

District Dispatch

Extending the Hand of A.A.

Alcoholics who are Deaf can access A.A.'s program of recovery in an updated American Sign Language translation of Alcoholics Anonymous



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(New York, NY) With over 35 million printed copies sold, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is now available in an updated abridged translation into American Sign Language. Commonly referred to as “The Big Book” this basic text of the worldwide Fellowship that bears its name is now available on DVD to the Deaf community, the Hard-of-Hearing community and the hearing community as well.

A.A. HIGHLIGHTS FOR DISTRICT TWO (2)

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GENERAL SERVICE

Meetings 1st Sunday of the month @ The Club ; 3333 W Columbus Drive

GSR Orientation / DCM Sharing
2-3 pm // Business Meeting 3-5pm

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

Meetings 9:30 am / 1st Saturday of the month @ Tri-County Central Office, Inc. 8019 N. Himes, Suite 104 ; Tampa, FL 33614

PI/CPC COMMITTEE

Meetings 9:30 am / 2nd Saturday of the month @ Tri-County Central Office, Inc. 8019 N. Himes, Suite 104 ; Tampa, FL 33614

ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEE

Meetings 9:00 am 1st Saturday of the month @ 301 House ; 8601 Bowles Road; Tampa, FL: 33637

SOUTH FLORIDA AREA 15

GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY

QUARTERLY SOUTH FL AREA 15
GENERAL SERVICE ASSEMBLY
JANUARY 3 - 5, 2020

REGISTRATION FRI 4-8:30 PM
SAT 8-8:30 PM/ SUN 7AM-9AM

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT
QUARTERLY ASSEMBLY CHAIR

DVD features:

- Professional ASL signers and DVD video production
- Updated translation inspired and reviewed by A.A. members who are Deaf
- Audio track and subtitles for use among ASL and non-ASL users
- The basic principles and practices of the Fellowship that have provided a pathway to recovery for alcoholics for over 80 years
- Can be ordered at www.aa.org or may be available through a local A.A. office near you

A.A. has always been committed to making its program of recovery available to anyone, anywhere who reaches out for help with a drinking problem. This translation has been updated with current language and signing most familiar in today's Deaf community. Founded in 1935 on the principle of one alcoholic helping another to achieve sobriety, A.A. is an effective and enduring program of recovery that has changed countless lives. As explained in the book, A.A.'s recovery program of twelve suggested Steps was formulated through the experience of its first 100 members and has reached millions of sufferers around the world.

For more information about A.A. resources for alcoholics who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, please contact the Accessibilities and Remote Communities Coordinator at the General Service Office at Access@aa.org or by phone at 212-870-3344.

For additional information about Alcoholics Anonymous, visit the [Press/Media](#) page at www.aa.org.

85th Anniversary International Convention — Detroit 2020

Next year over the Fourth of July weekend (July 2–5, 2020), A.A. members from around the world will be converging on Detroit, Michigan to celebrate A.A.'s 85th birthday with a broad spectrum of sobriety-related meetings, panels and workshops at Detroit's Cobo Center, the domed Ford Field Stadium and other locations throughout this resurgent city in America's midwest.

Held in different locations every five years, A.A.'s International Conventions have been hosted in U.S. and Canadian cities with cultures and personalities as varied as the alcoholics who travel to them for the celebration, and in Detroit some 50,000 attendees will celebrate not only their own sobriety and newfound lives, but also their great desire to pass on the message of recovery to another alcoholic who may not yet have heard that there is hope.

The theme of the 2020 International Convention will be "Love and Tolerance Is Our Code" — a phrase from A.A.'s basic text, Alcoholics Anonymous, recognizing the importance that inclusivity plays throughout the Fellowship. Over the years, many nonalcoholic professionals have addressed the Convention as guest speakers on a wide range of important topics, and hundreds of other meetings will share the diverse experience, strength and hope of A.A. members from around the world.

Professionals who would like to find out more about the Convention may contact the International Convention Desk at the General Service Office of A.A.: (212) 870-2020, or access G.S.O.'s A.A. website at www.aa.org. Members of the media may contact the Public Information Desk at (212) 870-3119.

Excerpts from Quarterly Report

A.A. World Services

Services

Accessibilities/LIM: The assignment is working to implement changes to Accessibilities service material to help Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing alcoholics participate in all Three Legacies.

Communication Services: Three major projects continue to be the focus of this assignment: website design; development of the A.A.W.S. app, which includes the Meeting Guide platform; and implementation of Google products.

Conference: An anonymity-protected electronic interim report on the 69th Conference was produced by the Publishing Department in English, French and Spanish and distributed to Conference members to support delegate reporting due to the lateness of this year's Conference.

Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment: So far in 2019, 12 national exhibits have been coordinated, with 16 more to be completed.

Corrections: Following a positive response to a mailing to Corrections/Bridging the Gap/H&I Area Chairpersons noting the need for men to write to inmates through the CCS, there is no longer a waiting list.

Group Services: As liaison with Intergroup/Central Offices the staff member on this assignment attended a local forum whose theme was unity and how A.A. entities can work better together. The coordinator also participated in a conference call with representatives of the Intergroup/Central Office/A.A.W.S./AAGV Seminar.

International: G.S.O. Mexico has completed the Spanish translation of the anonymity-protected digital version of the 25th WSM Final Report. It has been added to the A.A. website.

International Convention: Approximately 350,000 copies of the registration brochure will be mailed to over 65,000 A.A. members, groups and service entities around the world. Registration and housing will open on Monday, September 9, 2019 at 10 a.m. (EDT).

Excerpts from Quarterly Report--Continued...

Literature: Vendor selection and production concepts to update the video “Your G.S.O., Grapevine and the General Service Structure” are proceeding. This project is being approached in tandem with an introduction to a Regional Forums video to allow for possible cross-purposing of source footage.

Nominating: Notifications have been sent to delegates and appropriate area committee officers in the West Central and Western Canada regions regarding the regional trustee vacancies that will occur following the April 2020 General Service Conference.

Public Information: Extensive updates have been made to the P.I. Workbook due to outdated content. The P.I. assignment has been working with the Publishing department to develop draft “postcard style” service pieces with brief excerpted content about A.A.

Regional Forums: The East Central Regional Forum was held in Detroit, Michigan July 12-14. Work continues for the upcoming forums in the West Central and Southwest regions.

Programming for Regional Forums continues to include G.S.O. employees who share A.A.-related information from the office while engaging personnel with the Fellowship and vice versa. Drawings for free AA Grapevine or La Viña subscriptions will be held for first-time attendees and the International Convention skit will be performed at every 2019/2020 forum leading up to the International Convention in July 2020.

Administration

The ERP NetSuite transition is the highest operational priority of the organization at this time with the go live date of August 5th. There will be a learning curve both internally and within the Fellowship, with improved service expected across all office functions. Since the conclusion of the 69th General Service Conference, the office has been engaged in the implementation of Advisory Actions and appropriate follow-up. The first original book to be undertaken by A.A. World Services in nearly 30 years, *Our Great Responsibility*, has been published in English, French and Spanish. Work continues in the office on the strategic communications initiatives of the General Service Board and a rough draft of a three-year communications strategic plan has been circulated to board members, trustees and G.S.O. staff for discussion. Information gathering continues on the projected acquisition of an additional 5,000 square feet of office space on the 8th floor of 475 Riverside Drive.

Excerpts from: About AA CPC newsletter
https://aa.org/newsletters/en_US/f-13_summer19.pdf

Portable Exhibition Booths Carry A.A.'s Message to Professionals

Cooperation with the professional community has always been an integral part of Alcoholics Anonymous since its beginnings in 1935. A few decades later, in the mid-1950s, A.A. started to carry its message via professional exhibition booths at national conferences throughout North America. (The first booth was introduced at a Western Division meeting of the American Public Health Association in 1956.) Year after year, these resourceful booths have proven to be an effective way to introduce A.A. to professionals who often deal with alcoholics in their work—from medical doctors and psychiatrists to clergy and human resources professionals.

This year, booths are scheduled at 35 professional conferences throughout the U.S. and Canada. These ongoing efforts are largely guided by the central principle of A.A. to help alcoholics who still suffer. "These exhibits support local A.A. members' efforts to be a resource for professionals in their community, providing personal experience of alcoholism and sobriety in A.A.," says Diana L., C.P.C. Coordinator at the United States and Canada General Service Office of A.A., based in New York.

For national level exhibitions, the General Service Office pays the fees for booth space, as well as providing the necessary displays and A.A. Conference-approved pamphlets and literature. "This happens thanks to the donations from A.A. members across the U.S. and Canada to the General Service Office," says Diana. "The exhibit booths help cooperation, by making A.A. approachable

and an attractive community resource to professionals who help alcoholics. We are always seeking to strengthen and expand communication with professionals."

The local A.A. committees arrange for volunteers to work the tables and answer questions and concerns about the fellowship and how the organization works with the professional community. Occasionally, the C.P.C. Coordinator or A.A. trustees from the General Service Board are on hand to help volunteers at the booth.

"At these events, A.A. volunteers interact with professionals and answer questions about the A.A. concept of alcoholism and recovery. Not everyone understands that we consider ourselves to be spiritual not religious, but do cooperate with all faiths. They want to know what guides A.A., what the rules are," Diana continues. "So, we explain that we don't have rules; that we have Twelve Steps, which are the basis of the A.A. program of recovery. We also have Twelve Traditions, which are important and vital to the ongoing functioning of our organization, similar to an organization's 'best practices' that can be interpreted from different viewpoints."

BREAKING THROUGH MISCONCEPTIONS

This past spring, Diana and one of A.A.'s nonalcoholic trustees, Leslie Backus (above), a health treatment provider and CEO at a rehab facility located in Savannah, Georgia, attended the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) gathering in Orlando, Florida. Over 2,300 attendees participated in this conference, and over 200 visitors stopped by the booth, asking questions and collecting information about A.A.

BREAKING THROUGH MISCONCEPTIONS (cont'd)

“It was a great opportunity to assist local A.A. committees to meet and communicate with professionals,” says Diana. “Workshops for physicians and clinicians sometimes share A.A. as an example of a ‘mutual support’ resource that they may include in a treatment plan. Exhibits share information about A.A. so if they decide to refer someone to A.A. they can do so without hesitation.”

“There are many misconceptions about A.A.,” adds Backus about her experience of fielding questions at ASAM. “Often people don’t understand A.A.’s concept of singleness of purpose or anonymity and sometimes physicians or treatment centers think that they should be able to contact sponsors directly or they wonder if A.A. is a religious organization.” For example, at the ASAM conference, frequent conversations often revolved around these topics: Can a new member take Suboxone (an opioid that is often used in the detox from opioids) and attend A.A. meetings? Does A.A. dictate what kind of medication that an individual is allowed to take? Is A.A. anti-doctor? More than once those staffing the booth encountered physicians with false ideas about the role of A.A. in a patient’s treatment plan and recovery. As a result, the dissemination of information is critical to strengthening communication within the professional community. “The only way to educate is to break through some of these myths,” says Backus. “At these conferences, we can get more true information and replace the hype and hyperbole that is out there.”

“Besides explaining a bit about the Twelve Traditions,” comments Diana, “we highlight information found in our A.A. pamphlet ‘The A.A. Member — Medications and Other Drugs’ that notes all medical advice should

come from qualified physicians, and that it’s generally accepted that the misuse of prescribed medicines can threaten sobriety.”

REACHING OUT THE HAND OF A.A.

“One of the goals of A.A.’s board of trustees is to work well with the professional community,” says Backus. “To this end, we are reaching out to

friends of A.A. and letting them understand the services that we offer because A.A. is a tremendous service to the community.”

A.A. welcomes your questions, comments, and requests. Please be in touch with the C.P.C. desk if you are interested in having an exhibit or a presentation at your next gathering of professionals. Contact us at cpc@aa.org or call (212) 870-3107.

Excerpts from Box 4-5-9

The Meeting Guide App

This is the first installment of a new Box 4-5-9 series on the technology that is changing the way Alcoholics Anonymous communicates to suffering alcoholics and interacts with its members.

Josh R., a web developer, did most of his drinking in New York City. In 2013, he decided a geographic would help and he moved to San Jose. Unlike most geographics, this one turned out to be fruitful — for both Josh and for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Once in San Jose, Josh got sober, found a sponsor and started going to A.A. meetings in the area. Only problem was, the local central office website — while it listed meetings — wasn't so user-friendly for someone using a mobile phone. Like most A.A. websites, the site had been developed before mobile design came into general use. Such sites work fine for someone on a computer, but these days, A.A. sites get

more than twice as many visitors from handheld devices as from traditional desktops or laptops.

“Essentially what I did,” Josh says, “is take all the meeting listings and export them to an Excel file with links to directions, and then made my own little app, just for myself. That’s where the germ of the idea for the Meeting Guide app developed — just me trying to find meetings.”

From early sobriety, Josh has been a supporter of intergroups and central offices. The intergroup rep from his home group suggested that Josh develop his personal app into an app that all A.A.s in Santa Clara County could use. Josh agreed and conferred with the Santa Clara County central office. Eventually, Josh went further than originally envisioned. He came up with the idea to develop a WordPress plug-in that intergroup/central offices, areas and districts across the country (and the world) could use, so that the meetings they listed on their sites could be added to the app and automatically updated every 12 hours.

A turning point for Josh was making a presentation of his app to the National A.A. Technology Workshop (NAATW), where he received support and feedback. The free app was launched in November 2015 with seven connected A.A. websites — those in Austin, Mesa (Arizona), Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland (Oregon), San Francisco and San Jose.

Today, Meeting Guide is connected to 326 local A.A. organization websites. Getting connected wasn't easy for all of them. Some local sites had to find new web servants, while others had to draft new policies and procedures, sign up for new web hosting, and try new software. In several cases, group consciences were sought to settle concerns about the Sixth Tradition and the future of the app: Would it always be free? Does this represent affiliation with an outside entity?

In an era when smartphones dominate, Meeting Guide is a simple, useful tool for newcomers and oldtimers alike — one that standardizes meeting information so that it is always readily available and

“I realized,” Josh says, “that the only way we could continue to grow was to pass it on.”

In the fall of 2018, A.A.W.S., Inc. licensed Meeting Guide and put together a working group of consultants, employees and trustees to help bring it to fruition, and an updated version was released in summer 2019. Lois L. is a member of the steering committee for the NAATW and an administrator on the Technology in A.A. (TIAA) online forum. As an A.A. member with 30 years sobriety

**“Nothing matters more to A.A.’s future welfare than
the manner in which we use the colossus of
modern communication. Used unselfishly and well,
it can produce
results surpassing our present imagination.”**

www.aa.org