

Madeine P, former Pacific Regional Trustee opened the meeting thanking the group for their service and read from the service manual about the third legacy of service and the importance of the inventory. Encouraged everyone to demonstrate courage.

Please keep your shares to 2 minutes and do not share twice so that we can get through 6 questions.

Linda T., Area 18 notetaker

1. What is the purpose of our Area?

- a. To assist the districts. And the purpose of the district is to assist the groups in order to carry the message more effectively to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- b. To elect a delegate to represent the general conscience of Area 15 at the General Service Conference.
- c. We provide a forum for our groups and districts to share what is working, what isn't and to share ideas.
- d. Hopeful for more enthusiasm that we take care of business in a more efficient way. Could we do more virtually. This is a hope and a dream. This may be more cost effective and time efficient. This will allow more access to service. This is a large area geographically.

2. If we in General Service are the Group's link to AA., what can we do to improve that link?

- a. Overall making Area 15 more attractive to GSR's. I feel we ask a lot of the GSR's in our area and district. Monthly meetings and travel to quarterly meetings. We need to evaluate how we are communicating and how much we ask our GSR's absorb. We don't have a set format. Some say Roberts rules, some say conference protocol. We are in many ways failing our GSR's by not providing them tools.
- b. We as people who have been in service for a while need to be more accessible. We need to be open, transparent and willing to foster the relationships with GSRs.
- c. When I became a GSR it really opened my eyes. It jumpstarted my sobriety and helped me tremendously. We are here to help keep the doors open.
- d. I try to share everything I get with my home group and other groups. I just shared about tonight with a lot of people. Many are not aware. Even if they don't show up they always ask afterward. Try to keep the lines of communication open with the groups.
- e. When we visit a group, no matter what our service position, especially the DCM, share about general service. Even if they don't have a GSR. This creates enthusiasm and informs about service opportunities.
- f. We are just one link. Rely less on our GSRs. Give more work to the Area committee. The GSR's should elect the delegate and carry their group's conscience. All else should go to the Area committee.
- g. As a GSR, I had no idea what I was doing. I knew how to do things as soon as I was rotating out. I often have people look to me to answer what is going on as a DCM. I see so many people wanting to not do this. I formed a group with service sponsees and others who want to tap in more. We meet weekly to help educate and provide more

understanding. I have seen GSR's not vote because they don't understand what is going on. Idea for a workshop every 8 weeks an info session with a presentation.

- h. There is a GSR sharing session and DCM sharing session at each quarterly.
- i. DCM's are so important. In the past few years we have taken so much responsibility away from the DCM. We are hurting for participation. We need to encourage that and look at the responsibilities that they have and what we have taken away.
- j. I had a sponsor a service sponsor and a DCM who was involved. Back then it was a big job. They had so much to do. Traditions studies and giving the knowledge to the GSR's is important. Unsure if the DCM is giving the knowledge needed to the GSR. I visit groups that have GSR's and not have. We need more instruction for the GSRs.

Reminder that there will be a solution meeting at the end. As we do this, write these things down so that you have what you are thinking about now?

Suggestion from the facilitator: visit to other areas. See what they are doing there and how they may do things differently.

3. What could the area add revise, or drop from the Area Assemblies that would make them more inclusive and informative?

- a. We should rescind the motion from 2008 giving the vote for GSRs to reduce the work for DCM's to constantly be "selling" general service. Move the meetings to Saturday.
- b. We would benefit from adding Area sharing sessions to contribute as outlined in our service manual. Similar to what's on your mind, but more structured and goal oriented. Notes are taken and followed up on. For example, what issues or problems are your groups encountering?
- c. We need to find a better way of communicating the district and committee reports. People leave at noon. People are "talked at". Restructure the quarterly. It's too long and the distance is too much. The agenda for July will be a very long day and then have to drive 4-5 hours home.
- d. I have been in two other areas, both did business in one day. Two days is "brutal" it's a hard weekend. Is it necessary? It wasn't in the other two districts. Most people would still need to come Friday, but the folks who were local could go home.
- e. So many good suggestions! To add, we alcoholics are all the same when it comes to addressing things about our groups. What I missed during the pandemic there was no real interaction between individuals. We were not sharing with each other. A real sharing session would be so helpful. We never talked about online meetings. As a DCM I had 33 groups. How are we best serving our groups? Are we too big?
- f. The DCM and Sharing sessions happen concurrently. I believe they should happen one after another. So that the DCM can hear what is happening in the GSR meeting. Also, start identifying people to step in when you rotate out and train them. Why do we have a Saturday night speaker? We could be doing so much more with that time.
- g. My experience with the area meeting. I'm learning a lot, but I'd like to see planned breaks. Lunch. Set a time to end and stick to it.

4. How can the area attract more GSR's to attend the Area Assemblies?

- a. It costs about \$1500 a year to have a fully active GSR. Hotels, travel and meals. Cost is an enormous barrier for a group. For us it is \$145 a month. There is a large economic barrier for GSR's to participate.
- b. The time commitment and distance to participate in assemblies.
- c. If a GSR asks a question without the institutional knowledge, it is problematic that others roll eyes and be divisive. We should encourage their participation at the mic.
- d. Ad Hoc committee is working on virtual options, can we also explore how to expedite voting. It's easy online. We lose people during the discussion of the voting process and during the voting process.
- e. The area should compensate the GSR's who's meetings cannot pay for them to travel. At the area we have enough to fund those GSR's in order to get them involved. A lot of groups cannot afford to send the GSR, let alone the individual.
- f. Point of information, when we met virtually our attendance went down. We have signed contracts with hotels through April of 2024.
- g. It is difficult to get a hotel. Most sell out very quickly. Our area is very large.
- h. This is eye opening. I have been able to attend the online assemblies the last quarterly. The workshops are phenomenal. It's mind stimulating. But not everyone can get to them. The elephant in the room, we need hybrid. We will get more involvement. Change the time of the concepts workshop. Hold the DCM and GSR meetings back-to-back. Longer workshops. I am from a virtual group. We are a local group. Our district has been very accommodating to virtual meetings.
- i. I was the hotel liaison. The hotel being filled up can be discouraging. Everyone on the wait list was served. Put this information on the flyer.
- j. I've been an online GSR for about a year now. The last virtual assembly we had was 12 hours. It gave me the ability as an alternate GSR to "be" there. If it was in person my group would not have been able to pay for it and I would not have been able to pay for it.

Point of information, Oregon used an online voting system for people in person and online. (Madeleine)

5. Do we emphasize the importance of Service Sponsorship? How can we do better?

- a. I am an alternate GSR. When I started, I remember being on the zoom quarterlies, I did hear from multiple people to get a service sponsor. I heard it right away.
- b. I am the alternate delegate. I do not emphasize service sponsorship except in 1x1 situations. Perhaps we can include it in our format. Also, in our Friday orientation. Perhaps we could have a "buddy". Match up the new GSR with someone more seasoned.
- c. We need to make sure people know they are in the group and get a service sponsor asap. Motions at are confusing as they have nothing to do with the group. They are business motions. Not much to take back to the group.
- d. My first sponsor is very active in General Service. And now she is my service sponsor. I didn't have to search. But if I hadn't had one I wouldn't have know what one was. We have a workshop before our district meeting where we study the service manual.
- e. We have several opportunities when we could discuss service sponsorship and third legacy sponsorship. We don't have a format for that. For our concept/traditions workshops etc., we don't have a format. Perhaps some suggestions on how you might benefit from this we could include service sponsorship. We have an outreach committee

that is fairly new. This committee could be one of those who could provide this to the area.

6. Does the Area effectively prepare their trusted servants for their positions? If not, what can we do better?

- a. I think we could do better. I think we could underscore the importance of alternate positions. We don't think about that enough. Perhaps District Charis and GSR's could remind each other of. Bill did this. We need a plan. And keep our position descriptions updated. In another area, after the business meeting, another meeting was held and the rotating servants needed to prepare and provide all of the information for the incoming trusted servant. A passon. And to continue to be available to answer questions.
- b. I've had support every step of the way willing to help me to learn the job. It was my responsibility to ask and not to pretend I knew how to do the job. Pamphlets, service manual, every piece of literature can provide us with the information about the job description. I always consulted with the previous servant.
- c. I think it is important to remove barriers to get people to stand for office. We can do a better job of promoting what is concept 9. You may not have the "qualifications" but you should know the leadership qualities. Flexibility, tolerance, responsibility and vision. Don't talk people out of standing. If you believe you are qualified an available, then you are qualified and available. I think we need to take down all those barriers.
- d. The comment on Concept 9 is excellent. Instead of making decision based on the "mechanics". We need to need a lot more motions than should be required. By placing something in a motion, allow the servant to have autonomy. We need to get beyond micromanaging.
- e. I think that everyone should be able to stand for a position if they meet the qualifications of being a DCM and 5 years of sobriety. For those of us who rotate, you are responsible to share your experience and then step back. And not micromanage.
- f. I have not served in an area position so I can't speak from experience. But overall, based on conversations with my GSR's, there seems to be an air of "us and them" and an unwillingness for change. This is extremely unattractive. Those of us who have been here for a few years, we could do a better job of encouraging the next generation, not shutting them down. The leadership could have an impact.
- g. Area 15 tries to do very well is utilization of our area website. There is so much information there. We need to use this and share it. All of our meetings with the exception of the Sunday business meeting are open. We want people to attend on Saturday. I would hope that the members of our district and fellowship embrace that and get the word out.
- h. We have 53 participants. 12 are GSRs, 8 past delegates. Let's look at not making this so intimidating. The voice we are getting here is not the people we are trying to get to answer the question. We need to look at that.
- i. Who are these people who don't have their cameras on? We only have a very few people here at this very important event.
- j. The elephant in the room is that we are interested in streamlining the business of area 15, the people we know are not here today, but it is our job to give the information to the GSRs. How do we emphasize the need to make a change? This is the way we have always done it is no longer a good excuse.

- k. We have had great trusted servants. There is too much micromanagement. We can delegate to our officers. When I was new, I did feel like there were two groups, the ones who knew each other and then the newbies wandering around and not feeling a part of. We can all do a better job of reaching out to the newcomer to make them feel more welcome.

My experience has been that the weight of much of the Pass-ons falls on the area chair. And it really is the collective who should be responsible. (Madeleine)

Oregon Area does their inventory every other year at the last assembly of the panel. This time the area committees did their own inventory. This was done in the hopes of getting wider sharing. (Madeleine)

Second Session: July 30th, 2022

Meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer

Madeleine P, Former Trustee, Facilitator

Linda T., Notetaker

7. Do our Area Service Committees provide enough support to Districts and home groups?

- a) I am excited to see the support here. I have emailed area committee and have not received an answer. I am looking forward to seeing that.
- b) Some of our area committee chair people try to get to the districts and not the homegroups. They get involved only in their home districts. So if we don't have anyone from our district serving at the area level they do not get involved.
- c) Kudos to our area chairperson who sits in our district meeting. Last month we went hybrid and she attended and provided lots of support and answers. I was a member of Area 06 and the practice there where area officers attended district meetings. It was how I got connected to the Area as area 06 is so large GSRs often could not attend the area assemblies or area meeting.
- d) One thing I loved this last year was that we met regularly over the last year to review the workbook. But this was a specific project. I would appreciate the area meeting more often.
- e) I appreciate the outreach committee hosting a bootcamp and that they provided fliers and heads up notice so that we could plan to be there.
- f) I want to second the last speaker. I am very excited to do a bootcamp in the Keys.
- g) We are back in person and only the people who are able to attend area meetings can attend committee meetings. I think it would be great for committees to meet in between virtually so more folks could attend.
- h) As an area, especially at the assemblies we should be encouraging all of the GSRs to pick a committee to serve beyond just being a GSR. This would facilitate rotation. We need to do a better job of encouraging participation. Part of this is a sponsor issue. I wasn't given a choice about service!
- i) Listening to the comments I keep thinking communication communication communication. I think if we have a weakness it is how we are carrying back what happens in these wonderful committees. We are dependent on who is present to carry the message back or to read the minutes. One thing we do in our district is to identify 4 or 5 key takeaways and suggest that the GSRs and DCMs take those items back to their meetings. We have to let people know over and over again. Better communication strategy is needed.
- j) I can't distinguish the difference between the area committee and the district. Either there is an overlap or there needs distinction. I've been a GSR for a year.

8. Does the Area use our Seventh Tradition funds effectively to carry out our primary purpose? How can we do better?

- a) I am in the have too much camp. We contribute over 20,000 to the General Service Committee. If the groups are applying the pie chart appropriately and also sending to GSR, we should be using the money at the Area level. I think we should be spending the money at PICPC. We need more PSA's and digital work. We can advertise the APP. I think this would be the best way to spend the excess funds or tell the groups to stop sending so much money.
- b) I agree with the previous speaker. If we increase the budget for the committees it would go a long way to getting the districts more involved at the area level. The districts could do more workshops and get more cooperation from outlying districts. Increase the budget and make more funds available to districts.
- c) One thing I noticed in the last few years due to being virtual was how much money we spend on transportation and why are we spending so much money to reimburse hotels and transportation when we can do virtual so much more cost effectively.
- d) My home group does not give to the area. I am the first GSR there. Their logic is that they were given a distribution a number of years ago where they give 10% GSR and everything else to groups within the district. Their answer is that the area sends everything to GSO so we are going to keep the money locally.
- e) I am a GSR in a virtual meeting. My group does not donate because they feel that the money is spent for people's vacations to attend area in fancy hotels. And the process is archaic. Paper checks and not the ability to donate
- f) A while ago I spoke at an area meeting and was given a check to take back to GSO. At the time GSO had a surplus of a couple of 100 thousand dollars. I felt like I was robbing Area 15 when I took that check. When I asked why I was told this is the way we have always done that. We should be prudent with our money and spend it in the area first.
- g) One thing is how much we ask of our GSRs. We expect them to attend the assemblies every few months. The attitude is that there is too much money in Area 15 and the GSRs have to pay their own way. I keep hearing "we have to encourage GSRs" but we don't have enough room for any more to physically meet. Maybe we should spend the money differently or not meet so much in person.
- h) I notice a big drop in sponsors not cracking the whip over their sponsees. I was told I had to do service. If I hear anything consistently it is how great the website is. I go to a zoom group and there are a number of ways to give money, checks, venmo or paypal.
- i) If I ask for what I need, there is always a path. My committee was given a sizeable amount of money and then went to lockdown so the money was not spent. Now we are starting to come back with outreach. How do we do this in a responsible way so it reflects our area's values system.

9. How effective is the Area GSR Sharing session at Area Assemblies at providing GSRs the information they need to carry out their GSR responsibilities in their home group, District and the Area?

- a) I have the same question brought up earlier about the difference from district and area committees. We are getting information at the sharing session, but I am not sure the information follows a set plan. Opportunity to standardize the information and communication as it is a lot to absorb. I appreciate them but I'd like to improve the information we are getting. I cannot attend both the GSR and finance committee meeting.
- b) I have only attended the last quarterly assembly. I didn't feel it was effective at all. The panel shared their experience which was interesting. But then the people who asked questions asked the same questions about how to get their group involved. I think it's important, but those two hours were not effective and I didn't learn anything new. I do have some suggestions for the solutions meeting.

- c) I was not a fan of the format where they bring in a GSR or former who shares their service recovery story. GSR's need education and training! We need more information and less story!
- d) I have been to several of these meetings and it has been an interesting experience. It feels like I'm being "sold" to the next level. I didn't get information on how to be boots on the ground support for my group.
- e) I agree with what everyone has said. The education of a GSR starts at the District and it's the Districts responsibility to train the GSRs. We need to offer training for GSR's. Our district had a service committee meeting and it was well attended. The meeting stopped at rotation.
- f) I found the assembly very informative and when the GSRs shared I appreciated the experience. I got the resolution I needed. I got a lot of feedback from GSRs in the room. We need to talk things out in these sessions instead of just sharing problems. I also attended the Finance committee and went back to the GSRs. Sometimes the GSR panels do all of the talking.
- g) I've been of the opinion that the GSR panel should be folks from the local district running the meeting and past delegates, officers should be in the audience as a resource. We asked for responses from the audience rather than from those running the meeting. Unfortunately GSRs are often too afraid to ask the question. Service sponsorship is helpful too.
- h) I would like the GSR workshop be planned by the GSRs and the hosting district can oversee it. Being talked to is less effective than allowing those who need the education plan the meetings and content. I'd like to say yes the district trains them but we need more support.
- i) We met together to figure out what the GSRs needed to know. One thing we need is a GSR orientation. They need more information, structure and tools. We have an obligation to do that. Service sponsor too is important.
- j) There is a lot of information in our literature. Our district does an orientation.
- k) Our sessions need to be more structured and less loopy goosy.

10. How effective is Area communication with the Groups, Districts, and the rest of the service structure as a whole? What can we do better?

- a) I don't hear directly from the area; I hear from the area through my district. There is no facebook group. I wish I had direct communication from our area. Email too.
- b) Communication Communication. We have an upside communication and communicate through the district but I think we need to have more direct communication. I love the previous comments. We have three assemblies and meetings but we do not do any surveys on how people feel we are doing. I'd really like to see the Area surveying the members if they are getting what they need.
- c) I feel like I experience a different Area 15 than everyone else. I have emails. I have reached out and never had anyone not respond. It has been a very good experience. I had to do it.
- d) I feel the website is a tremendous source of information. I am responsible to search out the information. I think the communication is very accessible. I have no complaints.
- e) Point of information, we have three opportunities for communication. The district registrars put in information. Our districts elect committee members for every committee. The dcms can provide information to the registrar. We have some challenges. We are missing registrars and DCMs and unfortunately not all of the DCMs are working with the district registrars. We can tidy up these things. If the are data base doesn't have accurate information we wont be able to communicate effectively.
- f) I use email blasts. Every now and then there are some communications that come in the same day of when they are supposed to occur. It would be helpful to send them out early and in advance.
- g) Our chair uses email blasts to disseminate information. If you are not getting the information, contact the chairperson. We cant be spoon fed.
- h) How can we do better with email? Where do we get the information?

- i) Kudos to the website. The information posted is usually correct. Especially kudos to Tom. You want to find out what is going on, go to the website.
- j) I like the idea of keeping current with online information, like Facebook. Sometimes I get the email and it's already happened. Newsletter online? A lot of GSRs don't go to the quarterlies.
- k) GSO did a communications audit a few years ago and the things we are talking about now were discussed then. The upside down triangle was created in a different time. The florida state convention has great information. The website is great, and a private facebook group. Our website needs an opt in feature. Allow folks to put their email in.
- l) The website is amazing. The online forms look great. I looks very comprehensive. Lisa has been very helpful. Everyone I've ever contacted has been responsive and helpful.

11. Does the Area provide a safe, functional, and accessible meeting place for our Area events? If not, what can we do better?

- a) I think it is selfish of us to not do online whenever we can. It is costly to pay for travel. There are apps, slack, etc to improve communication. There are a lot of tools we could use to communicate far more effectively.
- b) Some of the concern expressed about accessibility, Tampa is not accessible with parking and wheelchairs. Financial concerns for travel. I like what was just said, meet in person and on line. Not force hybrid. We don't need to exclude people we have been doing this online for two years.
- c) The accessibility of the past assembly, there were workshops on the third floor not accessible from the main elevators. People didn't know where they were. It was a very long walk. A hotel may say that a hotel is ADA compliant, but we can do better than that. That should be part of the selection of the facility. The travel time to get across the state and the need to get an extra hotel night that is a barrier. People who work 9-5 can't always get there? Maybe shorten Saturday.
- d) D 14 and D19 opted in to Area 15. The area approved and signed contracts through April of 2024 for hotels.
- e) I don't think the Area assemblies are accessible to our target audience. If we had the access we wanted we would not be able to accommodate everyone. We need to move away from saying this is the way we have always done this. I know we have contracts, but GSRs don't want to travel and pay. I am curious how many area officers and committee chairs are retired. I'd like to see us meeting in person and online.
- f) The first assembly we had in person I didn't go because masks were not required. We still have covid. I reached out after the meeting and asked everyone what happened, people did not stay until the business meeting. The whole point of the assembly is the business meeting and no one stays. I had to wait for the minutes in order to inform my group. Why is always a high priced hotel and why a fancy expensive town? And why are we doing contracts two years out.
- g) In April we would have benefitted from AV equipment. The meeting would have been more effective if we could have seen the screen. The accessibility of the meeting rooms in July was very difficult.
- h) I am handicapped and the hotels are difficult for access.
- i) When we voted we tried to talk about different options, but I felt pressured to move on the contracts. I think now we are trapped. Unless the hybrid committee can come up with a plan to do something different after the contracts expire.
- j) Conferences are not bound by previous conference decisions. The groups are in charge. Area 15 is part of the service structure. The groups can vote to break the contracts. That's the way AA works. Obviously we have lots of money. Not advising we can pay penalties to break contracts, but we can have the conversation.

- k) We can plan things. We don't have to vote on things immediately. It cannot hurt to plan. Let's develop a plan. I'd go with one assembly a year. Four mini assemblies for localities. We have a lot of structure we do not need at the area level.

12. Are there any current structures or positions within the Area that are not effective or possibly not necessary? If so, what are they and why are they not effective?

- a) GSRs. Is the GSR without full right of participation needed at the assemblies? We do business at the end of the weekend. And they cannot stay. We don't give them rights for motions, but do to vote.
- b) "The Dais"? I don't see the purpose of it. Everyone else should be a part of the body, sitting with everyone else. It sets an "us and them" attitude. Let's get rid of it and be unified.
- c) We were adrift the last few years. When we did events there was resistance. It was poorly attended.
- d) We are very married to the book of current practice and we have no flexibility in how we do things. The current practice is focused on the process and not results and I think that slows us down in getting results.
- e) No panel is bound by other panels. The current practices seem to be a method of maintaining status quo no matter what. With positions we seem to be more worried about having positions than having GSRs show up. For me the most important thing is the group. We need to get together at the district level and figure out what we really need to get the message of AA to the people who really need it.
- f) The discussion has been wonderful. I wish we could have a forum at our assemblies to have this discussion. Maybe blend the GSRs and DCM sessions. We only have 60 people here tonight and at our assemblies we have 100's. This is wonderful. I applaud the area and everyone who has shared their concerns.
- g) Structures that might help? Ability to take area assemblies hybrid would be a structure that would open accessibility. For health issues, island participants, for groups who can't afford, for younger people. If the area's goal is to have more people participate than that is the way to go.
- h) DITTO. Things have changed. We need to move in that direction. I get the email from the district chair and I get it once a month and it is all inclusive.
- i) It seems to me that we need to take a hard look at the assemblies and look at restructuring them. GSR training and business meeting. Get it done in one day. When we had the assemblies on zoom we seemed to get less attendance than in person. I am not sure our experience indicates that we get more when we are on zoom. We get more done in person than online. We are trying to do too much at the assemblies.
- j) If we can be more effective, why not? How do we gauge the numbers for those who cannot come in person? How do we see who is coming online and who in person. If we access even one alcoholic online that we cannot meet in person then we are doing better.
- k) Yes, we had less online than in person.
- l) I am not opposed to implementing different ways to having the quarterlies. The meetings online went on for 10-12 hours. We need to figure this out and do it sensibly.

We need to talk about solution. Think of those going forward. Thank you for showing up. Solutions session will be August 13th at the same time.

