

■ Saying “You Belong Here”: Indigenous Translations of A.A. Literature

Since its inception, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services has understood the importance of language. Witness the many translations of the life-saving literature of the Fellowship: the most significant example is the Big Book, which has been translated from the original English into 72 languages — including Arabic, Swahili and Tibetan — and has been distributed around the world. Translations are a critical element of extending “the hand of Alcoholics Anonymous” to ensure that the message of hope and recovery is accessible to alcoholics who still suffer, no matter what language they may speak. Despite this worldwide distribution and success, there are still some areas where our translation efforts have much room to grow. For example, there are many indigenous populations throughout North America for whom the Big Book, the Twelve Steps, and other materials have not been translated. In some cases, literature is not even available to these commu-

nities, many of which are in remote areas with few resources.

One notable success story occurred in 2018 when, after years of painstaking work and meeting challenges, the Big Book was recorded and is now being distributed as an audiobook in Navajo, or Diné the language being primarily an oral one.

Still, a gap in translated languages spoken and read by Native Americans, First Nations, and indigenous people remains, but the value translations hold is boundless in terms of the potential connections — and recovery — that it could offer thousands of individuals throughout North America.

Isolated efforts toward translation undertaken by local communities have been made over the years, but more work and attention are needed to make materials more accessible to communities of indigenous speakers. One such source was a box of materials in a variety of



The White Bear Last Stand group meets in this spiritual room — the White Bear Wolves Den — from fall to spring.

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Note on anonymity: From time to time in this publication full names and/or pictures of G.S.O. employees, Class A trustees and other nonalcoholics are used. The anonymity of A.A. members is maintained, as they are identified throughout by first name and last initial only.

languages, including Inuit, Inuktitut, and Mi'kmaq, that had been dropped off at the General Service Office in 2007. Publishing Department staff members, Rosa Rodriguez (nonalcoholic), G.S.O.'s licensing administrator, and Brittnae Brasfield (nonalcoholic), Publishing Coordinator, sorted through these materials, which included printed pieces, hand-written sheets, cassettes, and other rough drafts of works such as “How It Works” and the Serenity Prayer in Algonquin, and the pamphlet “Is A.A. for You?” in Inuktitut. Unfortunately, the items didn't provide a specific individual or point of contact within the communities from which the materials came — someone who could collaborate with the General Service Office on these translations. Ordinarily, such items go through a formal process of translation, involving expressed need and participation of local A.A. members who speak the vernacular, having each piece of translation local committees submit for review professionally checked for linguistic accuracy and fidelity to the A.A. message, and, ultimately, approving it to become A.A.W.S.-copyrighted material. Rosa worked to compile scanned versions of the locally developed material for G.S.O. Staff reference on the Accessibilities and Remote Communities desk and,

whenever helpful, the items were made available.

To help make wider distribution possible, several members — Carolyn W., a general service trustee who lives in Surrey, Vancouver, and Irma V., a current Western Canada regional trustee — are working with local indigenous communities to ensure that more literature is translated (into both oral and written forms) and made accessible to the individuals who reside in these communities.

“People need to feel more included in Alcoholics Anonymous,” says Carolyn. “You come into a room and you don't see people from your culture, but if there is literature from the culture — particularly when the meeting location is immersed in and surrounded by that culture — having this literature available says, ‘We see you. We want to share with you what we have here. You belong here.’”

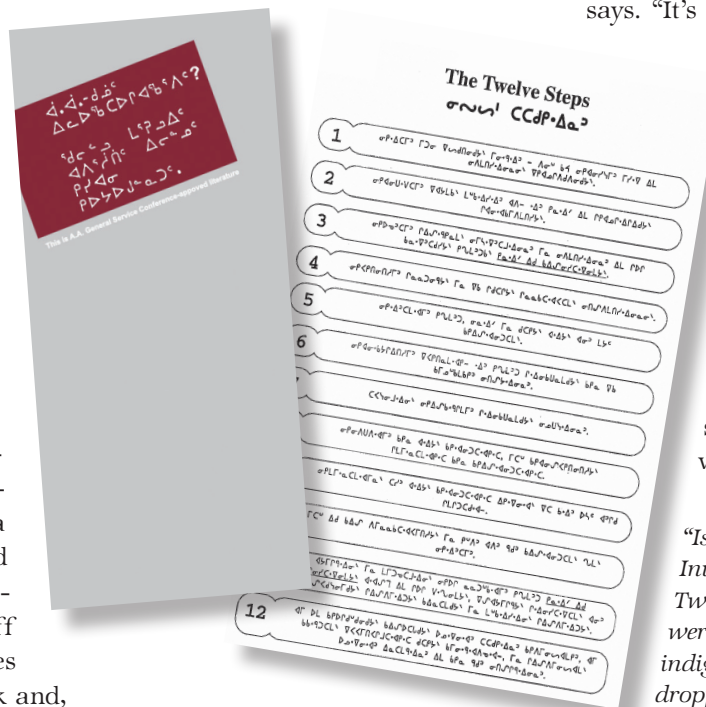
Efforts are being made to reach out to local groups to see if they are interested in helping to bring a specific piece of literature to fruition. “We don't parachute in for people who don't want us to,” notes Carolyn. “We need these local groups to reach out to us and give us another chance. We would like to do better.”

It will take time to build relationships within local communities that are interested in developing these items further; once that happens and work begins, the items will go through the formal approval process established by A.A.W.S. According to Irma, help is currently being sought to create translations of Chapter Five in the two main dialects of Inuktitut, which are spoken and read by folks in Eastern Canada. “We're reaching out to people who could be possible translators,” she says. “It's important that we do this

with the communities, and that we don't do it for them. We want input from the members of the specific communities.”

Everyone who is passionate about this initiative agrees that these efforts will only strengthen and expand the message of A.A. to the alcoholic who still suffers.

“Is A.A. for You?” in Inuktitut (left) and the Twelve Steps in Oji-Cree (right) were among the pieces of indigenous-language literature dropped off at G.S.O. in 2007.



■ Class B Trustee

Trish L. Shares Her Thoughts on Remote Communities

Hailing from Vancouver, British Columbia — but having moved around Canada in her early life as a self-described “Navy brat” — **Trish L.** is the Class B (alcoholic) trustee-at-large for Canada. In 2018, three years after retiring from her position as executive director of a nonprofit charitable organization operating a 15-bed support recovery facility for women, she and her now-husband Arnie and their two dogs spent five months traveling across Canada and then back again (via a different route), attending A.A. meetings wherever she found them. The experience reinforced “the fact that we can forget that Canada is quite rural and remote and A.A. is bound together by a thread, rather than a rope,” she says.

Box 4-5-9: Trish, you got sober in 1994 and have since done all types of service — from the home group level to GSR, BC/Yukon (Area 79) to General Service delegate, 2007-2008. Lately, much of your work has focused on remote communities. Why is that?

Trish: I am so grateful that I can walk out the door today and find five meetings almost outside my window. But our area is Area 79, British Columbia/Yukon, which is huge. Geographically it is the second largest in the Canada/U.S. structure — Alberta/Northwest Territories [Area 78] right next door is the largest. Area 79 is not only vast but vast with a population that is concentrated around a couple of urban areas and then a whole population of people that are scattered throughout the whole province. As a delegate, I started to go to these assemblies and hear from people whose meeting schedules were based on ferry schedules, on when roads were open, on when groceries were coming in and out of the community. That was one of the first inklings I had that even within our home area much work was needed to make sure people had a way to connect with us through the service structure — and to help those alcoholics who were sober reach those in their remote communities still suffering.

Box 4-5-9: Alcoholics Anonymous, especially in Canada but elsewhere as well, has begun to redefine what a remote community really is.

Trish: Area 79 did some really good work around trying to figure not only how we could serve our remote communities — but of course the question is, what is a remote community, how are we going to define it? We have lots of geographical challenges, but are there other challenges? Having traveled so much around BC and Canada, that slender thread that binds A.A. also applies

to language and culture. One can feel so alone if one is surrounded by people who speak another language, if you are disconnected from your culture, that “remoteness” is an isolating factor, a psychological factor. Which is why we now define a remote community as ‘any community where it is difficult to carry the message because of language, culture, or geography.’

Box 4-5-9: Whenever we hear the phrase “trustee-at-large” we’re a little bit in awe. You have a lot of ground to cover.

Trish: A trustee-at-large has this incredible opportunity to have a window onto other service structures around the world. And that ties right back to remote communities. What we’re trying to do in the U.S./Canada service structure in terms of being of service to the world is to support other structures to be the best that they can be in terms of carrying the message to their folks. But then the pandemic hit, and I like to say I actually became a “trustee-at-small.” Or as my husband Arnie says, “the trustee at home!” I was still having a window into other service structures, but the window was the one on the small screen on a virtual platform.

Box 4-5-9: Devastating as it has been, the pandemic caused this incredible connectivity to happen — A.A. members all over the world have found new ways to meet and communicate.

Trish: Yes, that’s right. It allowed for relationships and for a sharing globally. It wasn’t that these ways of meet

■ REMINDER

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ing and sharing weren't possible previously. They just hadn't been looked at before. And so, all of us had a chance to be a trustee-at-large, in a sense.

Box 4-5-9: In fact, the first North/South Connections Forum came out of that ability to travel virtually, right?

Trish: Yes. Newton P., who was the trustee-at-large U.S. at that point and I went to the Argentine General Service Conference virtually and that's where that idea was born for the first North/South Forum [held via virtual technology on May 15, 2021] to bring members of the remote communities of Argentina and Chile and Patagonia together with remote areas of Canada and the U.S. They have so many similar challenges, experiences which can be shared. That came about because of global thinking and the ability to visit more closely with each other.

Box 4-5-9: Any thoughts on what A.A. members can do in terms of service they can provide to remote communities. Everyday Twelfth Step work, in other words?

Trish: You don't have to think of stark geographic

landscapes. The beauty of expanding the definition of remote communities to include language and culture is that you can think, "What's the best way for me to reach people, locally?" One of the terms that I think is very descriptive is "hidden community." Where are the hidden communities? Hiding in plain sight, in a sense. If you are in a large metropolitan city and there's a population of people who speak a language other than the one commonly spoken, then you have a community that may be isolated. And there are a number of indigenous languages and cultures that may need support, and who can tell us how we can be of further service. You can ask yourself, "Can my group be more helpful and more accessible?" to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community. Service to remote communities has grown and developed — there's a service desk at GSO devoted to this for anyone who is interested in remote communities as well information at aa.org [<https://www.aa.org/remote-communities-committees>]. There's always Twelfth Step work to do in Alcoholics Anonymous and that certainly applies to remote communities.

■ The Second Virtual North/South Connections Forum: "We Always Try to Practice Unity"

On July 16, members from the service structures of Argentina, Canada, Chile, and the United States gathered virtually at the second North/South Connections Forum to share their experience, strength, and hope in extending the hand of A.A. to remote communities. (The first North/South Forum took place in May 2021, hosted by the General Service Board of Argentina — see Box 459, Summer, 2021.)

The July 16 Forum was hosted by the General Service Board of the U.S./Canada and brought together three panels of members of remote communities, both North and South, who focused on areas of Language, Culture, and Geography. (This echoes the Remote Communities Guidelines, which define a remote community as one "difficult to reach because of geography, language, or culture.") There were 18 speakers, six each from the U.S./Canada, Argentina and Chile service structures. James H., regional forums coordinator at G.S.O., says: "This year we expanded the scope of the topics — last year's forum was focused primarily on geography, this year we really looked at the obstacles of language and of culture, which added new dimensions to consider and to talk about. The hope — and I think it was accomplished — was to stimulate more interest in service in remote community work and to demonstrate how vital it is. You could see connections being made. In the chat, there

was a lot of sharing of documents and contact information, which was great to see."

Marita R., trustee-at-large, U.S., agrees. "You could just feel the vibration of all the connections being made. With the definition of "remote" being expanded, everyone has more work to do. When you hear someone speaking from the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community, as we did, you think: 'Oh, how many deaf people do we have the United States who haven't found each other yet?'"

A true partnership

With 532 total U.S./Canada registrants and a peak attendance of 345 (1,722 individual log-ins), this virtual forum was a complex undertaking from a linguistic and technical point of view. Hernan M. and his team of translators rendered panelist shares into French, Spanish, and English, while American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters signed for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community. The technical aspects of the forum were handled by Mike W. of Tech-12, along with Laura S., Matt C. and a team of 10. (Tech-12 specializes in facilitating virtual events and has worked with G.S.O. to host the previous North/South Forum and other A.A. events). Mike says: "The tech side was a true partnership — we loved working with the tech team from Argentina in order to put the pieces together. This is really one of my

favorite events. It does have challenges that are specific around doing virtual events involving remote communities, especially geographically speaking. Internet connections, computers, and devices — sometimes power, there can be issues. And with language — how do people from the southernmost part of South America all the way up to Alaska get connected and get interpretation? Not everyone is adept with Zoom and knows how to select ‘interpretation’ [to find their language]. So, we built a whole system on the backend to that, allowing for interpretation to work without having to select it.”

The Forum was a success, with few tech glitches, says James O’D., of Toronto, Canada, who chaired the panel on Language. “I know how hard Mike and his team work, the way they problem-solve; they made everything so seamless.” James is also chair of the Inter-Area Remote Community Workgroup, an ad hoc committee on remote communities that meets virtually on the third Monday of each. He compares the isolation felt by people in such communities to the sense of aloneness many alcoholics have before they come into the program. “I felt like I was the only one, that no one else felt like I did, no one had been through what I’d been through. And then I got to a meeting and found out, ‘Oh, there’s a room full of people who have felt like I have felt.’”

“Where can I do service?”

Even when there are barriers of language, James says, “the language of the heart” helps A.A.s communicate.

Deb B. is an alcoholic who is Deaf who found community in A.A., although the journey was a difficult one. She got sober in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1992, and found only two other sober alcoholics who knew ASL. “If it wasn’t for them,” she said, “I would not have stayed in the rooms.” During her talk, she spoke of how isolating it can be to attend an A.A. meeting that has no ASL interpreter: “It’s like being in a glass jar.” Sometimes she could pick up just a word or a phrase from the meeting and that would have to be enough. After moving to Austin, Texas, however, she has helped found the Austin Area Deaf Intergroup, which lists meetings with ASL interpreters and addresses the issue of using Seventh Tradition funds to support the Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Panelist William L., a sober alcoholic who moved to northern Chile from his native Columbia and found no A.A. groups in his adopted city of Antofagasta, showed just what one individual reaching out to others can do, much as A.A.’s early founders did. William’s first thought when he realized there were no meetings was: “Oh, my God, where can I do service?” The answer to that was to reach out to other A.A. members isolated in the city and start their own A.A. group, which is still going strong.

You're invited!

“Beyond Language, Culture and Geography: Sobriety Within Everybody's Reach.”

Alcoholics Anonymous®

North/South Connections Virtual Special Forum — A.A. in Remote Communities

Saturday, July 16, 2022 – 11am-7pm EDT

Members from the service structures of Argentina, Canada, Chile and the United States will share their experience, strength and hope in extending the hand of A.A. to Remote Communities.

All sessions will be interpreted into American Sign Language (ASL) and English, French and Spanish.

The event is open to all members!

Registration and information are now available at www.aa.org.

If you have any questions, please contact the Regional Forums desk at G.S.O.: northsouthconnections@aa.org or (212) 870-3400

Flyer for the North/South Connections Virtual Special Forum held in July 2022.

“We bring them literature”

For some alcoholics, “going to any length” may mean driving an extra few miles to make a meeting. But to Enrique O., a speaker from Salta, in northern Argentina, any length meant traveling 12 hours on difficult roads to help a remote community. An A.A. member from the high Andes of Argentina got in touch with Enrique’s home group and asked for help. “We wanted to be able to serve this suffering alcoholic,” he said, so Enrique and members of his group took a lengthy bus journey into the mountains for three years, usually spending a weekend in the caller’s remote village. Six A.A. members started out making the trips, paying their own way; two had to stop because of altitude sickness, but four continued. This began 10 years ago; they now visit A.A. members in this little town about once every six months.

“We bring them literature, and we always try to practice unity,” Enrique said, summing up what so much of remote community service is all about.

Martin G., from Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, chaired the panel on Culture and spoke movingly about the way “alcoholism made us disconnect from our families and cultures.” Ramon, of Temuco, Chile, a member of the Mapuche ethnic group, spoke of how getting sober

in A.A. helped him begin his search for his Mapuche roots and how this search now helps him in reaching out to those of the Mapuche who are still-suffering alcoholics. And panelists Justina of Argentina and Eve of Chile related the difficulties of getting sober in cultures where attitudes toward women alcoholics, although slowly changing, can be challenging. Eve calls herself “the daughter of Zoom, although I am on the other side, too — the hug, the coffee cup.” Most of all, through her Higher Power and A.A., she has overcome her shame at being an alcoholic and is now a person “who wants to live to be able to serve.”

“Sharing our experience”

Second only to the World Service Conference, the North/South Connections Forum paints a picture of A.A. members engaging with others in Twelfth Step work that seeks to be inclusive, thoughtful, and far-reaching. James O’D describes an instance of A.A. volunteers passing out Big Books in an indigenous community without realizing that the right thing to do, in this culture, was to work through the elder system. “We’ve learned over the years that it’s best to ask, ‘How can we be of service?’ to the community we are approaching. And then we act accordingly.”

Christina M., of Kelowna, British Columbia, is remote communities chair for Area 79 BC/Yukon — the second largest in A.A. “Smaller communities,” she says, “are definitely the ones who will email or phone in to look for help. Often, they’ve been contacted through road trips by other committees — PI, for instance, or CPC — that had visited there. People in these smaller places are not necessarily going to know how to type in [to a search engine] ‘Alcoholics Anonymous remote communities.’ But they know to find us because of the legwork that has been done before by A.A.”

When Christina gets such a communication from a remote town, she makes it a point to respond quickly. “I talk to them on the phone, follow up with an email, get them some links really fast [from the Area 79 website bcyukonaa.org or aa.org in New York] so they can link in. And then I send them a box of paper literature.”

Christina and her committee also do remote community service with work camps — temporary places where workers gather to mine or log or work on an oil pipeline. “They might be there two weeks to a month at a time and it is designated as a ‘dry’ camp. So there can be workers demanding that there are A.A. meetings on site or they’re not going. Or HR itself wants to bring A.A. in as an issue of work-life balance.”

These areas are, for the most part, too remote for outside A.A. members to bring a meeting in, says Christina. Sometimes HR wants to run the A.A. meeting them-

selves, “but I explain to them that the meeting needs to be run by a sober alcoholic” among the workers. Instead, Christina sends meeting topics and formats and urges HR to set up a room and a time, so that everyone knows where to go. “And then the alcoholics there can just do a meeting.” Although some of these work camps may have the ability to meet on a virtual platform, what they’re really looking for is an old-fashioned physical connection. “The workers are isolated, stuck in a small space with people after work, and what they’re trying to do is build a community [of support] within the camp.”

Whether in the high Andes of Argentina or an isolated senior community in Hawaii or an online intergroup where Deaf/Hard of Hearing people can check in from all over the country, building a community of support is what remote community work is all about.

“What I find so exciting about being a trustee-at-large,” Marita R. says, “is seeing the way people are reaching out and forming groups and making connections. It’s on their own initiative. They never thought they’d be telling their story at a forum! They’re displaying the quiet leadership that Bill W. spoke of, the steadfast leadership. I’m so impressed by the sense of purpose and compassion I see in people in these communities, and the people who do this work. You can tell in hearing them and talking to them that they do not feel alone. That they really feel a part of Alcoholics Anonymous. And I think that’s what we want with our remote communities.”

■ Eileen A.: New Arrival at G.S.O.

Eileen A., new staff member on the Corrections desk, loves what she’s doing. “I’m so grateful to be a part of this team, and it really does feel like a team, all the way from the person who sits at the receptionist desk to my fellow staff members to [G.S.O. general manager] Bob W.” she says. “When I get to work every day, I’m thinking, ‘Is this really my life?’”

Eileen is a New York native: born in Richmond Hill, Queens, she moved to Roosevelt Island at age 9 with her mother after her parents separated. Sitting in the East River between Manhattan and Queens, Roosevelt Island had a checkered past — in the 19th century it was home to several hospitals, a prison and the New York City Lunatic Asylum. It now boasts a thriving population of 14,000 people, but when Eileen arrived in the late 1970s, she says, she and her friends were able to wander through the as-yet undeveloped island at will. “We had a lot of freedom and would run around and play all day. It was quite an amazing place to grow up, although I didn’t realize it then.”

Eileen began drinking at the age of 9 or 10, draining the dregs of drinks left behind by adults after parties. “My mother was a heavy drinker and my whole family was a party family,” she recalls. When her mother (who now has 40 years of sobriety) hit bottom, Eileen moved with her sister to their father’s home in Queens, but her drinking continued to the extent that she narrowly escaped being sent to a juvenile detention center. Her mother, newly sober, took her back to live with her on Roosevelt Island and sent her as an outpatient to a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Manhattan, where she had to go every day after school. “The place was filled with lost and addicted kids like me. I was already sick. I just didn’t know it.”

Although the facility did not follow a Twelve Step program of recovery, it did separate Eileen from alcohol for a year and a half, and she received further reinforcement of the value of sobriety when, at the age of 20, she attended the Narcotics Anonymous meeting where her sister was receiving her one-year chip. “That was where I saw young people who were clean and sober, living a life that was different from mine. Mine was full of shame and remorse every day.”

Eileen stayed sober for eight years and was admitted to Columbia University as a general studies student. She followed this with a degree in speech and language pathology from New York University. But during this period, she stopped going to meetings, started drinking non-alcoholic beer, and ended up getting drunk one night at an Upper West Side bar. She went to work the next day hungover: “It was my first day back to drinking and it was as if no time had gone by.” Despite the resumption of her drinking, she was able to work in her chosen field as a speech pathologist and to get married and move to Connecticut, where she currently lives with her husband and two daughters. It took her until she was 35 to understand she “was utterly powerless over drinking.” Her sobriety date is October 5, 2002.

Sober once again, Eileen started going to meetings every day while continuing to work, eventually becoming part of a “structured home group with commitments.” She joined a group of young A.A. members and met her current sponsor, who took her through the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and that is when her spiritual journey deepened. She also attended an informal workshop of young people who met regularly to discuss *A.A. Comes of Age* and the Traditions. “I got a Public Information commitment, and I learned about the Traditions — definitely from doing some of it wrong,” she laughs.

Eileen took time off from service to raise her children, but for three months during the Covid pandemic, she studied the *The A.A. Service Manual Combined With the Twelve Concepts for World Service*. “I felt a need to

learn about the Service Manual and the Twelve Concepts and to get back into service work to enlarge my spiritual life — or I’d go stir crazy.” Soon after, Eileen became the GSR of her home group in Stamford, Connecticut, which is “very beginner-focused, which I love, because I don’t ever want to forget.” In the summer of 2021, she applied for a staff position at G.S.O. and, after the lengthy application and interview process, she began work on the Corrections assignment on February 7.

“My husband said, ‘I haven’t seen you light up like that about anything in a long time,’” she says. “I had always had a secret dream to work at G.S.O. but did not think it would be possible for me. But here was my chance.”

“My experience so far has been amazing,” she says. “The director of staff services, Sandra W., has been beyond helpful, as have Jeff W. (staff coordinator), Susan U. (retired G.S.O. staff) and all the staff members. I have so much support.” Eileen has been busy, receiving about 20 letters daily from people in custody, and maintaining the Corrections Correspondence Service, with the help of her staff assistant, Ana. “One of the greatest parts of this desk,” she says, “is that you have so much contact with A.A. members — just being able to answer a question or two or connect someone with a member in the program. I really enjoy working with the Corrections committees. They are so dedicated and really want to get back into the facilities to share the A.A. message of hope. And the letters from the people in custody are quite amazing. These people are so inspiring, with the stories they tell. I feel like they have no self-pity. They remind me to be grateful for what I have. They motivate me to be better. I feel like this is the kind of assignment where you can’t help but be spiritually rearranged.”

■ Meet Two New General Service Board Class A Trustees

Following the General Service Conference in April, the General Service Board selected two new Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees who will serve the Fellowship over the next six years: Kerry Meyer, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, District Court Judge, Fourth Judicial District; and Anadora “Andie” Moss, of Washington, D.C., founder and president of a criminal justice consulting firm. They will replace rotating Class A Trustees Christine Carpenter and Nancy McCarthy, who have served the Fellowship since 2016.

“I had a calling when I was in seventh grade that I was going to be a judge, which was quite hilarious,” says **Kerry Meyer**. “I didn’t know what that meant. But as I explored it, in reality, it was a call to help victims.



Kerry Meyer

That's why I became a prosecutor [Kerry was assistant Hennepin County District Attorney between 1989-2006]. I wanted to help the people who had no voice at the time the crime happened to them. Being their voice in court is what really motivated me."

Kerry was appointed District Court Judge in the Fourth Judicial District in Minneapolis in 2006. Working in the "biggest and busiest district" in the state, Kerry has presided over cases across the spectrum — felony, juvenile, property, misdemeanor, civil, and more. When she was working in treatment courts, "there was this core group of A.A. volunteers who came to DWI court. They were doing their Twelfth Step work and really helped teach me about sobriety and the difficulties of recovery. I had certainly seen this in my work previously but didn't understand it in the profound way that these A.A.s were able to teach me. That's when I became aware of what these Twelve Steps are, not just on paper, but what they are to live."

Kerry presided over DWI, Mental Health, and Veterans Treatment Court full time for three and a half years. She ended up learning about, and doing, the Twelve Steps with a group in Minnesota called Study in Action — the class reads the first 164 pages of the Big Book together and explores its meaning. "This is something that I required my DWI Court folks to do. I myself did some important Ninth Step work, although not alcohol-related," she says. "The whole experience really made me see how alcohol and drug addiction impacted others. I cer-

tainly understand that a person who is actually working the Steps, actually attending the meetings — and going to the meeting after the meeting — and who has what is truly a home group has a good chance. The people who struggled in my program were the folks who didn't actually do A.A. Their relapses started before they picked up a drink when they stopped going to meetings." Kerry adds: "I honestly believe that A.A. is *the* thing that works. I wouldn't be spending as much time as I'm about to spend for the next six years if I didn't believe that."

Kerry was a speaker at the International Convention in Atlanta in 2015 and continues to speak at A.A. events. Of her role as a Class A trustee, she says: "I'm hoping to give back in a productive way for all the time those A.A. volunteers spent in my court and hope that I can have even a small impact when it comes to helping still-suffering alcoholics. There is this incredible responsibility of being able to be the public face of an anonymous organization and I certainly don't come into this with any agenda. But I tend to be a workhorse and am happy to do whatever needs to be done."

Andora "Andie" Moss grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, to parents who both served in the Marines in World War II. She had a strong faith-based family and was influenced by some thoughtful youth directors who "encouraged a faith that was engaged in the issues of our time. I was always inspired when the church brought in speakers who were doing great things in the world. I also was blessed with being the sibling of a special needs person — my sister is blind and my parents decided to pioneer in mainstreaming her into the Atlanta public school system and my brother and I were very involved in that journey. So, I have always been wired to work with special populations and to do good in the world. I was also a child of the 1960s, so reform and understanding the underserved came almost in my DNA."

She received two degrees in Education from the University of Georgia and University of Idaho, "but I rambled around for a few years in terms of what I really wanted to do," she says. "I got interested in sports psychology and recreation therapy and I had the opportunity to work at a large hospital in Atlanta, where I became Director of Activity Therapy. After five years of inpatient crisis work, I really wanted to change directions. Finally, I had an awakening — instead of figuring out what I wanted to be, maybe I should decide who I wanted to be."

This epiphany led Andie to a career in the criminal justice system. She began working in the Georgia Department of Corrections, writing lesson plans for corrections officers working with inmates with mental health issues. She has stayed in the field for more than 36 years. "I fell in love with what could be done in terms of helping the inmate population as well as the staff

who so often are painted with a broad brush of misunderstanding. And I have had many opportunities to progress in that field.”

She worked within the Georgia Department of Corrections until 1996, where she was instrumental in investigating and instituting reforms after widespread incidents of sexual abuse of women inmates by corrections staff. She moved on to the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, where she began “working throughout the country on issues of sexual abuse in confinement settings. “My view was that it was not only about sex, but the culture of our facilities — the staff culture, the inmate culture — and the external culture in our society.”

After seven years, Andie left the Department of Justice to start her own consulting firm, which works around the country with prisons and jails on the federal, state and local levels, advising on issues that range from sexual safety within institutions to leadership and supervisory development, diversity, equity and inclusion, workforce shortages, how to sustain staff, “For just about any area of corrections,” she says. “I have experts on our team who are dedicated to working with some of the most sensitive issues we face today.”

Andie has encountered the issue of alcoholism during the course of her work, becoming aware of “the addictive process very up close” in dealing with people from different walks of life including her own family. She decided to apply for the Class A trustee opening after



Andora “Andie” Moss

conversations with one of her mentors, former Class A trustee Allen Ault.

“I’m very anxious to receive my orientation [for the General Service Board] and see what the conversations are, see what the needs are,” says Andie. “I think what draws me to A.A. is the way it offers hope and a pathway for healing. Hope and healing are what my career has been all about. If I can be helpful in any way to an organization that has really saved the lives of so many, then I think I’ll get more out of it than I put in.”

■ Three New Class B Trustees Arrive at A.A.’s General Service Board

Following their election in April at the 72nd General Service Conference, the General Service Board of A.A. welcomed three new Class B (alcoholic) trustees: Joyce S., of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Eastern Canada regional trustee; Reilly K., of Winston, Oregon, Pacific regional trustee; and Carolyn W., of Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, general service trustee. While all trustees represent the Fellowship as a whole and no trustee can be said to “represent” a geographical section, these newly elected A.A. members bring extensive service experience and invaluable regional and professional points of view to the boards’ deliberations.

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, **Joyce S.** doesn’t precisely remember the occasion of her first drink but does recall drinking early on to try “to fit in with the cool kids at school, the ones with the nice flashy clothes” that she couldn’t afford, coming as she did from a turbulent home with an alcoholic father. She left home at the age of 17 with only a ninth-grade education, married another alcoholic and for the next five years “there were times when I didn’t think I was going to live and in fact almost died.” After the birth of a daughter, Joyce made the painful decision to leave her husband and ask her sister to take care of her daughter; she then headed to Toronto in search of a new life. “I had no idea why I came here,” she says, “but my Higher Power was looking after me, even then. I got a job in a hospital as a dietary aide, went to work, went home — didn’t drink much because I couldn’t afford it — and didn’t talk to my co-workers. What was I going to tell them? I was full of shame and had so many secrets I was harboring.”

Ironically, it was after Joyce began a relationship with a stable man who didn’t drink much that her own drinking accelerated. “I began to drink in the bars on Friday and Saturday nights and then my drinking took off and within five years I was a full-blown alcoholic.” Her rela-

tionship began to fall apart and Joyce moved to a new job, but her alcoholism was advanced enough that she drank vodka out of styrofoam cups in her office. One Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1981, after drinking with a friend, she blacked out while driving, ended up in a ditch and was charged with driving under the influence.

It was the beginning of her journey into A.A. She continued to drink while awaiting her court date, but one night — so full of what she calls “the bag of negative emotions that I can’t afford to have these days” — she picked up the phone and called A.A. There was a nearby meeting called The New Life Group (just what she had been seeking) and she showed up in a pair of dirty jeans and a black t-shirt with a picture of a bottle of bourbon on it. She took a resentment at the nicely dressed men and women who seemed to have their lives in order, but after more drinking and a rehab stay, she decided they had what she wanted. Inspired as well by the cautionary tale of her father, who died of alcoholism on Christmas Day, 1978, Joyce put down the drink. Her sobriety date is October 12, 1982.

“What you see today,” Joyce says, “is not the person who walked through the doors of that meeting. I’m a different person, with the help of God and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.” Service is a big part of that transformation. One day, Joyce says, she was watching the GSR of her home group, whom she considered to be cranky and rather unapproachable. “But I started seeing changes in him — he seemed to be more outgoing. So I went up to him and I said — quite brazenly — ‘What have you been up to? You’re so different.’” The man replied that service had changed him; the next thing Joyce knew, she became the man’s alternate GSR. Her service roles since have included Panel 65 Delegate for Area 83, Eastern Ontario (2015-2016), Area 63 Alternate Delegate (2013-2014), District Committee Member (DCM) and Public Information chair. She has not missed an Area committee meeting in more than 20 years, and she is also active in her home group. “Being in service,” she says, “keeps me and my triangle balanced.” Outside of A.A., she has had extensive business experience, with a job as an Executive Assistant whose responsibilities include managing 20 companies. Although semi-retired now, she still works for the same company and an understanding boss who tells her “that if I do the same job for A.A. that I do for him, A.A. is in good hands.”

“I feel a lot of gratitude to the Fellowship to be in this position,” Joyce adds. “As Eastern Canada regional trustee, I hope to go to areas that are struggling and help out as much as I can. I want to get the word out about what’s happening in A.A. and at G.S.O. I also want to get the word out that we need people to get active in service. When I was a GSR in 2001-2002 I’d be at the back of the

room and I’d look at these people at the front tables with their suits on and I’d say to myself: ‘Not in my lifetime will I be up there!’ So I hope to be an example and a resource. I guess I want to give back what was so freely given to me and say, ‘Look, if I can do it, so can you.’”

Reilly K. got sober on August 7, 1966, which gives her 56 years in A.A. The new Pacific regional trustee was raised in Puyallup, Washington, and took her first drink at the age of 12. She was 15 when a speaker for the National Council on Alcoholism came to her school and gave her literature on the disease of alcoholism. Her response? “Oh, great, this is fine — this means I *have* to drink, right?” By the time Reilly was 18, she had started working in radio and TV in Tacoma, moved to California, and became the first female disc jockey between Los Angeles and San Francisco. During the course of her work, she heard a public service announcement about Alcoholics Anonymous — the first time she’d ever heard of A.A. “I thought about going to A.A., I tried it, I chickened out,” she remembers. However, three years later — after being fired from her DJ job for being drunk on-air — she found herself homeless in California. “I remembered the PSA and I wondered if A.A. was in California,” she says. “I made a call and that’s how I came to A.A.”

Reilly was 21 when she took her last drink. There weren’t all that many young people around at that time — in fact, she was the youngest person in A.A. within 250 miles. “The alternate delegate at that time was active in public information and said to me, ‘I don’t know if you’re going to stay sober, but just in case you do, A.A. is going to need you.’ So, he got me started talking at high schools because he believed that A.A. should show people that you didn’t have to be old to get sober.” She ended up going to Los Angeles to meet other young people in A.A.. “There were three people younger than me, and everyone was under 40. It was wonderful to meet people my age. And so we formed a committee and for the next eight years, we traveled around California starting young people’s groups.”

Focusing on young people, for the next 15 years Reilly delved further into A.A. service. “I was essentially doing Public Information work at the Area, District, and local levels.” She was Area 5 PI Chair and CPC Chair, as well as Treasurer, DCM or Alternate DCM several times, both in Area 5 and later in Area 58 after moving to Oregon. She worked as a liaison between G.S.O. and gay groups (now called Gays and Lesbians in A.A., or GaL-AA). “That’s where my focus was for a long time,” Reilly says, “supporting and maintaining gay groups all over the world.” Reilly has also served as Area 58, Panel 66 delegate and Area 58 Grapevine/La Viña committee chair.

Early in her sobriety, when a potential employer asked her what she did for a living, Reilly said she was

a bookkeeper, a profession she knew next to nothing about. After the man hired her, she taught herself book-keeping at night, keeping “half a day ahead of my job” and ultimately created a successful career for herself as a licensed tax accountant and a non-profit corporate accountant. Reilly also helped raise six children with the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts as a foundation for her family. Later she moved to a 15-acre ranch in Oregon, where she opened a gay and lesbian campground as a safe place for diversity in a rural community.

Working with diverse groups of people has been a hallmark of Reilly’s sobriety. What does she expect to do as Pacific regional trustee? “I’m certainly not walking in feeling like, oh, let me tell you what I know,” says Reilly. “But I feel like I have a lot to give. I’ve traveled all around the United States and I’m well aware of all the different areas and regions. And I love the Pacific region. I know that we have so much to give each other.

“One of my main considerations with the trustee role is to be a conduit, taking what I know and what other people know, let people share with each other, and then take it back out again to the people who need to know it. That’s my visualization. I think I can help. I hope I can. I had a woman talk to me at my Area assembly this past weekend, and she said, ‘Sometime would you come to a meeting with me so I can show you to women, so they know that if you stay sober you can be anything.’ This gave me such a warm, wonderful feeling. It’s not about me, but yes, you can show me off if you want to. I don’t mind being an example.” She laughs. “I’ve been an example of one thing or another all my life!”

Carolyn W. has served as a non-trustee director on the A.A.W.S. Board since 2018 and is now assuming the role of general service trustee. She lives in Surrey, British Columbia, but was raised in Winnipeg and has lived all over Canada. “I was someone whose drinking started really early and escalated quickly and by the time I was 17 I was facing serious consequences, so I ran away and joined the army. It didn’t get me sober, but it gave me a chance to experience military prison. They did put me through treatment a few times to no avail and then we mutually agreed I was not suitable, and I left.” Carolyn drank for several more years. “It was very dark,” she says. “Some people stay out there because they think they can handle it. I stayed out there because I really thought dying drunk would be better than living sober. By the time I came to A.A., it was not some big event that got me sober. Some people seek sobriety because they lose a job or break a relationship. What brought me into A.A. was none of those things, although many of them had happened. It was just total despair.”

She was not a first-time winner, but instead one of those aspiring A.A.s who stay close to the program

even as she had a hard time putting down the drink. She relates drinking in the bathrooms at meetings and occasionally being asked to leave. Her home group, which she went to every week “no matter what condition I was in,” even discussed what to do about her at a business meeting. Despite this — or perhaps because of it — Carolyn says, “I learned a lot about the Traditions without anyone ever explaining them to me. There were no requirements except a desire to stop drinking. I had nothing to put in the basket. I didn’t have to conform — which was good because I was defiant and belligerent.”

Carolyn’s sober date is March 22, 2001. As she grew in sobriety, service was presented to her by members of her home group not as “some optional thing you do,” but rather as something everyone was responsible to participate in, something that was in fact quite desirable, as in “Hey, you get to do this now.” Her service roles have included everything from working as a greeter and secretary of her home group to GSR and Panel 63 Delegate for Area 79, British Columbia/Yukon (2013-2014) to her role as non-trustee director. Service has been, she says, “a core part of my sobriety.” Service has informed Carolyn’s life in other ways. She is employed as the National Director for Privacy for a firm that provides rehabilitation services and home health care to clients across Canada. She remembers a boss telling her how much he valued the fact that she made decisions via a sort of group conscience, that she sought out the minority viewpoints and passed along credit for work done — A.A. working in the non-A.A. world.

“Somewhere in my journey [in service],” Carolyn says, “I realized how much had been invested in me by the Fellowship. Trust and learning. People generously gave of their time to support me and to help me better understand things I needed to know. The area I served [BC/Yukon] is vast geographically, so there are a number of travel costs, as there are costs involved in work as a Board member. So when I decided to make myself available as a General Service trustee, it was almost like a spiritual return on investment. I owe A.A. absolutely everything and to just walk away from service before A.A. says, ‘You’re done’ would not have been the right thing to do.”

As General Service trustee, Carolyn says, she wants to get more information out into the Fellowship — “communicating up and down the triangle. I’d love to see increased participation and discussion of all the things the Fellowship wants to be talking about and to challenge ourselves throughout the structure, and beyond, to make things better. Not change for the sake of change but change for the sake of better. Are there things we can do to make us more effective in reaching the alcoholic who still suffers? That is a test we should hold up to everything we do. It’s our North Star.”

NOTE: Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, events may be canceled or moved to online formats. Please contact the event coordinators as listed before making your plans.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site. **For any additional information, please use the event contact information provided.**

September

- 1-4—*New Orleans, Louisiana.* ICYPAA. Write: Ch., 601 Loyola Ave., New Orleans, LA 70113; Info: 62nd.icypaa.org.
- 3-4—*Boston, Massachusetts.* XLIX Convencion Hispana de AA Estados Unidos y Canada. Info: <https://www.convencionhispanadeaousaycanada.com/informes>
- 3-4—*Monterey, California.* Monterey Bay Area Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1462, Monterey, CA 93942; Email: MBARChair2022@gmail.com.
- 16-18—*Chouteau, Oklahoma.* Gratitude Getaway 2022 Women's Conference. Write: Ch., 406 E 76th Street N Sperry, OK 74073; Info: www.gratitudegetaway.com
- 16-18—*Gatineau, Québec, Canada.* 22e Congres du District 90-22 Gatineau. Écrire: Prés., 85, rue du Barry, Gatineau, Quebec J8T 3N5; congres22@aa90.org
- 16-18—*Salt Lake City, Utah.* Pacific Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; regionalforums@aa.org. Info: https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/regional-and-local-forums
- 16-18—*San Diego, California.* Woman to Woman — San Diego. Write: Ch., 1710 Mission Bay Dr., San Diego, CA 92109; Info: <https://womantowomansandiego.com>
- 23-25—*Kalispell, Montana.* Montana Fall AA Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 155, Bozeman, MT 59771; Email: information@aanwmt.org
- 23-25—*Richland, Washington.* Three Rivers BigBook Weekend III. Write: Ch., 750 W Livernois Way, Chino Valley, AZ 86323; Info: <https://www.threeriversbigbookweekend.org>
- 23-25—*Somerset, New Jersey.* NNJGS — Area 44 — 66th Annual Convention. Write: Ch., 2325 Plainfield Ave., Suite 2J, South Plainfield, NJ 07080; Info: <https://www.nnjaa.org/convention/2022>

- 30-02—*Spearfish, South Dakota.* 2022 Area 63 Fall Conference. Write: Ch., Box 1212, Spearfish, S.D. 57783; To book online: www.holiday-inn.com/spearfishsd and using the GROUP CODE AAC
- 30-02—*Stateline, Nevada.* Sobriety In The Sierras. Write: Ch., P.O. Box 18913, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151; Info: <https://www.laketahoe-aa-fallfestival.com>

October

- 7-9—*Cheektowaga, New York.* 81st Buffalo Fall Convention. Write: Ch., Box 685, Tonawanda, NY 14151; Info: buffalooa@hotmail.com
- 14-16—*Palmdale, California.* The Antelope Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., 5022 West Ave., N Ste.102 #104, Palmdale, CA 93551; Info: [Avroundup.com](http://avroundup.com)
- 14-16—*Puerto Peñasco Sonora, Mexico.* Rocky Point Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 10756, Glendale, AZ 85318; Info: <http://rockypointroundup.org>.
- 14-16—*Round Rock, Texas.* SWTA68 Fall Voting Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 631, Cedar Park, TX 78630; Info: <https://d22-swta.org/contact-us.html>
- 21-22—*Saint Cloud, Minnesota.* "A New Beginning" — 39th Annual St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, Saint Cloud, MN 56302. Info: www.stcloudroundup.org.
- 21-23—*Plymouth, Massachusetts.* MSCYPAA Convention. Email: mscypaaxiv@gmail.com; Info: www.mscypaa.com.
- 28-30—*Melville, New York.* Empire State Convention of Young People in AA. Write: Ch., Box 975, Amityville, NY 11701; Info: <https://www.escypaa8.org>.

November

- 17-19—*Manama, Bahrain.* 19th MERCAA Convention. Write: Library Room, American Mission Hospital, Manama Bahrain, Bahrain 11559; Info: <http://www.mercaa.com>

December

- 2-4—*New Orleans, Louisiana.* Southeast Regional Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; regionalforums@aa.org. Info: https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/regional-and-local-forums

January 2023

- 6-8—*Garden City, Kansas.* 52nd Annual Southwest Kansas Conference. Write: Ch., 105 S. Main Street, Ulysses, KS 67880.
- 13-15—*Bismarck, North Dakota.* Rule 62 Rendezvous Annual Woodstock of ND. Write: Ch., Box 268, Bismarck, ND 58504; Info: Rule62rendezvous.com.
- 27-29—*Boston, Massachusetts.* Freedom Trail Conference. Write: Ch., 15 Saint Paul St., Brookline, MA 02446.
- 27-29—*South Padre Island, Texas.* Sober in the Sand. Write: Ch., 108 Madelyn Rose, Bayview, TX 78566; Info: dist27dcm@gmail.com.

February

- 16-19—*Addison, Texas, New York.* 59th Annual International Women's Conference. Write: Ch., Box 293013, Lewisville, Texas 75029-3013; Info: <https://internationalwomensconference.org/>.



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