

Friday Night

Friday, July 11, 2014 6:16 PM

06:45-07:00 pm Orientation for First-Time Attendees

This is my first Forum so I made sure I attended the Orientation for First-Time Attendees. I was also given a nice little gold star to stick on my registration badge so that I can be identified as such. It's time for the event to start and we aren't quite ready. And now we are..

1975 - Regional forums were introduced and the first was held in Atlanta GA in the south-east region. The purpose is bring the GSO, Grapevine, and the Board to the people in AA because not everyone will be able to get to NY. How do they serve us? That's what we are going to find out. There's also the opportunity for everyone to interact with each other and that's important.

Joel C. said, "I need to hear from you."

Tomorrow there will be sharing sessions for us to break into smaller groups and we can learn from each other.

We were also given an orientation hand-out which explains what this is all about. The next several pages help with the "alphabet soup." That stuff like, what does AAGV mean? What does GSR mean? Many of us know this stuff, but those of us just getting into general service may not. I sure didn't when I first came to AA.

Joel suggested we take notes and explained how he does it. He also mentioned that those of us who are funded have a responsibility to take back our experience. He said that we should be bringing back our experience of the Forum and not just the information we were given.

Joel C.: We only have one thing in AA and that's our story. We should share our story back at our groups and maybe someone will respond and say, "I'd like to live that story myself."

And now Joel is calling up the participants for the first session and we will formally start the Forum!

07:00-10:00 pm Opening Session

Forum Called to Order by Chairperson - Joel C. Pacific Regional Trustee

07:00-08:30 pm

Welcome - Joel C.

We opened with the Serenity Prayer as we do in so many AA events. Joel gave us a little history of the forum and reminded us that these are sharing sessions and our participation is important. We can exchange information, ask questions, and spark new ideas.

We were reminded of our tradition of anonymity.

Joel then introduced staff, guests, and others. There are just too many to list.

Then everyone was introduced by group or service (like delegates, officers, etc.) We weren't, of course, introduced by name. Let's just say everyone in the room got to stand and receive applause.

We were then asked not to take the stuff from the display tables. It was said more diplomatically.

Opening Remarks

Terry Bedient, FACHE, Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee, GSB, Chairman

Terry Bedient is our non-alcoholic GSB chair. He welcomed us and repeated the idea of our being here to connect with each other. He is willing to listen to our complaints. He also welcomed Joel to the board and said, "He'll be good for the Pacific Region."

"Our responsibility is to keep lines of communication open."

"We are faced with unlimited opportunity cleverly disguised as unsolvable problems."

We are being challenged to craft a vision for the future to carry the message forward to the future.

Presentations

The Class B Trustee - Joel C.

Newly elected Pacific Regional Trustee Joel C. gave us the first presentation. He was elected in April at the 64th GSC. This is his first official act.

Relationship of trustees to AA as a whole (showed on a chart - this is in the service manual). See upside down triangle with groups at the top. Joel then explained a bit of how this works. There are 135 voting members at the GSC. Delegates make up over 2/3's. Delegates vote in the interest of AA as a whole.

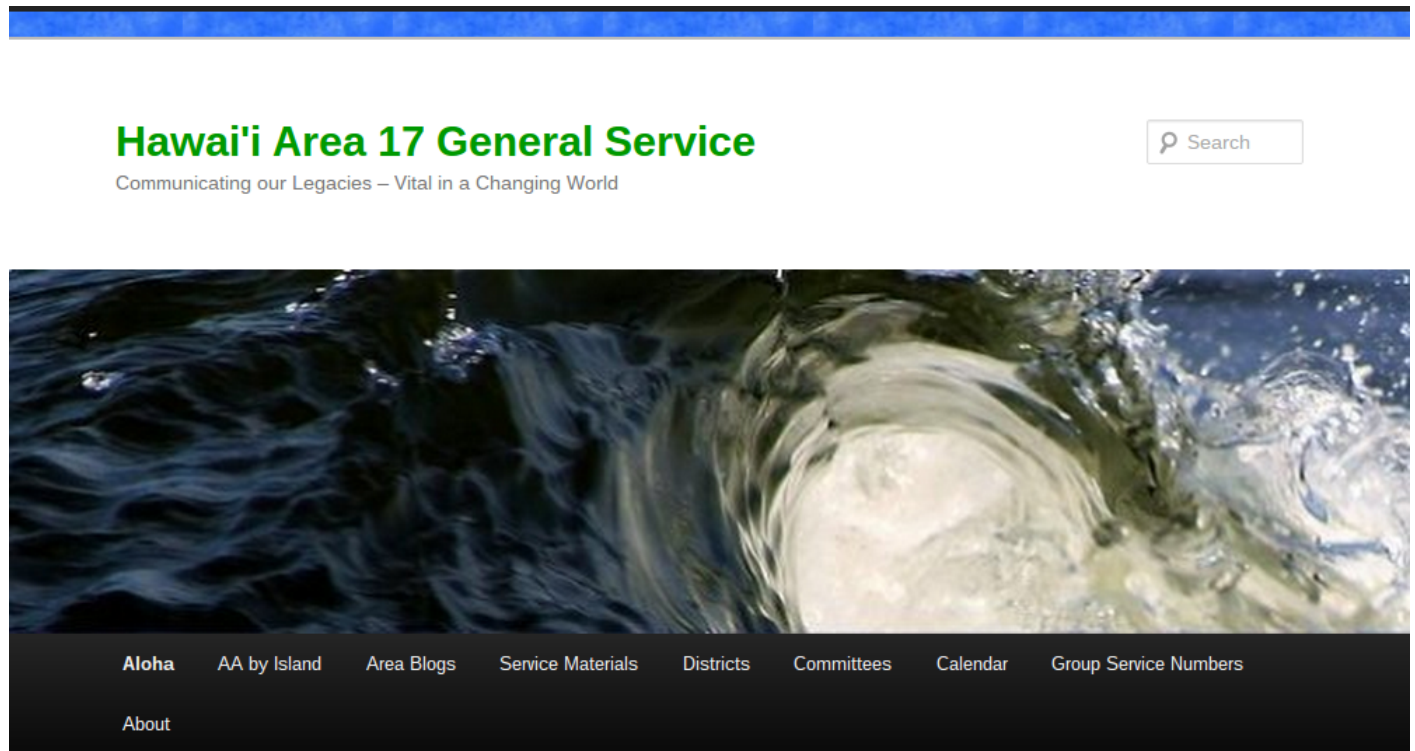
21 Member Trustees: 7 non-alcoholic, 14 class B alcoholic

87 Regional Trustees - 2 from Canada, 6 from US

Then showed map of regions.

Images of each area in the Pacific Region were shown.

Hawaii's image was the front of our webpage with the picture of the wave. We must keep it. Okay, if we want to change it later we can. After I die.



Then Joel talked about his specific role.

GSB Board Member
Attend Board Weekends
Serve on one corporate board
Attend assemblies
Regional forums
...and more

Thanks us for his sobriety

The Class A Trustee - Terry Bedient (nonalcoholic trustee, chair)

Terry is a class A trustee. He is speaking here in the place of another class A who couldn't make it. He mentioned that the service manual is their guidebook, just as it is for us. Their purpose is to oversee things and carry out the will of the GSC. There are quarterly board meetings. They are friends of AA and can reach out and be the public face of AA as they do not have anonymity constraints.

The trustees work on each committee with at least one class A on each

The trustees draft policies and procedures based on the wishes of the GSC.

Terry went to his first meeting as a counselor in the 70's when someone took him to show "how people really keep sober." He was recruited to the board. Before AA service he was able to attend retreats for recovering lawyers and judges. He loved the countdown. One of his experiences was that someone with a lot of years stood up at one of these with 30 days and Terry saw us "love him back into the Fellowship."

Then he thanked us!

G.S.O. Staff Assignments - Jim M., G.S.O. Staff Public Information Coordinator

Jim is a GSO staff member. He is an alcoholic and a staff member. He started with a little GSO history. The first office was in Newark NJ where Bill W dictated the big book to Ruth Hock. Today we have 36,000 square feet of space in Morningside Heights (where I am from oddly enough). They must have known I'd need AA.

There are around 80 full-time employees, most are non-alcoholic. There are 12 staff members who are required to be sober alcoholics and their positions mirror to some degree the committee structure for the most part. Jim is the current PI staff member. Jim directs anonymity break concerns to the delegate in the specific area in which the concern arose.

Then he mentioned the upcoming 2015 International Convention and what a big job coordinating this is. The theme is: 80 Years, Happy, Joyous, and Free. Registration forms are being sent out at the end of August. September 3rd registration will open. 4,000 local AAs will welcome folks to Atlanta. If you haven't been to one, I urge you to consider it.

Every two years staff members change positions. Part of the reason is that it insures they can all cover another position and so that folks don't become entrenched in any one position.

Tradition questions make up a big part of correspondence, so do questions about personality conflicts! Sound familiar. There are no official opinions.

"We just won't get drawn in controversy."

We just try to share from AA's collective experience. What we can do is help local AAs become more informed. The solution to group problems is an informed group conscience and things are often passed on to the area delegate. "We are not the AA police."

Staff members are also conference members.

He invited us to visit GSO - M-F 8:45 to 4:45, Friday at 11am there's an open AA meeting. You can take a tour, see the archives, order literature, etc. 1942 visitors last year!

Then he thanked us.

Questions for Presenters

There was 45 minutes left for questions - keep the questions on these topics.

I asked, "how does one become a staff member at GSO." It's put out in Box 459. They look for versatility, communication skills, AA experience, and more.

Other questions.

1. What is the relationship between staff assignments and the twelve committees the trustees serve on? - Most of the staff positions have a direct correspondence to the each committee. There are exceptions like the International Convention.
2. Where do intergroups fit in the triangle? - They have a more locally based focus, running phone banks, bookstores and the like. In the service structure they are not directly part of the triangle and they are referred to in the glossary of terms in the Service Manual and are also responsible to the groups.
3. If you keep rotating staff positions every two year do you start over or leave, or what? - some staff members have rotated through all of them and done one more than once, sometimes one has to rotate back to a position because of retirements or something.
4. What does FACHE mean after Terry Bedient's name - Fellow of American Health Care Executives (I knew that actually).
5. When the general service office gets a call and they want a spokesman who goes and speaks for AA? - No member can be a spokesman for AA. Our literature is our voice. Staff can do radio. Class A trustees can be on radio, TV, etc. Of course we don't always send anyone out because many requests are not appropriate as we do not have opinions on outside issues.
6. Class A trustees draft policies and procedures, do class B trustees do the same? - yes, there is input from A & B trustees as well as from staff.
7. The board Class A trustees seem to be top heavy with medical/recovery folks but we have trouble with publishing. Maybe we could see more of them - we all need to encourage those folks to apply
8. The number of visitors is almost 2000 per year, how does a visit actually work if you have that many people visiting? - We have a remarkable group of people working the reception area and are conduct the tours. They are most non-alcoholic. They do get trained for this. Individuals and small groups can also come, but large groups should schedule their visit. Jim visited in 2005. Greg M., the manager, got up from his desk and chatted. You are our bosses and when the boss shows up...
9. Alphabet soup - what does LIM mean? - Loners, Internationalists Meeting. There are 5 components: loners (only AA member in an area), homer (homebound), internationalist (seafaring), port contacts (port city internationalist contact), loner sponsors (helps loners and homers). There's a newsletter that contains much information (we don't see it as it contains actual contact information).
10. Spanish Question - translator called - About the international convention in Atlanta, I've heard that there are 10,000 rooms reserved, are these separate from the place the convention will take place, why are there 10,000 rooms but 60,000 attendees? - call Eva S. in GSO and she can answer that question.
11. Comment from member: I'd like to see someone in technology become a class A.
12. Footnote in the service manual - How can I get more information about the history of the footnotes in the service manual? - start with Tracy at group services desk and she will probably tap into the archives.
13. Are there students or career advisors coming through the office to investigate what they so as a career? - the kind of outreach being spoken of is generally referred to a local CPC committee - we wouldn't send them away empty handed but it's really the job of AA committees.
14. Does the board interface with any of the other 12 step service boards? - there'll be a presentation tomorrow that would better address this
15. BC Yukon, with the passing of the trustee, will the next be elected to shortened term they can't come back, will change happen to allow them to come back for a full term - The by-laws could be changed (didn't answer how that could happen or how long that might take)
16. A comment - allowing non-alcoholics to be appointed to committees - but seemed to be wondering how technology folks who don't interact with alcoholics could serve on the board as Class A.
17. One districts had it's bank account cleared out except for \$18 and they wanted to call the law, punish, etc. - they thanked the office for being guided in this issue.
18. It was mentioned that every two years the staff rotates - do the trustees rotate their committees and if not, could it? - the trustees to rotate annually, Terry then mentioned that there is some consistency in that the treasurer always sits on finance, etc.
19. Mentioned article "AA Fight Leads to DUI Arrest," is this normal now for newspapers or do they still respect us? - Historically he couldn't answer, but did mention that a letter goes out to media professionals go out and asking them to respect - over 30,000 of them in fact. Local committees also work with local media. Members also break anonymity and sometimes GSO sees this. Remember 1.2 million members in the US and Canada didn't break their anonymity today. Joel then mentioned that when media is critical of us we don't have an opinion.
20. How many days a years does a class A participate and how much to you get paid: 365 and 0. He gets about a phone call a day during the week. His salary however is zero. Happy to serve and he gets more out of it than he could possibly give.

08:30-08:45 Break

08:45-09:15 Video: Markings on the Journey

This was an excellent history and maybe we can see about viewing at some point as a group. We are the first large group to see the video so I'm not quite sure it'll be available this panel, but I can hope.

The board approved an update and we are the preview audience for it!

09:15-10:00 pm General Sharing Session, Phyllis H. General Manager, GSO

There is currently 50 minutes for sharing - this is a time for more general discussion and questions - we are limited to two minutes. We now have a timer using a bell, not the lights we normally see. Folks are asked only to have one question and not to rotate back.

1. Many Paths to Spirituality should be out late summer or early fall.
2. The film is ready right now as a DVD, \$10 - answered my question.
3. What is the requirement for Loner Sponsors? How does one become one? - Mary Claire - Loner Sponsor, the term is a little misleading as one doesn't really sponsor the loner, you're just a sober member who corresponds. There is currently an over-abundance and they suggest folks join the inmates correspondence programs.
4. Asked about the schedule for e-books, particularly AA Comes of Age - Big Book, 12&12, Daily Reflections, and ???, are out. There will be 8 books in total, hopefully out by the end of the year
5. How much travel do staff and trustees go and is there an 'in-house' decision - staff coordinator makes decisions.
6. What are the GSO pet peeves? How can we be of better service? - Jim and Mary Claire answered (but aren't speaking for whole office) - they are concerns the has..
 - a. Naming of AA groups - we have thoughts on that and it's in AA Group Pamphlet - if you are starting a group look it up! Not after a person, etc. Here it is: http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-16_theaagroup.pdf
 - b. Maintaining accurate contact information for your groups - for instance for the 800 randomly selected groups were chosen for the 2014 survey and many have been returned
7. Video in Spanish, yes!
8. 160,000+ special edition big books
9. What time September 3rd will registration for the international be available - there is a blitz of folks and it matters - please let everyone know!
10. 1962 version of the service manual has a concise version of the Concepts in the table of contents - In 1990 things were changed from 1962 - why did that happen? Can we get this back in the book - take it to your home group (just like we always do)
11. The board can be censured...has it ever happened and why? No, it hasn't as far as we know, but in 1990 there was a suggestion that they be censured because there was a lack of communication at various levels. It didn't happen because they were making improvements.
12. Are there publications for dual diagnosis folks? Where are meetings? Will GSO address this? -There has been much conversation on dual diagnosis in special needs committee work. It didn't get traction at recent conferences but there will be action in the trustees literature committee.
 - a. Dual Diagnosis - comment that many folks don't understand what this means - like to see more information on that
13. Are there any plans to allow group change forms online? - there will be a new IT manager soon
14. Someone asked how to get help starting an ASL meeting in Sparks? Answer: your delegate or area chair would be happy to help!
15. How do we go about electing translator and interpreters at the GSO level? - Translators and interpreters for Spanish at GSO are paid employees not elected. They are hired, not elected.
16. Is the 75th edition identical to the first edition? Yes. Oops, check page 69 there seems to be a problem
17. How many general services offices worldwide are there worldwide? Is there communication with them? This is about changing the 11th tradition so how can we contact groups worldwide? - Yes, we are in contact with them.
18. When the conference approves any changes to a pamphlet do they wait till all the old printings are sold or do they immediately start selling the new one? What happens with the old ones? Yes, we do run through the old ones before the new ones are put out.
19. We talk about registered groups and there is no such thing as a registered groups. Delegates report this number. But there is no such thing as a registered group? - We list groups we do not 'register' them as there is no implication of approval. The language is changing slowly. Take this back home - we do not register groups, we list them.
20. Answer on block of rooms from before - 10,000 room vs 60,000 attendees? If we expect 50,000 people why 10,000 rooms?
 - a. Most people do not stay by themselves
 - b. The 10,000 rooms are by the convention center, there 60-80 thousand rooms in the area
 - c. Many people will stay outside the core of the city
 - d. We do not want AA to be on the hook for too many rooms if folks don't come - unsold rooms would be big trouble. Based on past experience 10,000 makes a lot of sense

That ended the sharing session for now.

We will start at 9:00 am with Grapevine presentations - there will be final forum report available.