

Southern Minnesota Area Assembly
Area Inventory
Cannon Falls, Minnesota
2/23/08

Niles opened the meeting with the Serenity Prayer followed by a round of introductions. Niles read the area inventory norms. The facilitator is Jerry S., past Delegate from Area 35. The consensus of this group is that no service position titles will be used today.

A. Trusted Servants:

1. Are Area Officers and Standing Committee chairs elected or chosen with care and consideration on the basis that serving is a great responsibility and opportunity for Twelfth Step Work?

The only impression I got when I read this is that things I hear at different groups is that we have a number of open positions. It seems people are strong-armed rather than being an opportunity.

There is a high turnover of people at the Area Officer level. Committee chairs don't have co-chairs or alternates. We are not getting prepared for the next round of servants.

Have we done enough research on the area election policy? If we had more information regarding the individuals standing for Area Officer Positions, we might make different choices.

We used to do resumes until they got too creative so we started doing things the way we do them now. I am concerned about not having co-chairs. Many people are coming back who have already served.

We need to sponsor people into service so we have wider selection. Choose committee chairs with more care. Need people with enthusiasm. Too much turnover recently.

Coming from large group, 300 to 500 people. Members seem to be oblivious to service higher than group, district or area. Nobody seems interested in anything higher than personal recovery.

New to this, echo same as above. Would like a general overview of what is going on. I am here to get direction to get a foundation for myself so I can take it back to the group.

We chose the people well. Would like a larger selection to choose from when voting. If the Area doesn't want it you can't force it. God provided what we had and they did the best they could. I am happy with our leaders.

I have observed during election time a dilemma between who is qualified to serve and who is able to serve. Idea that in order to be one of the Area Officers you must be a Committee member first. Hierarchy as you work your way up the line seems to disqualify many people. Is it so we can bring in people so no learning curve? People are ABLE but don't because of the hierarchy.

Do we have too many committees? When I served on the committee, there was confusion on who's role is it to take information to the schools. Maybe we need to keep it simpler. Make sure we attract more people, but if we are struggling to fill a lot of committees maybe, we need to look in another direction.

About 2 years ago, we had a motion to have a brief resume in the Pigeon. It didn't pass. Maybe it would help if we did this in advance to see the interest level.

2. Are new GSR's fully informed on the members standing for Area office?

NO. Coming from two other areas I see a lack of service sponsorship. Young GSRs at Assemblies are intimidated. Nobody (older GSRs) takes them under their wing. Area 16 was hit hard by this. Areas do things differently. New GSRs need help when they get here. Groups are taken out of the loop on who is elected.

I enjoyed Trusted Servant Workshop. Speakers should give talks on how they were sponsored into service.

I see this all over the area. Lack of participation. Too busy, too much politics, too much work involved? It's my responsibility to share enthusiasm for service. I try to show others how service enhances my sobriety. I saw many new GSRs at the Trusted Servant Training but not here. If we continue this way, we will soon have nobody involved.

Sponsor people into service the same way you sponsor into sobriety. When positions transition, the GSR going out should take the new GSR to the next meeting. A GSR packet is great, but how many people read them? It's a one on one thing. We need to avoid voting based on personalities. We need to stick to principles.

The new GSRS aren't fully informed or prepared for elections. Let them know their voice matters. They need to know they are responsible for taking back to their groups and prepare for the elections. They need to be more involved. If we need resumes or stand at the previous Assembly to let them know who the people are and get to know them a bit. If GSRs knew they were responsible to elect Officers and bring information back to the group, they would feel more part of the Area. I think resumes are a better way to have GSRs actively participate in the Area rather than them showing up 1 day in October not knowing who they are voting for. If we work more for group conscience in the inverted pyramid, we will see it.

I have been to 3 District meetings this week. When Committee Chairs visit the Districts, GSRs get to know them. Many Districts are doing workshops.

Maybe we should come up with a resume template to identify questions we want to know about the people willing to stand for a position. The only way I learn is by coming here and getting to know the process.

GSRs aren't at Committee Meetings. We have DCM Sharing Session, why don't we have a GSR Sharing Session and come in to get to know people.

One of the challenges faced is the time it takes to do service and go places. Seems like a lot.

Service is not really recovery. Sometimes we put people into service too quickly and they can't commit to it. Do groups understand the importance of the GSR? Or is it that the GSR has to do it for himself? Our dilemma goes back to the group. Group isn't informed. We have a hard time getting DCMS to the Area let alone GSRs. What is our commitment and involvement individually? How am I carrying the message? We criticize, but don't realize the work involved in these jobs.

Being new at being a GSR there seems to be a lack of communication from the groups sometimes. If you come to these meetings, you get to know the people up for elections. Few tight members in the group but most people don't come to me to communicate concerns.

We tried the resume temple and they didn't pass it. It was turned down. Perhaps we should have slowed down the process to be able to re-work it. If we came up with a good, one they might like it.

We need to be able to rotate so we continue to build on from where we are now.

Sometimes newer people are elected to be GSR because the older members don't want the job. We need to give them GSR packets. I tell them to read the part that explains their job. It's all in the service manual. We don't have a lot of people sponsoring people into service. We just give it to the new people. We need to do a better job of informing the groups.

Suggested that at the last Area Committee Meeting of the year, the Area officers make the rounds of the committees to discuss what their position entails and what they do. It is my responsibility to know what is expected going into it having read the service manual and knowing the concepts.

We need to inform GSRs. I hear people telling others they don't have to attend Area meetings. Propose for the 2009 General Service Conference we suggest a film on what is a GSR and what a GSR does.

I have a sponsor who encourages me to be of service. I have no title. I am here learning. I bring my sponces along. That way they will get interested. I am excited to become engaged in the process. I am just showing up. That builds the bridge to the next generation of AA service.

On the resume concept, I don't like it. Suggest election nominations in the June Assembly so we have 5 months to decide. It will give us time to talk about it and get to know people. Go to meetings to see them in action. Make an informed decision.

During the last area election, I didn't know the people nominated. I attend many meetings and if I don't know them how would GSRs? I think information is the piece that was missing. When I sponsor people I ask them to participate in service. We need to hold people accountable. I recommend sponsoring people into service. Do more than just attend meetings. I don't know recovery without service work.

Our District has a GSR orientation after the District meeting. We go over basic facts about being a GSR. People are showing up for it. It shows there is a demand for it. There is a demand for more accessibility to knowledge. We need to keep demands of the GSR realistic and make clear our expectations from the beginning.

The Districts have a responsibility to share with the GSR what is involved. Starts at the District level not at Area. Are District members giving GSRs the info? It's important for a person to have done the steps before they become GSR. You can't transmit what you haven't got. Groups can take responsibility to elect a more fully informed GSR.

As a new GSR, it was helpful to find someone in service who would be my service sponsor. Why don't we have a show of hands on who is willing to be a service sponsor? I needed to know who to ask.

NOTE: At this point, the format had been changed to limit ourselves to 8 minutes for each question, since things are going a bit long.

3. Do we practice the principle of rotation, or do we revolve in our Area? With officers? Committee chairs? Conference/workshop presenters?

When I took on an Area position, I did research about the position and what the duties were.

I am being sponsored through this rotation process. I came with a car of 4. A group of people new and old.

We try to select people who have not been presenters before like at RUS conference. Try to have an even mix.

I was fully trained. About the time I knew what I was doing, it was time to rotate out.

4. When practicing rotation of the Area Committee, are incoming trusted servants fully informed of their responsibilities and provided with the information necessary to serve effectively?

I found as new committee chair that I didn't have the tools. I went back to past Committee Chair to get oriented. I was grateful that incoming Chair got the tools out there.

I had the tools and knew the responsibilities from serving other positions. You never know the full job until you serve as chairperson.

I was not fully informed but I was given information when I took the position. Trusted Servant Guidelines. I did research on my own. I have never been fully trained. I had to do research. That is part of the rotation thing.

The Area has a Rotation Meeting for the incoming Area Officer's or Committee Chairs to meet with the outgoing Chairs or Officers. There needs to be more one on one time. Suggested a checklist of things to look at because you don't know what you don't know.

We are not preparing people when we rotate. There are big manuals for a Committee Chair. I have read old minutes and I think we have room to grow doing better job. Need 3, 4, 5 page manual of information. When you rotate-hand off instructions. Be proactive.

5. Are enough of our past trusted servants staying involved in service to ensure the healthy growth of our Area?

We over use past Delegates for service positions. We only have one past Area Delegate here today. That concerns me. Are we denying someone the opportunity to do the duties we have given to the past Delegates?

Past Delegates continue to be active at the Area level. It has been varied. There is going to be a proposal in a committee to place past delegates automatically into Archives committee. Reason is they are a resource often overlooked. We want to give them the opportunity to know where they can contribute.

How many past Committee members here or Area Officers are here? They disappear. Where are the people who were in the Area 5 years ago? Our history and experience goes away. Why?

I'm concerned about using past Delegates at workshops. At one time, we were asked to present at Districts. They were training us to be leaders by doing the footwork at the District. You need to take resources from District and ask the current Area Officers and Committee Chairs to come do workshop presentations.

There is so much overlap and it is overwhelming. I agree we can do better. We need to have something so we don't have to reinvent the wheel every time we change leaders.

B. Finance

1. How well are we using contributions to provide services to the groups? The Fellowship? To the still suffering alcoholic?

The State Fair PI booth has become example of how our pamphlets are going back to AA and not still suffering alcoholic.

If organization becomes ends and means, we lose sight of primary purpose. Would like to hear more of what the Committees are doing to help the still suffering alcoholic? When we keep the focus on that primary purpose, it makes service special. When I try to get people involved, I hear that this is all politics. What are we really doing? Keep focus on still suffering alcoholic.

How does service help us carry the message? If we didn't have coordination of the groups through the Area, we would not have unity. If we didn't have financial support of the Area, we wouldn't have Chairs and so forth.

2. Is our Area incurring unnecessary expenses (i.e. travel, printing, copying, etc.)?

We are doing better. 10 years ago, we had \$2,000 printing bills. Internet CDS, internet, printing cost has done down.

One person likes the printed copy as opposed to electronic.

The question is who is responsible to cover the cost? Would like to have a conversation regarding what the District and what the Area is responsible for as far as printing, such as background material. It would be helpful to have that information available.

Boils down to individual responsibility. Each Chairperson is responsible to assess what needs to be printed. We need to use common sense and use the technology available to conserve costs. If I am a chair of Committee, do I need a whole lot of paper there? We need to be willing to try to use what's available at the cost of everyone. If someone wants a copy they get one.

3. Is our Area fully self-supporting? In our use of prudent reserve? When using luncheon costs to defray meeting room costs? When accepting money from sources other than groups and individual members?

I just found out how much the cost of the treatment temporary contact desk costs each month at the Minneapolis Intergroup. GSO has a guideline for accepting dollars from AA related conferences.

Buying literature from Intergroup seems backwards. Suggest buying from GSO instead.

I don't believe that we should have to buy lunch to defray cost of meetings.

Many years ago, when I was treasurer, we had a lot of money tied up in literature sitting in the garages of past Chairs that wasn't passed onto the next Chairperson. Then all this literature was lost. We decided since intergroup was selling at cost we'd use them. Literature also got outdated.

Accepting money from Roundups is already in our AA Guidelines. Maybe we should read our literature.

AA doesn't like to be in the food business. This is a difficult issue. We could not bring food today because the facility would not allow it.

4. Does the Area provide Districts and other service entities the opportunity to be fully self-supporting?

Yes, the Districts put on our Trusted Servant Leadership Training.

Sometimes the Area oversteps its boundaries and takes over what the Districts should be doing for themselves.

C. Communication

1. Do all Districts feel a part of our Area and receive equal attention and service?

Are we making General Service relevant? I struggle with wanting to continue in General Service. Are we deciding what is good for AA as a whole? The local groups didn't support the RUS Conference. Why not? Service involves sacrifice.

Would like to see more communication with dark districts. If there's bad blood between Mpls. Intergroup and outlying groups, it's because they said they don't service those groups.

We need to keep the email up and running and be sure our web pages are updated.

I don't like term "Dark District." Even though it's a term that GSO uses to describe inactive Districts. They are active. Just because they aren't at Area doesn't mean they are dark. They don't want to participate at Area. They are more active than some metro groups.

2. Is there cooperation and communication between the Districts in our Area?

We agree that there is.

DCM Sharing Sessions have started setting the agenda while we are there that are relevant to the Districts and it is invaluable.

I agree. We are focusing on carrying the message. We need to let districts around us know what is going on. Communicate locally.

Discussing what our problems and successes are, works well. We try to send our newsletter out to other Districts. Lets them know what is going on. They know what we're doing. Very effective locally.

3. Does our structure foster communications within AA (i.e., between Groups, Districts, the Area and GSO)?

Questions communication coming from GSO, electronically transmitted. Suggests putting them online so everyone could get them. Does GSO need to come of age and put more online through GSO website?

4. How well do we support and encourage communication between GSR's and their groups?

I think we already covered this. Seems like a great deal of lack of communication. Big mess nobody knows what is going on. Some do most don't. It is a nightmare for me as a new GSR. I don't know who to talk to. I know it is my responsibility but I think that people need to step up and tell me.

I think we do a good job. The responsibility is ours as the GSR. We have lots of literature, manuals, workshops, I feel like I am given the opportunity to flourish. We have so much information. Turn to someone for help.

Another person felt there is a lot of communication, through literature. If you don't know what's going on, ask someone for help. Review the service manual.

Being new is very overwhelming. It's hard to know what's going on.
We have the suggested format for a GSR report available. Also, at the Assembly we have a sample GSR report that is given by someone. I think we do a good job of taking info back to the groups.

We let GSRs know by saying "take this back to your group or it's not necessary to take this back to your group."

We are going to do an ask-it-basket for GSRs. It should be the responsibility of each of us to reach out to the new GSR or new person.

We will have two alternates talk to the GSRs. Need to reach out to the new GSR.

D. Service Structure

1. What can be done to improve Area Assemblies and Area Committee meetings?

Ultimately, the AA groups have the responsibility. We are weak in communication between groups and world service structure. I am confused on the role between Delegate and DCM. DCM sharing session suggestion to have delegate attend the sharing session and offer communication.

I think we need greeters at these meetings. Be more welcoming to the newcomer to service.

Was new today and was welcomed and befriended.

Need more controversial issues! Fights on the Assembly floor about important things helped us get to the bottom of things. We need to discuss.

Don't have District meetings during the same month as Area meetings.

Have a good chairperson keeping meetings going.

Afternoons are painful and boring. If I weren't encouraged to come I wouldn't be back.

Area Assembly is something to attend all day as a GSR. I know information is in the Pigeon. People in our Area don't read it. Print is too small. Agenda is so full. We need to speed up communication. Use mass email to people in Pigeon listing.

When the Assembly Agenda is so full, it has to be explained again which takes time. Maybe we can speed up our communication. Perhaps the Chairperson can email out info beforehand, other than the using the Pigeon, because not everyone reads the Pigeon. Review material prior to arrival.

2. Does the Area's process for handling AA business consistently provide a fully informed group conscience?

No, it doesn't always happen the way it should happen.

It can be done. It's a lot of work. We elect our trusted servants by the ones who are willing to put forth the effort. We are working for AA's future.

As former committee chair I was frustrated people weren't present or just were not listening. I had to repeat myself. It's our responsibility to become informed. As DCM, I think training should include how to bring forward a proposal from a Group to the Area.

3. When Area decisions are made, is there correct balance between the group conscience and AA's traditional "Right of Decision"?

Reading AA Comes of Age, was instrumental in learning about group conscience. The groups run AA. If I have spent time with a GSR and they come to Area and don't see that, why be there? If it is going to be run by people, why should we vote and stay informed?

At Area level, I experienced our Committee was asked for input on topic. We were ignored. Nobody on Committee agreed. It changed the participation of everyone there.

There needs to be a balance. My job in service is to look at what is good for AA as a whole. I have to make decisions I disagree with. The right of decision gives me ability not to feel like a puppet.

4. Is there proper balance of authority between the Area Committee and the Area Assembly with respect to custodial issues and the detail budget?

There were no responses for this question.

E. Miscellaneous

1. Does anyone have any issues or concerns that were not addressed?

I need things written not emailed. I don't have the web available to me.

I would suggest that new GSRs identify themselves as such at all events, committees, and workshops. There is a lack of GSO literature catalogs available at Area functions. We have an over affiliation with Twin City Intergroup. We have over dependency on electronic communication.

We lack cooperation with Intergroup and Alano Clubs. Would like to see better cooperation between each to carrying the message.

Need to stress importance to people in service work actually working with alcoholics. Stress 12-Step recovery, not just service. Are the Area Committee members working with newcomers? (Out of the Big Book) There is a fine line between our 3rd Legacy of Service and 12th step.

Archives wants your paper. Paper is only media you can access in Archives. We need to follow up our words with action. Formulate what our real concerns are as an Area, talk at the Assembly, and publish findings for further discussion. We have numerous issues we need to look at.

Minnesota has the last on the list for sending people to treatment. Maybe that's because our AA is so strong.

If our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic, maybe we are spending too much time trying to get the information and getting too caught up on structure. We get so busy doing service that we forget what we should be doing is carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Announcements:

The Delegates Workshop

March Assembly- Burnsville

District 3 Workshop

Temporary Contact Program flyers available please fill out a new one. Call 612-275-5825 Robert S. with questions.

Doug C., Alt. PI Chair – Signup for State Fair Public Info Booth at the March Assembly

Bill- St. Paul Intergroup - March 1st workshop, 285 N Dale. Then offices will be moved across the hall.

Niles - The results of this inventory will be dealt with in June at the Assembly. Each committee will receive inventory items. Angie will try to locate a copy of the previous inventory.