



Seeds of Service

Passing it On Through Sponsorship

John K., Area 60 Chairperson

Early in my recovery I was hopeless, afraid and had absolutely no idea how to live life without alcohol. I had a little bit of willingness and a desire to have an ordinary life.

As I began to attend meetings I was told that I needed to obtain a sponsor. I had no idea what a sponsor was or what an important role a sponsor has in recovery. I chose a man with 14 years of sobriety to be my sponsor. He expected me to call him everyday, attend meetings and be involved in service.

I had no idea what service was about; but did as suggested and have had many service positions to date. He



taught me about the steps and shared freely with me what worked for him. He helped me to think about things in a different way — not in the typical self centered manner I had used for so many years.

My sponsor shared with me how to accept my own humanness. He also taught me how to accept other people for all that they are, and not to focus on what they are not. He has cared about me and my family.

I was not used to having people care about me for I had destroyed countless relationships. Through the years, as I gained experience in sobriety, I began to sponsor other newcomers. I pass on to them what I have learned from my sponsor, and what I have learned about recovery myself.

Sometimes when sponsoring others we have to use “firm kindness.” Our goal must always be to share the message of recovery. All sick and suffering alcoholics deserve the opportunity to have a life and the opportunity to live just as we have been given by our sponsor — and all the sponsors that came before them.

Pass it on. ▲ John K. Area 60 Chairman

Sponsorship Plus Service Keep Me Coming Back

Sue H., Donora Saturday Night Special Group

My sobriety has been enhanced by the guidance of several knowledgeable sponsors in PA and also in MD; the result of passing it on!

For this alcoholic, the journey of a few decades of sobriety has allowed me to carry the message to alcoholics in my home group, as well as to those in confined communities.

I have found that sponsorship plus service are the ingredients that keep me coming back. My service positions have included washing coffee cups (*we did have those in a few 24 hours ago!*) to group secretary, GSR, Alternate DCM, area corrections coordinator, treatment coordinator, alternate treasurer, treasurer, to alternate chair.

From the time volunteered to be the area Corrections Facility coordinator I have been volunteering in taking meetings to state correctional institutions. Another type of sponsorship that has

greatly helped me in these service positions is service sponsorship. From our pamphlet, *Questions & Answers on Sponsorship*, service sponsorship has a whole page and half devoted to it. “*Sponsorship in A.A. is basically the same, whether in helping another individual’s recovery or in service to a group.*”

I would like to add: to a group, or other entity. This means that one alcoholic who has progressed through recovery, now can share his or her experience with another alcoholic who is just starting the journey. I have come to believe that I have more to offer those who cannot come to the meetings of their choice (*as you and I can*) and gravitated to the correction service.

Why have I gone to prisons to carry the message for over 25 years? There are many reasons I do this, the primary one



being I want to stay sober. I can only keep what has so freely been given to me, by giving it away.

There are many reasons why some of our members are not able, or are unwilling to go inside correctional facilities.

You can donate a book, or a subscription of the *Grapevine* which will go to the facility. Also Corrections Correspondence Service is an important and gratifying form of Twelve Step work; you can write the Corrections Desk, @ General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, 10163.

I must say that this decision to volunteer in correctional facilities is very important and extremely personal for me. I have no doubt that God was looking over me all the while I was drinking. If it were not so, I would not be here today, maybe dry, and definitely not sober.

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ON MY BOOKSHELF

Jean M., Past Delegate, Panel 61 Area 60 WPA

It is no coincidence that my books for this issue of the Seeds of Service are “Pass It On” and “Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers,” since the theme for this issue is “Sponsorship.”

From that bleak November night in 1934 that Ebby T. called on Bill W. to carry the message of sobriety, our Fellowship has been about “*one alcoholic talking to another*,” truly the “language of the heart.” Bill W. considered Ebby his sponsor until Ebby’s death in 1966.

When I first discovered these books, I asked my friend Mary Margaret which I should read first and she suggested that I read them in the order that they were written.



“Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers” was written first, so that is how I read them. The forward to “Dr. Bob” explains that originally it was planned to write a joint biography of the two co-founders,



but that proved to be impractical. The 1977 General Service Conference approved the writing of two biographies, with Dr. Bob’s being written first. That book is copyrighted 1980, so it was completed in three years time.

Dr. Bob, born and raised in Vermont, educated at Dartmouth and receiving his M.D. from Rush University, set up medical practice in Akron Ohio. He married Ann Ripley, raised two children and continued with his prolific drinking that started when he was in college, until meeting Bill W. in May of 1935. Dr. Bob is credited with the growth of our Fellowship in the Midwest and

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What Is Sponsorship?

Excerpted from the A.A. Pamphlet P-15 written by Bill W.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: “You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!”

He found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need

A.A. was born. The word “sponsor” was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.

What does A.A. mean by sponsorship? To join some organizations, you must

have a sponsor — a person who vouches for you, presents you as being suitable for membership. This is definitely not the case with A.A. Anyone who has a desire to stop drinking is welcome to join us!

In A.A., sponsor and sponsored meet as equals, just as Bill and Dr. Bob did. Essentially, the process of sponsorship is this: An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individ-

ual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.

When we first begin to attend A.A. meetings, we may feel confused and sick and apprehensive. Although people at meetings respond to our questions willingly, that alone isn’t enough. Many other questions occur to us between meetings; we find that we need constant, close support as we begin learning how to “live sober.”

So we select an A.A. member with whom we can feel comfortable, someone with whom we can talk freely and confidentially, and we ask that person to be our sponsor.

Whether you are a newcomer who is hesitant about “bothering” anyone, or a member who has been around for some time trying to go it alone, sponsorship is yours for the asking. We urge you: *Do not delay*. Alcoholics recovered in A.A. want to share what they have learned with other alcoholics. We know from experience that our own sobriety is

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Grapevine Cartoon Contest Winner
Feb. 2012—James, New Zealand

“You may want what I have and be willing to go to any lengths to get it, but I am still going to run this past my sponsor.”

Get a Sponsor!

Rick O., Area 60 Literature Coordinator

This is an opinion piece; I say that so the reader knows right away I didn't copy it somewhere. As a chronic relapser, I just wasn't getting it. At the time some of the people were saying not to do anything for a year. Just make meetings and take it easy.

Basically what I heard was; Hang out for a while, get physically better and bankroll a little money if at all possible. Obviously, I was on the hunt for the sponsor that said not to do anything, over and over again.

I'm not going to dazzle you with facts from A.A.'s history or quotes from Bill W. What I am going to do is merely write down some of the simple things I've learned about sponsorship.

By definition, a sponsor is not your friend, banker, counselor or matchmaker. If you're looking for someone to save you, it will be a shock when you find out —*if it's to be, it's up to me!* The question is how far will you go to stay sober; will you shave your moustache? Quit going to discussion meetings? Will you stay away from the opposite sex? Here are a few suggestions on finding a sponsor, and what to ask or look for:

- What step are you on? If this question takes more than a second to answer, MOVE ON! Try to get someone working the steps, ideally someone that has gone beyond step five.
- Do you have a sponsor? Who's their sponsor? If none, run!
- Have you been seeing this person at a lot of meetings? This will only happen if you yourself are making a lot of meetings.
- Is this person active in A.A., Do they sponsor others? Does this person chair? Lead? Go to jails or institutions?
- My biggest question... Does this person seem happy? Are they smiling and laughing? Are they enjoying life?
- Does this person still read the Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve and other literature including daily meditation books?

- Does this person have something non material that you want; do they aggravate the living hell out of you? You may have found the right person!

Some sponsors will call you; some will have you call them daily. There is no hard and fast rule to sponsorship.

What ended up working for me was a sponsor that had found a Higher Power, made a lot of meetings and laughed.....a lot!

By definition, a sponsor is not your friend, banker, counselor or matchmaker. If you're looking for someone to save you, it will be a shock when you find out — *if it's to be, it's up to me!*

After seven years of continuous sobriety I don't really use him as my sponsor as much as a sounding board and trusted advisor. If there happens to be a problem I have lots of friends in A.A. in that I trust and feel confident in speaking with.

There are lots of sober people that use their sponsor throughout their sobriety and there are many that feel a sponsor is supposed to help get through the first five steps. What works for you is the vital question. There are no musts in A.A. and yet if you want everything offered here I strongly suggest you try everything.

In the beginning I stated that these were the opinions of a chronic relapser. If you're new here are a couple of suggestions to get to where you can choose a sponsor.

- Go to a lot of meetings. It's not possible to make too many meetings.
- If someone invites you somewhere, go! If you don't have money just say sorry, I can't afford it.
- Get phone numbers from folks the same sex you are.
- Pray. Doesn't really matter what or who to, just pray. Be grateful to be sober today.
- USE phone numbers.

- Reach out to other sick and suffering alcoholics, believe it or not they may be worse off than you.
- Let people know you're new and could use help. Asking for help is difficult for all of us. If you can get over that hurdle you're on your way.
- Read conference approved literature. Read non conference approved literature.
- Take a walk; spend time with your spouse or children.
- Give yourself a break. Enjoy this day, it's the only one you'll get. You will not be able to relive it.

Fake it til you make it. GET A SPONSOR!!!

Your Trusted Servant, Rick O. ▲

75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition

\$12—English-language text only



A faithful facsimile of the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* is now available from A.A. World Services, Inc. You can purchase it online at

www.aa.org, or through the Area 60 Literature Coordinator Rick O. literature@wpaarea60.org.

The official publication date of the first printing of our Big Book was April 10, 1939. There were 4,730 books printed, with red cloth binding, wide columns, thick paper (*which was why it was called the Big Book in the first place*), and a red, yellow, black and white dust jacket, which came to be known as the "circus cover."

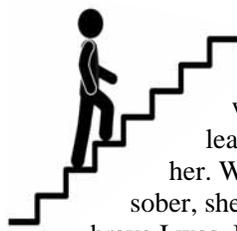
Sponsorship and It's Gifts

Teresa K., Area 60 Registrar

I have had many sponsors in AA — this time around and in the past. My first sponsor, Pam, appointed herself to me. Back in “the day” that’s what sponsors did. They *told* you they were your sponsor. I don’t think I could have picked out anyone at that time. I was young and had never been in AA before. She intimidated me, but she was the only one who got the truth out of me.

I was wet behind the ears when I first came in. She called me to task when I messed up or said something wrong in the rooms. Her strictness helped me when I most needed it. She genuinely cared if I got this program or not. It was life or death to her, and now it is the same for me.

At first I didn’t know how to use a sponsor, or what to expect from one. Pam told me something I will never forget. She said “*If you were handed AA on a silver platter you would turn around and hock it.*” That brought me to my knees.



The sponsor I have now, Marilyn, is just what I need. I’ve learned so much from her. When I was newly sober, she told me how brave I was. I was shocked that anyone noticed I was there. I watched her at meetings and saw how she knew everyone — because she shakes everyone’s hand and introduces herself. I do that now myself.

What is Sponsorship? A sponsor in AA is many things. I believe first and foremost they are our guides to the program of AA. They teach us a new way of living, and the proper way of doing things. They pass down the information that their sponsors have taught them. A sponsor walks with us on this remarkable journey of recovery. I’ve had to ask myself, am I willing to go to any lengths with my sponsor, am I willing to take direction

from her and to follow her guidance?

What they are and aren’t. What they are not is our banks but they will teach how to have a bank account. They are not our taxi’s, but they will take us to meetings. They are not our therapists but they do counsel on how the steps and traditions can help us in our daily lives. They are not our maids but they will teach us how to keep house. This list can go on and on....

Why do we need a sponsor? The reason I need a sponsor is because I can’t do AA alone. My sponsor has been where I am, and if not, she can guide me to someone who has. I never understood the meaning of the saying “*my best thinking got me here.*” Then I heard at a meeting “*you need a sponsor because you should never go into your own head alone, it’s a bad neighborhood.*” Now I understand this perfectly. My thinking in the beginning was very messed up still it is at times these days.

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Sponsorship and the Language of Letting Go

Larry R. L., Jr. SCI Fayette

In five years of recovery, I’ve been blessed to be sponsored, and to sponsor a few fellows in the A.A. fellowship. Through that experience, I pass on what was so freely given to me by my sponsor and people in the meetings.

The “language of letting go” begins when we attend meetings and share. We grow further in recovery when we work with a sponsor and “let go” of our fears of who we are or were.

This took decades for me to actually let go of who I really was. Fear had robbed me of recovery — I didn’t want anyone to know my darkest, deepest secrets because I thought that NO ONE who knew all of these things could actually love or respect me.

Working Step five has changed that opinion for the better! I’ve had sponsees ask me a wide range of questions that often stem from fear, such as: “*what is going to happen? What must I change besides drinking or using chemicals?*”



What will making amends change? What about personal or intimate relations? Or Why is a higher power ‘absolutely’ necessary for recovery?”

As sponsors, we may also ask ourselves these same questions from time to time. I explain simply that working the 12 steps protect us from ourselves, the traditions from each other, and a God of our own understanding is the glue that binds us all together on a common journey. To keep it simple, I always recommend that they read the first story in Chapter 8 of “*Came to Believe*” entitled “My Friend.”

I am truly blessed to have found a sponsor here who “works” a program of recovery. I can fully trust in the language of letting go – the promises become a reality.

Sadly, I’ve seen people who claim they can’t get a sponsor because they are incarcerated, or they’ll wait till after their release to start working steps with a sponsor. Personally, I believe the time is now — NOT TOMORROW – to invest in recovery. Recovery IS possible anywhere!

I don’t care to be the fellow you read about in the Big Book in the story called “*The Jay Walker*” (p 37-38) ever again! We simply trust a sponsor, through a higher power, to guide our recovery. Step work IS work because we must get humble and actually “do” the written and action work. Recovery MUST come first. Passing it on through sponsorship and working with others ensures our own recovery.

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In Support of Our 7th Tradition

John W., Area 60 Past Delegate Panel 51

Recently while reading “*The Family Afterward*” at a Big Book meeting, someone commented about how we value money in sobriety, as compared to our drinking years. As a general rule - we were quite content to throw our money around (*when we were fortunate to have some*) - as if it sprang from a bottomless pool while still investigating the wonders of alcohol! This is the old ‘*live today, for tomorrow we may be gone*’ attitude.

Well, move ahead to a few sober years and you will find this same individual stooping to pick up a penny in the mall parking lot! I know the truth of both sides of this coin...been there, done that. We quickly regain many of the positive traits and behaviors that our folks tried to imbue in us in sobriety.

Thrift is usually somewhere near the top of the list. A great many of us truly enjoy being self-supporting and frugality and discretion in our spending habits go a long way to achieving this objective.

As we regain confidence in our ability to make proper decisions and begin to participate productively in group matters, a feeling of usefulness comes into our lives. Taking part in group conscience meetings and discussions will probably lead into matters that involve the 12 Traditions, and even the 12 Concepts, as they apply to our activities at the group level.



An understanding of the 7th Tradition (*of self-support*) and its application by members at the group, district, area and conference

levels is of great consequence. We have a tremendously difficult time getting the monetary support that A.A. deserves.

In the mid 1970’s I had the job of treasurer in my home group. One of the most necessary items I needed was a package of quarter wrappers.

Not too far in the past at that time, A.A. treasurers needed dime wrappers. Five or six years later, again doing the job of treasurer, I now needed \$1.00 wrappers. It had become more or less customary to drop a dollar bill into the

hat. Thirty-five years later it would seem that maybe a fiver would be more appropriate. But, what the heck, let’s say a couple of bucks, at least.

Several years ago the Irish General Service Office sent a rather large donation to our General Service Office, earmarked for the purpose of translating A.A. literature into foreign languages. Never before had such a thing taken place. Donations from foreign General Service Offices were unheard of.

When asked why and how this donation had come about a very simple explanation was offered. Ireland had begun to use the Euro, and one Euro was the equivalent of two of the old Irish dollars. The boys and girls of the olde sod were simply following their old habit of dropping a single bill into the hat!

Somewhere, sometime, at some place one of our founders - and I believe it was Bill W. - made the remark that once you get an alcoholic sober he becomes tighter than the bark on a tree!

Really now, doesn’t the Fellowship that has saved our lives deserve better support than most of us provide? ▲



A Buck In The Basket?

Maybe it's time for a raise



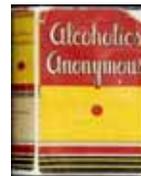
In the February 2006 issue of the AA Grapevine, member Jack H. of Stanwood, Washington, wrote:

“When I first came to AA in 1963, the accepted contribution was \$1.00, which seemed to pretty well cover expenses. That dollar from 1963, the average “dues” paid by most members, when adjusted for inflation is equal to just 16 cents today!”

That answers the question, “How long have we been putting ‘a buck in the basket’?” 50 years! That dollar, adjusted for inflation, is worth \$7.50 today.*

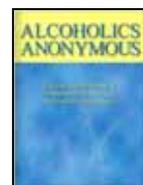
* A 1963 dollar is equivalent to \$7.72 in 2014.

Cost of Printing the Big Book—Then & Now



1939 —

1st printing of our basic text, Alcoholics Anonymous, our Big Book cost \$3.50.



2014 —

Today, \$3.50 adjusted for inflation is \$59.50...and we pay just \$8.00! In 1939, \$8.00 was just .47 cents!

Why do I sponsor? I sponsor because, frankly, I want to live up to the A.A. clichés “you have to give it away to keep it, and carry the message of AA.” I teach the women I sponsor similarly to the way I was taught. I take them through the Big Book, and help them find the information laid out in it. After all it is our *basic text*. I have them highlight and underline so they can find things again when needed.

They all write out their steps. When a sponsee speaks for the first time I come mainly to support them, but I also take notes. I do my best to guide them on how to lead. Dress right for the new comer, and be respectful of the program that has saved their lives. No “F-bombs” from the podium. Hopefully by the time they begin to lead foul language is not a

problem.

What are the gifts of sponsor? Wow there are so many gifts, To be a sponsor I have to keep in the book because I go through it with them. There is a feeling of purpose, that I matter. The guidance I receive I can now pass down. To be able to see them grow and change in this program is amazing. The humility that sponsorship gives is a blessing. I continue to learn right along with them. I have made mistakes in sponsoring. I have grown and changed. I don't want to become complacent with my recovery—it's is a sure sign of pending relapse... and I don't want to do that again. Thank God for AA and for my sponsor. ▲

Sponsorship and the Language of Letting Go

Larry R. L., Jr. SCI Fayette (Continued from page 4)

I've attended thousands of meetings on and off since 1985. I failed to use a sponsor as I should have. I've got five years here in the fellowship. I do not recommend waiting for a prison sentence or a life threatening, life changing situation to find recovery from alcohol and other chemicals. I do recommend to sponsees or anyone who will listen – to get fully involved in going to any length to get recovery and getting humble, to open up and share honestly.

The language of letting go really begins when we start and end our days with prayer and meditation to the God of our own understanding. All of our fears, joys, worries, hopes, dreams and gratitude for one more day sober can be given to the higher power we've discovered in the “rooms” of our fellowship. We invest in our today and tomorrow through sponsorship and the language of letting go. ▲

Resource List for the Daily Reflections

*Presented at a service workshop held by District 29, Spring 2014
Compiled by “West Virginia Mike”*

Mike is an avid collector of A.A. literature. He talked about a wide variety of books and related background information. After the Big Book and 12 and 12, he asks new comers to read “Daily Reflections,” and encourages them to use it as a focus of study by going to the original source of each of the citations. It's a great way to become familiar with A.A. literature and build your own library. Following is a complete list of books and pamphlets cited in the book, “Daily Reflections:”

Books:

Pamphlets:

Big Book 3rd edition	Language of the Heart	AA Tradition How it Developed
Living Sober	Best of the Grapevine, Vol. 1	12 Traditions Illustrated
Twelve and Twelve	As Bill Sees It-AA Way of Life	Understanding Anonymity
AA Comes of Age	The Best of Bill	
Dr. Bob & the Good Old Timers		

September 7, 2013

"The individual must sometimes place the welfare of his fellows ahead of his own uncontrolled desires. Were the individual to yield nothing to the common welfare there could be no society at all - only self-will run riot; anarchy in the worst sense of the word."

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1946
"The Individual in Relation to AA as a Group" The Language of the Heart

May 1, 2013

"The actual experience of turning myself inside out for the first time in the presence of an AA member left me drained and numb; but when feeling started to come back, I found that I had changed. For the first time in my AA experience, I could feel the sunshine of God's love on my wounds, and true peace of mind."

Memphis, Tenn., October 1977
"Finding Self-Forgiveness"
Step By Step: Real AAs, Real Recovery

Remembering Sweeney

Shane A. J. SCI Fayette

If the 12 steps and traditions are the foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous, then sponsorship is the glue that holds us all together.

In the early 80's I came into the rooms a kid in desperate need of a solution to my uncontrollable desire to drink. Lucky for me, I ran into Sweeney, a crusty old timer with a real eye for the soon to be lost.

Sweeney took me under his wing and taught me the truth of how truly messed up I was. He will always have my respect for not only being my sponsor; but for being a friend, when friends were in short supply. I had to go out and do some extensive research but I'll always remember Sweeney — who introduced me to myself!



Area 60 Get Away Weekend Celebrates AA Grapevine's 70th Anniversary!

Barb G. Area 60 Newsletter Coordinator

Area 60 has been holding the Get Away Weekend (GAW) for 22 years. Initially, it was called a "Weekend of Sharing" and was held first at Slippery Rock University, then Butler Community College.

The purpose of the GAW is to inform and educate, and help those in attendance to better carry the message of A.A. Although different formats have been used over the years, a committee system is currently used so participants can review and consider the same topics that are on the agenda for the annual General Service Conference in New York. Through the GAW and the Pre-Conference Assembly, which concludes the weekend, a general consensus can be formed for our Delegate to carry with her to the conference. That is how our collective voices are heard.



This year's GAW was kicked off with a "Happy Birthday Party" for the Grapevine Magazine, hosted by our Grapevine Coordinator, Ted G. and his alternate Joe L. They reviewed the history of the magazine and its legacy of carrying the message of recovery since 1944, using a PowerPoint presentation produced by Grapevine staff. Attendees were also treated to a delicious Grapevine birthday cake!

I also spent time talking to people throughout the weekend, asking them how many GAW's they've attended, why they come back and what's the best part of the weekend. I heard a variety of answers and a few stories.

There were quite a few first time attendees, a few folks who had been to all of them, and several people new to sobriety. People were amazed at the distance that some travel to attend. Most come for the information and fellowship ... the chance to meet all kinds of happy sober people! It's also an opportunity to meet friends you rarely see but once or twice a year. One man said "*we have a lot more in common, than differences. It's an opportunity to share our passion for AA with newcomers.*" Another said "*I love the camaraderie of all of us together.*" I'd have to agree—it was a great weekend—please consider joining us next year! ▲

GSR ... The Most Important Job in A.A.

Excerpted from the A.A. Pamphlet P-19

General Service Representatives are sometimes called the "guardians of our traditions," and the "voice" of their home groups. Being of service while learning about our traditions and concepts is a worthwhile journey. There is an abundance of information available for you to do this job well, and make a weekly report to your group. Consider finding a "service sponsor" to share this experience with you.

When you're a GSR... you are linking your home group with the whole of A.A. As general service representative, you transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of "the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship."

At district meetings, you join with GSRs from other groups. Perhaps you've already worked with an intergroup or central office, where groups band together to help alcoholics just in your locality. **But your general service district is the second link in an entirely different chain, which extends much farther.** With your fellow GSRs, you elect a district committee member, and all the DCMs make up the area committee.

Now, do you just sit back and let your DCM take it from there? No! GSRs stay very much in action in each of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada. You attend area assemblies four times a year. At the electoral assembly (*every two years*), you elect committee officers and your area's Conference delegate along with the other GSRs and the DCMs from the whole area.

Just as you rely on your group for help in your personal recovery, so the A.A. groups of Canada and the U.S. rely on the General

"By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR, a group helps secure its own future — and the future of A.A. as a whole."

Service Conference in maintaining the unity and strength of our Fellowship—*our obligation to all the alcoholics of today and tomorrow.*

It's up to you to keep two-way communication going between your group and the Conference. Via your DCM and your delegate, you can see to it that your group's conscience on matters of importance to all A.A. becomes a part of the consensus when these matters are discussed at the annual Conference meeting in April.

As GSR, you are the "group contact." Upon your election, your name and address are sent (*by you or your group secretary*) to the area registrar and then to GSO. Be sure to include the name of the GSR you are replacing, so the records won't be confused. (*a full name, address, and phone number are necessary for GSO and the Area to communicate with your group, and for inclusion in the regional directory*).

In return, GSO sends you a GSR Kit, and the bimonthly bulletin Box 4-5-9. You use these—and *share them* with the other members of your group. Are some pamphlets marked "new" on the Literature Order Form? You check the literature rack to make sure your group is offering all the sobriety tools available. Does Box 4-5-9 carry news of a future International Convention? *You spread the happy word.*

You can help when your group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. You don't have to know all the answers—no one member possibly could—but you learn where to look for good suggestions, drawn from broad A.A. experience.

Thinking of Tradition Seven particularly, you work with the group treasurer to remind your group of its part in keeping all of A.A. self supporting. You explain the importance of financial support of your intergroup/central office, GSO, district and area committee, and the Birthday Plan for individual contributions.

Since you're in touch with A.A. throughout your area, you can bring to your group the news of upcoming local conventions. As GSR, you share with your fellow members the joy of widening A.A. horizons. ▲

Our AA Relationship and our Friendship Grew From There!

Jan H., Past Delegate, Panel 57 Area 60 WPA

I am truly blessed to have the same sponsor for all of my 36 years of sobriety. She has gently taught me the program, guided me through the steps in the Book, disapproved of my silliness with just “a look”, and enhanced a friendship that I never knew could be possible.

It wasn't until many years later that I realized that she was passing on what she was so gently taught. The Big Book tells us: *“Practical experience shows us that nothing will so insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.”* I teased her once that all she was doing was saving herself. Her sweet answer with a smile: “You got it!”

The best way in AA to keep what we have gained in the program is through giving it away. I did not understand that but as I began “passing it on,” I relearned what had so lovingly been taught to me. I had to stay on top of my own program in order to guide others. I would never want to follow a guide through woods that had not been there before, or did not know where they were going. Nor would I want to traverse unknown territory alone. When it was

suggested to me in my beginning weeks that I get a sponsor, I was given the sponsorship pamphlet to read. It was rather extensive, so that task took me a while — time that I needed to grow.

“Practical experience shows us that nothing will so insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.”

Believe it or not, I did not come into the rooms all put together ☺. In fact, I was half drunk at my first meeting. The big teaching that I had in the beginning was “Don't drink.” By God's blessing, I have not had a drink since that day.

I found out later that I was never dangled out there without someone watching over me. There was always someone nearby from a group of long-timers checking on “the kid.” It took me three months before I asked “R.” to be my sponsor. She was such a lady, and I had a deep desire to learn how to be like her. We spent quite a bit of time talking about honesty, open-mindedness, and

willingness—three descriptions of me that had somehow eluded my life. Hmmm—could it have been the alcohol?

I remember us talking about feelings and my calling her one day to tell her that I thought I had one of those. When she asked me “one what,” I told her a feeling! Her words of congratulations were her simple way of saying they were okay!

After that day, I began to honestly realize the depth that I felt the helplessness, loneliness, and despair so common to us all. They had been deeply buried. I was finally beginning to find the real me and thrilled to begin reading the Big Book about our path to healing.

Slowly I learned, studied, and did the steps with my sponsor by my side. She passed on sober living to me by patient example and by giving of her time. There is no greater gift than helping someone find their whole selves once again. I am so proud of the girls that I sponsor and hope to pass sober living on to them that I was so freely given. A July, 1945 Grapevine article calls it “the Sponsor System,” and it works. ▲

Sponsorship: Essentials on Both Ends

Andrew W., SCI Fayette County

Having a sponsor is one of my most essential needs in being able to work a successful program of recovery. My sponsor not only guides me along in my step work, he gives me his experience, strength and hope in areas where I'm struggling, provides me with love, care, support and motivation and offers suggestions that can and do aid me in my spiritual growth.

My sponsor is also a friend, someone who I can trust with my inner most thoughts, feelings, secrets; and isn't afraid to point out my shortcomings...but will also point out my assets too, so I can see my true self. The sponsor/sponsee relationship is two-way street, a give and take

partnership in which both parties help each other to achieve the desired result: recovery.



program
Being a sponsor is also one of my most essential needs in being able to work a successful program of recovery. I am honored to be able to guide others along in their step work, to use *my* experience, strength and hope to aid and comfort those who still sick and suffering, to provide my sponsees with love, care, support and motivation and to offer suggestions that can and do aid in their own spiritual growth. Being a sponsor gives me the opportunity to keep my recovery fresh by going back through the

steps with my sponsees, to gain a different perspective on each topic and to develop a stronger understanding of the fundamentals of our program.

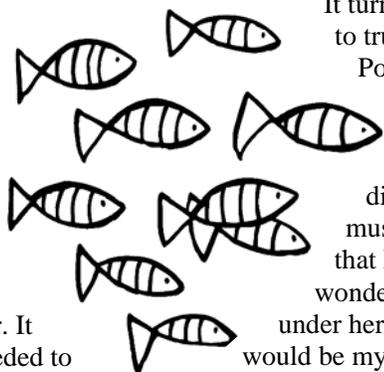
My sponsees help me by keeping me humble and allowing me to remember where I was not so long ago. I am grateful that my sponsor is giving to me what was so freely given to him, and I feel that same sense of gratitude when I give away what has been so freely given to me. We cannot work a program of recovery alone, no should we ever have to. Ours is a program based on fellowship and sponsorship is a truly necessary and essential tool to foster our unity and continue to recovery. ▲

Sponsorship ... A Unique Experience

Yvette N., Delegate, Panel 63. Area 60

In my relatively short time in this program, my sponsorship experience illustrates there is more than one right way. While in rehab I was ignorant and confused and wanted instructions on how to obtain a sponsor. It was as if I thought I needed to shop around, take applications, conduct interviews and then select the most qualified individual. Considering my track record in evaluating my needs—as evidenced by current circumstances—it was clear that I did not know what was best for me. I was given a copy of a pamphlet and the only thing I could remember was that the most important qualification to look for was ‘trust’.

In meetings, I listened to members tell how their sponsors told them what to do, made them “sit down and shut up,” “get in the car,” “don’t think,” and so on. Naturally, I then thought I needed someone who didn’t like me and would yell at me. Well, I thought that would be easy enough. I heard from folks who had the same sponsor for their entire recovery, some who had more than one sponsor at a time, and some who had no sponsor at all—I saw what happened to them.



It turns out that who I needed to trust was my Higher Power. He continually sends angels in the form of people; and has put many of them directly in my path. It must have been apparent that I was floundering and a wonderful woman took me under her wing and told me she would be my temporary sponsor—very temporary in fact. I am grateful to her for beginning the all important step-working process with me. She then fell away leaving me again sponsorless. Obviously my story would not include a lifelong sponsor.

That is when I entered the many sponsored phase of my recovery. Not wanting to go the way of those I saw who had *no* sponsor, I used everyone as a sponsor. I have been heard saying, “If there are 1.9 million members in AA then I have 1.9 million sponsors.” I AM that important. I went to a lot of meetings, got involved in service and stayed sober and relatively happy, for a while. Something was missing though, I was left wanting and knew I had work to do. The triangle was not complete. Unity and service would get me only so far. I wanted recovery.

Next I approached a woman to whom I had become close. We had similar attitudes and I liked her, loved her in fact. I knew her from outside of AA

and we had some things in common. Some things were also missing. She attended a few select meetings a week, didn’t do much Big-Book-reading or step-working and rarely fellowshipped outside of meetings or participated in general service. Frankly, we didn’t see the AA program with the same eyes.

God has continually put the right people in my life. When I trust my Higher Power I am given opportunities I could not have even dreamed about. As an active member of Area 60 General Service I developed a relationship with a service sponsor. She did everything I wanted to do and began to invite me to travel along with her. After long days at service conferences and assemblies we spent long nights talking about more than service. We talked about recovery. Though she lived rather far from me I felt close to her and eventually asked her to be my regular-old everyday sponsor and thankfully she agreed.

My sponsor today tends to be the polar opposite of me, a quiet gentle spirit. She is a person of wisdom and experience combined with humility, peaceful serenity combined with enthusiasm, persistence combined with acceptance. She exhibits all these qualities in her actions so that I may see them in practical application and not just as a list of idealized principles. In other words, she leads by example. More importantly she patiently teaches me while practicing unconditional love and tolerance for me as I struggle to grow in her likeness. I have found the person who has what I want...Recovery, Unity and Service...and I love her. ▲

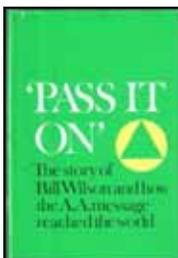
HEARD
AT MEETINGS



HUMOR	SLIPS	INSIGHTS	THOUGHTS
The steps are for climbing, not sitting. They are stairs — not porches!	Did you notice in the Big Book that there is no Chapter called Into Feeling or Into Thinking?	The AA message does not carry itself; somebody must carry it.	The only emotion stronger than fear ... is hope.

helping thousands to find sobriety.

“**Pass It On**” was copyrighted 4 years later, 1984. It is the story of a boy, born and raised also in Vermont, introduced to alcohol as a young man in military service during WWI, “plummeting to rum-soaked despair”, until being visited by his boyhood friend, Ebby T., and being introduced to the Oxford Group.



The two stories dovetail with Bill W.’s trip to Akron, Ohio, meeting Dr. Bob S. and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous being born.

The dust jacket of “Pass It On” describes it as the definitive biography of Bill W. with every word documented, every source checked. It continues with: *“for the scholar this volume is invaluable. For all of us, it is exciting reading.”*

Exciting, indeed! I never tire of hearing our history: what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now!

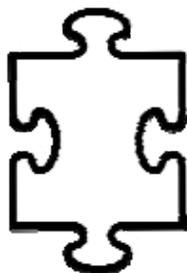
Each book is available separately, or as a boxed set. If you already have them, they make a nice gift for a special friend.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be of service. ▲

Sponsorship ... A Piece of the Puzzle

Drew M. SCI Greene County

I am new to Alcoholics Anonymous. At 18 months sober, I am relatively new to sobriety. While I have been learning, somewhat successfully, to exist in a world where alcohol is somewhat prevalent, and often glamorized, I know that there is still much more to learn if I want to live a long, healthy life in sobriety.



By attending meetings and listening to the successes and failures of others, it is comforting to know that I am not the only one who has a path of loosing to alcohol. The camaraderie of those of us involved in AA helps keep the goal of long-term sobriety front and center in our lives.

We can lean on each other. We listen when someone needs to talk, and we talk because we know others are listening.

But there is another aspect of AA that I haven’t experienced yet: — sponsorship. What is it, how does it work and what can it do for me? I know that a sense of community is one

factor in AA that propels it forward—but what about on a personal level?

I’m sure I’m not alone in hesitating about what I bring to the discussion at a meeting. I’m curious to know what a one-on-one interaction can bring. How effective can it be? Is it the piece of the puzzle that I’m missing?

Beyond that, what qualities should I look for in a person when considering them as a sponsor? Should they be just like me, or different enough that our relationship remains focused on sobriety? And lastly, when do I know when I’m ready to take on a sponsor?

The reason I bring these questions up is that I believe I am not the only person asking them. As newcomers, we often do not know what we don’t know, so to speak. We are unsure of where to start and what inquiries to make. But we witness the strength and unity of an AA community, are eager to achieve sobriety, and some of us wonder if sponsorship is that piece of the puzzle that is missing in our journeys. ▲

Thank You for Sponsoring

Scott A. – SCI Fayette County

Recovery, unity and service are AA’s three legacies — and sponsorship falls within that triangle. I am grateful for anyone who sponsors someone ... giving back the help and encouragement that was given to them.

Personally, I have a hard time sharing my inner feelings, thoughts and past actions. As a result, I have never looked for a sponsor. I am afraid to open the door and let someone in. I try to open up, but always shut down.

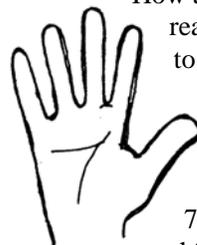
I do not have a problem with sponsorship, I’m just not there yet. I can speak in meetings, but never real deep. One day I hope to feel comfortable enough to ask for a sponsor, but not today.

I keep attending and speaking and hopefully one day I’ll ask a willing sponsor. My thanks to all those who sponsor in A.A. ▲

Sponsorship Plus Service

Sue H., Donora Saturday Night Special
(Continued from Page 1)

Experiencing the freedom that comes with living sober is undeniably wonderful. Every time I exit a facility and the guards say my first name and tell me to have a nice day, I feel the blessings. My High Power has been looking out for me all along. The suffering alcoholic may not be at a meeting, but may have just been let out of his cell. They may want to hear a message of hope!



How about you? Are you ready to provide service to the person who is ‘stumbling in the dark’?

Please contact me by phone or email:
724.684.7473 or
sch920@verizon.net. ▲

In Grateful Service Sue, H.

What Is Sponsorship

P-15 Questions & Answers on Sponsorship AAWS

(Continued from Page 2)

greatly strengthened when we give it away! Sponsorship can also mean the responsibility *the group as a whole* has for helping the newcomer. Today, more and more alcoholics arriving at their first A.A. meeting have had no prior contact with A.A. They have not telephoned a local A.A. intergroup or central office; no member has made a “Twelfth Step call” on them. So, especially for such newcomers, groups are recognizing the need to provide some form of sponsorship help. In many successful groups, sponsorship is one of the most important planned activities of the members.

Sponsorship responsibility is unwritten and informal, but it is a basic part of the A.A. approach to recovery from alcoholism through the 12 Steps. Sponsorship can be a long-term relationship. We hope that this pamphlet will provide answers to some of the often-asked questions about the rewarding two-way street called sponsorship — for people who may be seeking sponsors — for A.A. members who want to share their sobriety through sponsorship — and for groups that wish to develop sponsorship activity

WHAT DOES A SPONSOR DO & NOT DO?

- A sponsor does everything possible, within the limits of personal experience and knowledge, to help the newcomer get sober and stay sober through the A.A. program.
- Shows by present example and drinking history what A.A. has meant in the sponsor’s life.
- Encourages and helps the newcomer to attend a variety of A.A. meetings — to get a number of viewpoints and interpretations of the A.A. program.
- Suggests keeping an open mind about A.A. if the newcomer isn’t sure at first whether he or she is an alcoholic.
- Introduces the newcomer to other members.
- Sees that the newcomer is aware of A.A. literature, in particular the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and *Grapevine, As Bill Sees It, Living Sober*, and suitable pamphlets.
- Is available to the newcomer when the

latter has special problems.

- Goes over the meaning of the Twelve Steps, and emphasizes their importance.
- Urges the newcomer to join in group activities as soon as possible.
- Impresses upon the newcomer the importance of all our Traditions.
- Tries to give the newcomer some picture of the scope of A.A., beyond the group, and directs attention to A.A. literature about the history of the Fellowship, the Three Legacies, the service structure, and the worldwide availability of A.A.
- Explains the program to relatives of the alcoholic, if this appears to be useful, and tells them about Al-Anon Family Groups and Alateen.
- Quickly admits, “I don’t know” when that is the case, and helps the newcomer find a good source of information.
- The sponsor encourages the newcomer to work with other alcoholics as soon as possible, and sometimes begins by taking the newcomer along on 12 step calls.
- Never takes the newcomer’s inventory except when asked.
- Never tries to impose personal views on the newcomer. A good sponsor who is an atheist does not try to persuade a religious newcomer to abandon faith, nor does a religious sponsor argue theological matters with an agnostic newcomer.
- Does not pretend to know all the answers, and does not keep up a pretense of being right all the time.
- An A.A. sponsor does not offer professional services such as those provided by counselors, the legal, medical or social work communities, but may sometimes help the newcomer to access professional help if assistance outside the scope of A.A. is needed.

A recovery program — not the sponsor’s personality or position — that is important. Thus, the newcomer learns to rely on the A.A. *program*, not on the sponsor. A sponsor well-grounded in the A.A. program will not be offended if the newcomer goes to other A.A. members for additional guidance or even decides to change sponsors. ▲

AA GRAPEVINE

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800.631.6025 / 212.870.3301
475 Riverside Dr., Suite 1264
New York, NY 10115
www.aagrapevine.org
gvrc@aagrapevine.org

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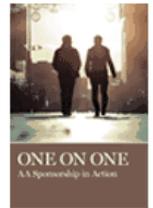
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since 1944



One On One

Grapevine's new book
featuring stories about
sponsorship



The Laugh's on Us

Submit a caption for this cartoon at:
www.aagrapevine.org



OR vote on last month’s captions
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 Alt Delegate - George K. altdelegate@wpaarea60.org
 Chairperson - John K. chairperson@wpaarea60.org
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 Alt. Treasurer - Jean M. treasurer@wpaarea60.org
 Registrar - Teresa K. registrar@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Registrar - Jay P. registrar@wpaarea60.org

Area 60 Coordinators

Archives – Dennis M. archives@wpaarea60.org
 Archivist - Al C. archivist@wpaarea60.org
 Corrections ____ corrections@wpaarea60.org
 CPC/PI Mike J. pi@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. CPC/PI Erik K. pi@wpaarea60.org
 Grapevine - Ted G. grapevine@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Grapevine - Joe L. grapevine@wpaarea60.org
 Literature - Rick O. - literature@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Literature - Holly B. literature@wpaarea60.org
 Newsletter - Barb G. newsletter@wpaarea60.org
 Treat./Special Needs ____ treatment@wpaarea60.org
 Website - Mario D. website@wpaarea60.org
 Alt. Website - Hubert H. website@wpaarea60.org
 Webmaster - Greg G. webservant@wpaarea60.org

Newsletter Themes & Due Dates

This year's newsletters are following the 2014 General Service Conference theme "Communicating Our Legacies – Vital in a Changing World." Presentation topics follow the sub-theme "Living in the Heart of A.A."

- Jul 25. Participating in Our Common Welfare through Contributions
- Nov 14. Inventory – A Guiding Tool to Our Future

Area 60 Website—WWW.WPAAREA60.ORG

There are a variety of resources for you and your group on the Area 60 website, including: back issues of the newsletter, flyers for Days of Sharing, the Area 60 calendar, pamphlets, service documentation, and more. Direct questions or suggestions the Website Coordinator at website@wpaarea60.org



Donations to Area 60

Support from groups and individuals is always welcome and appreciated! Make check payable to:
 Area 60 Treasurer
 P.O. Box 152 Conway, PA 15027

2014 Calendar of Events

Area 60 meetings are held at the Comfort Inn, 699 Rodi Rd. Penn Hills, PA

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sunday May 18	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	2ND QUARTERLY MEETING Post-Conference Assembly Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Saturday, June 4	9:00 AM—3:00 PM	District 25 & 24 Day of Sharing. Ashes to Life Church 831 4th Ave., Beaver Falls
Friday-Sunday June 6-8	9:00 AM	Northeast Regional Forum (NERF) Baltimore, MD
Saturday June 21	9:00 AM—3:00 PM	District 65 Day of Sharing Worthington Civic Center 218 E. Main St., Worthington
Sunday, June 22	9:00 AM	Officer and Coordinator Meeting Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
August 1-3	Holiday Inn East— Harrisburg	21st Annual PA State Convention "Language of the Heart" www.aapastateconvention.com or call 800-637-4817
Sunday August 17	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	3RD QUARTERLY MEETING Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Sunday, Sept. 14	9:00 AM	Officer and Coordinator Meeting Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Sunday, Dec. 7	8:30 AM - Registration 9:00 AM - Workshop 10:15 AM - Meeting	4TH QUARTERLY MEETING/ Comfort Inn, Penn Hills
Sunday, Dec. 21	9:00 AM	Officer and Coordinator Meeting Comfort Inn, Penn Hills

Seeds of Service. The WPA Area 60 newsletter is published quarterly by the Area Committee. It is for A. A. members only. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily that of the Area Committee or AA as a whole. The newsletter is a useful reference for GSRs reports.

Newsletter Distribution. Paper copies are distributed to DCM's at each quarterly meeting for redistribution to A.A. groups through their GSRs. A digital copy (PDF) of the newsletter is available at www.wpaarea60.org; and *will also be sent to DCMs and GSRs, if the Registrar has a correct email address.*

Newsletter Submission Guidelines. Suggested length is 500 words or less. Material should be generally relevant to the theme, and may be edited for clarity and length. All material submitted on time is reviewed, selected by topic and appears on a space available basis. The newsletter does not publish song lyrics, tributes to individuals, prayers, plays, or anything unrelated to AA or that violates the principles of AA. Please include first name/last initial, home group and district. Submissions may be emailed to newsletter@wpaarea60.org.