

AD HOC COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

REPORT

PRESENTED AT THE AREA 16 ASSEMBLY

1/15-16/05

INTRODUCTION

Communication has been critical to “carrying the message” since the founding of AA. “We were sure that unless our recovery experiences were put on paper, our principles and practices would soon be distorted,” Bill W. wrote about the origins of the Big Book in a June 1947 Grapevine article reprinted in “The Language of the Heart.” (page 58.)

Bill W., writing in July 1960 on the growth of AA, said that “it occurs to me that every aspect of this global unfoldment can be related to a single crucial word. The word is communication.” (page 243, Language of the Heart).

The importance of communication was emphasized in the AA 16 Group Inventory conducted at the May 15, 2004, Area 16 Assembly. Among the areas affecting communication that the inventory suggested improving were better communications with the Area Office in Macon; improving design, content and distribution of the Message; improving distribution of information about cluster forums; improving distribution of information for Fall and Spring DCM meetings; and improving content, design and information available on the web site www.aageorgia.org.

In response to the inventory, delegate Dick A. appointed an ad hoc committee at the September Assembly to begin studying some of these communication issues and make recommendations.

The members of this Ad Hoc committee are chair Kris J., incoming DCM for District 16D; co-chair Charles G., alternate GSR for the Savannah Group in District 5C; Glenda U., office manager Area 16; Dick A., Area 16 delegate; Sally C., former GSR; and Clint Y., PI/CPC chair and webmaster for Area 16. Sally, Charles and Kris are professionals in communications-related industries.

Our charge was to identify and review all forms of communication that Area 16 uses and then recommend ways in which they can be improved to better serve the Area and meet the needs of the alcoholic who still suffers. We were asked to present an interim report at the Nov. 13, 2004, DCM session in Macon, which we did, and a full report to the January Assembly.

ACTION

Some members of the ad hoc committee met immediately after the September Assembly to begin identifying tasks, and we met as a full committee at the Pre-Paid Convention. At the first session, it was decided there were some areas we could immediately improve, such as work with the office staff to improve the design of the Message on an interim basis and put it on the web site – both suggested in the May inventory. These tasks were accomplished, and the Message is on www.aageorgia.org with a user name, Area16, and password, gssa.

To fulfill our charge, we identified many ways the Area communicates or could communicate inside and outside the fellowship. These include: The Georgia Message newsletter, the www.aageorgia.org website, overall “design” or the look of publications in print and on the web, the Service Manual, the Service Directory, letterheads, envelopes, a possible e-mail list, a possible phone chain, three State Service Assemblies, two DCM planning meetings, seven regional forums, committee displays, regular mail, fliers, the Area 16 office, brochures, and “We Share the Georgia Experience” possible update.

We discussed the purpose of each and some possible improvements:

- 1) **The Georgia Message of AA:** The purpose of the Message has been to learn about official business, reports from trusted servants, upcoming events and other items. The committee reviewed newsletters from around the country to determine what was being done, and to get a feel for possible content and presentation. Our conclusion was that the Message needed a more consistent look, including consistent typefaces, a possible logo, and more uniform layout. It is suggested that some changes in content would inspire more people to enter the service structure. We suggest an improved newsletter and improvement of content on the web site, www.aageorgia.org, would require a volunteer network of reporters, and a volunteer staff of editors, illustrators and graphic designers. We also found in our research that in New York, for example, professional communicators in the program frequently

use their talents for this type of 12th Step Work with good results. We also suggest current distribution and printing of the Message be studied.

- 2) **www.aageorgia.org:** The committee foresees the AA Georgia website as having an ever increasing role in receiving and distributing information.. This information will have to be assimilated and the website redesigned to accommodate all the new features. In addition, as other districts uplink there own websites, which several districts have already done, it will become necessary to unify and maintain a consistent message that stays within the traditions of AA. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement on how information is presented on the website.
- 3) **Design:** The “look” of our publications and web sites is very inconsistent. One crucial element of communication is not only what you say but how you say it. The committee suggests continually trying to make uniform all design elements so we’re communicating in a visual way with one voice in terms of typefaces, logo, any graphics, and other visual elements.
- 4) **Georgia Service Manual:** The purpose of the Service Manual is to provide guidelines for operation of the Area and its Assembly. The Ad Hoc committee suggests that the manual be redesigned to be consistent in appearance with other Service materials, such as the Georgia Service Directory. This would not affect content of the Manual. The ad hoc committee suggests the manual could also be placed on the AA Georgia website with password protection.
- 5) **Georgia Service Directory:** The purpose of the Service Directory is to help communication around the area, but has been hampered by old or incorrect information, as the inventory points out. The ad hoc committee suggests the Directory be revised and redesigned to have the same look as the Georgia Service Manual. The ad hoc committee suggests studying putting the Service Directory on the AA Georgia Website for constant updating with password protection. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement on how information is presented in the Directory.
- 6) **Letterhead/Envelopes:** The committee suggests that these be consistent in design with other publications.
- 7) **E-mail list:** The committee suggests studying creation of an E-mail list to be kept in the state office and by the webmaster. This will allow immediate access to the

districts and the groups when needed. E-mail information could be collected when DCMs, GSRs and other servants rotate in.

- 8) **Phone:** The committee suggests studying creation of a phone list if there is an immediate need to reach someone. This list would come voluntarily from the DCMs, GSRs and other servants at the time they rotate in. The phone operation of the state office – including having a 1-800 number as suggested in the inventory – could also be studied.
- 9) **State Service Assemblies:** The purpose of the state service assemblies is to conduct Area 16 business and inform GSRs of upcoming events and proposals. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement on how information is presented there.
- 10) **DCM Planning Meetings:** The purpose of the DCM meeting is to prepare them for the upcoming State Assemblies so that they can better prepare their respective GSRs. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement on how information is presented and distributed.
- 11) **Cluster Forums:** Their purpose is to educate and inform the regions on selected topics as selected annually by the state executive committee. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement on how information is presented to promote the forums in the newsletter on the web, and elsewhere.
- 12) **Committee Displays:** The purpose of a Committee Display is to showcase what is going on in that committee, to solicit volunteers, or to sell conference-approved material. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement when needed on how information is presented
- 13) **Mail:** The purpose of any mailings is to inform, educate, or to attract and help the suffering alcoholic. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement when needed on how information is presented
- 14) **Fliers:** Their purpose is to attract and promote a particular function. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement when needed on how information is presented
- 15) **Area 16 Office:** The state office communicates who we are in its appearance and interior design. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement when needed on how information is presented.

- 16) **Brochures:** Currently, there aren't any state brochures that can be handed out or mailed that have information of the Area 16 districts or their respective intergroup phone numbers. We suggest continued study and creating them if necessary.
- 17) **We Share the Georgia Experience:** The purpose of this book is to outline the history of AA in Georgia. Revisions of this book is being considered and to bring all the information together, edit it, and design the layout and cover will take many hours. The ad hoc committee suggests continued study and improvement when needed on how information is presented.

RECOMMENDATION

As shown above, communication is a big part of carrying the message in Area 16, the state of Georgia. This committee believes that Area 16 has grown to where it needs to address in a consistent basis the way it communicates while staying within the Twelve Traditions of AA. This ad hoc committee suggests the formation of a permanent Area 16 Communications Committee. We would suggest a committee of eight or nine members, including two-three people with professional editorial experience, one-two with professional-level web experience, the state office manager, the PI/CPC chair, the delegate and a member at large. One of the committee members with professional editorial experience would be designated as editor of the Message. The committee – to be appointed by the delegate – would be further charged with improving the various communication areas described above or any others that arise. It would not dictate what we communicate but offer its expertise to help carry the message within the Traditions. It would seek other volunteers, such as a reporting staff or web helpers, as needed. It is suggested committee members rotate on a regular basis, except for the editor of the Message whose volunteer position might be longer than a two-year term to ensure continuity. The ad hoc committee would leave the issue of rotation up to the permanent committee to resolve.

The permanent committee would initially have a budget of about \$1,400 for travel to Macon or other areas for four to six meetings next year, and for any other miscellaneous expenses. It would develop and implement improvements in communication when possible with existing resources, and seek funding within the service structure if needed. For example, it might need money for software which could cost \$2,000 or so.

The committee will perform and publish an inventory after a year of operation. And it is suggested the Assembly review it after two years of operation.

Respectfully submitted,

The Ad Hoc Communications Committee