

Sobriety Sentinel

SEPTEMBER 2022 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

Area 38 delegate to visit IR meeting

Editor's Note: At September's Tri-County IR meeting – held at noon on Sunday, September 18, at the Campus Office – Area Delegate Jim F will give a report from April's 72nd General Service Conference held in New York. He graciously agreed to talk with me about his upcoming visit and his service to AA.

-Andrew H, Group 484

Thanks for speaking with me, Jim. Tell me a little bit about what you'll be presenting to us.

Every year when the delegate comes back from the General Service Conference, he goes around to all the districts and central service offices to give a report on what was done. With the area assembly in the summer, we do a two-hour report, but I usually do about a half-hour report at the districts and the offices, which is kind of hard to do – to put seven days and all the stuff we do at the Conference into a half-hour – but we try to get it done.

There were 110 agenda items that we looked at this year, and each one was given hours of debate and time to thoroughly look through and go through and try to make the right decision for AA as a whole.

What kind of rounds do you make?

There's four intergroups in our area. Central Service Office in St. Louis, Tri-County, Mid-Missouri over in Columbia, and North County Office. Then there are 26 districts that I visit, from the Iowa border all the way down to the Arkansas border. We're half of Missouri, so we put in some miles.

Did you serve as alternate delegate first, then slide into the delegate slot?

Yeah, that's the way it worked for me. It doesn't always work that way. I was the area chair. I wasn't the alternate chair at any point in time, but I was area treasurer probably about 10 years ago, then I was area chair, then became alternate delegate and delegate.

For more, please see **DELEGATE, Page 2**



Andrew H/Sobriety Sentinel

On Saturday, August 13, while Group 484 meets in the parking lot outside, the main meeting room of 212 Club is stacked floor to ceiling with displaced shelving, chairs and various salvaged property brought in from other areas of the building. The club flooded with two inches of sewage water on July 26, and all its existing meetings were suspended or displaced for several weeks.

Reconstruction

After a sewage-water flood, 212 Club is being steadily built back by a network of dedicated volunteers

As told by JAMIE E Group 633

I knew we were in trouble when I got a phone call [on July 26] at 6:30 in the morning, from our person who runs the 7 am meeting, saying there was water coming out of the front door of the club. And I said, "Oh boy..."

I'd given my car to my daughter, not thinking I'd ever be interrupted that early in the morning, but fortunately she got back soon. I arrived just a little after our vice president of the board. When he got there, there was water coming out of all the faucets and the sinks. Just pouring out of them. When I got there, it stopped. And that was about 10 minutes after I'd called O'Fallon Water and Sewer, told them there was a problem.

The whole club was flooded, about two inches deep. It wasn't just regular water, it was sewage. We kind of flailed around for a little bit, then we figured we'd better get the insurance people out there.

They came – one for our insurance and one for the owner's insurance – and both of them told us it was a flood, and we didn't have flood insurance.

Then we figured, okay, if we don't have the insurance and you don't have the insurance, then we'd better start getting volunteers. The first people to step up were Dustin J and Janey, and we knew we needed to cut the drywall at least two feet up.

Dustin and company did that for three or four days, both cutting and moving the furniture. We moved everything in the club that wasn't porous to the main meeting room. Everything else we threw away – all the comfortable chairs, anything that was cloth-lined, anything that was wood that would absorb any of the sewage.

We didn't get a big Dumpster right away. There were several guys – Dave B, Tony – who came, took all the junk and loaded the big Dumpster up to the top. We owe them a lot for that; that was just

a Herculean exercise. We also realized we need to get a pod so we can put the stuff that's valuable in there and then we'd be free to move the rest of the stuff around. We're in the process of figuring out what that is, and we'll be putting that in the pod probably this week.

Yesterday, Kevin B – a regular – came up with his whole union crew of drywall hangers, and they did almost the whole club. Now we're waiting. We need dry-wall tapers. There's several people who are willing to do it, I'm hoping to have them start tomorrow.

I'm also hoping we can get some volunteers to move some things around so we can at least start to have a noon meeting in the club, probably in the location near the pool table. I've just been very grateful to everybody that's helped us. People have come forward with donations, and all kinds of people have rallied around.

During this, we were offered meeting space by ARCH, down on 5th Street in

St. Charles. We've had access to their spaces for noon meetings. I'm hoping to get [212 Club] to a place where people can come do noon, 6p and 8p in that space that we're clearing out near the pool table.

In terms of how long it's all going to take, I learned the rule of thumb is one-third for the demolition and two-thirds for the drywalling and painting, so on and so forth. The drywall, getting there took us two weeks, so I'm thinking two to four weeks, that's my guess, that's not scientific. It's going to take awhile, because we can only work with volunteers. We don't have the money to pay people, so we do what we can do when they're available, and we really appreciate it.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This information was provided on August 13. On August 16, Jamie announced via social media that meetings at 212 were successfully resuming in the 7 am, noon, 6 pm and 8 pm slots.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Don't forget the Tri-County Picnic

This is the September issue, but due to the production schedule, there's a chance you're reading this before the August 27 picnic at Olde Town Park in St. Peters. If so, there's also a chance that you've maybe somehow been unaware this picnic is taking place, or maybe you just need a reminder like this to get you out there.

So let's remind you - and maybe you can remind a friend in the program or some loved ones who would enjoy coming with you to spend a sober day enjoying free hamburgers, hot dogs, brats and fried catfish, while it lasts. 11:30 am to 5 pm is the kind

of day we're talking about here. There will be softball, horseshoes, washers, a playground for the kids, AA and Al Anon speakers at 3 pm, raffle baskets and a 50/50 drawing.

If you'd like more information or want to help with service at this event, call Sue S at 314-657-5650 or Tom B at 636-248-4010. See you there!

212 Club Float Trip is coming this month

This announcement has nothing to do with the recent flood that washed through the 212 Club. There is actually a camping/float/fishing trip the weekend of September 23-25 at Froggy's River Resort near the Gasconade River.

There will be speaker meet-

ings Friday and Saturday night along with a Daily Reflections meeting Saturday morning, and food will be provided Saturday after the float. Last initials A-L are asked to bring a side dish, with M-Z taking on dessert duties.

ARCH adds Sat 9 am meditation meeting

This mixed Step 11 meeting also provides donuts and coffee.

Are YOU the next Sentinel chair?

Well, if you have a journalism degree you're just sitting on, news/editorial sequence with an emphasis on copy editing and design, like I did, you

might find this to be the perfect assignment!

But what if you don't? No worries. This is a calling for someone who loves AA, sobriety, spirituality, words, people, email, flyers, local news, personal stories, AA history, pagination, information, distribution, birthdays, homegroups, photos of empty meeting rooms, crowd shots of the backs of people's heads, and - of course - service!

This position is a two-year commitment, and it will come open when I complete my term at the end of 2022. I'm happy to be a mentor, contributor and consultant to whoever steps up.

-Andrew H Group 484

BIRTHDAYS

Deb D	7/28	20 years	GROUP 484		
Christine W	8/1	6 years	Jill L	7/20	2 years
Beth	8/10	6 years	Dave J	7/20	2 years
Jack L	8/13	54 years	Jeff C	7/29	21 years
			Randy D	8/6	2 years
GROUP 1023			Laura K	8/15	31 years
Kim W	8/17	5 years			
GROUP 164			GROUP 124		
Mary M	7/22	30 years	Karen P	7/18	36 years
			Greg J	7/22	3 years
GROUP 77			John D	8/5	33 years
Pat S	7/29	26 years	Don "Hog" S	8/7	41 years

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.



John S/Sobriety Sentinel

On opening night of the 2022 Missouri State Convention in Jefferson City, a crowd of attendees gather for the evening's main speaker. This year's convention drew 498 attendees, which was the most that event has seen in a decade.

Three Legacies

Four local AA members tell us about the 2022 Missouri State Convention, which was held in Jefferson City in late July

BARBARA B, Convention Chairperson:

What the Missouri State Convention does is, it brings together the Eastern Area and the Western Area in unity. This year we had a total of 498 attendees, which was more than we've had in 10 years.

JOHN S, First-Time Attendee:

At the hotel check-in, there was a huge, long line, and one alcoholic said, "I'm so thrilled to wait in line because we have so many people going!" I guess we've never filled the hotel before.

CHRISTINE C, First-Time Attendee:

My spouse Jill wanted to go, and I thought, *Alright, we're gonna do this!* We ended up, it was a day trip because her mom's in the hospital and she couldn't afford to stay away long, so we left early in the morning and got there for the first speaker.

All the speakers were amazing, but the first one really affected me, be-

cause she put into perspective how we can give back to our parents after we've been so shitty to them. She said, especially during Covid, the shutdown and the period after it, just bringing her mom and dad a cup of coffee is probably the highlight of their week, and that's something she can do for them, being sober and present.

I was like, *Oh my gosh, I need to do that more!*

BARBARA B:

The Missouri State Convention is a three-legacy convention. A lot of people don't realize it is the only convention in the entire state that is recognized by GSO in New York. These other conventions, they're nice, but they are not what we call "sanctioned" or "recognized."

Consequently, every year, we try to have someone from New York, from GSO, to come and speak at our convention, or to play a part in it. It's important for people to know that.

JOHN S:

What I was struck about was, no one made these people come together. This is something people do for their own growth, their own recovery, and to spread the message. And that just blows you away when you see this many people in an auditorium that are doing it out of service, wanting to get better and be a better person.

It's not something like a sales convention, where you have to go because it's your job.

CHRISTINE C:

The convention gave me a chance to sit down and eat with - have conversations with - people that I'd met before but didn't really know. I really enjoyed it.

I've been to the International Convention, and I feel like this is similar but way, way scaled down.

JOHN S:

I met some General Service Reps

from Macon, up north near Kirksville. That was fun, to meet some people from smaller towns, really tiny places where there are small but loyal meetings.

BRANDI B, First-Time Attendee:

Meeting people from all over the state was super cool. I learned a lot and had a good time.

My only suggestion is, it's Eastern and Western Areas going together, but they each have their own archives and their own hospitality rooms. We're supposed to be united, you know? So you'd think they would unite those rooms.

But the actual convention was awesome.

BARBARA B:

It just was a phenomenal success, and we hope to match that and even do better next year.

Andrew H
Group 484

Delegate: Will stay involved in service afterward

From Page 1

Have you been to a General Service Conference prior to this year's?

Well, the one last year, the 71st General Service Conference, was my first. It's a two-year rotation. But it was all virtual. We did seven days of Zoom for about 10 to 11 hours a day. They're long days, because there's a lot of information to look at and go through. The Conference itself runs that one week in April, but in reality, the Conference is going on all year long. There might be some things that are sent back to committee, to the trustees, to the office staff in New York, and the things that we pass that are being implemented are going through the process during the year.

What have been the general effects of this type of service for you?

It's an opportunity that not everybody gets, and you feel very grateful for it. But there's been a few hiccups the last couple years, too. The pandemic made things difficult, to say the least, but we got stuff done, and we made it through. I think AA is still right now seeing where the fellowship in general washes out from all that. It can be complicated sometimes, it seems like, but to watch it work in the active process is something to behold.

As this term ends for you, do have an idea of where your service will take you next?

I'm not really sure yet, but I'll stay involved. You can only serve as a delegate once, and once you become a delegate, you can't serve as a DCM or GSR again. There's still opportunities, don't get me wrong. John V, who was a past delegate, is a good example. John stays very active in workshops and the assembly itself. I've been involved in it too long; it'd seem weird not to keep doing something (laughs).

Father Tom: 'The Spirit in the rooms lifted me'

by **BRENDA F**
Group 451

When I heard, "There's a lot of us," I chuckled. Not only was that true with regards to alcoholics in society, but the speaker was talking specifically about alcoholic clergy.

Growing up Catholic, I never would have imagined that there were "men of the cloth" who were alcoholic. I never would have imagined a "good little Catholic girl" like me would grow up to become one, either.

But let's get beyond religion, and let's take a look at a man who said, wisely, that "God helps those who ask," not that "God helps those who can't help themselves," as most of us were taught.

AA speaker Father Tom W has been sober since August 18, 1976, "the day Gerald Ford was nominated to be President." When I think about it, it was probably that exact month that I was just beginning to get drunk with friends.

Father Tom lives in Northern

California but has spoken all over the country. You can find him on "Sober Cast: A Meeting in a Podcast," and in late July, Father Tom spoke here in St. Louis.

I first heard Tom years ago, when someone loaned me a speaker CD. I love listening to AA speakers while driving, while walking the dog or while making my art. Although never a replacement for me to attend regular meetings, it's a great way to supplement my daily intake of good wisdom. In this case, with lots of added humor.

Tom speaks frankly about his family of origin - a drunk father and a mother from "nervous people." He says that, in the 1960s, the National Council on Alcoholism gave talks to groups of priests, informing them that alcoholism is not a "moral failing" but a disease, that people can get help and treatment, and that recovery is possible.

Tom recounts that he was full of "piss and vinegar" and was very loud and extroverted when drinking. I could relate to that. He got in fights about politics

and religion. Check. And says he was cut off from drinking before he could learn how to drink successfully. Check again.

Someone did an intervention on Tom when he was 29 and in graduate school at University of Berkeley. Tom was a teacher, as are most Jesuits, and alcohol "was a great help." Later, he had to learn how to teach (and tolerate!) the students without alcohol and without any tools.

His family were good Irish Catholics, and drinking was multi-generational. Everyone spoke in "code," meaning they used denial to cover up how bad things really were. For example, if someone had cancer, they were just "not feeling well." His mother never found the rooms of Al-Anon or her own recovery from living with the family disease of alcoholism.

Tom admits to driving drunk but never getting caught. His sponsor later told him, "I was a drunk driver too. That means I'm willing to kill you." Wow. Check mark again. This was getting too close to home, except that I did

get caught once, and only once. But that was one of my wake-up calls to get help.

After losing my license for a year, which was hugely inconvenient to my work commitments, I knew I could not promise myself I would not drive after having "just a few." It was the jumping off point that I knew I needed help.

Here's how to tell if you are an alcoholic, perhaps at your bottom, Tom says:

Stage 1) Give me a few drinks, and it's fun. Stage 2) It's fun, but I'm getting problems and blackouts, health problems start showing up, and there are "unfortunate urination events." Stage 3: It's just problems.

According to Tom, the first step asks us if we are still having fun. "If you are still having fun, we won't look good to you," he points out. If you are "bleeding and on fire," Tom says, then you might be ready for "90 in 90" and for "G-O-D: the Gift of Desperation."

Tom has seen personal benefits from the rooms of Al Anon as

well. As someone growing up with the family disease of alcoholism, Tom was "angry, exhausted and tired." Both programs talk about "hope" in Step Two and that "there is a way out." Tom said he had faith and knew all about the God of his childhood. But he didn't have Hope.

"The Spirit that lives in the rooms lifted me," Father Tom explains. "I went to a lot of meetings. If you people could promise me it wouldn't get worse, that's hope. I finally realized I was breathing. And that the program is available to anyone in the room. I was in the room."

But the key to success in AA? "I have to ask God for help," Tom said. "First thing in the morning and not halfway through the morning."

At Step One, there's no hope, but at Step Two, there's hope.

"I got carried from Step One to Two by going to meetings," Tom says. It's like being let out of the fowler's snare or out of a cage or trap, he explains. "At meetings, you find nourishment and oxygen."

FATHER TOM'S FIRST RULES OF BEING A DRUNK:

- Don't Tell Anyone
- Try Harder
- Keep Secrets

OVERHEARD AT A MEETING:

"What you don't know won't hurt you."

"Not true," says the other person. "What you don't know about alcoholism can kill you."

All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole. To give feedback or report Tri-County AA news or events, please email sentinel@tricityaa.org

PRODUCED FOR ST. CHARLES COUNTY, LINCOLN COUNTY AND WARREN COUNTY IN EASTERN MISSOURI