



DISTRICT SIX

MAY 2020

WHY DO I AND MY GROUP NEED THE AREA WORKBOOK?

Briefly, the workbook gives you and your group insight into how Area 28 Maine currently functions in help to carry the message into your community. It is true the Service Manual provides overall guidance as to how the service structure should function; however, it leaves up to each area how to decide how it can best operate in helping to carry the message. To accomplish this goal, it has become necessary over the years to define and to clarify how each job is defined and carried out, a calendar to be followed, how elections are held, the responsibilities of many area committees, the experience necessary for an area officer to do their job, and most important, what is to happen at rotation time so that the experience gained is not lost and instead is passed on. Further, it was decided that it was necessary for the area to have a brief record of past actions taken by the assemblies and is recorded in a separate booklet which is updated every two years. This fuller thinking is available also in the minutes of the area committee meetings and assembly minutes in the area archives, if ever needed.

What is interesting to me is that many of the districts are also developing their own guidelines or workbook as to what seems to best work for them. The Maine Area is large geographically and includes urban, rural, and isolated communities. While the heavy AA population is located south of Augusta, it should also be kept in mind that Area 28 serves ALL the groups in the area. When I left two years ago, it was already apparent that the area is not serving all the Maine groups as almost all the districts in Northern Maine are “dark” or lightly supported. Is the message being carried? If not, why not? Should the area officers crash these darker districts, invite themselves? Some of you may remember that it is what Jake and I did to encourage groups in what is now District 15 after District 12 had already separated from old District 2. We did this because the Rockland area groups were not participating in the assemblies.

It is important to keep in mind that these guidelines in the workbook can be amended by a three-quarters vote by the assembly for further discussion and action; however, at this

time it will need a three-quarters vote by the assembly to pass and be included in the workbook.

Why, might you ask, did this workbook ever happen?

From 1950-1980 the area moved along using the Service Manual as its guide making some deviations from its suggestions as to how best operate. The area had four districts with about 10 groups per district at first; but by the early 1980's, the number of districts grew from four to seven, with Districts One, Two, and Three growing to 100 groups or more with sub-districts in each. The area held two assemblies a year in the Spring and Fall which met in the auditorium, or classroom, at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor. Usually, but not always, the area committee met a half hour before the assembly which usually started at 1:30 PM and lasted until 2:30 PM. The assembly sometime went until 3 PM but by then, half of the assembly would have left. Most of the time was spent on deciding who could vote, what were the issues, H & I and district reports, the summer picnic report, and the Boomerang Report by the editor. Not much was accomplished, while pressure from the groups was building. In those days there were no standing committees – maybe PI, a committee of one.

Onto this foggy scene appeared several newcomers to Maine from other areas where other areas operated differently. In other areas, Area Committees met several times a year and set agendas for the assembly. Service committees were active such as H & I, PI and CPC. Assemblies were held three or four times a year, and guidelines or workbooks had been developed so that assemblies could operate more smoothly. Districts tended to be smaller and had greater group participation. Change began to happen in Area 28 as questions were asked at the district meetings and the Service Manual was consulted as to the role of the area. Look at the “white pages” of our workbook from the late 1970's/early 1980's for an idea on issues confronting the area – such as group contributions, owning of chip dies (property), selling of literature at a profit, Boomerang, and the Roundup. Exciting times.

The result you see today. For a while group participation increased as the assembly grew to 30 to over 100 participants. This number has stabilized for a long time now with 125-150 participants even though the number of groups has **CNT PG 3**



The Emmet Fox Corner
With Michel J

"Let Go Let God"

"The people of A.A. had something that looked much better than what I had, but I was afraid to let go of what I had in order to try something new; there was a certain sense of security in the familiar." Reprinted from Big Book PG 407, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Life is change. The opposite of change is stagnation. Stagnation marks the beginning of death. Nowhere is this more evident than when one is in the midst of an alcoholic career and keeps on doing the same thing repeatedly. The beauty of the AA program is that it is constantly encouraging us to step outside of our comfort zone and to recognize the false sense of security that comes with the familiar and with resistance to change.

So how are we going to be able to bring about a change that we must make if we are not to die? First, we have to find in God and in our AA brethren the grace to admit our powerlessness over alcohol. We give ourselves permission to admit what everyone else already knows is true about us. With this admission, we start on a journey from a life that is unmanageable to one that is spiritually driven.

We start by giving up our old ideas about alcohol. We abandon the notions that if we don't drink we won't have fun anymore or that we have to drink in order to feel relaxed. Ultimately, we reject the idea that we can drink safely. As we become more open-minded about our relationship with alcohol, we begin to become aware of the other biases that we hold regarding our ideas about life and life's purpose.

Hollywood, the home of many high functioning alcoholics, often gets this process wrong when it tries to bring it to the big screen. It is often portrayed as some kind of epic struggle and display of enormous will power. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, we do have to expend some effort in going to meetings, phoning our sponsor, studying the big book and praying. But, this is usually far less effort than we used to expend in securing a sufficient supply of alcohol and finding the opportunity to consume it in quantity. As we continue to grow in the program, we come to learn the great Cosmic law of Relaxation. This law states that in matters of spiritual growth effort defeats itself.

Emmet Fox understood this principal so well when he wrote: "People often say, "I try to do this," or, "I try to do that, but I fail," or, "I tried so hard but nothing came of it," and they become discouraged and dispirited. They wonder why things will not come right. Yet the explanation is contained within the words themselves.

You should never "try"; you should "let" God. When you "try" to do things, you are working from the outside. When you let God do them through you, you are working from the inside and success must come. If you will re-read the creation chapter in the Bible (the first of Genesis) you will notice that God creates by "letting." God said, "Let there be light." God said, "let,"

at every act of creation, and it was done.

Now God creates by means of you if you will let him, but you must let. The scientific way of working is to "let" God manifest, through you, the wonderful ideas which He gives to you from time to time."

If you are attending meetings regularly, identifying with the speaker rather than comparing and if you are trying to be of service then you are letting God work through you. As the big book puts it, when you walk the path of spiritual progress remarkable things will happen. It is not until much later that you will realize that some things that happened to you when you put yourself in God's hands were much better than anything you could have ever planned. Once this realization occurs, you are starting to live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

~~~~~

### Editorial

#### Re-educated a bit on Group Contributions.

It is customary for us to slide a bit over the years as a District puts on events that the Groups feel they need.

As I understand it from my experiences as a Treasurer for various AA bodies (Bath Group Treasurer, District 6 Treasurer, Area 28 Roundup Treasurer, Area 28 Treasurer and the North East Regional Conference Treasurer), the Groups have to be reminded, in a gentle way, of their responsibilities. It is AA Board Policy not to accept Earmarked Funds, this is generally followed throughout AA as Guidelines suggest. From within their own Budget, AA entities may set aside funds from their General Fund, to fund various AA Committee Work, such as Newsletters, PI, CPC, Grapevine, Love and Service etc. Funding for various other activities Groups might like, such as dances and other social events (picnics, etc.) are financed from the excess funds that a Group or body might collect after the more crucial and main Group activities. This is why Groups, Districts, and Areas are reminded not to accumulate any funds beyond their stated AA purposes, and donate these excess funds to other AA entities down the triangle so that the AA Message can be carried. As a case in point, I remember years ago, from around Boston, and some Groups in Maine, who accumulated large funds for celebrating a Group's Anniversary with a dinner and dance. They were extravagant, but were they the best use of AA funds? This is why Conventions and Roundups have their separate AA Committees and charge Registration Fees to cover expenses, etc. This is also one of the ways an Intergroup, or Central Service Office, can perform these different services that the Group(s) might want. A Group does have a primary purpose (Tradition 5. Each Group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers) To stray from this Tradition opens the Group to disunity. Old timers in Service need to speak out and remind the Groups of their responsibility.

Editor



**CNT FR PG 1**

has grown from 250 to 500 or more, and the number of districts from 7 to 25 with many districts going dark or inactive. The assembly went from one and a half hours to a day, and then to the two-day assembly with the pre-gathering on Friday night. The services provided to the groups has increased with two intergroups now, and active area committees such as Finance, PI, CPC, H & I, Website, Workshops, Archives, Roundup, etc. All these committees help the groups and members carry the message, and how these entities operate and communicate so that their experience is not lost at a cost to groups becomes increasingly important. After all, the groups contribute the funds, and as an old timer told me years ago when I first arrived, I should know where my buck goes and that there are no stupid questions.

So the answer is to the question that we now do a much better job of making it possible for the groups to carry the message of recovery because we now address this question and do not spend time on questioning how to proceed. However, we also need to keep in mind there is much more that the groups can do. "Progress rather than Perfection" applies here also.



Love through Service,  
Bob D, Past Delegate, Area 28

~~~~~

THE CHIP CLUB

A sobriety coin is a token given to Alcoholics Anonymous members representing the amount of time the member has remained sober. It is traditionally a medallion the size of a poker chip 33 mm (Standard) or 34 mm in diameter marking the sobriety time achieved, awarded for abstaining from alcohol while with the program. In other 12 step programs it is to mark time abstaining from whatever the recipient is staying away from. There is no official AA medallion or chip; they are used in AA culture but not officially Conference Approved, and the AA logo has not been granted for use on medallions. Alcoholics Anonymous was not the first organization to use sobriety chips: other temperance societies gave medallions to those who swore to stop drinking/using and to track the duration of their sobriety.

Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers, the history book for Alcoholics Anonymous, discusses the work of Sister Ignatia in Akron, a nun who was devoted to assist early members of A.A. and was known for passing out coins to these members. In this book, it states:

"Sister Ignatia gave each of her newly released patients a Sacred Heart medallion, which she asked them to return before they took the first drink. She would occasionally give out St. Christopher medals as well, but she would tell the recipient not to drive too fast. "He gets out after 50 miles an hour," she warned." (Reprinted from Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers,

page 195, with permission of AA World Services, Inc.) The actual history of how the A.A. chip came about after this is still a mystery. It is believed to have originated in 1942 in Indianapolis. The man who began the Alcoholics Anonymous section in Indianapolis, Doherty S., is thought to have started the sobriety coin tradition within this section of A.A.

The Portland Group (Maine) began a tradition of using colored poker chips to mark time of sobriety.

As each section of A.A. saw fit, it joined in on the sobriety coin custom. As private companies saw these coins being used, they began to manufacture "A.A." chips (even though they were not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous) and sell them to different sections. It is believed that the company that made the modern chip as we know it today occurred in Minneapolis in 1965. Wendells Inc. from Ramsey, Minnesota began manufacturing the raised center bronze AA Medallion in 1973. The Wendell's medallion is the most common bronze coin given by AA members.

When a twelve-step member is presented with his or her first chip, they are often told, "This chip represents AA's commitment to you, not your commitment to us". Sobriety coins themselves do not necessarily help the holder stay sober, but studies have shown a connection between the visual presence of the coin and the holder's self-resolve. The coins are meant to motivate the holder to continue their abstinence from the subject of their addiction.

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of both men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism". To show how far along each person is in their sobriety most A.A. groups use a chip of a particular color or alloy that constitutes a range of time that person has been sober. These different colored chips and values are meant to be tokens of inspiration and a reminder of just how long the member has been sober and how far that member has come. It is evident that "early on, many people in A.A. carried personal mementos to remind themselves of the importance of their sobriety". From personal mementos to coins, the practice of giving out something such as a sobriety chip represents the will and desire that a person has to quit drinking. "The practice of giving sobriety chips in A.A. is attributed to a group in Elmira, N.Y. in 1947. The celebration of birthdays came from the Oxford group where they celebrated the anniversary of their spiritual rebirth, in Alcoholics Anonymous people choose the anniversary of the date of their first full day without a drink. Fourteen basic coins are given to members within their first year of sobriety. Generally, coins are given at one month, three months, six months, and nine months of sobriety the first year. After this, coins are given after each yearly milestone.

Typical coin milestone colors:

White Chip 24 hours of sobriety, Red Chip 1 month, Gold Chip 2 months, Green Chip 3 months, Purple Chip 4 months, Pink Chip 5 months, Dark Blue Chip 6 months, Copper Chip 7 months, Red Chip 8 months, Purple Chip 9 months, Gold Chip 10 months, Green Chip 11 months, Bronze Chip

My Greatest Teachers

By David L



I came to AA in October, 1984 via an abstinence based treatment program in southern Maine. I had been introduced to AA while in treatment and was told that my only hope for maintaining sobriety was to continue. I recall going to a meeting the evening I was released from the inpatient program I had attended.

I returned to my home area and began attending meetings with desperation that if I don't get this, I am going to die. Fear is a great motivator and I easily surpassed the recommended 90 meetings in 90 days I had heard about in rehab. I began attending mostly speaker meetings and a common theme seemed to be "sit down, shut up and listen", so I did. Got confused real fast because I did hear some really good stuff but also people saying things like "you don't need the steps, just don't f--- drink", "You do a step a year", and the most frightening "don't do what I do to stay sober, what I do might get you drunk". I then began to repeat what I was hearing because that was how I thought it was done. As the result, I was still filled with fear and still wanting to drink.

I finally got a sponsor after about three years of trying to figure this thing out by myself. I picked a guy we used to jokingly refer to as "Big Book George" because he was a book guy and from the streets so I figured if this could work for him, it could definitely work for someone as hip, slick and smooth as me. In our first talk, I was hoping to get the Big Book magic page and he suggested I start at page one as I had not done much beside go to AA and "warm up a chair".

I finally began taking some direction and doing someone else's program. George explained that what he was going to pass on the "daily program of recovery" that had been handed down since the beginning. George explained that he had left Maine in the early 1970's and relocated to Las Vegas, NV and fell in with a group of people at a sober club and that an old timer in that group had been sponsored by AA#40, Clarence Snyder who offered to take him through the steps.

George directed me to do selective readings in the Big Book third addition including "The Home Brewmeister", Clarence Snyder's story, "He Thought He Could Drink Like a Gentleman" by Abby G. from Cleveland, OH who hosted the first AA meeting at his home in May 1939 (don't argue, just read the story first), "The Vicious Cycle" whose author brought AA to Philadelphia describes the "New York Group composed of twelve men..." (P. 246) and the description of the word of mouth, fellowship based program being done by them at that time. The latter was contrasted with "He Sold Himself Short" by Earl Treat who brought AA to Chicago who describes meeting with Dr. Bob and being taken through the steps very much like the experience I had with my sponsor George. The stories of Clarence S. and Abby G. can only be found in the third edition. If you own a second addition, we need to talk.

I claim no special AA. My sponsor George made a point of mentioning that his sponsor Dewey had been sponsored by

Clarence who had sponsored by Dr. Bob. George also made a point of mentioning that he was scheduled to be taken through the steps on a Saturday so he checked in with Dewey on Friday evening and found Dewey and his buddies packing their fishing gear as they were going away for the weekend. Based on inquiry George learned that the "21 year old kid" sitting in the corner was going to take him through instead. I owe my life to that young man but regret that I never got his name.

I am grateful that I was granted the "benefit of this type of sponsorship" as that is what I have had the privilege of passing on for the past 30+ years since I was walked through the archway into a new way of life. I did not immediately begin working with others as George had done with me until I was "forced into the middle" of AA. I found myself approaching 5 years going through a divorce with young children, getting sued and George being diagnosed with terminal cancer at age 41. I recall visiting the VA hospital and blubbering like a baby while he is telling me that "everything is going to be OK" and that I "forgot about the string attached to the steps" that they are not for me to keep but to give away. I promised him on his deathbed that I would.

My God takes so much better care of me than I can. I returned home and began sharing at meetings in a way that must have been different as I was approached by a man who asked "that I do with him what George had done with me". Wasn't sure I could do it but had observed the two occasions when I had brought men to George so I reluctantly agreed. The guy who asked me was three years sober so I figured I wasn't going to hurt him. We fumbled our way through the directions in the book and I "walked him through the archway" and saw him open his eyes. That "boy was on fire alright" and he ran back to the sober club we attended meetings at and ran his mouth to anyone who would listen about his "spiritual experience".

I finally began saying yes to AA and was flooded with opportunities to "do that thing that George did with me". The result is that the men (and a few women) have been there to carry me through many of my life difficulties. The answer to my prayers has been the people I have had the privilege or sitting with over the years. I have been finally able to make a connection with the God that resides in me by reaching out and making connections with those like minded souls who I walk the path of recovery with.

I need to be constantly reminded that we are all in this thing together.

Requested by Audrey, newsletter reporter



Clarification:

Last month (D-6 Newsletter Final 04.10.20) an article was printed "The Here and Now" (PG 4). It was written by Ann S. not Anne S. and was meant to be credited "Requested by Audrey, Reporter". Editor

DISTRICT SIX AT A GLANCE

District six met on April 10th via Zoom. The meeting was opened and members promptly addressed any concerns about 'zoom bombing' or problematic settings. There appear to have been no problems on this front for the duration of the meeting. There were 14 people in attendance, five GSR's, six committee members and three non-voting attendees. Due to the sudden change in venue and use of an irregular platform district business scheduled for April was postponed until the May meeting. Reports were given, there is a love and service workshop tentatively scheduled for May 30th, the newsletter committee continues to meet monthly online and to produce the newsletter, and corrections welcomed two new co-chairs how have been long time volunteers and thus are familiar with the systems they'll be serving in. There were additional comments and opinions brought to the district by the delegate and a past delegate which can be found in the district minutes. They do not address any district business.

The district's next business meeting will be held via Zoom on May 8th at 6:00pm. We will address the old business reported on in the February newsletter. This includes a grapevine budget motion, approval of purchasing a SSL certificate for the website, the area 28 agenda items and possible reimbursement for a lock change made by a church utilized by many AA meetings. We will also be addressing disbursement of any funds above prudent reserve as well as calling for any open positions. If you have any interest in attending the meeting please reach out for the call information, it was sent to all district members.

FINANCES

Beginning balance: 2,031.37\$

Deposits: 166.96\$

7th tradition: 11.00\$

Sunrise serenity: 105.96\$

We Group: 50.00\$

Expenses: 00.00\$

Ending Balance: 2,198.33\$

Prudent Reserve: -1,100.00\$

Prudent reserve functions: -750.00\$

Prudent reserve operations budget: -350.00\$

Surplus: 1,098.33\$



HELP WANTED

The following positions are open at the District level

ARCHIVES

The right person for this position would be willing and able to maintain files and documents that are historic for the district and the districts meetings, as well as attend the monthly business meetings for district six and area. There is a recommended guideline of 2 or more years of sobriety and proficiency with computers. Further information can be found at the district six website or the monthly business meeting.

FUNCTIONS CHAIR

Looking for self-motivated person, willing and able to serve a 2

year term running a committee responsible for planning and throwing events for AA's in district 6. The role includes managing seed money, proposing events to the district committee and working with a team to throw each event as well as attending the monthly district meeting. More information can be found on the district website or the at the monthly business meeting.

HOTLINE

The hotline coordinator is responsible for attending monthly business meetings, maintaining and updating the phone list and connecting with CSO to share information. This will include reaching out to meetings and AA's in our District to get contact information so that we can continue to be actively involved in supporting those AA's in need who turn to the hotline for support. More information available on district six website and at the business meeting.

MEETING LIST

This position is a two-year commitment to maintain a list of all meetings, times and locations in the district and to share said list with district secretary and webmaster so that it may be printed and distributed in the district. This position also updates this information with CSO. Further information can be found at the business meeting and on the district six website.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Many of these positions are held with the intention of working with a larger committee. Current chairs seeking committee members include: The Website, The Grapevine and The Newsletter. If interested in pursuing more work in service at the district level this might be an excellent way to dive in without the commitment of a chair position. Please seek more information at the District Business Meeting.



Aly, newsletter Reporter



Is there A Solution?

We know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as the co-founders. Many of them now spend months or years going in and out of treatment centers and sober livings.

Much of this world is represented, and we are people who would not normally interact with one another. Yet we have all decided to do something about our drinking. Either because we really wanted to, or because someone else was making us. Either way, we are lumped together here now.

Is There a Solution? Almost none of us enjoyed the thought of having to do this the rest of our lives, but the fact is, we are bound together by a solution we call basically just going to meetings. Many attend daily. Some of us are so situated that we are able to attend multiple meetings a day. More fortunate still are those of us who are in a position where, due to the enabling nature of either family, insurance companies, or both, we are able to attend countless meetings each week without even having to drive ourselves there.



1 year of sobriety.

The chip system is optional and not a part of all A.A. groups nationally or worldwide". In 2011, the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous estimated that there were about 58,000 Alcoholics Anonymous groups throughout the United States. All the chips after the One Year chip are traditionally also bronze. There are special novelty chips that come in other metals, colors, types and designs. Common premium sobriety chips are gold- and silver-plated, colored and some-times coated in a clear epoxy dome.

The Story behind The Wendell's Raised Center AA Medallion:

Have you ever wondered how the custom of handing out Raised Center AA medallions began?

The story behind this tradition is a story of innovation and strength of the recovery fellowship.

One of the brightest highlights in Wendell's history is our role in the area of support for the millions of people worldwide who have fought and are still fighting the battle of addiction. In early 1973, Bill Westman, a recovering alcoholic wanted to do something to fortify the will of the groups and individuals he spoke with. Bill designed and had Wendell's produce a coin bearing the two large A's on one side of the medallion and the Serenity Prayer on the reverse.

Continued Next Month

FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING INTO

Alcoholics' anonymous meetings comprise of a group of ladies and gentlemen who share their experiences and encourage each other to keep away from alcohol. The meetings are sometimes open for anyone to attend but in some cases, it is a closed meeting only for people recovering from alcoholism. I attended an open one that was taking place in our local church. The initials of the participants of the meeting were as follows:

This was my first time to attend such a meeting and I had no idea of what to expect that I was not an alcoholic. On arrival, I found people outside the meeting room chatting as they took a cup of coffee. I was made to understand that the meetings started and ended at the designated time. When the community called a chairperson, all other conversations stopped. As announced beforehand, the meeting was supposed to start with a moment of silence followed by members reciting the serenity prayer. The members who attended the meeting for the first, second and third time were then recognized as well those who were visitors in our locality. Each of the members who was willing to contribute was given about five minutes to talk about alcoholism and the reform journey. At some point, the regular members contributed some money to sustain the group while the new members were left out first to learn about the group. Each of the given testimony was very touching and seemed to give hope to keep pushing on despite the

challenges. I also felt quite challenged about life in general and many of my preconceived ideas changed despite me being a non-alcoholic.

Initially, I used to think that alcoholic people are just immoral people who are not willing to change their ways. After that meeting, I discovered the kind of agony the participants went through as they tried to quit once they got addicted. Most of them actually lack the kind of support required in that journey. For instance, a new member Edwin had narrated about his ordeals before he met that group and they were very touching. He used to live in regrets whenever he became sober after drinking and really wanted to change but could not. Alcoholism is actually a mental disorder that requires both psychological therapy and in some cases medicine.

I used to underestimate the power of consistency in what I do but such views changed altogether after attending that meeting. The former alcoholics were very resilient in their mission to stop drinking. Even their own friends would not derail those who had succeeded in quitting. Emily said that her former colleagues who she used to drink with would even offer to buy alcohol for her and she had to fight the temptations hard. From the meeting, the importance of service to others was clearly instilled in me, as the members believed that the best way to quit alcohol was by helping others. They would share their personal encounters without the fear of being judged to help their colleagues. Besides that, the meeting starting with the serenity prayer was a clear indication that those people who might be considered by the community as non-believers actually adored God. The AA meetings have achieved a lot in helping alcohol addicts, and for this reason, membership has grown to over two million around the world. It is a good way of solving a problem by sharing experience and involving the members directly.



A Non Alcoholic

THE HALLS OF AA 2020

