

## ■ The General Service Board Welcomes Five New Class B Trustees



Following their election in April at the 75th General Service Conference, five new Class B (alcoholic) trustees joined the General Service Board: Teddy B.-W., Oakland, California; Jennifer B., of Santa Rosa, California; Sherry S., of Curtice, Ohio; Susan V., of West Virginia; and John W., of New York, New York. These trustees bring extensive service experience, long-term sobriety, and invaluable regional and professional perspectives to the deliberations of the General Service Board.

### **Teddy B.-W.:**

#### **‘I suddenly realized I was worth it,’**

General service trustee **Teddy B.-W.** was born in London and raised just outside it, moving back to

the city when he was 19, when his drinking really took off. “I was living in a house, officially with eight other people, unofficially with 23,” he says. “There was no period of social, moderate drinking. The only inhibitor was my job. I was basically going out in the evening, drinking, blacking out, and waking up. Like Dr. Bob, I didn’t get hangovers, at least at first. I’d dust myself off and go to work and drink vodka, under the illusion that the smell would not be noticed on my breath.”

Teddy’s drinking progressed to the point where he found himself at 35 years old living in a single room with a “fingernail’s grip” on employment. So when a job came up in San Francisco, he jumped at the opportunity. As with most “geographics,” he brought his drinking with him. At one point, when his mother

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**Note on anonymity:** From time to time in this publication full names and/or pictures of GSO 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.

died in the UK, he was too drunk to get on a plane to attend her funeral. “I was so grief-stricken and depressed,” he says, “that I was [excused from] work by a doctor, and so I had nothing left. By this time, I was down to a single room again. A check would come in, and I would spend it all on getting loaded and quietly poisoning myself.”

Seeing that Teddy was in dire physical shape, the doctor called an ambulance and admitted him to the hospital. A story of total collapse and despair, it would seem, except that Teddy had a spiritual experience in his hospital bed. “I suddenly realized I was worth it,” he says—worth a good life, worth saving. “I never until that point believed I was worth it.” Three weeks later, he was in rehab. There, he had another spiritual awakening, sensing the presence of a power greater than himself. His quintessentially alcoholic response was to decide that “I was on a fast lane with God,” and thus could drink again. Fortunately, he was soon back in A.A. His sobriety date is March 15, 2006. Still physically sick, he needed 13 medical procedures in the first six months of his sobriety, and his new home group picked him up and brought him home. “I fell in with the right crowd,” he says. “They had a really strong culture of sponsorship and service. They talked about the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and they talked about God a lot, as well.”

Since Teddy’s first home group was quite large, he joined a smaller group, in part because he was intrigued by their name—the Straightjacket Group. “I so much wanted to belong that I sought a service commitment, but they were all taken except for that of GSR.” Teddy didn’t have the recommended two years of sobriety for that, but one night the group had a business meeting and decided to allow him to take

the job anyway. It turned out to be a big commitment, much more so than he thought. But, says Teddy, “I didn’t run away, and I fell in with a group of really wonderful people. I showed up. I learned something important, which is how to listen like I didn’t have an opinion—I thought, wow, what a concept.”

Teddy has worked in the nonprofit sector for more than 30 years, specializing in communications, fundraising, and strategy. His general service roles have included being a nontrustee AA Grapevine director and a Panel 69 (2019-2020) delegate. Now, as a Class B trustee, Teddy says, “I am interested in finding out what we want as a Fellowship. So, what I hope to accomplish is to remain open-minded, to really listen very carefully, and travel around A.A. and listen to members about their hopes, dreams, and fears about the future of A.A. In a sense, that’s what makes me qualified to serve in this way. I have the experience and knowledge that I have accumulated, but I don’t know what’s best for the future of A.A.—*we* know what’s best. Along the way, I have fallen in love with the group conscience and really upholding that. The formula that has been passed along to me to try to live by is simple: Listen like I don’t have an opinion, speak my truth, vote my conscience, and trust the process.”

## **Jennifer B.:**

### **‘Once I got sober, who I really am came back and blossomed.’**

**Jennifer B.**, trustee-at-large/U.S. from Santa Rosa, California, has been quite busy since her election in April. She attended Bulgaria’s General Service Conference in June; the International Convention in Vancouver in July; the REDELA (Meeting of the Americas) in Bolivia in October; and the East Africa A.A. Convention in Kenya in November. Not bad for a self-described “service nerd” who began her general service career when her sponsor invited her to come and eat pizza and fold newsletters for the California Northern Coastal Area.

Jennifer’s serious drinking began when she was 13 or 14, although there was a telling incident when she was the ripe old age of three. “My Dad asked me to hold his beer while he went to the bathroom, and apparently, I didn’t want to give it back, and it was considered very cute. Although it wasn’t cute for long,” Jennifer says that drinking at first made her

feel older and more mature. “But then problems came along. I think I grew up too quickly. As a kid, I had been sort of precocious and outgoing, and then it just shut down with the alcohol. I created some wreckage, and I feel like I lost who I was. Once I got sober, who I really am came back and blossomed.”

After graduating from college, Jennifer began a career in the book publishing industry as a graphic designer for a small publisher in Berkeley, California, a job she enjoyed. But as her drinking progressed, “I just tanked that career. I got laid off from that job, and then I got another job in publishing, but I was barely able to show up for that.” In her mid-20s, Jennifer’s alcoholism deepened. “It was court orders, treatment centers, the psych ward, people suggesting that I go to really *any* Twelve Step program. So, I dabbled in A.A. and other recovery groups, including a survivors of suicide support group, because I had a friend who died by suicide, which was the beginning of my bottom when I was 27. I would actually love to tell my story without having to mention all the people that died, but that’s what got me here. It was jails, institutions, and death. Just not my death, although that was starting to look like an option.”

The deaths included Jennifer’s mother, an alcoholic who died shortly before Jennifer went into treatment for the last time. Her sobriety date is December 15, 2002. “In the beginning, I was so uncomfortable, and I wasn’t sure I fit [in A.A.]. But when people got to know me, they would say, ‘You’re going to be our next secretary’ or ‘We need help taking notes at our steering committee meeting.’ Even the slightest bit of encouragement and I would start to feel better.”

By saying yes, Jennifer found her way into sobriety and service. After her stint folding newsletters and putting address labels on envelopes—the classic “lick and stick”—she felt confident enough to look for a group that needed a GSR (her home group already had one). She raised her hand at a women’s meeting, which she had attended but didn’t know anyone, and volunteered to be their next GSR. The answer was a unanimous yes.

“This was in 2009, on my birthday, and it was the best birthday gift I’ve given myself,” Jennifer says. “I was off and running after that, raising my hand every two years and getting elected for something.” Such service deepened and enhanced her sobriety. “My sponsor, Joann, the one who got me into gener-

al service, spent a long time on Steps Six and Seven when we went through the Steps. The real heart of my growth and evolution as a person who is happy in sobriety comes from learning to accept and turn over my character defects. And service certainly allows you to look at those,” she laughs.

Jennifer became a Panel 71 (2021-2022) delegate, then served as chair of PRAASA, the Pacific Region A.A. Service Assembly. When the trustee-at-large opening came up, Jennifer threw her hat in the ring. “It’s a long shot,” she says. “You keep your calendar clear, but you don’t think it’s really going to happen.”

Speaking of her journey so far as a trustee-at-large, Jennifer says, “I never would have expected that I would be trusted with this level of responsibility when I was completely untrustworthy as a drunk. I’m an introvert, but I love getting to know so many people, the travel, the different cultures, even being in an unfamiliar place and not speaking that language. But there’s that language of the heart in the room. I get so much out of the recovery of the people I meet, finding out how similar we are in all these places, that it has kick-started my own recovery in ways that I hadn’t been expecting.”

## **Sherry S.:**

### **‘People kept telling me to stay in the middle of the program.’**

**Sherry S.**, East Central regional trustee, remembers tasting alcohol as early as the age of five, when she was a “beer bottle runner” at parties in her home in Toledo, Ohio. But she really didn’t get drunk until high school, when she began to hang out with an older crowd. “Our motto was ‘We’re the class of ‘68/ We drink and smoke and stay out late!’—which kind of tells you who I was hanging out with.” Despite the levity of their rallying cry, drinking was a serious business for Sherry. “As Bill W. wrote,” she says, “‘alcohol provided me with an immediate sense of ease and comfort,’ an important feeling for a person who believed I wasn’t pretty enough or smart enough and [that] you were always better.”

Sherry married right out of high school at age 17. “I jumped from the frying pan of an alcoholic home right into the fire—my husband Jim was an alcoholic.” Jim continued to drink for the first 14 years of their marriage, while Sherry raised two boys, went back to school, and got her bachelor’s degree and

paralegal certification. (Ultimately, during the course of her career, Sherry worked in government positions, at private law firms, in the corporate world, and as a director on the board of a paralegal nonprofit association.) In 1982, Jim went into treatment and joined A.A., and Sherry joined Al-Anon. Their teenage boys joined Ala-Teen, and their lives took a turn for the better. Sherry had stopped drinking altogether, “having proved to myself that I wasn’t an alcoholic because I could stop.”

But then, Sherry says, “my daughter-in-law had a full-term miscarriage of a baby girl, and God and I just parted ways. I was very angry. After that, when I picked back up, I picked up for a long time. I drank hard and heavy, and bad things started to happen.” By June 2010, Sherry says, “I was at my worst. One day, I drank two huge bottles of wine in two hours, and I had a blackout like no other blackout I ever experienced. When I woke up the next day, I had road rash down the side of my face and no idea how it had happened.” With her sober husband ready to leave her, Sherry accepted the fact that she needed to get treatment. Her sobriety date is June 6, 2010.

After doing her Fifth Step, Sherry’s sponsor posed a question to her: “Now that A.A. has saved your life, what are you going to do for A.A.?” That planted the seed for Sherry. Within 18 months, she was an inter-group rep, and then she and Jim became Area 55 AA Grapevine co-chairs, though Jim had to promise that Sherry could work behind the scenes because of her dread of public speaking.

“People kept telling me to stay in the middle of the program, and that is what I decided to do,” Sherry says. She ended up serving as alternate DCM, alternate delegate, and then Panel 72 (2022-2023) delegate, experiences that, she says, “allowed me to find my voice and comfort zone while at the microphone. I was privileged to present from the dais at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Conference on the topic of Our Common Perils and Common Solution,

which is included in the *Final Report* of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Conference.”

Sherry has hit the ground running as a Class B trustee. “It was kind of a baptism of fire. They told me I was to go to the Vancouver Convention, and then I got home and three days later, I had the Ohio State Convention and the East Central Regional Forum two weeks after that.” Sherry says that her goal is to do the best job she possibly can as a trustee. “I’m an alcoholic, so probably both an overachiever and a people pleaser. But God gave me skills and talents, and I’m excited about the opportunity to use these for the benefit of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

### **Susan V.:**

#### **‘I get a lot of joy out of recovery.’**

The fact that her parents were immigrants to the U.S. made Southeast regional trustee **Susan V.** feel different from her peers as she grew up, the eldest of three children, in Denver, Colorado. It was a difference she later grew grateful for, but one she found hard to adjust to as a child. Her life became more difficult when her parents’ marriage broke up, and her father became a single parent to three kids. “Our home became largely unsupervised and ended up as a kind of party palace. Alcohol wasn’t really available to me then, but it was the ‘70s and a lot of other things were, so I got started having mind-altering experiences at an early age.”

Susan turned to alcohol when she was 14 or 15,

**SAVE THE DATE**

**28<sup>th</sup> National AA Archives Workshop**

**Tacoma, WA Area 72**  
September 10-13  
Washington State History Museum  
1911 Pacific Ave, Tacoma, WA 98402

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**[NAAAW.ORG/INDEX.PHP/NEXT-WORKSHOP/](https://naaw.org/index.php/next-workshop/)**

spending time with people who drank as much as she did. “I’ve always been attracted to alcoholics,” she says. “I’ve hung out with them my whole life.” She made an attempt to do other things—cheerlead or run track—but the allure of drinking and drunks was too strong. Deciding that Denver was a “trouble spot” for her, Susan moved to Detroit to live with her mother. “I went to college there, found out I was smart, and ended up with a bachelor’s degree and a master’s in social work. I work as a mental health therapist. I do psychotherapy and work with people with trauma and grief, which I think I was pretty well trained for from life. I also do specialty work with children who have been harmed.”

But Susan continued to drink. “Partying was a part of my life for a long, long time, and I did have this period where drinking was a lot of fun, very social.” Another move, this time to the small town in West Virginia, where she currently lives, ended up in an “ill-fated” marriage. “My husband got in the way of my drinking, so he had to go. I started down that path where I was losing friends and blowing up situations. Gradually, I just came to the place where I could see that drinking was hurting me, hurting my relationships, hurting my life.”

The bottom line for Susan was that her relationship with her sister—“the person I’m closest to in all the universe”—was becoming damaged. “She was very angry with me and very disappointed, and that was just untenable for me.” Impelled by this, she went into rehab and surprised herself by loving it there. “I always felt like such a loser that it was a relief to learn that I was just a sick person. After I got out, I jumped into A.A. with all four feet.”

Susan’s sobriety date is September 21, 2009. She got a sponsor right away and went to every meeting she could. “I started reading the literature and fell in love with that and fell in love with the Fellowship. I mean,” she laughs, “I get to hang out with alcoholics, right?” Very early in her sobriety, she started service within her home group, making coffee, setting up, and learning the ropes. Business meetings fascinated her. “I was amazed that people could bring up their issues and there would be thoughtful consideration with the group conscience. It was a way of being very solution-oriented.”

Moving into general service, Susan became a DCM, AA Grapevine chair for Area 73, and Area 73 chair before becoming a Panel 69 (2019-2020) delegate.

“Being a delegate was eye-opening because I got to know my area really well. I loved traveling around to the different districts and watching them do their district meetings. I am liking that about being a trustee, as well, traveling, and seeing how the assemblies are run.”

As people read the Steps and Traditions at Susan’s two home groups (one in person, one online), she says that now, as a trustee, she hears them “in a whole different way. I read from the literature every morning, and I feel I have a different perspective. In general, I get a lot of joy out of recovery, even though there have been some dark moments and some difficulties.

Being a trustee and being with other trustees, having a different relationship with the Fellowship, continues to bring me joy.”

## **John W.:**

### **‘You never have to hurt like this from alcohol again.’**

General service trustee **John W.** grew up in southern New Jersey, where he started drinking alcoholically at age 13. Although, as John points out, ‘alcoholically’ is perhaps redundant. “There aren’t that many 13-year-old social drinkers.” Life on the Jersey Shore was divided into two seasons, winter and summer, and alcohol was a huge component in each. “In the summer, bars were open until five in the morning, so all we did was drink. In the winter, they turned off the streetlights early and there was nothing going on, so if there was a party anywhere in the county, we knew about it.”

Eventually, John moved to Philadelphia, where his alcoholism progressed. “I like that saying, ‘I drank until it wasn’t fun anymore, and then I drank a few more years.’ That was me,” he says. “Circumstances and consequences continued to get worse, and I was pretty untethered.” Things got to the point where even John’s drug dealer recommended that he get into A.A. When John went to his first meeting he had 15 days without a drink, but he was white-knuckling it. “I went to A.A. thinking that I was going to learn how to drink responsibly,” he says. “I imagined that we’d get an information packet, there’d be a few of us sitting around a table, and we’d be given tips on how to drink safely.” When he found out this wasn’t the case, John remembers, “I couldn’t get out of there fast enough. But there was a woman who turned

around during the meeting and said to me, ‘To the new guy in the back, you never have to hurt like this from alcohol again.’ For me, that was my first moment of grace.”

John never drank again; his sobriety date is December 22, 1986. He got into service mostly to stay warm; he had thought for months that the heat in his apartment wasn’t working (it turned out he had failed to turn the radiator knob on). But the mix-up ultimately worked in his and A.A.’s favor, since he went to meetings to avoid his cold apartment. “I did as much service as I could, arriving early and helping set up coffee and chairs and also just taking part in fellowship.”

John also found his sponsor—he’s had the same sponsor for more than 38 years—and became an intergroup rep, then an alternate GSR and the GSR for his home group at the time, the Philadelphia Gay Group. He became the DCM for District 27 in Philadelphia, but later moved to New York City, where he currently lives. He has been an executive at a non-profit organization for more than 30 years.

John was a Panel 67 (2017-2018) delegate and served on the Conference Archives Committee and Literature Committee, which he chaired in 2018. He was elected a nontrustee AAWS director in 2021. “As a Class B trustee,” he says, “I draw on my experience as a member of the corporate board, applying the principles of Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, but having a background as a nonprofit executive allows me to help A.A. function in the world at large.” His recent service has also given John an opportunity to observe the current state of A.A. “We are still in a bit of a transitional point, post-COVID,” he says. “It really was a huge disruptor. I think the understanding that one gets from seeing others do service work has been lost. I see less attendance at home group business meetings, fewer people putting up their hand to help put away chairs, or arriving early to be a greeter. There are more online meetings and fewer of them have a Seventh Tradition component. There seems to be a disconnect about the basics of the unity that comes with the home group: the role the home group has in that beautiful connection to the rest of the service structure and how it is responsible to that lifeblood of A.A. I do hope this is a wonderful opportunity to try to re-engage people and teach them the importance of that.”

“I found A.A. through a classified ad that said:

‘Drinking problem? Maybe we can help,’” John adds. “I think about the local PI group that placed that. People were there to greet me at that first meeting, and they paid their rent and bought literature they could hand out to me on my way out as I was fleeing the room. My Higher Power was laying this all down before I got here, through the principles of this program. All of that makes it kind of magical for me.”

## ■ General Service Office Retrofit Update

We’re excited to welcome back visitors to a refreshed and revitalized General Service Office when the office reopens after the completion of the retrofit project.

The retrofit consolidates all GSO and Grapevine offices on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the building at 475 Riverside Drive in New York City. Previously two departments were on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the building.

Please check “[What’s New](#)” on [aa.org](#) or the “News” tab on the Meeting Guide app for the latest news and reopening date.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this project.

## ATTEND A REGIONAL FORUM

**Regional Forums** provide unique opportunities for A.A. members across the U.S. and Canada to connect with people throughout the A.A. service structure. At forums, members can exchange information with representatives of the General Service Board, AAWS, AA Grapevine and GSO.

### Upcoming Regional Forums in 2026 include:

#### **Western Canada**

June 12–14

Travelodge Saskatoon, Saskatoon, SK

#### **Eastern Canada**

August 21–23

Hôtel Mortgage, Boucherville, QC

#### **Southeast**

September 18–20

Hilton Raleigh North Hills, Raleigh, NC

#### **Pacific**

December 4–6

Wyndham San Diego Bayside, San Diego, CA

**Questions?** Contact the Regional Forums desk at GSO, [regionalforums@aa.org](mailto:regionalforums@aa.org).

## ■ Meet New GSO Staff Member Kacie N.

The General Service Office (GSO) recently welcomed new Staff member Kacie N., who serves on the Corrections assignment. There are currently [12 Staff assignments](#), or “desks,” filled by a rotating group of professionals who are also A.A. members. With the help of Staff associates, Staff members provide services specific to their desk, which cover a broad range of areas related to A.A., while responding to thousands of inquiries from the Fellowship.

Kacie hails from a small town in Montana’s Flathead Valley, about 30 minutes south of Glacier National Park. She jokingly describes her drinking career, which began in high school, as “pathetic,” at least in terms of drama. Once, after a weekend of drinking, she ended up spending an entire plane flight with her head stuck in the bathroom toilet bowl, especially mortifying for a self-professed germaphobe. Another time, the Forest Service arrested her for burning trash on public lands, except that she was only guilty of drinking in the wrong place at the wrong time while underage. But as time passed, she suffered real consequences. “Spiritual bankruptcy, losing relationships with friends and family, not being able to look at myself in the mirror,” she says, and, finally, thinking about taking her own life, at age 25.

“Fortunately, I had been exposed to someone who demonstrated to me what the program does for us. That ended up totally changing my life,” Kacie says. When she reached her bottom, she went to see her sober friend, who suggested she go to a meeting. “My first meeting, I was intoxicated, but I saw something there that felt different. The next day, I decided to try to do what they were suggesting. I was hanging on by my fingernails, but I went to my second meeting sober and didn’t look back.” Kacie’s sobriety date is November 9, 2006.

“I got exposed to service very young in sobriety,” she says. “I have been very blessed to be surrounded by people who are not only sober but full of joy and enthusiasm. So I copycatted everyone else around me, because I wanted what they had.” Kacie’s first service position was as her group’s literature chair, but then, following in the footsteps of her sponsor, she went to her first assembly and became a secretary, then alternate GSR and GSR and, ultimately, Panel 73 delegate (2023-2024) for Area 40.

Kacie’s long road to GSO began in 2012 when she read in an issue of *Box 459* about an opening for a Staff position at the office. She applied but didn’t get the job. However, Kacie says, “it became this tiny seed in my head that grew and grew.” As a delegate, Kacie had the opportunity to visit the GSO twice. “When I walked into that building, I just felt like I belonged there,” she remembers. “I thought, ‘I’m supposed to be in this place and work with these people and serve the Fellowship in this way.’”

When another Staff position opened, Kacie applied and was hired, joining the Corrections assignment in September 2025. “Working on Corrections is like seeing the best of the spirit of A.A. — when you look at the members who are willing to sacrifice time and energy to help folks in correctional systems,” she says. “The letters that come in are both heart-wrenching and heartwarming. It’s great to know that people are aware of where to go to get help.”

Kacie finds the strides made in technology to carry the message to persons in custody inspiring. “So much of our material, including our literature and the *Our Primary Purpose* podcast, is on tablets for persons in custody to access. The number of people who are reached with those resources is amazing.” GSO is also beginning to take advantage of new technology that allows it to communicate with inside members via e-communications, akin to a messaging app, which has the potential to improve communication significantly.

As part of her job, Kacie is also the Western Canada regional correspondent for GSO. “This means,” she says, “that when folks from that region go onto aa.org to contact A.A., it comes to me. Maybe there’s a Tradition issue that they want some help with, or someone reaching out for help with a drinking problem. So I correspond with them and share resources from the office that might be helpful.”

So far in her first few months of working at GSO, Kacie says she feels “almost overwhelmed with gratitude. I do need to remind myself that this is not service work—I still have a service position in my home group, continue to sponsor women, and be sponsored. It’s important to strengthen my A.A. program and not rely on my job to do so. But it is really wonderful to be a part of something that serves the whole Fellowship. It’s a gift to work here.”

## *The Global Gateway:*

### ■ Insight Into Your International Assignment at GSO

General Service Office (GSO) Staff assignment rotation occurs every two years, offering Staff members the opportunity to work for the Fellowship from different perspectives. One of the assignments that is on rotation is the international assignment coordinator. Seventh Tradition support makes this possible.

This position requires the GSO Staff member who has been supporting the U.S./Canada service structure to shed their skin and adjust their eyes to an entire worldwide focus of Alcoholics Anonymous. Questions from A.A. members around the globe provide invaluable opportunities to share experience and learn from countries whose service structures are in different stages of development. Patrick C. is the current Staff member on the international assignment, enthusiastically embracing the role from the start.

Initially, the experience can feel like performing a complete 180-degree turn from the U.S./Canada service structure and walking into a whole new fellowship of A.A. members — but these members serve their countries and reach still-suffering alcoholics using the same solution A.A. has carried for over 90 years.

The international assignment coordinator works closely with two members of the General Service Board, the trustees-at-large for the U.S. and Canada. We receive invitations to attend conferences, board and service meetings, anniversary celebrations and conventions from our international friends. All travel involving GSO Staff, whether expenses are covered or not, is reviewed and approved by the general manager and the Trip Consultation Team. The Trip Consultation Team, made up of board members, come together to evaluate each invitation and determine which events to accept and participate. When possible, hosts are asked to provide on-site expenses, though many emerging structures are unable to do so. History shows that countries with emerging structures often benefit from this two-way sharing of experience. And while we can support the countries by sharing what has worked in the U.S./Canada service structure, it is important to remember that each country and structure ultimately finds its own path, shaped by its own unique needs and capabilities.

Some international service events are standing commitments, such as the Zonal Meeting of the Americas, known as REDELA. It meets every other year and trustees-at-large from the U.S. and Canada serve as voting delegates. Country highlights and reports, committee meetings, workshops and many

service discussions take place during zonal meetings, addressing many A.A. service topics and the development of A.A. around the world.

This year, the REDELA meeting was attended in person by delegates from Argentina, Bolivia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guayana (for the first time), Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, the United States and Venezuela.

One of the highlights of international service is attending a local A.A. group. While in Bolivia for the REDELA meeting, GSO Staff attended a group celebrating 50 years of continuous A.A. existence in late November 2025. With our interpreter in tow, it was clear that the message being carried was the same one you'd hear in a home group in the U.S. or Canada. In addition to the privilege of seeing someone attending their first ever A.A. meeting, Staff were honored to be invited to share our experience, strength and hope. With a growing global fellowship and ever-increasing opportunities to travel, attend meetings and make connections around the world, GSO receives many questions from A.A. members in the U.S. and Canada, including expats, about how best to support A.A. members, groups, and service structures in other countries. Members are, of course, free to meet with others to study A.A. literature and principles together. From the perspective of the GSO International Desk, we first encourage members to connect international members to their local service structures, where cultural context and local experience can best be honored. In fact, there is a U.S./Canada Advisory Action that guides our structure to avoid involvement in local matters but to simply share our experience, strength, and hope. Based on experience, here are a few considerations when asked to give presentations or lead discussions:

1. Clearly state, and reiterate, that speakers are not representing the U.S./Canada service structure, as is done in public information talks.
2. For questions related to publishing, licensing, translation or intellectual property, refer members to GSO's Legal, Licensing, and IP (LLIP) Department
  - a. LLIP: [tl@aa.org](mailto:tl@aa.org)
  - b. [International Literature Fund questions: international@aa.org](mailto:international@aa.org)

Did you know that the international assignment coordinator is responsible for putting together the

World Service Meeting (WSM)? The 29th WSM will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, at the Lisbon Marriott Hotel. The meeting will start on Sunday, October 4, 2026, and conclude on Thursday, October 8, 2026. The theme of the 29th World Service Meeting is “Guided by All 36 Principles.”

The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as the primary purpose of A.A. as a whole: to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever language they may speak. The World Service Meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world. It can also represent an expression of the group conscience worldwide.

Finally, GSO also receives inquiries from members traveling internationally seeking local A.A. meetings. When possible, the International Desk connects travelers with local A.A. contacts listed in GSO’s system of record, NetSuite.

Communication about this assignment and our trustees-at-large service, as well as the services we offer internationally at the General Service Office, occurs on several channels:

- Reports given at Regional Forums
- Presentations and Q&A sessions at the annual General Service Conference
- [General Service Board Quarterly Reports](#)
- [Articles in Box 4-5-9.](#)

### Questions?

The international desk assignment coordinator can be reached at [international@aa.org](mailto:international@aa.org).

Want to learn more about this assignment’s activities?  
[A.A. Around the World | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

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## ■ Tips to Identify Trustworthy A.A. Information Online

The Internet can be a valuable place for the Fellowship and for people seeking support, connection, and information about Alcoholics Anonymous. Many A.A. members and newcomers use online resources to find meetings, read literature, or learn more about the program.

Because A.A. is widely known and trusted, there are also websites and other online materials that may appear to be A.A. resources but are not affiliated with the Fellowship. Learning a few simple ways

to recognize reliable A.A. information can help you feel more confident and comfortable as you explore what’s available online.

### Check the Website Address (URL)

A helpful first step is to look at the website’s address. The official Alcoholics Anonymous World Services website is <https://www.aa.org>.

Some websites may use similar wording or different endings (such as “.com” instead of “.org”) or include extra words or characters. Taking a moment to notice the exact address can help you understand whether a site is an A.A. resource.

### Look for Clear and Verifiable Contact Information

A.A. websites typically provide clear contact details, such as phone numbers or email addresses, for the General Service Office or a [local central office](#). If contact information is missing, vague, or difficult to verify, you should double-check the source or look for confirmation through [aa.org](#) or a trusted local A.A. office.

### Be Thoughtful About Special Offers or Services

Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and peer sponsorship—members sharing their experience, strength, and hope—are freely available. A.A. does not charge for meeting access, sponsorship, or participation in the program. If a website describes paid memberships, exclusive access, or special recovery services presented as A.A., it may not be affiliated with the Fellowship.

### Protect Your Personal Information

You do not need to provide personal details such as your full name, address, or financial information to attend meetings or participate in A.A. Payment information is requested *only* when purchasing through the [A.A. Online Bookstore](#) on [aa.org](#) or from a local A.A. entity. If a site asks for personal or financial information to take part in A.A. activities, it’s best to pause and seek confirmation from an A.A. source.

### Sharing Concerns About Website or Other Digital Platforms

If you come across a website, app, or other digital platform that appears to use A.A. copyrighted material or trademarks inappropriately, you may report it by contacting [ippolicy@aa.org](mailto:ippolicy@aa.org). More information is available in the [Terms of Use](#) on [aa.org](#).

The internet offers many helpful tools that can support recovery and connection. By knowing how to recognize trusted A.A. resources, members and newcomers alike can use online information with greater ease and peace of mind.

*For reliable, up-to-date information about Alcoholics Anonymous and its services, visit [aa.org](#).*

## The Power of Our Seventh Tradition

### ■ Self-Support Contributions Help the Corrections Desk Reach Suffering Alcoholics in Custody

Every week, dozens of letters arrive at the Corrections desk at the General Service Office from individuals behind the walls of correctional facilities across the United States and Canada who reach out for the hand of Alcoholics Anonymous. Every letter is read with care and responded to with individual attention.

Each response includes thoughtfully prepared resources and a sampling of A.A. literature, made possible through Seventh Tradition contributions sent by A.A. groups and members to the General Service Board. The [Corrections Correspondence Service request form](#), the [A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Information form](#), and the [Tablet Literature List](#) for AAWS and AA Grapevine are just a few of the resources enclosed with every response. [Sharing From Behind the Walls](#), a newsletter featuring excerpts from members in custody who share their experience, strength, and hope, is also included with each outgoing letter. The literature sampling sent by the Corrections desk includes the Prison Recovery Package, a collection of pamphlets such as [A Newcomer Asks](#), [Behind the Walls: A Message of Hope](#), [It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell](#), and several oth-

ers. When facility guidelines allow, a copy of the AA Grapevine or La Viña magazine is also enclosed.

Perhaps most important, individuals who write to the Corrections desk receive one of the Fellowship's core texts: [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), the *Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous*, [Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions](#), or another A.A. Conference-approved softcover book.

The resources required to provide these personalized responses and literature packages are made possible through the generosity of A.A. members and their Seventh Tradition contributions. Members in custody often write to us to share their gratitude and appreciation. As one member writing from a state prison in California shared:

*"Over the last 6 years, I have written to you all at A.A. I want to thank you all for your help. I cherish the A.A. Big Book you sent me. A true blessing from God. I have been in prison most of my life. I know God is now here for me to live by his will, and my release and further recovery can only be stronger. Again, thank you all. God bless – long live recovery!"*

## CARRYING THE MESSAGE 'BEHIND THE WALLS'

The Corrections Assignment at the General Service Office coordinates efforts to help carry the A.A. message to persons in custody across the U.S. and Canada. These include the quarterly newsletter [Sharing From Behind the Walls](#), which features excerpts from letters sent to GSO by persons in custody, and the [Corrections Correspondence](#) service that connects A.A. members in custody with A.A. members on the outside.

Corrections outreach extends to the digital space, with a range of A.A. literature available in digital formats (audio, eBooks, and PDFs) to persons in custody via tablets.



Since the program's launch in 2022, 93,444 unique items of A.A. literature have been accessed.



1,492 facilities across all A.A. areas throughout the U.S. have reported that persons in custody have accessed our digital literature via tablet vendors that AAWS has engaged to provide this access. GSO continues to seek ways to extend the program to more institutions and geographic areas.



All supported by your Seventh-Tradition Contributions!



Give the gift of joy  
with Greeting Cards

Each card includes a cartoon  
about life in sobriety,  
created by AA members.

A special gift for a sponsor,  
sponsee, or friend, to celebrate  
an anniversary or share a smile.

AA Grapevine Store

**LA VIÑA**



# AA GRAPEVINE & LA VIÑA

The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous



**GRAPEVINE**



**LA VIÑA**



# Calendar of Events

**NOTE:** Events may be canceled or moved to online formats due to health and safety concerns. Please contact the event coordinators as listed before making your plans.

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.

## MARCH

- 6-8 Detroit, Michigan**  
March Round Up  
Write: Box 2843, Southfield MI 48037  
Info: <https://aa-semi.org/mru2026>
- 21-23 Tarrytown, New York**  
SENY Conv.  
Write: Box 571, New York NY 10116  
Info: [www.aaseny.org](http://www.aaseny.org)
- 27-29 Ames, Iowa**  
Aim for Ames  
Info: [www.aimforames.org](http://www.aimforames.org)
- 27-29 Gillette, Wyoming**  
Area 76 Winter Business Assembly  
Info: [soccerfiend03@yahoo.com](mailto:soccerfiend03@yahoo.com)
- 27-29 Portland, Maine**  
Northeast Fellowship of the Spirit (NEFOTS)  
Info: <https://www.nefots.org/>

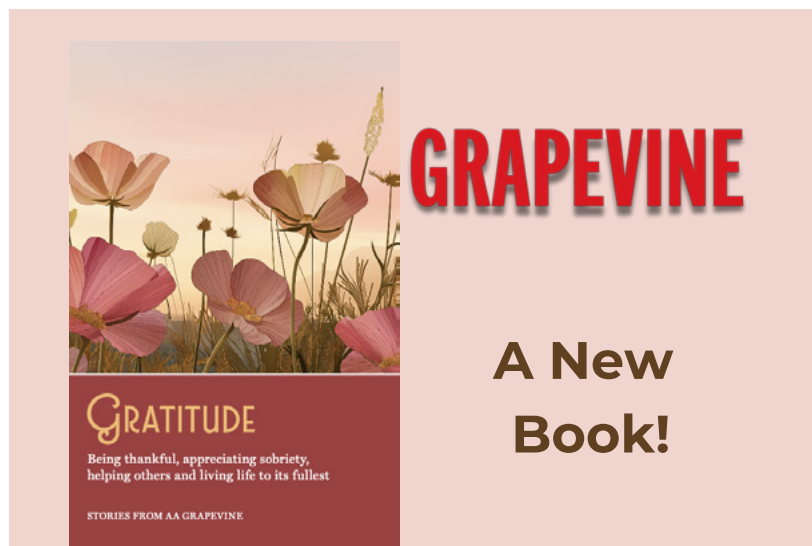
## APRIL

- 16-19 Eureka Springs, Arkansas**  
Springtime in the Ozarks  
Write: Box 767, Bentonville, AR 72712  
Info: [www.springtimeintheozarks.com](http://www.springtimeintheozarks.com)
- 17-19 Manchester, Vermont**  
Area 70 Vermont 60th Annual Convention  
Info: <https://aavt.org/conventions/>
- 24-26 Keauhou, Hawaii**  
35th Big Island Bash  
Write: Box 384442, Waikoloa, HI 96738  
Info: <https://www.bigislandbash.com/>

## MAY

- 15-17 Florence, South Carolina**  
South Carolina State Conv.  
Info: [Area62.org](http://Area62.org)
- 15-17 Broken Arrow, Oklahoma**  
75th Oklahoma State Conference.  
Info: [Conf\\_chair@aaoklahoma.org](mailto:Conf_chair@aaoklahoma.org)
- 15-17 Ontario, Canada**  
Rainbow Roundup  
Info: <https://www.rainbowroundup.ca>

- 15-17 Toppenish, Washington**  
21st Hispanic Convention  
in Washington State  
Info: [www.oimewa.org](http://www.oimewa.org)
- 22-24 San Diego, California**  
49th Convencion Estatal Hispana de California.  
Write: Box 635088, San Diego CA 92163  
Info: <https://convencionestatalca.org/>



Gratitude is a collection of powerful personal stories about being thankful. With warmth and humor, the stories, written by AA members, illustrate the many ways the program of recovery can improve one's perspective to help them enjoy each day to the fullest. The book includes chapters on spirituality, fellowship, family, service, getting through tough times and more. All stories were previously published in Grapevine, the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. A great book to start the day. Also makes a wonderful gift.

Gratitud es una colección de poderosas historias personales sobre el agradecimiento. Con honestidad y humor, los relatos —escritos por miembros de AA— ilustran las muchas maneras en que el programa de recuperación puede transformar nuestra perspectiva y ayudarnos a disfrutar cada día plenamente. El libro incluye capítulos sobre la espiritualidad, el compañerismo, la familia, el servicio, cómo atravesar tiempos difíciles y mucho más. Todas las historias fueron publicadas previamente en Grapevine, la Revista Internacional de Alcohólicos Anónimos. Un excelente libro para comenzar el día y para compartir gratitud con otros.



Visit: [aagrapevine.org/books](http://aagrapevine.org/books)