

2015 Northeast Regional Forum, Treatment Chair Report

On May 29-31, 2015 I represented Area 47 in my capacity as Treatment Chairperson at the Northeast Regional Forum held in Albany, New York. In attendance were over 400 representatives from The General Service Office, Board of Directors, current delegates, past delegates, and many others individuals involved in various service positions. The forum was chaired by Richard P., who is the newly elected Northeast Regional Trustee. Richard P. replaces, the much loved, J. Gary L., who has admirably served the Northeast region for the past 4 years.

The overriding theme of the Forum was how can we, as trusted servants, best fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who still suffers. It was expressed throughout the weekend a concern by various presenters that membership in Alcoholics Anonymous has stagnated over the last decade, and that we are no longer doing an adequate job of reaching the still suffering alcoholic.

Friday evening was divided into orientation for first time attendees (this included me), opening remarks from Richard P., a brief video, and a general sharing session. Saturday's daytime schedule consisted of presentations from the Grapevine office, a delegates panel, a general sharing session, two general presentations, and two ask-it-baskets session. Saturday's evening was devoted to two separate workshop sessions. Sunday's schedule was devoted to general sharing and past trustee remarks.

The Forum was probably the best opportunity I have had in general service to meet and get to know the leaders of our organization. Throughout the weekend all of the past and present trustees that were in attendance, along with GSO staff that were there, made themselves available for questions, comment, and/or just general conversation. I found all approachable, very knowledgeable and truly passionate about AA. Other attendees provided for me a wealth of information and experience in General Service.

All of the delegates who presented at the delegates panel were interesting, and their specific topics were all very well researched. We heard Craig W. from Area 11 (Connecticut) speak on anonymity the necessity for humility, compassion, and cooperation in carrying the message. He remarked that too often we allow our ego, rigidity, and need for self-aggrandizement to stand in the way of reaching the suffering alcoholic. We heard Jim W. from Area 49 (SENY) speak on our common welfare (who is responsible). George K Area 60 (Western Pennsylvania) spoke on his experience in service. Mary Lou Q. Area 28 (Maine) spoke on getting others involved. Amy C. Area 13 (Washington D.C.) spoke on the Warranties. And, our very own Vicky S. gave an outstanding presentation on our primary purpose, and the necessity of service in order to

insure our own sobriety.

On Saturday evening I attended the singleness of purpose roundtable, and the anonymity and social media roundtable. Much of the discussion of the singleness of purpose roundtable centered on how we carry the AA message in our groups, and how we avoid addressing topics outside the scope of alcoholism. Opinions at this workshop ranged from members with a very orthodox view of what the AA message is, to those that take a more liberal view in their approach to carrying “the message”. I found the discussion enlightening and at times troubling. Most in attendance were supportive and understanding of the many concerns and solutions expressed by individuals and their homegroups, though there were some in attendance that were ridged and authoritarian in their approach and felt a need for AA groups to return the “my way or the highway” days (whatever that means).

The anonymity workshop was primarily concerned with what to do with members breaking their anonymity on social media sites, and whether or not AA should have a presence on social media.

On Sunday morning we had a chance to hear from past trustees. This for me was the highlight of the Forum. All of the past trustees were excellent speakers, and had a wealth of knowledge and experience with general service. They all conveyed a deep gratitude for the AA program, and a strong belief that service had been an essential part of their continued sobriety. They also expressed a concern that AA was not doing enough to attract new members, and that we as the fellowship must do more to reach out to include all who suffer from alcoholism.

I would encourage all members of Area 47 to attend the Northeast Regional Forum in 2017. It is a rare opportunity to meet many of the people that serve as Trustees and work in the General Service Office, or are involved in service in our neighboring Areas. I found that by attending much of the mystery for me is removed regarding who serves and of how our organization operates. I have also learned that the people that are working at GSO or serving as trustees are very approachable and not any different than me. By removing the mystery I have attending I have a greater understanding of General Service and a better ability to serve Area 47.

Pete B., Treatment Chair

