

PRAASA 2025

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This year, PRAASSA (Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly) was held in Anchorage, Alaska. There were over 800 AA members in attendance from the eight states (California, Oregon, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii) that make up our Pacific region. The assembly body was primarily made up of Trustees, Delegates, Area officers, DCMs, and GSRs, but there were non-service position-holding AA members there as well. PRAASA's purpose is to develop greater unity among members, groups, and areas of the Pacific Region; to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences; and to provide an opportunity for members to discuss pertinent aspects of AA. The Assembly and PRAASA committee should always foster the Recovery, Unity, and Service Legacies of AA. They do this through panel presentations, roundtable discussions, open mic sharing, and meetings: not to mention tons of fellowship.

This year's theme was "Working Together, Increasing Trust". The weekend kicked off on Friday morning with a native Alaskan welcome from Area 2 Delegate, JoEllen L, which included learning native sayings and an amazing native dance presentation, which had everyone out of their seats and joining in. Afterwards, there was a Panel of all the Area Delegates highlighting what each specific Area has been doing over the past year. I was amazed at some of the things that other Areas had been able to achieve with their time. For example, Area 6 Northern California Coastal has instituted a "text-to-vote" system for their Area Assemblies to make the hybrid voting go quicker. Area 72 in western Washington has created virtual districts solely for their online meetings, and Area 9 in San Diego hosts 16 different annual events to promote service. Each Delegate who took the mic spoke proudly of their Area and all they were doing to promote and preserve general service in AA.

COMMUNICATION BEFORE AND AFTER YOU LEAVE AA PANEL

The idea of how we are spreading the word of AA in the changing times was a very interesting topic on this panel. First and foremost, how are we representing ourselves and the program in and out of the rooms? Are we making the program

attractive to the newcomers? How do we go about getting the word of the program out there in the world now? When you Google “Alcoholism”, the AA website is the twenty-fifth site that comes up. If you type in “help for alcoholism,” we are the twelfth site to come up. Why aren’t we the first? How do we change this? In a world of social media, perhaps pamphlets aren’t the best way to get the word out to people anymore. Millions of people get their information from the internet, especially podcasts, and AA only has two podcasts available presently. Why are we not promoting this more? We may have to rethink how we see the eleventh tradition moving forward if we want Alcoholics Anonymous to keep up with the times.

THE YOUNG PERSON IN AA PANEL

How are we representing this program before and after they enter the rooms? What are we doing to set an example for them and to make sure this program is here for them intact? Our own Area 93 Delegate, Rudy, spoke about his own experience coming into the program as a young man and the effect that it had on him. He also raised the question: What can we be doing to make sure that the young person can relate to the program, and how can we guide them in the right direction through service? How can we make sure that we are working together and increasing the trust? Finally, Debbie S from Area 7 presented that we always remember “Rule 62” and that is: Don’t take yourself so seriously. Which we tend to do the older we get.

DCM ROUNDTABLE

Friday evening, I sat in on a topic roundtable comprised of over 70 DCMs from around the Pacific Region. We exchanged questions and ideas about how we help our Districts. It was great to hear so many diverse voices in the room, some with what seemed like a firm grasp on their role, and others just as unsure as I have been, wondering if they are even fulfilling their role correctly. We discussed a lot of things, such as the way funds are disbursed, to the way information is spread to the groups from the GSR, to how to get more GSR participation in the Areas. There is even a GSR app in development that would allow the DCMs an easy to use system of distributing information to their GSRs from the Area. We

spoke about the role of the DCM as the voice of their GSRs. We take our District's conscience as a whole in the meeting, even if we don't fully agree with it. It is not our job to govern our Districts. We also discussed our role in encouraging our GSRs and making sure they know that they can bring independent ideas to an assembly. We all still have our own voice in General Service, even though we are part of a District and Area. I left the roundtable with a lot of information and the understanding that this and any role in General Service is what you make of it. The DCMs who were excited about what they were doing were inspiring their GSRs, and they seemed to have a vision of what they wanted to do in their Districts, which sent me from that room asking myself, what would I like to see my District accomplish over the next two years? How can I be of better service to my GSRs? How can we inspire more participation in General Service at the District level? I felt a newfound purpose in my role as DCM.

FINDING BALANCE IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

We ended Friday night with the panel *"Finding Balance In Your Personal Life and Service Responsibilities"*. Topics on this panel included *Overwhelming Workloads*, *Excessive Time Commitments*, and *Rewards of Service Work*. Lately these topics seem like the theme of my life each week. Service at a higher level can be completely overwhelming at times, but like our previous DCM Erica G, used to say, "We do this for fun and for free". This was a much-needed panel for me. It was an honest and open discussion about what it is like to carry a heavy service load from people who have been in General Service for years. They stressed that before you take any service position, you should ask yourself what skills you may need and if you have the time to honestly serve the position for all it requires. They also reminded us to have fun and to serve with enthusiasm, and most importantly that gratitude is the action of spirituality. When I see the level of service that these panelists are doing "for fun and for free" while they balance families, jobs, and, for some, life-threatening illnesses, I am reminded that this is truly a gift that has been given to us.

Saturday Afternoon, I took part in an Al-Anon-sponsored lunch, which included AA members as well. We got to take part in an open Al-Anon meeting and see what their program is like. I was so happy to see the love and support in the room that we all gave each other as we shared our stories. It really meant a lot to me. I was also happy to see Alateen represented there. That is a program I know helped some people very dear to me when they were growing up in families with alcoholism.

PLAIN LANGUAGE BIG BOOK PANEL

Saturday kicked off with a panel on the Plain Language Big Book, which has been a hot topic for almost a decade now. Back in 2016, the idea was brought to the General Service Conference to make a more simplified version of the big book for people who don't read at a proficient level or just don't understand the meaning of a lot of the words and phrases that were written almost one hundred years ago. Studies showed that 52% of Americans read below a level 3, which is about an eighth-grade level, and only about 17% of people who didn't graduate high school can read at that level as well. Other studies showed that people with PTSD, anxiety, and depression have low cognizant production, which makes it hard to retain information. Since we know that addicts fit into all categories, this affects a portion of our AA population.

That same year a Trustee committee was put together called RIPTAB. In 2021, the Conference decided that this new book would not be a replacement but a companion piece to help people understand the Big Book. By 2022 the writers made their first attempt at a manuscript. It took another two years of discussion, debate, and re-writing, but by 2024, the Plain Language Big Book went into production and immediately sold out its 70,000 copies.

The book is still a source of contention for a lot of people. They removed any reference to God as "HE" or "HIM" and simply refer to it as God. A lot of people were, and are, very vocally against this, saying that we are changing the founder's writings by doing this. Some even believe this is the first step to removing God permanently from our texts. I don't know if we will ever agree on this matter. I do

know, as our presenter reminded us, that Bill W wanted us to change with the times. He wanted AA to evolve, and perhaps this is the first step in this direction.

FUN WITH FINANCE

Finance is such a broad topic and yet one a lot of people don't deal with in AA. We drop our money in the basket, or we send cash through Venmo to our groups for rent, coffee, literature, and cake, but where does the rest of the money go? A lot of AA members don't know the answer to that. They aren't aware of their District or Area. They may not be familiar with the GSO at all and how vital it is that AA is always functioning at its full capacity. Does your group know the proper percentages to donate quarterly?

From a newcomer's perspective, being asked to give money can seem off-putting and cause a sense of unease or distrust in the program. That is why it is very important for the group to be transparent in meetings about where the money is going and why it is important to observe the seventh tradition.

As of 2024, AA has 15 million North American members. It fulfills over 31,000 literature orders annually and took in over 1.9 million dollars in 2024, and that still barely scratched the surface of their needs.

Does your group have a prudent reserve? Does your group know what one is? A prudent reserve is an amount saved to keep operating for 1-3 months of group expenses. A solid prudent reserve is necessary for a group to sustain itself. The prudent reserve should shift with the group's needs. It is a spiritual practice to not have or spend more money than you need. However, this is not just spiritual, it is a way for groups to care for their community and to grow and care for themselves. This is how we build trust and work together.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GSO AND THE GSB

The General Service Office (GSO) in New York is the operational hub in New York City that provides services to AA groups and oversees A.A. World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. They produce and oversee all of AA's literature.

The General Service Board (GSB) is a board made of Trustees, both Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic, responsible for safeguarding AA's traditions and funds. It oversees the operations of the GSO.

How Do We Support The GSB?

- Do you or your group have a subscription to The Grapevine or La Viña?
- Educate your groups on how to donate. Know your group number. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in checks get returned each year because they don't know if they are from a group or a single member.
- -Donate yourself, outside of your group.

REMOTE COMMUNITIES

How do we reach alcoholics in remote communities? There are so many people working and living in isolated areas around the world who need the help of this program. I found out that AA started almost 80 years ago in the Yukon, in 1949. However, it still doesn't begin to barely meet the needs of the geographically isolated alcoholic. CPC knows it has to reach out to the employers of the fishing and oil communities out in Alaska to make sure that all employees have access to our program. The advent of Zoom meetings has helped all of us, especially people in remote areas, but a lot of times they don't have access to a solid internet connection or electronic devices. There are people in BC, Canada, who travel over two hours by water taxi just to get to an in-person meeting. This is how badly people need our program. There are many cultural differences to deal with as well. Even in remote communities where English is the dominant language, how the language is spoken can differ depending on how fast or slow someone speaks, their accent, by using different slang terms, and even down to inflection of words. This can make it hard for people to communicate properly. Some AA members find it better to attend specified meetings so they may identify comfortably, such as male/female, LGBTQ, or atheist. This may become more difficult as they have fewer choices in remote areas. Before AA it was impossible to find an ASL meeting every day of the week. Now, meetings are readily available. You can visit deafaa.org for links to meetings and links to

information and literature (including the first 164 pages of the Big Book) on YouTube.

My time at PRAASA was amazing, to say the least. It is an experience that I will never forget. I met so many new people from around the Pacific region and made some new friends from my backyard here in LA. There are so many ideas and people that inspired me and showed me what it is like to be of service. I heard so many voices there, some I agreed with and some that I did not. That is okay, though, because we are all working toward the same goal. Our stories and outlooks aren't always the same, but our need for and love of this program is what keeps us united. The most important part is that we are always working together and increasing trust. And for that, I am grateful. Thank you for letting me be of service.

Christopher C.