

Area 47 Website Committee Chair's Report from August 2015 NYSIW

As the Website Committee Chair for Area 47, I participated in this year's New York State Informational Workshop along with current and former committee chairs and members from Areas 47, 48, 49 and 50. There were panels every hour on Saturday; each one focused on a specific area of service. SENY, Area 49, did a great job hosting the event.

From almost every panel came a couple of ideas that, as a committee, we might assist other committees in sharing information with Area 47 groups. For example David C., our C.P.C. Chair, has agreed to provide a list of pamphlets helpful to professionals to which groups with open meetings may refer when compiling packets for visiting professionals. Also Noella, our Accessibility Chair, agreed to provide diagrams to post on the site that will help groups in Area 47 evaluate their accessibility to members with physical limitations.

I participated in the Website Panel along with the Web Chairs from Area 49 and Area 48. I reported on our reasons for and approach to redesigning the Area 47 Website over the past year and how we, as a committee, agreed to provide an online home for meeting schedules from parts of our Area where no AA web presence existed. I was approached later by the Corrections Chair from Area 48 who expressed his gratitude for the posting of Area 47 Meeting Schedules. He said it would make his job of providing meeting information to newly released inmates more manageable.

In reviewing other Area's websites, I realized and shared that our Area 47 site, having been developed primarily for the use of G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s and regular Area Assembly attendees participating in General Service, has very little information up front for someone seeking help for a drinking problem. Although, our site content is in keeping with its purpose as stated in our handbook, it is a little like having a first-timer wander into an Area Assembly right when we're counting down eligible voters or listening to the treasurer's report—maybe a little daunting. There are many online resources for a newcomer or a family member seeking information, but it's hard to say where Google will take them first when searching the internet. As a committee we might want to consider this. In addition, I reported on plans the Website committee has to address the accessibility of the site to hearing- and sight-impaired visitors as well as on our efforts to update the Area 47 Website Manual in the coming months.

Fred's talk regarding the upcoming redesign of Area 49's website was the most interesting discussion I heard. His enthusiasm and energy were inspiring. He talked about "lowering the bar" for participation and ways in which the SENY website would be built around readily displayed "job descriptions" and "service opportunities" offered by various committees in an effort to retain new G.S.R.s who, just as in Area 47, often attend an Area Assembly once and then "bounce." He stated that we, as a Fellowship should find it completely unacceptable that there are currently 300 male inmates on a waiting list for Corrections Correspondence from AA members. He wondered aloud if someday email might be a means of helping to address that backlog. He shared a little about his committee's decision to use SquareSpace with some WordPress functionality as a means of generating a super-simple-to-maintain and a visually-appealing-right-out-of-the-box site much as we did with WordPress. I am eager to see the new SENY site which should be launched soon.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to serve AA in New York state as well as Area 47. Thank you.

In Service,
Colleen K., Website Committee Chair