

2019 PRAASA Report Back – Delegate’s Report

The Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly 2019 has come and gone, except for the presence it has in my heart and in my sober memories. 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; to provide an opportunity for members to discuss pertinent aspects of Alcoholics Anonymous; and to foster the Unity, Recovery and Service legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our Pacific Region Trustee met with the delegates a few times for round tables and lunch. She made several suggestions, which I am trying out. For reporting back, she asked us to pay attention to the general feeling around a topic or panel, and to not get too caught up in taking notes. I took fewer notes than usual, however, a good pen and notebook have always been my two preferred low tech assistive devices.

Friday March 1, 2019

In Panel 1, all the Pacific Region delegates shared. We each had 2 minutes to describe our areas. We are a diverse group with varied ways of reaching those who just might become members. Hawai`i is more like Alaska and Idaho in that we seem to be more rural and have fewer guidelines. Other areas have a more formal and detailed structure. These differences in the ways we work for and with our respective areas are not a problem. By our second meeting, it was clear that in the Pacific Region we are striving for unity, and not uniformity. You will find my 2 minute presentation about Hawai`i Area 17 in the February Mynah Bird.

In Panel 2 and Panel 3, the focused was on the group conscience and our singleness of purpose. It was acknowledged that sometimes some questionable and shady people can show up in AA. Our program helps us clean up our past; not hide and continue inappropriate or illegal behavior. Anyone who has a problem with alcohol and a desire to stop drinking is welcome. When it comes to extending the hand of AA, the language of the heart will always shine brighter than the darkness that sometimes enters our rooms.

We were reminded, it is not necessary or helpful to use the program as a hammer to express our own views of how it should be. We respond to the meetings and people that help us feel like we are home. The decisions we make utilizing the informed group conscience are positive possibilities for the future.

During these panels we were also reminded there is more to do. We all come to AA with our own particular form of “beyond human aide.” All these adjustments and changes that we make to literature, and to outreach efforts, are for the purpose of reaching more alcoholics. For example, the hope to do a better job reaching alcoholics who are deaf or hard of hearing, who live in remote communities, or who don’t speak English. Kunane’s presentation on reaching out to minorities in A.A. was excellent. I was glad he was chosen to share so the Pacific region could listen to his wisdom and experience.

Some of the topics were chosen because they are a part of the General Service Conference agenda: Should we allow individual members to contribute \$5,000.00 annually to AA? Do we need a 5th edition of the Big Book? What about our public service announcements or a directory for meetings in correctional facilities? You and I may not need these things, but someone else might.

Our last panel on Friday was on Diversity. Who are we not reaching? How can we better carry the message? Who is prevented from coming to AA? Who has obstacles that we either have or have not also experienced? Our active and retired military, Hispanic women, young people, the elders in our communities, the marginalized of society were all mentioned as groups we could do more for.

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Saturday, March 2, 2019

This was our busiest day with meetings scheduled from 8:00am to midnight. I had the opportunity to meet with the delegates twice, once at lunch and again at our 10:00pm-midnight round table. I want to thank you for considering PRAASA to be an expense that the area covers. It allowed the Panel 68 delegates to let the Panel 69 delegates ask questions and hear what the experience was like last year, when they were the new delegates. It was also time to become familiar with the very full schedule in the upcoming General Service Conference week, and get a sense of the time frame involved. Face to face conversations, our very valuable form of AA communication, is important at all levels of service. It isn’t enough to get the background information and read it. The time we had to spontaneously ask and answer our questions and concerns helped me to feel a sense of unity and comfort with the Pacific Region delegates and our Trustee. Please thank your groups, and let them know it was valuable preparation and fostered unity.

The Panel 6 and 7 focus was on service; our committee system and the heart of AA. La Vina, a service tool the fellowship uses to support the Hispanic community is 23 years old! We were informed that yes, it still useful in reaching the alcoholic who still suffering and helping Spanish speaking members to keep sober every day. What a great way to use our contributions and resources.

Another question asked is does our committee system work? Does it produce results? AAWS publishes over 100 pieces of literature. Some is intended for the general public, while others are service pieces for us. It is a tedious process, and we cannot always keep up with the changes needed. But that is because we don’t publish anything until we agree it is the best we can do. Some members want to update the outdated language in our Big Book. Others want to keep things the same. Because we listen to everybody, coming to a group conscience can still be a frustrating and seemingly never ending conversation. We also have our Grapevine and La Vina magazine and theme based literature. Through GV/LV publications, we have another way to share experience. GV is a reflection of our membership today and of our past. Has anyone here shared the book Step by Step, One on One, or One Big Tent with a newcomer because the language and ideas expressed in the stories are easier for a newcomer to accept and consider?

We in AA have a unique means of communication and making decisions. And because of this our use of social media is behind the times. We recognize these may be missed opportunities to reach alcoholics.

During the day, Kunane and I took some time to refine our planning for our committee meeting and for the ITD Assembly in April. He is more tech savvy that I am, and a past delegate gave the suggestion that I don’t have to know how everything is being done, I just have to know it is getting done. Whenever I talk with this current panel of trusted servants, I know things are getting done. You’ve given me a job to do and I am humbled by the efforts of person after person in their willingness to help me succeed in the tasks you have given me.

During Panel 8 and 9, the trustee gave her report and we had our annual business meeting. Of concern are the inconsistent quality of translation, and interpretation equipment used during PRAASA. And, we need listening devices for those with hearing loss. On a positive note, if you visit aa.org and watch the video invitation to our 2020 International Convention, let me know if you were moved to tears like I was.

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Sunday, March 3, 2019

Prior to the Ask the Delegate panel, I had time to walk off some nervous energy, and strolled from the meeting hall to the lobby of the hotel. I had an experience that reminded me of my first PRAASA in Woodland Hills. I paused and watched the people – doing what we do when we get together: laughing, hugging, being at ease with each other. As I walked through the maze of people in Irvine, I thought: this is familiar, it is just us doing what we do whenever we get together.

We started the morning by listened to what’s on the mind of PRAASA participants, what’s on the mind of Past Trustees, and we ended with the Ask it Basket for the Delegates. I was anxious about this, and then it dawned on me that, although I had no way of knowing what my question would be, my higher power knows what I know and might have a part in choosing what I get to share. So, I kept my focus on the person at the mic, for the most part.

My question gave me the opportunity to share my experience moving to Hawai`i in 1994. New in town, ten years sober and half a world away from my early AA foundation and friends, I went to 90 meetings in 90 days. I’d never been in general service, because I thought someone else who was probably bossy could do that. But then the thought came to me, “AA has done a lot for you, maybe you should do something for AA.” I was elected to be a GSR. At 20 years, my sobriety wasn’t so shiny and new and I was discontent with a few things. One day, I thought out loud to myself, “This is it? What’s the point of staying sober for 20 years?” In my head, I heard, “I’m glad you asked.” Since that experience, you have elected me, or pulled my name from the hat to serve Hawaii Area 17.

What a gift service is. I love that PRAASA brings us together in one big room. At the mic we hear our differences, our similarities, and how we can improve. In round tables we share our concerns and solutions. And during the breaks we talk story, laugh, and have a little more ice cream or coffee together. That sounds like what we do at assemblies and committee meetings.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

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