Two years ago I attended my very first PRAASA in Portland OR. I was representing my home group "Bad Brains" as a first time GSR. While attending that PRAASA it occurred to me through a series of GSR round tables and panel presentations that I most likely heard about AA through the efforts of someone somewhere through General Service. To the best of my knowledge I had never met that person, and they too had never met me. An anonymous affair it would seem. It also became apparent to me that AA assemblies such as PRAASA and other local assemblies exist to ensure that our message (that by working all 12 steps you can have a spiritual experience significant enough to overcome alcoholism) continues to stay strong and does not become diluted. It also ensures that our primary purpose continues to be that we carry this message to all who suffer from Alcoholism. I realized that I may not be standing here today if not for such assemblies and such hard work from others who had given freely their time and energy to be involved in General Service.

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Returning home I reported this new found awakening that I had experienced at PRAASA with my home group and my district. I also saw how blessed I had been to have fallen into a home group that puts so much emphasis on service. It seemed to me that the members of my home group understand the true purpose of AA. They claimed that it was through their involvement with General Service that allowed them to continue to carry AA's message effectively at Bad Brains.

With so much excitement and enthusiasm I was displaying about service, my district decided to vote me in at the beginning of this year as the next DCM. Now, once again, I am here to report about this year's experience at PRAASA.

PRAASA 09' in Oakland CA. was a wonderful learning experience. The overall theme this year was carrying AA's message with Enthusiasm and Gratitude. The overwhelming number of young people at the assembly conveyed the enthusiasm. The heartfelt shares on topics such as "humility and sacrifice", "spiritual program in action" and "language of the heart" certainly conveyed the gratitude. We spent plenty of time talking about money. With the way things are in the world today AA is feeling the financial crunch as well. The Grapevine, "our meeting in print," which in many cases is the only way someone can attain the message of AA, is losing money. If we lost the Grapevine, you and I would be ok but what happens to the man behind bars or the soldier overseas that can only attend a meeting via printed pages? More than the Grapevine, AA as a whole needs more money to carry its message more effectively. Remember a dollar doesn't go as far as it used to.

There were many moving panel presentations, but none as moving is the topic of "special needs" by area 17's own Nora T. She discussed an experience of being in a meeting for the deaf. She told us how that meeting would actually bring in an interpreter once a month so that a hearing capable person could get the message from the deaf. She told us about how at the end of the meeting they were going to sign the serenity prayer. She was wondering how they would all be connected when signing the prayer because they were using their hands to do so. As the prayer was being signed she looked down and noticed that they were all touching their feet in a circle.

Other presentations brought to light topics such as "Our common welfare", "Inclusivity in AA" and "Learning from young people in AA". These topics are near to my heart as I came into AA for my first time at the age of 12. I was reminded during such presentations of our third tradition, that "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking". Had AA been exclusive to me declaring myself as only an addict and being so young, I may never

had been giving the opportunity to realize my true problem being alcoholism and could have died from this disease thinking that AA was full of self righteous people unwilling to give me a chance.

This year's PRAASA was very different from the experience I had two years ago. Then, I was overwhelmed and moved by the spirit of service. I saw its effect on me in a personal level. That experience instilled in me what our true primary purpose is. This year through panel presentations and a series of DCM round table discussions I recognized the importance of carrying AA's primary purpose to my GSR's and therefore AA's message being relayed back to the home groups

This year's experience at PRAASA showed me how to be a leader in AA. When I say "leader" I don't mean that I have any sort of power or prestige or that I am any better than any other member of AA. What I mean is that because of General Service Assemblies such as PRAASA I understand that the bottom line in AA is that we stay sober and help other to do the same. Understanding that bottom line has helped me to be objective, understanding and has given me direction to give to other members in AA and to the new GSR's I get to work with in my district. I want to close with this: Once the assembly ended I attended a meeting right down the road from where it was being held. The speaker share about how he doesn't read the "Big Book" and how he lost \$40,000 playing facebook poker that day and how torn up he was about it. He seemed miserable. I then heard people share on the topic the speaker chose which was "treating yourself good". Out of the 15 people who shared only one person said anything close to what the message of AA is. Of course there were many "new comers" in the room with less than a week of sobriety. I didn't recognize one person at that meeting from PRAASA and when I spoke of it no one seemed to know what it was. I couldn't help to wonder if there was a connection between no one sharing the message of AA and no one knowing what PRAASA was. This only inspired me further to be involved in General Service and to carry the message to the best of my ability.

**In love and service,
Patrick A.
DCM Waikiki, District 10**



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PRAASA Presentations

PRAASA 2009

Panel 6: How We Cooperate

Topic: "Our Common Welfare"

Good afternoon everyone, I am an alcoholic and my name is Elizabeth. Grateful to be here, grateful to be anywhere sober! Friday Night Palolo Discussion on the island of Oahu is my home group. My sobriety date is April 5, 1999. I currently have the incredible honor and privilege to serve Hawaii Area 17 as our Panel 59 Delegate.

First of all I would like to thank Bill for inviting me to present, and thank Area 06 for hosting this beautiful event. I love Alcoholics Anonymous with all my heart; it is always exciting and yet terrifying to say yes to an AA request.

When I first received my topic "Our Common Welfare", my initial thought was "Simple - Tradition 1 – Unity." When I learned that the panel I am on was entitled "How we cooperate" I realized that I would have to widen the circle a little.

My research included reading Tradition One, reviewing portions of "AA Comes of Age", subscribing to the AA Grapevine Digital Archives and reading the pamphlet "AA Tradition – How it developed". I spoke to my service sponsor, and he encouraged me to share my personal experience with "Our Common Welfare".

In the forward to "AA Tradition – How it developed", Bill W. says "When an alcoholic applies the Twelve Steps of our recovery program to his personal life, his disintegration stops and his unification begins. The Power which now holds him together in one piece overcomes those forces which had rent him apart. Exactly the same principle applies to each AA group and to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. So long as the ties which bind us together prove far stronger than those forces which would divide us if they could; all will be well. We shall be secure as a movement; our essential unity will remain a certainty."

Like many of us, when I was drinking, I never gave a thought to the welfare of others. To be painfully honest, at the end of my drinking I didn't even give a thought to my OWN welfare, let alone anyone else's. I never wanted to be a friend among friends, a worker among workers, and a useful member of society. I was dying of loneliness and isolation. When I arrived at Alcoholics Anonymous, I was out of ideas, and I was willing to try what had worked for you all.

I joined a home group, because you all said you belonged to a home group. At first I was there just to stay sober, then to learn how to live, and eventually it shifted and I was there to be of love and service to others. From an isolated and lonely Alcoholic, I began to care about my fellows, my home group, and finally my Higher Power. Today, as the direct result of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have a life full of love, friends, family and co-workers. I truly believe that if not for the genuine human connections in my life - which for me represent a direct relationship with Power Greater than myself - you would have another presenter here today. I would not be sober.

Tradition One states quite clearly, that the group must survive, or the individual will not. "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward."

Step One identifies the problem – I am powerless over alcohol and my life is unmanageable, and steps 2 through 12 shows us the solution. Tradition One identifies the problem – our common welfare must come first or the individual will not stay sober, and Traditions 2-12 shows us the solution.

To relate Our Common Welfare to the Panel topic of "How we cooperate", I would like to share experience I have had in our Area with a local treatment center for women. After speaking at their in- house AA meeting one evening, I had about 10 women calling me to go out on passes to outside meetings. I ended up sponsoring one of the women, and the Treatment Center required her to share a biography with me and sign off that I had read it.

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This was mandated in order for her to be able to move to the next level in her treatment. I felt slightly uneasy with this, but I complied to help out my sponsee. Since that experience, I have had numerous requests to be "sober support" and take women out to meetings from that facility. Due to the fact that I feel personally that the treatment center is asking of AA something that AA "does not do", I let the women know that I would love to talk to them about AA after they get out of Treatment.

Maybe one day I will feel more comfortable with being of service in that capacity. I AM willing to cooperate by helping women with the transition from treatment into the AA community, but I AM NOT willing to affiliate myself, as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, by facilitating their curriculum.

My good friend and Alternate Delegate always reminds me that we don't do recovery alone, and we don't have to do service alone either. With that in mind, I queried members in my Area on this topic, and got the following comments:

We carry the message of AA, not of any one individual.

We need new drunks and we live the principles in ALL of our affairs.

I have learned over the years that without our society and our groups there would be no place for the individual to go to learn how stay sober.

I am reminded how important our common welfare is all the time at my home group with all the personalities. We must learn to get along for our primary purpose and be tolerant of each other, being an example for the shaking, confused newcomer.

Just knowing my home group will be there and that I can depend on that support is the rock that holds true.

Our Traditions create a framework in which the individual can have spiritual contact with other alcoholics and learn to function in the world around us.

Well if recovery / 12 steps keeps us from suicide, then unity / 12 traditions keeps us from homicide.

We have that common bond that only together we can stay sober.

Although we may not see eye to eye, we can get along.

In my Area, we often close our Assemblies with the Declaration of Unity:

This we owe to AA's future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

Thank you for my sobriety and a life filled with light, love and laughter.

**Elizabeth M., Panel 59 Delegate
Hawaii Area 17**



**"Changing Our Perceptions: Special Needs"
PRAASA, Oakland
March 7, 2009
Presenter: Nora T.**

When I first came into AA, someone said to me, "I spilt more booze than you drank, how can you possibly be an alcoholic." I was 21 at the time, and the youngest member of the group. This was a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, like any other, where love and service were spoken of, and the only requirement for membership was a desire to stop drinking. And yet, clearly there was a lack of understanding for someone with a different experience than his own. In the Grapevine article, "The Deaf Alcoholic," from August 1963, the writer quotes an AA members saying, "In all my drinking

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years I never once saw a deaf person drink." Another AA was quoted on the topic of the needs of the deaf saying, "It really can't be such a problem. Just get them a copy of the Big Book in Braille." (In case you didn't catch that... Braille is for blind people...not deaf.)

In the book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age," page 231, Bill W. says, "in the years ahead we shall, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, providing that we always remain willing to confess our faults and to correct them promptly. Our growth as individuals has depended upon this healthy process of trial and error. So will our growth as a fellowship . . . Just as each AA must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole society do if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well."

It is an honor and privilege to stand before you today and discuss the topic of Special Needs. I am always amazed by the gifts that flow into my life now that I am sober. At our Area election assembly this past November someone said, "God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called." I can see a thread of miracles that have connected together and brought me to this moment. The topic of Special Needs first came into my life about three years ago, when I was asked to coordinate the Special Needs booth at Manhattan Share-a-Day in New York. I hired the American Sign Language interpreters, I assigned people to run the manual elevator and the wheelchair access to the building, I brought AA literature in Braille, large print and on audio cds, and helped guide people to the elevators, the meeting rooms, and the interpreted meetings.

This was not my first encounter with aspects of Special Needs in action. At a meeting I used to frequent in New York City, I met a woman named Karen. She was a tremendous inspiration. Every day, she and her Golden Labrador came to the meeting. There was always a seat saved for her up front and she brought her own Big Book in Braille. The meeting was a round-robin format where each person would read a few paragraphs. She read along in Braille, and when it was her turn to read aloud, she never skipped a beat.

One of the most moving talks I have heard in AA was at the International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous, Los Angeles. The speaker signed his story to us, and the interpreter translated it for us to hear. The I.C.Y.P.AA committee's choice in this speaker caused an instant "change in perception" in all of us who were in attendance that night. At the end of the talk, we all waved our hands – which is the sign for clapping.

Most recently my experience with Special Needs has hit closer to home. About a year and a half ago my grandmother – a long-time member of Alcoholics Anonymous – had a massive stroke. We were on our way to pick her up and take her to a meeting when we discovered what had happened. The stroke left her unable to speak, eat, or move her right side. She is homebound in a long-term care facility, she cannot read the literature, and expressing her emotions is very difficult. We tried consulting with the Hawaii Area Cooperation with the Elderly Community Committee, and we asked friends to help start a meeting. While that avenue availed us nothing, God had other plans. A younger Maui resident suffered a stroke several months later, and his home group, Happy Hour (which happens to be in my district), quickly formed a weekly meeting at the facility. I've tried to ask my grandmother what it was like when she didn't have access to meetings, and what it is like now. Sadly, she cannot put it into words. I do know that when I come for my weekly visit, and I read the Big Book to her, I can tell that a peace comes over her. For the hour that she's in her meeting, or the time that we are reading the book, both she and I can connect to something bigger than our current physical conditions.

The experiences I have shared with you so far, are all speaking of long-term AA members. But what of the newcomer that walks in the door? In preparing for this presentation, I've tried to imagine what it might be like if I walked into my home-group as a deaf person. Everything there is dependent on auditory learning: The preamble, the steps, the introduction, the speaker's topic, the literature that he or she chooses from, and the sharing. While the truth behind the AA message comes from the language of the heart, the solution to alcoholism often relies quite heavily on the language, or the needs, of the majority.

The term Special Needs includes those who may be hearing-, visually-, or speech-impaired, those who are homebound, chronically ill, and those who are developmentally disabled or who suffer from brain damage. In the Special Needs/ Accessibilities Workbook, there is a list of suggested activities for the committee. Many of these are things I hope to bring to the attention of my home-group, my district, and my area. For example, conduct a survey of wheelchair accessible meetings and add this information to local meeting lists. . . conduct a survey of meetings with American Sign Language Interpretation. . . Work closely with other committees to inform the public of alcoholics with special needs . . . Take a meeting to homebound AA members. . . and provide Special Needs workshops."

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Of the 44 Area Special Needs Committees, the breadth of their work varies from committee to committee, catering to the needs of the area. In a recent presentation at the General Service Board Sharing Session, Valerie O'Neill discussed how "some committees deal with AA members whose first language is not English, as a Special Need, and others try to help mothers with children." Most recently, one Special Needs chair contacted her in regards to a recent plea stating, "I am autistic – please help me!"

As a teacher, I encounter students with varying special needs. This has been a true gift of sobriety, and a lesson in patience and understanding. In college I was instructed that in any class I taught, it was my responsibility to cater to any, and all, learning styles. On page 85 of the Big book, the tenth step says "every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities." This is not always easy; it requires much *humility and sacrifice*. At the end of the day, when I look back at whether I was thinking of myself most of the time, or if I was thinking of what I could pack into the stream of life, I am most pleased when I can honestly say, that when anyone, anywhere, reached out for help, the hand of AA was there. In the book, "Dr. BOB and the Good Old-timers," Norman Y, the first blind member, is quoted on page 250 saying "AA is a wonderful thing to know and apply – but in your life. You've got to live it out in the street. You see somebody having a little problem, help them, no matter who they are. That's AA"

I know I have learned a great deal in doing this presentation. I hope that today you have gained a little more understanding about Special Needs. Whether it be by starting a Special Needs committee, considering the proposal for a Special Needs Pamphlet for newcomers, considering to include Special Needs in the scope of the Trustees' committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community & Treatment Facilities, or simply by bringing a meeting to someone with a broken leg, we can be a part of the growth of our fellowship.

I would like to close with a quote from the grapevine article entitled, "Inside an A.S.L. Meeting: A Hearing Alcoholic Gets the Message from Deaf AAs," from October 2004. In it, John W, from Kihei Hawaii, states, "During the break, one of the members 'told' me that this deaf AA group paid for a voice interpreter once a week so that hearing alcoholics could benefit from the meeting. I was still pondering that one thirty minutes later when the meeting neared closing. As we rose to form a circle, I thought, 'How can we sign the Serenity Prayer while holding hands?' Pondering this, I thought it was too bad they couldn't enjoy the physical connection during the prayer that we do in hearing meetings. Then one member signed to me and I noticed everyone's feet were touching. I gently pushed my shoes against the shoes of my neighbor's and signed the prayer. Power poured from my feet and my hands to my heart."

Mahalo for letting me to be of service.



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Questions? bibinfo@bigislandbash.com

Mahalo to all for contributing to Area. Please send to our permanent address below.

Hawaii Area Committee #2107

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Honolulu, HI 96813

Please remember to include your group name and District.