

PRAASA Delegate Report 4.11.15 Hawaii Area 17, Panel 65

Aloha. First, I want to thank Area 17 from the bottom of my heart for sending me to the 2015 Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly, aka PRAASA, in Layton, UT. This is now my sixth PRAASA and although each one is different, I always come away filled with gratitude for the life I have as a result of this program; with a fire for doing everything in my power to stay sober and help others achieve sobriety and a recommitment to 'practicing these principles in all my affairs.'

The purpose of PRAASA is to develop a 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 three days of PRAASA are filled with panel presentations, open mike sharing, and roundtables. Sunday concludes with a panel by past trustees - one of my personal favorites.

First year delegates are invited to give a two minute presentation of the highlights of their area. I've posted mine on the Delegate Blog on our area website, www.area17aa.org. There are so many exciting things about our area I wanted to share with all of PRAASA, but two minutes is not very long at all!! I also had an opportunity to participate in the 'Our Legacy of Service: Critical in the Past - Vital Today' panel presenting on 'Ways to Engage Members in Corrections service. I was randomly chosen to be on the Corrections Committee at the General Service Conference, so this was a great opportunity to delve further into background material.

Our delegate roundtable met twice - once on Friday evening and then again on Saturday afternoon. These workshops were a bit different than ones I've attended in the past as Area Chair, DCM, etc. They focused on orienting the new Panel 65 delegates and explaining what's going to happen at the conference. Joel C., our Pacific Region trustee and the Panel 64 delegates shared their experience and lessons learned as well as practical tips. At any given time, half of the delegates are second year delegates and half are first year delegates. The Panel 64 delegates, the second years, were so amazingly welcoming and helpful, that many of my concerns vanished. Joel shared some valuable principles - Third Step, Rule 62, love and tolerance and focusing on the alcoholic who still suffers. It struck me that these are principles that I can use in any AA setting - service, AA meetings, sponsorship and more. The final advice for the conference was to "Trust your AA heart."

There were a total of eight panels over the three days with topics ranging from "Recovery Begins with Carrying Our Message," to "Traditions - Our Primary Purpose," to "Good Communication: Vital in Our Changing World." There was lots of discussion 'at the mike' after each session. I was touched by so many of the comments but here are a few that stood out for me.

- 'Join us, not see us.'
- 'Unless you are the lead dog, the view never changes.'

- 'If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.' An African proverb.
- 'Volunteered or "Voluntold"????'
- When asked for an opinion or advice, try starting with "In my experience..." rather than "I think..."
- The comment that one of the definitions of 'leader' is a hot air duct in a heating system brought quite a few chuckles.
- "Leaders don't always have titles."

The last panel of the weekend was "Past Trustees Share Their Vision for AA's Future." We were fortunate to have eleven past Pacific Region trustees sharing some of their perspective. The overall message I came away with was that our founding fathers did a fabulous job of being inclusive in our traditions. Tradition 3 states "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking." And the first tradition reminds us we need to stick together - 'Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.' The biggest challenge comes from applying these traditions to our daily life - 'practicing these principles in all our affairs.'

- Do we welcome others who look, dress, or talk differently than we do?
- Do we practice openness and avoid rigidity when others have different religious views than we do and remember that Step 3 includes 'God as we understood him?' 'God' vs 'Higher Power'
- Do we avoid phrases that might offend members' religious beliefs? 'Recovering Catholic,' 'Bible beater' etc.
- Are we careful to avoid prayers that non-Christians may find inappropriate in AA? Perhaps try using the Serenity Prayer rather than the Lord's Prayer.

The message from our past trustees was very powerful and got me thinking. I will try very hard to avoid saying or doing anything that could be construed as judgmental and will be as welcoming, open minded, tolerant and flexible as I can be. We never know where the message will come from.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to attend PRAASA and represent Hawaii, Area 17.

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 Delegate
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