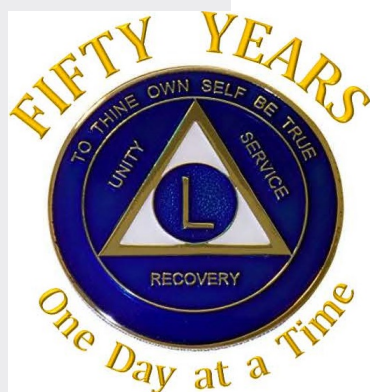


AREA 29 ACCESSIBILITIES NEWSLETTER

WWW.MARYLANDAA.ORG

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SPRING/SUMMER ACTIVITIES ACCESIBILIDADES



ILA



UPDATE ON HISPANIC INTERPRETATION & COLLABORATION

VISIT THE ACCESSIBILITY TABLE AT THE MARYLAND STATE CONVENTION!

If you're looking for a way to be in service to A.A., we have an easy solution for you! Come by and visit our table at the 50th Maryland State Convention on Friday or Saturday beginning 6/24/22 and we can show you how to serve for one hour intervals greeting new people and making new friends. We are also looking for more bilingual members to assist us for future needs. If you are bilingual or know of a bilingual member willing to help please contact us!

You will also find us at the in the front lobby of the Hotel answering all of your Accessibility questions and checking out the headsets for all of your Spanish interpretation needs! Swing by and say hello!

INSTANT LANGUAGE ASSISTANT

We have borrowed and will have at the state convention registration desk a device called an ILA, which is a nifty language translator to assist with interpretation. This is yet another example of how technology can be used to assist with accessibility needs. It is also an example of using the free state resources that are available. The device has been loaned to us by the MDTAP spoken of in the last newsletter. MDTAP has a lending library of assistive items people can borrow to trial.

Join us for the 50th Maryland State Convention

Walk in Registration Available!

Arrive early, almost at capacity!

Friday June 24-Sunday June 26th at the

Clarion Inn Frederick Event Center,

5400 Holiday Drive, Frederick, MD 21703.

Registration is \$30.

Spanish and ASL interpretation are provided.

Our **May Accessibility Committee** meeting was led by Kim B. of the Older Adult Project with Baltimore City from the Mental Health Association. We have a growing number of older adults with substance use disorders right now. They are the fastest growing group in need of treatment for alcohol use disorder. We also have something that our country's never seen before, which is a very high number of people with long-term recovery who are at risk for relapse because of age-related circumstances having to do mostly with pain and the need for pain management and people who are disengaged from their communities of support for multiple reasons. It could be because of hospitalization. But oftentimes, we're seeing people who may not return back to their communities, and so, they may be in assisted living; they might be in nursing homes. And that kind of disconnection, as you can imagine, is a slippery slope for many people, and we're trying to address relapse rates. And how can we keep people connected?

We were trying to build on the Homebound website idea which was so inspiring that we truly wanted to see this come to life. We discussed multiple needs of the senior population as well as barriers to carrying the message to them. Such barriers include increased stigma and anonymity concerns.

In addition, seniors are specifically targeted for fraud, and the senior centers have done much to educate and warn these older citizens to be aware and on the lookout for fraud and schemes. This heightened awareness may make them less inclined to let members of the fellowship into their homes to bring in a meeting or to assist them with transportation or technology needs.

We will need to continue to look at, discuss and explore options for overcoming these barriers and meeting these needs. We are certainly open to and invite Area input.

There are 19 jurisdictions in Maryland with Area Agencies on Aging. And within the Area Agency on Aging are a couple of services, one of which is Maryland Access Point which is an Aging and Disability Resource Center, and each jurisdiction has a Maryland Access Point. The acronym, because we all go by acronyms, is MAP. And so, anyone with a disability or who is older and needs some kind of assistance, could call MAP for services. MAP Representatives are always in need of resources for mental health and substance use disorders for older adults. And most of them don't know about the A.A. Intergroup or how to connect people. **One thing we could do better is to make sure that meetings guides are advertised to Maryland Access Point.** One of the things the Mental Health Association of Maryland can do is help with connectivity to different service systems who are reaching towards older adults. Unfortunately, many of our older adults are falling through the cracks because we don't have a designated system similar to say, peer support specialists, to connect with them.

"But if we were to put together some kind of a website or a way to keep people connected, there would have to be a vetting process or a way that we can ensure people's safety, which bumps up against issues of anonymity. I'm not sure how we do that, but being connected with people who are in the senior advocacy community, I know they would be very concerned about opening up the potential for someone to be vulnerable and scammed via access to a public website. So, somehow, we'd have to figure that out." Having access to this advocacy community will be very helpful in early development to work out issues like this.

If you've ever participated in an AA meeting called **Better with Age**, this meeting was created by us at their (MHA) request during the pandemic, and all credit to the Older Adult Project for collaborating with AA for seniors and friends. It has been a huge success! Ask a committee member for details.

HOMEBOUND COMMITTEE

Our Homebound Committee members met in April and May to discuss planning. Jochen H., webmaster for the Annapolis Area Intergroup (AAIG), is also serving on the Area 29 Homebound Committee with Accessibilities, and he presented the Homebound project at a recent AAIG meeting. He requested permission to post *the Elder survey* on the website. As a HB committee, we talked about the probable need for Bylaws and the potential for this website to be housed on the Area website. We would want it to have statewide accessibility via the Intergroups as the home for local resources.

The meaning of confinement and lack of access is ever expanding. This could include many scenarios, such as lack of child care, hospitalizations, rehab or nursing homes, lack of transportation, technology, literacy, and so on. If you know anyone who is homebound and unable to access A.A., please contact us. We want to help meet those needs now. The formal Homebound project however is sadly in a holding pattern to address the security concerns mentioned on page 2 as well as the current lack of expressed need to our knowledge.

SHARING SESSION/AD HOC

We are also open to the possibility of both an Area sharing session or Area ad hoc temporary committee should the body consider the need.

AREA 29 ACCESSIBILITIES WEBSITE

Having our own Accessibilities page on the soon-to-be unveiled Area 29 website, is key in carrying the message, potentially imbedding a homebound aspect, and overall refreshing the way A.A. members view the many aspects of Accessibilities.

APP OF THE MONTH

Rogervoice produces live transcriptions of phone calls in over 100 languages. Have a phone call with someone and the conversation is received on their phone as typed text.

OUTREACH TO SENIORS

Our outreach efforts to the approximate 100 Senior Centers in Maryland is continuing. One center, Bykota Senior Center in Towson, requested a visit from our committee, which Jessica W., Pat H., and Bernie P. accomodated for us. We gave a brief overview of A.A. to them and were prepared to have an A.A. meeting. Additional outreach will be mailed in July, 2022.

POWER OF AGE EXPO

Accessibilities is working with the Baltimore Intergroup to host an A.A. table at the Power of Age Expo, formerly the Baby Boomer and Senior Expo, at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium. Thursday, October 27, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Baltimore County Department of Aging's Expo showcases the latest in information, resources, products and services to approximately 11,000 attendees.

TALKS AROUND TOWN

Accessibilities has been the guest speaker at the following events to talk about our activity and to re-emphasize the need to inventory meeting spaces for access via the Accessibility Checklist.

- 4/14/22 District 7 Committee Meeting
- 4/18/22 District 1 Committee Meeting
- 4/27/22 District 6 Committee Meeting
- 5/2/22 Intergroup Liaison Committee Meeting
- 5/3/22 Ocean City Intergroup Monthly Meeting
- 6/1/22 District 22 Committee Meeting
- 6/16/22 West Central Intergroup Monthly Meeting

TRAVEL OUT OF TOWN

5/14/22 We traveled with our Hispanic friends to Philadelphia for the XII Convencion Hispana De Pennsylvania; and
6/12/22 to Bethesda for the XII Convencion Estatal del Estado de Maryland, celebrating 87 years! This alternates location every year in DC, VA, and MD.
We broke out into small groups to discuss how service and the AA message is carried within the service structure.

On **June 5th our committee** met with Norma A. of the AA Deaf Intergroup of Central Texas, America's only Deaf Intergroup. While Norma no longer manages or speaks on behalf of the Deaf Intergroup, she is a co-founder and the former manager. They started out as an Accessibilities Committee for about 8 years until that evolved into the Deaf intergroup.

An underserved AA member is primarily an AA member who has difficulty accessing the AA message due to a barrier of some kind and, according to our Guidelines, this is mainly AA members who may be blind, deaf, homebound or chronically ill. The barrier could be (1) physical, such as those who are wheelchair bound, (2) geographical, such as those in remote places or the military, or (3) developmental, such as those who are dyslexic, learning disabled or head injured.

"What I found was the home group could easily meet the needs of most alcoholics by providing space for wheelchairs, or physically disabled alcoholics; rides to blind AA members; materials in braille or audio format; spending a little extra time and attention for those who may be learning disabled or dyslexic. Our home groups have always had that love and compassion for all AA members, newcomers or otherwise, no matter what obstacles stand in the way of the recovered. **The exception is the deaf AA member.**

Because of the difference in language without an interpreter, the deaf AA member cannot participate. This brought up another issue the financial one. Who would pay for the interpreter? How many times a week would an interpreter be needed? Could an AA group afford that? Shouldn't the deaf person or social service agencies be responsible? All of these questions came up as I began to look at accessibility needs of our deaf AA members.

Accessibility should never be seen as social services. As far as AA's concerned, our commitment is to level the playing field so that all may participate and it's a commitment to carrying the message."

"It's been said that if there's not a direct line between what you are doing and with helping the alcoholic then maybe we should rethink what we're doing. So I consulted widely before looking at the idea of forming a committee to deal with this particular situation. And of course it's always based on one alcoholic talking to another. In my community and in my travels, I met several differently-abled alcoholics.

One came because she suffered permanent damage from a car wreck while driving drunk and was now wheelchair bound; another rides a specially outfitted Harley and had many years of sobriety but had limitations due to his physical disability Another was a blind AA member active for years in corrections, and another is my new friend, a deaf woman, who was an active sponsor of other deaf women and she later with me cofounded the deaf access committee. **By the way, she'll be speaking at the North/South forum that's coming up on all kinds of interesting topics.** All of these experienced deaf AA members active in service, with long-time sobriety, shared quite revealing things. They didn't want charity. They spoke of wanting to belong. They shared how AA had helped them deal with their pride and their fear and other things. But they greatly wished to be seen just as another group member." For the full transcript, or for a listing of A.A. meetings in ASL, please contact accessarea29@gmail.com.

The AA Deaf Intergroup of Central Texas at <https://centexdeafintergroup.org/> has no physical location but is staffed by a board manager, a secretary, a treasurer and an interpreter liaison. The interpreter liaison communicates with the interpreters and arranges and coordinates their services. Most of their service are coordinated via their website and paying a professional and skilled webmaster is key to its functioning. Another reason a professional webmaster is important is that there are features specific to websites for accessibility, and also in the way useful apps and assistive technology work with the site or even interfere with the site.

ASL REMINDER

ASL is different from our written and spoken language and there are different forms of ASL.

Norma reminded that many deaf cannot read English. Therefore skilled interpretation is very important. AA has specific unique jargon and a unique way of doing things. Volunteer, student or beginner interpreters are not as skilled or experienced and less skilled interpretation can affect the message. Volunteers also may not show up reliably.

The Deaf Intergroup only takes requests from Deaf AA members or qualifiers, not their families or professionals. Reaching out to the Deaf starts with assessing your local needs such as through a survey, and knowing what services are available for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH). Working with the professionals who work with the deaf is important, that is where you will find the deaf alcoholics wanting and needing recovery. Many of their clients come through the treatment centers, and she made sure they had the Deaf Big Book, which is the ASL Big Book. So, know what your needs are, where your meetings are, and the guidelines and literature/resources available.

An important note is that with the virtual platforms available now, the concept of 90 meetings in 90 days is now possible for the Deaf!! And we also now have access to a couple lists of AA meetings that are ASL interpreted and are happy to make those available upon request. A copy of the ASL Big Book and 12&12 on DVD can be found for sale at <https://onlineliterature.aa.org/ASL-Big-Book-DVD>.

ALSO IN JUNE/AUGUST

In our outreach efforts to the Deaf Community, we were referred to Deb Guthman the founding director of the MN Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals located in Minnesota. Ms. Guthman is a career advocate for more treatment and recovery options for the Deaf and HOH. She also trains and educates

people in the field and is focused on overcoming barriers. We are thrilled that she will be speaking to us on Sunday **August 21st 3pm meeting** - please join us! A key point is that the deaf do best with writing that is very visual and descriptive, and the deaf blind do best with materials that are even more descriptive and visual. An example would be "the tall blonde women spoke is a soft voice of her difficulties in quitting drinking." Other key points are that "unmanageability" is a difficult concept to portray for the deaf in a relatable way due to language differences and other factors, including that many deaf people have not been previously exposed to addiction in their schooling and life. She has authored a book for the deaf in recovery that is used in addictions counseling; she has published multiple articles on deaf addictions, challenges, and she has created many tools for success. Her experience in this area is impressive in depth and weight, and she has already been a tremendous value in a community that is customarily hard to reach.

Our outreach also led to a referral from Gallaudet University, a research university in Washington, D.C. for the education of the deaf and hard of hearing, founded in 1864 as a grammar school for both deaf and blind children. Accessibilities plans to collaborate with Area 13 and respond to an invitation to meet with the staff at Gallaudet University Counseling and Psychological Services.

ARMED FORCES INTERVIEW PROJECT

Check out this *Grapevine* initiative in advance of our September/October presentations: Interested military members can volunteer or get more information about this project by writing to militaryoutreach@aa.org.

https://www.aagrapevine.org/armed-forces-interview-project?utm_source=Blast&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GV-Product-News

Deaf in Recovery

Guest Speaker on 8/21/22

ASL, Deaf Outreach,
Plain Language & More!



Accessibilities
Committee
meets the 3rd
Sunday of the
month @ 3PM EDT

841 2499 3206
pw 326186

NORTH/SOUTH CONNECTIONS
VIRTUAL SPECIAL FORUM —
A.A. IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES
SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2022 —
11AM-7PM EDT

MEMBERS FROM THE SERVICE STRUCTURES OF
ARGENTINA, CANADA, CHILE
AND THE UNITED STATES WILL SHARE THEIR
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE
IN EXTENDING THE HAND OF A.A. TO REMOTE
COMMUNITIES.

ALL SESSIONS WILL BE INTERPRETED INTO
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL)
AND ENGLISH, FRENCH AND SPANISH.

THE EVENT IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS!

REGISTRATION AND PROGRAM WILL BE AVAILABLE
JUNE 13, 2022, AT WWW.AA.ORG.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE
CONTACT THE REGIONAL FORUMS

DESK AT G.S.O.:

NORTHSOUTHCONNECTIONS@AA.ORG

OR (212) 870-3400

9/18/22

& 10/16/22

ACCESSIBILITIES
FOCUS TURNS TO

**A.A. History and
the Armed
Services**

