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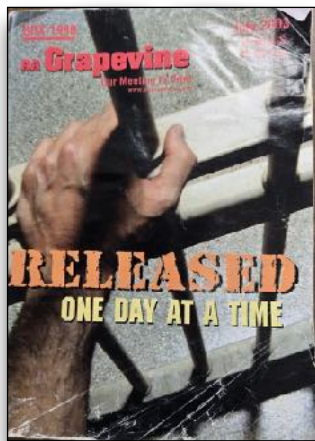
OUR COMMON WELFARE

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 Maryland General Service

‘They’re waiting for someone just like you’ Day of Sharing a chance to consider how to help alcoholics in jail

Jeanine W., Chair, Area 29 Workshop Committee

The Area 29 Corrections Committee, in conjunction with many of the Area 29 Service Committees, hosted an Area Corrections Conference Day of Sharing in Severna Park on Oct. 12.



The theme of the Conference was “Let It Begin With Me.” This theme was taken from a *Grapevine* article published in July 1985. From the *Grapevine* article:

“If you wonder where all the twelfth-stepping has gone, you don’t have to look farther than your corner jail. Suffering alcoholics are gathered there waiting for you. You don’t have to go

looking for them. Your jails are full of them. They’re waiting for someone just like you. All they want is what you’ve found – sobriety. You may not know it yet, but some of you have some pretty subtle ways of motivating, encouraging and enlightening other people.”

More than 50 people attended. The day began at 9 a.m. and concluded at 5 p.m., with continental breakfast and lunch included. Door prizes were also distributed. English-to-Spanish translation was provided. As one attendee noted,

“If you wonder where all the twelfth-stepping has gone, you don’t have to look farther than your corner jail. Suffering alcoholics are gathered there waiting for you.”

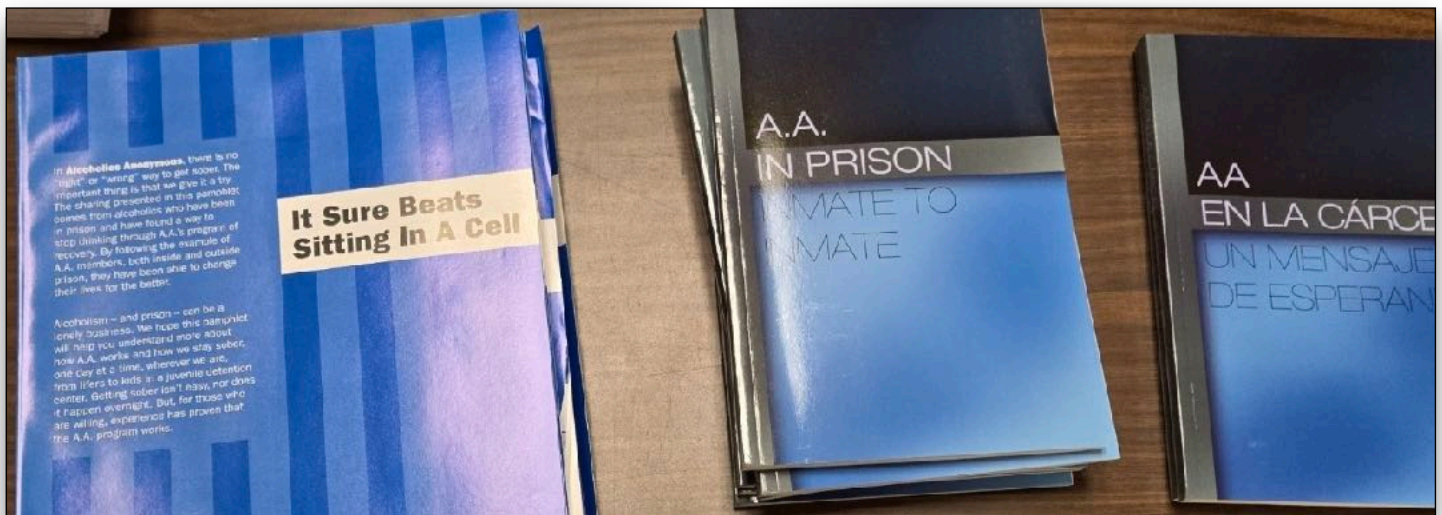
—*Grapevine* article, 1985

“Even though our Spanish-speaking members comprise about 3 percent of our A.A. population, they comprised over 30 percent of our attendance today.”

Sharing consisted of four panels and a virtual presentation from Nick S. at the G.S.O. Corrections Desk.

Scott B., Area 29 Corrections Chair, provided opening remarks and welcomed everyone. The first set of panel discussions included: “A.A. History in Maryland Correctional Facilities” and “Minding the Gap” through use of A.A. literature, including *Grapevine* and “Cooperating with Re-Entry Programs & DUI Courts.”

See **Corrections** on page 2



Corrections cont. from page 1

After a wonderful lunch provided by the Area Host committee, panel discussions continued with: “Taking Meetings into Correctional Facilities.”

In his virtual presentation, Nick S. from the GSO Corrections Desk highlighted efforts to respond to letters from 1,248 A.A. members both inside and outside correctional facilities in his first eight months on the desk. The Corrections Correspondence Service has a particular need for Spanish-speaking and female members outside of correctional facilities to correspond with those inside.

Nick also discussed an initiative to provide electronic A.A. literature via tablets. Many facilities and members are still unaware of this program, so spreading awareness remains a key challenge.

The day concluded with a keynote panel, “Former Persons in Custody.”

Members shared their experience of either getting sober or planting the seeds of sobriety while in custody.

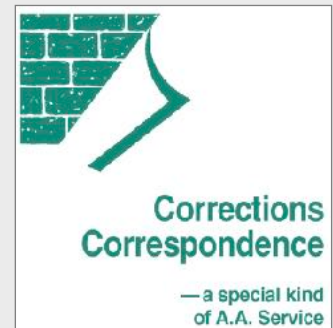
Feedback was received with 100 percent of respondents stating that the Corrections Conference Day of Sharing met their objectives and found the format satisfactory. When attendees were asked about their favorite sessions, responses varied but indicated there was something for everyone!

A second Area Corrections Conference Day of Sharing is being planned for Oct. 11, 2025. Watch Our Common Welfare and the Area 29 website events page for more information.

**Area 29 Maryland
General Service Events**

Get into Service

A.A.’s General Service Office is always looking for volunteer A.A.s to correspond with inmates who want to learn about recovery. Sign up for the **Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)** <https://www.aa.org/corrections-correspondent-sign-form>.

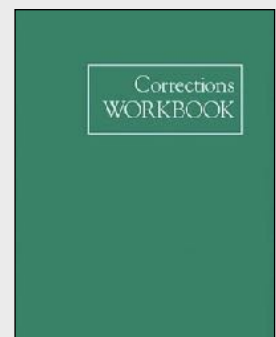


Guidelines for corresponding with inmates can be found at https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/f-26_en_0223.pdf.

Sharing from Behind the Walls is a quarterly newsletter published by the A.A. General Service Office that includes inmate letters. Current and back issues can be printed from the Corrections section of the G.S.O. website at www.aa.org.



The Area 29 Corrections Committee is responsible for carrying the A.A. message of recovery to alcoholics behind the walls, and to set up means of “Bridging the Gap” from the facility to the larger A.A. community. Find out more at marylandaa.com



Area 29 asks: Are we fulfilling our purpose?

Inventory reveals strengths, shortfalls of service structure

Frank M., Area 29 Chair

“Working together, increasing trust” is the theme of the 2025 General Service Conference. That is also the Area 29 theme for 2025. It is most appropriate after our October Area Inventory.

Our October Assembly is one of the most important Area Assemblies of the year – it’s our area inventory – we do this in October of every even numbered year. Just as we do a searching and fearless moral inventory on our personal recovery journey – a group and district inventory can be very beneficial. The General Service Board has just published the results of their inventory. In mid-September, twelve questions were sent to the fellowship to be discussed with groups and districts and bring feedback to the Assembly.

Cindy F, Past Delegate and non-Trustee Director from Fairfax, VA facilitated the day.

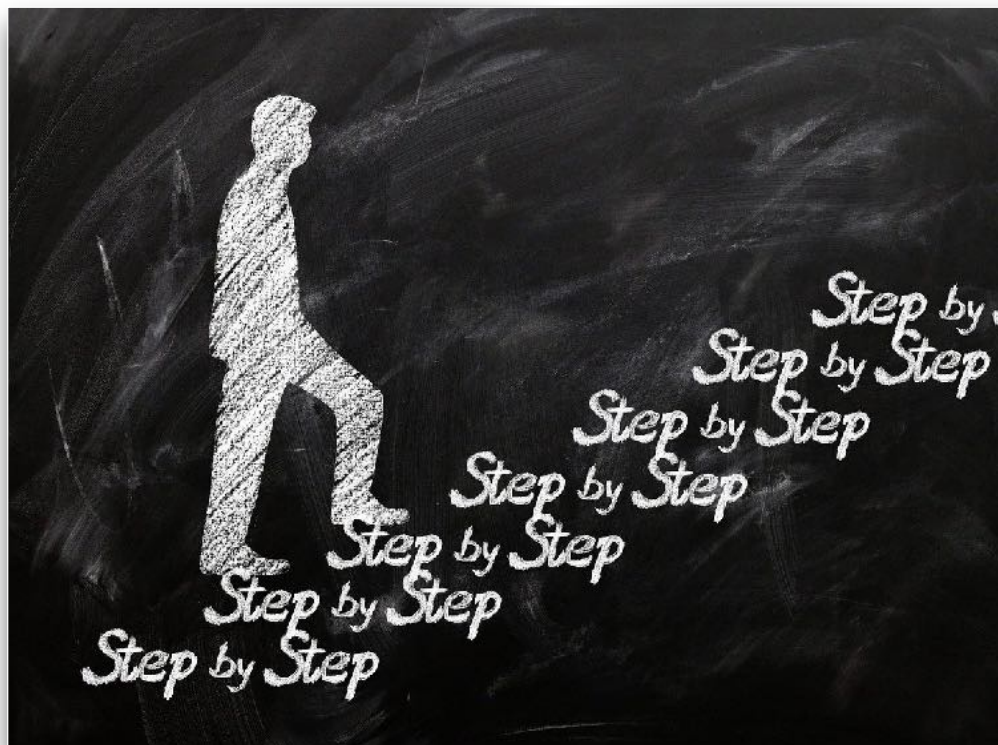
What did we learn?

- GSRs have a challenge as to what to report to groups.
- DCMs are seeing poor attendance at District meetings.
- Folks new to service appreciate the orientations but are sometimes intimidated at Area meetings.
- The new website is doing well. Hybrid meetings are making Area meetings more accessible to some.
- *Our Common Welfare* has been a great resource for the Area.
- The Area needs to discern the needs of our new linguistic district and what resources are needed.
- We are missing a portion of the fellowship, particularly people of color.

This year, we will do our best to engage people by doing things at Area meetings such as “Ask Me” buttons, trying a Buddy system, Roberts Rules table cards, forming an ad hoc committee to analyze the needs of District 29, getting the word out of what our Area committees are doing and what they can do for our districts and groups.

These are but a few suggestions that came out of the Inventory. During 2025 we plan to do all we can to ensure Area 29 is “Working together and Increasing Trust.”

Just as we do a searching and fearless moral inventory on our personal recovery journey – a group and district inventory can be very beneficial.



“Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” (Tradition 1)

Our Common Welfare is the newsletter for Area 29 Maryland General Service, published quarterly to foster unity and cultivate communication among A.A. members, groups, districts, and Intergroups within the MGS Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. *OCW* aims to encourage service and carry the A.A. message by publishing A.A.-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength and hope, and members’ encounters with service at every level.

Nothing published in *OCW* should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or A.A. policy, and publication does not constitute endorsement by the newsletter, Area 29, Intergroup, Districts, local groups, or A.A. as a whole.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are welcome, including anonymity-protected photos, graphics, drawings, and articles. Written submissions can be up to 500 words – shorter is fine, too. All submissions will be reviewed by the Newsletter Committee chair and may be edited for length and clarity.

Send submissions and calendar items to margenser@marylandaa.org.

Looking for a service position?

Join the Newsletter Committee and help us grow and develop the revived Area 29 publication. Contact Kristin B. at margenser@marylandaa.org

Feedback is welcome...and encouraged. Let us know what you think. What else would you like to see in the newsletter?

What happened at the Dec. 14th Assembly?



Voted 63 to 2 to approve the 2025 Maryland General Service budget.



Used the Third Legacy Procedure to elect a candidate for the open Trustee-at-Large position with the General Service Office. Candidates were Past Delegates Don B. (Panel 68) and Tom R. (Panel 58).

After three votes, **Don B.** won with 44 of 63 votes, or 70 percent.

A 2/3 majority vote, or a substantial unanimity, was required. **For a complete description of the Third Legacy Procedure, see p. 110 of the A.A. Service Manual, or page 22 of the Maryland General Service Area Assembly Handbook.**

Don B will be considered for the Trustee-at-Large position, along with candidates from the other 92 Areas in the U.S. and Canada, at the April 2025 General Service Conference.

Two alcoholics (one from Canada and one from the U.S.) serve as trustees-at-large of the General Service Board. They represent the U.S. and Canada at the World Service Meetings and the Zonal Meeting of the Americas.



Voted 50 to 11 to allow District 46 to transfer from Area 29 to Area 12 for logistical reasons, as Area 12 is geographically closer, and that participation would increase by avoiding going over the Chesapeake.

Voted 22 to 13 against a motion to reconsider.

Upon review by the Maryland General Service Board of Directors, it was determined that the motion was “unactionable at this time” and should be further discussed and reconsidered at an upcoming Committee Meeting.



Voted 48 to 7 to table a motion recommending that Maryland General Service, Inc., not fund a hospitality suite at the 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, Canada.

Who votes at an Area Assembly?

All members of A.A. in Area 29 are welcome to attend!

Voting members include all Area Officers, Area Committee Chairs or their Alternates, District Committee Members or their Alternates, and General Service Representatives or their Alternates.

Get involved! Represent your A.A. group as General Service Representative and have a voice in how the Fellowship functions and grows. Our next Assembly is **Saturday, March 22**, at Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.

Delegate to attend his fourth International Convention

July event in Vancouver the ‘chance of a lifetime’

Terry P., Area 29 Delegate, Panel 74

In the early 90’s, I was living in San Diego and had a few years of sobriety under my belt. Following my sponsor’s recommendation, I got involved in service after moving to San Diego with one year of sobriety. I became active both in my home group and at the local intergroup level. In my early 30’s, I was enjoying sobriety and sunny Southern California.

One day, I saw an announcement about the A.A. International Convention, which was going to be held in San Diego in July 1995. As the newsletter editor for the local intergroup, I was thrilled about the opportunity to provide information to members in the area. I signed up to volunteer, and on the day of the volunteer orientation, about 400–500 of us gathered in a hotel meeting room in downtown San Diego. The energy was electric and we were invited to walk over to the Convention Center to see the spaces where the event would take place.

When the convention weekend arrived, downtown San Diego was filled with thousands of alcoholics. It was amazing to witness the sheer scale of the event. As the newsletter editor, I had gotten approval from the intergroup to print 10,000 copies of our local newsletter. I brought boxes and boxes of newsletters to the convention, and everywhere I placed them, people eagerly grabbed handfuls. It was such an exciting time—a chance to meet new friends, reconnect with old ones, and experience the energy of so many people coming together.

One of the highlights was attending the big meetings at the local football stadium. It’s hard to describe the feeling of being in a meeting with 40,000–50,000 other alcoholics, all reciting the Serenity Prayer at the same time. It was truly unforgettable.

Years later, I attended the International Conventions in San Antonio and Atlanta. Each event was unique, but all shared the same spirit of connection and recovery. I had registered for the Detroit convention, but as we know, COVID-19 prevented it from happening.

Like my experience in San Diego, the conventions in San Antonio and Atlanta were filled with friends, family, and fantastic presentations. Maryland has always had a strong presence at these events. I recall Harold G., a longtime member from Annapolis and a trusted servant



Click here for Information about the 2025 International Convention

in Maryland General Service, as the keynote speaker and other Area 29 members leading panels.

Now, I’m looking forward to Vancouver in July of this year, where I will attend my fourth International Convention. I’ve visited Vancouver before and have walked around the Convention Center and downtown. The excitement is indescribable. After the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and missing the Detroit convention, I am especially eager to experience Vancouver.

These International Conventions are not just an opportunity to gather with 40,000–60,000 other Alcoholics, attend panels, and participate in large meetings. They’re also profound opportunities for spiritual growth. Events like these are often the highlight of many people’s recovery journeys. Seeing this miracle at work in so many people is awe-inspiring. It’s truly the chance of a lifetime, and I encourage everyone to attend at least once.

For those who may find it difficult to attend a large convention all the way on the West Coast, there is also virtual programming available through aa.org. I hope to see you there!

*It was such an exciting time
— a chance to meet new
friends, reconnect with old
ones, and experience the energy of so
many people coming together.*

Toward a new *Gleanings*: Help Area 29 to flesh out A.A.'s history in Maryland

Editor's note: Articles from *Gleanings from Maryland's A.A. History*, written in the 1990s, are more than 30 years old, and Area 29 Delegate Terry P. would like to compile an updated volume with additional articles about the history of A.A. groups in Maryland.

Below is one such article, submitted in 2008 by Baltimore's Druid Hill Group.

If your group has a fairly recent history, or if your district has a collection of group histories, please send it to margenser@marylandaa.org for possible publication here and inclusion in an updated *Gleanings*.

The Druid Hill Group (2008)

The first Druid Hill Group meeting was held on March 9, 1947. The group was started by Tom and Lib Symington of the 857 Group, which was a white group. Prior to 1947, there were no black A.A. groups in Baltimore City. Blacks were not permitted to attend white A.A. groups unless they were invited by members of the white groups or were the speakers.

In the beginning, the Druid Hill A.A. Group had day meetings only, at the Druid Hill YMCA. They wanted to have night meetings, but the YMCA did not have any openings at night. Later, the meetings were held at the Druid Hill Health Clinic, 1313 Druid Hill Ave. Harold Thomas joined the group in July 1947, followed by Arthur Williams, who joined Oct. 23, 1947.

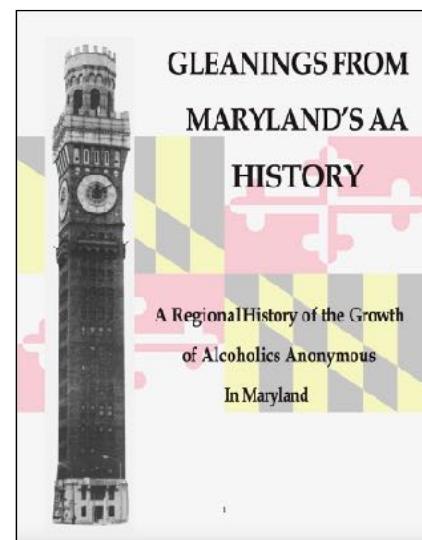
Lib Symington was the group secretary at this time. After three years, Tom and Lib left the group to Harold and Arthur to carry on the fellowship.

Many people came through the doors but did not stay until Julliette Nickens and Thomas (Chink) Wyatt came into the group to help Harold and Arthur carry the message to new members. Chink Wyatt had the only car in the group. He would pick up members and take them to the meetings. On Sunday evenings he would take the group to the

Intergroup meetings, which were held on Oliver Street. Both white and black attended this meeting.

In 1956, three newcomers came to the Druid Hill Group. They were Lee Stokes, Melvin Tuggle, and Nathaniel Tillman. Also joining the group were Alice Moran, Sarah Burgess, Dan Johnson, Robert Johnson, Wilbert Knight, Sam Young, Sally and Bill Banks, George Conway, and Edwin Allen. From this group, other meetings for blacks were formed in Baltimore City.

There was a need for more black groups in other areas of Baltimore. Lee and Robert left the group to form the Highland Park Group. Alice Moran left the group to help form the Midway Group, which met on Popular Grove, and later the Park Heights Group. Sarah Burgess left the group to help form the Echo and Omega groups. These were the core groups of the black A.A. experience in Baltimore City. From these groups, other groups began to form all over Baltimore City. All members of the core groups supported the new groups. At each of these meetings you could see numbers of black A.A. groups in Baltimore. These were the only groups open to blacks.



Find [Gleanings](#) here, or go to marylandaa.org

*W*e, the members of the
Druid Hill Group
2008, feel that it is
very important to build on our history
in Baltimore City. We feel that we
need to mention by name those who
have kept the doors of A.A. open so
that we would have a chance to
recover and live a better life.

One of the Druid Hill Group members, Julliette Nickens, inspired the first Gratitude Breakfast in Baltimore City.

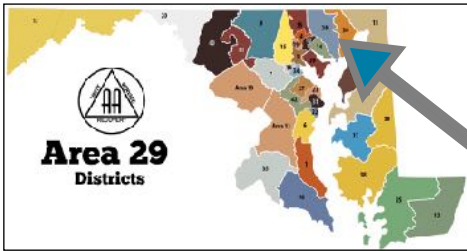
See **Druid Hill** on page 14

‘Having a sponsor’ and ‘being a sponsor’ topics at workshop

Jeanine W., Chair, Area 29 Workshop Committee

District 28 hosted a Sponsorship Forum on Saturday, October 26th at Harford Community Church in Belair, Md., from 9 a.m. until noon. There were 41 attendees.

Attendees were given a nice folder that included the



Questions and Answers on Sponsorship pamphlet (P-15), a copy of Clarence Snyder’s 1944 Sponsorship pamphlet, and the service piece,

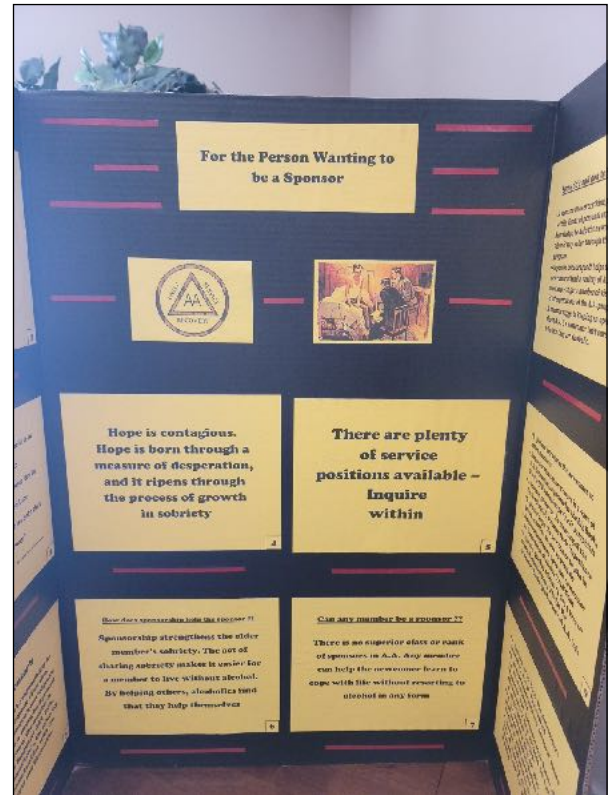
Sponsorship – A Vital Stepping-Stone to Service and Sobriety. There was also blank paper and a pen for note-taking.

After a continental breakfast, Brian M. opened the forum at 9 a.m. Jeanine W. gave a brief history of sponsorship using a poster board as a visual aid. There were three panel sessions – Being A Sponsor, Having a Sponsor and Service Sponsorship. Each panel ended with a Q&A session for attendees.

Door prizes of *Grapevine* literature were given after each panel presentation.

The panel “Being a Sponsor” was first. Dan W. stated that as an old-timer told him, “The best way to learn *how* to sponsor is to be a sponsor.” Linda B., the second panelist, emphasized that the sponsor must learn to work within their (and their sponsee’s) limitations. They discussed the sponsor-sponsee relationship and what sponsorship *is* and *isn’t*.

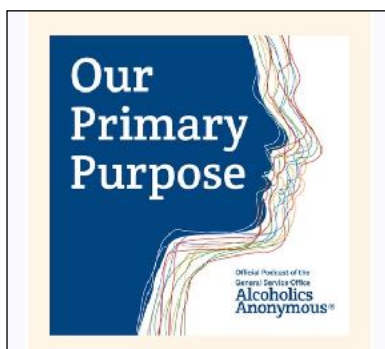
In the second panel, “Having a sponsor,” Amber W. and Bruce B. spoke about their experiences with getting a sponsor, how they were helped by their sponsor, and the relationship that evolved with their sponsor. Both emphasized



the importance of communication in the sponsor-sponsee relationship.

The third panel, “Service Sponsorship” was led by Linda J., and Don B., both of whom are past Area 29 Delegates. They spoke about the importance of having a service sponsor to guide you in your service work and how that relationship differed from your relationship with your recovery sponsor. They shared their personal experience of having and being a service sponsor. Linda J. emphasized that “Service is the Secret” and Don B. finished up the day singing his “Sponsor-less” song.

Upon reviewing the Feedback Forms from the attendees, it appears that everyone enjoyed all panels and presenters and appreciated the Q&A after each panel. When asked for “other comments” there were no negative remarks – most were a thank you for an enjoyable forum!



90 in 90...

Brigitte F, Area 29 Treasurer

We are so fortunate these days to have such a wide variety and selection of A.A. meetings to attend, both in person and virtually. Looking back at A.A. history, I am always grateful for the determination of those early members who rode trains, took buses, and wrote letters to the General Service Office in New York to connect themselves to the fragile new beginning of what has become a worldwide program of recovery. Until Bill W. and Dr. Bob sat together, talking and igniting the spark of what became Alcoholics Anonymous, we drunks were doomed to be thrown out on the streets, locked up in institutions for the mentally ill, and basically left to die terrible, lonely deaths.

Yet in spite of this, I can still get complacent about meeting attendance. Thankfully, there are many tools that I can use to re-ignite that spark in my own program. We all have these choices, whether it's sponsoring others, making coffee in our home groups, serving as GSRs or DCMs, bringing meetings to institutions, etc. But, for me anyway, A.A. meetings have always been a critical part of my program, where I am reminded of what it's still like "out there," and where I meet my fellow travelers on this road through sobriety, experiencing new lessons in how to live life on life's terms. Meetings are where I can hang out with my tribe; I've felt this way since the very beginning.

That said, my first sponsor gifted me with something that's pretty common for newbies: the strong suggestion/directive that I attend 90 A.A. meetings in 90 days. This wasn't too difficult as my home group – Early Bird in downtown Frederick – was then, and still does meet six days a week at 6:45 a.m. If anything, I was doing at least that many meetings in those early days. I was an evening drinker, so I needed to be in meetings at night, too. Initially I thought this meant I could take Sundays off. Nope. My sponsor picked me up on Sunday mornings and we would ride up to a meeting in Thurmont, about 20 minutes away, which gave us an opportunity to talk about the Steps and for my sponsor to listen to my latest complaints, until she veered the conversation away from problems and toward solutions. By the end of that 90 days, I felt much more secure about my chances of staying sober, but of course there was still a lot of work ahead. One of the biggest gifts of that early experience was the confidence it gave me to walk into any A.A. meeting anywhere around the world and immediately feel comfortable.

“One of the biggest gifts of that early experience was the confidence it gave me to walk into any A.A. meeting anywhere around the world and immediately feel comfortable.”

to celebrate 20 years of sobriety



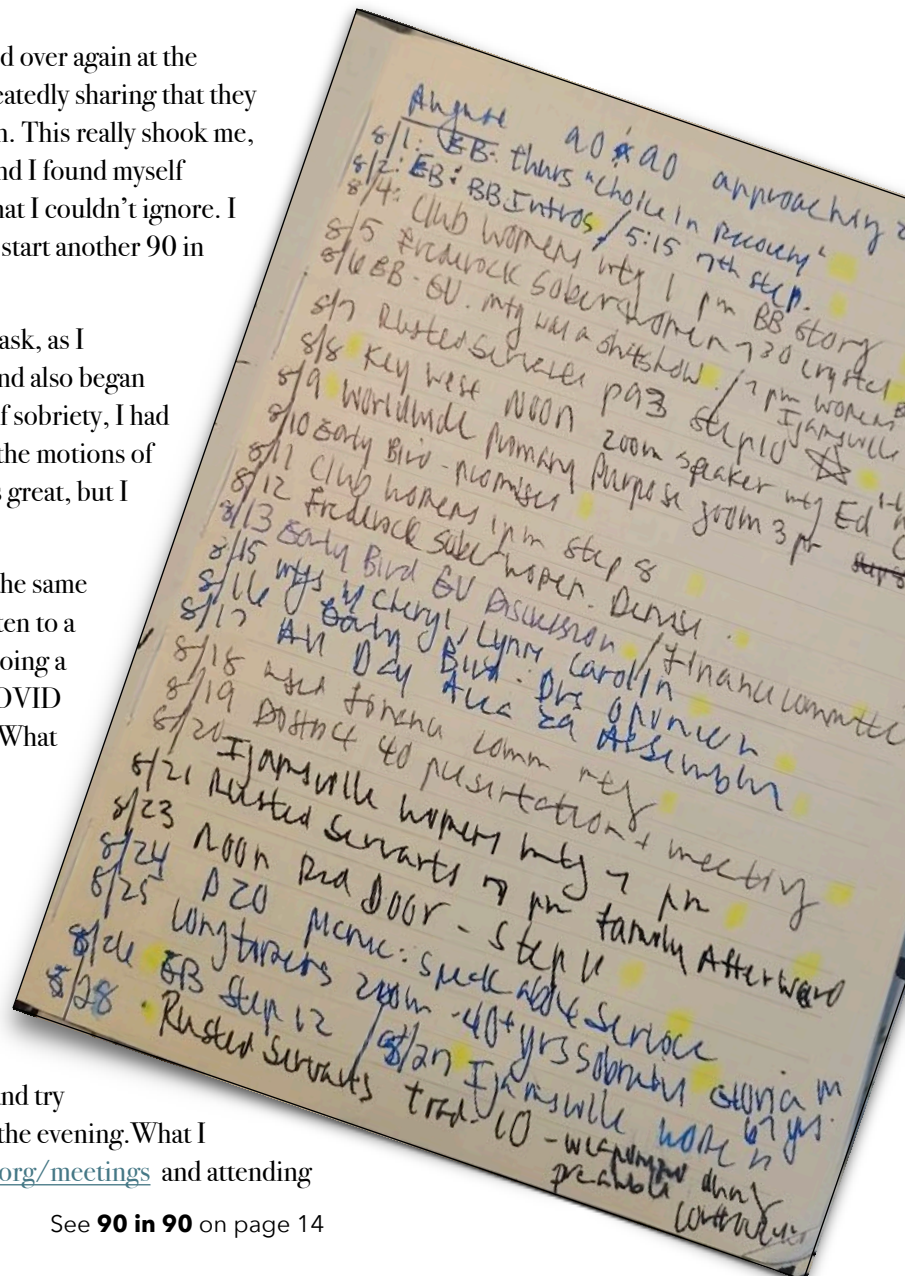
I continued to attend meetings, but after several years I wasn't doing so as consistently. My meetings gradually dropped off from five to three or less a week. I figured this was fine, as I had a husband and two teenage sons that I was working on making living amends to, I was working with other women, and I had a job that in hindsight I was getting a little obsessed with, believing that this was necessary to make up for all the times I showed up hungover. Meetings had definitely lost their priority.

Suddenly, I started hearing a similar message over and over again at the meetings I did attend. People who had relapsed were repeatedly sharing that they had stopped going to meetings and eventually drank again. This really shook me, especially when people I knew didn't make it back at all and I found myself attending their funerals. What a huge wake up call, one that I couldn't ignore. I made up my mind in July 2014 that on August 1, I would start another 90 in 90, culminating with my 10 year anniversary.

It turned out to be a challenging but very rewarding task, as I reconnected with several people that I'd lost touch with and also began praying regularly again. When I celebrated my 10 years of sobriety, I had immense gratitude and knew I wasn't just going through the motions of picking up a chip. I also told several of my friends, "It was great, but I will NEVER do that again!"

Fast forward 10 more years and yes, you guessed it, the same idea popped into my head last July. Once again, I had gotten to a point where my meeting attendance had fallen off. I was doing a lot of service work and sponsoring several women, but COVID had absolutely impacted my regular meeting attendance. What it did do, however, was make me comfortable attending meetings online, something I had never done before.

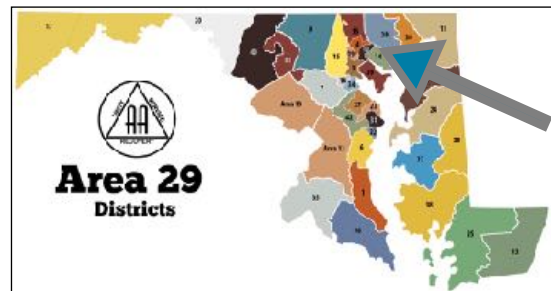
What did this latest stint of attending 90 meetings in 90 days feel like? It was a great way to get me back to attending Early Bird more regularly, although 20 years later it is much harder to get up, get ready and arrive by 6:30 a.m. which is what I like to do, for the all-important meeting before the meeting with my pals. Like 10 years ago, this was also an opportunity to branch out and try more meetings, some on Sunday afternoons and some in the evening. What I really enjoyed was surfing around <https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings> and attending



See 90 in 90 on page 14

Alcothons bring cheer and sobriety

District 19 celebrates ‘chip drop’ instead of ball drop on NYE



Anna S., DCM, District 19

North Baltimore’s District 19 rang in the New Year with an Alcothon at St. David’s Church on Roland Avenue, with meetings on the hour from 4 p.m. until midnight.

The district has hosted a New Year’s Eve Alcothon at least as far back as the early 2000s, though some of this year’s attendees recalled others in the same room in the 1980s. After moving online for the pandemic in 2020, and one missed year in 2021, the event returned to St. David’s in 2022 and has been going strong ever since.

This year, in addition to hosting meetings, groups in the district had the option to “sponsor” a time slot, by committing volunteers to fill the various roles needed throughout the evening. In all, 11 groups participated as hosts and/ or sponsors, and their enthusiastic support made the Alcothon a success from beginning to end.

The pot-luck brought in a festive flourish along with the food. This year, the dessert table dominated, with goodies ranging from chocolate cupcakes to pie and cookies. Dinner items were also a hit, with various delicious pastas, salads and even a pizza or two. The leftovers went to a few sober houses nearby.

Meetings varied widely in topic and character. At the 6 p.m. Sought Through meeting, over 50 people sat in silent meditation for 15 minutes – a feat described by several as both challenging and important amid the holiday chaos. Later on, the Queer Ideas of Fun group began their meeting with a reading of the Daily Reflections – punctuated at the right moment by the first few notes of a popular musical. The final meeting of the evening was the Firing Line, whose speaker, Kevin, celebrated his one year anniversary that day.

Other highlights included the sobriety countdown at 8 p.m. Attendees applauded one another as they marked the various lengths of sobriety in the room, ranging from 49 years to two days. Those with the longest and shortest times each received a book as a gift.

As the clock approached midnight, an oversized 24-hour chip slowly dropped to the floor, and everyone celebrated one more day of recovery.

District 19 wishes to express our deepest gratitude for the many members who attended, hosted meetings, made coffee, served as greeters or hall-monitors, arrived early for setup, stayed late for cleanup, and ran last minute errands for supplies. Thanks to you, our Alcothon continues to be a great way to greet the new year.



A giant A.A. anniversary chip descended from the ceiling at midnight during the District 19 Alcothon on New Year’s Eve.

to Maryland A.A. groups over holidays

District 36 hosts Christmas and New Year's marathon meetings



Mary F., Events Chair, District 36

District 36 holds annual holiday Alcothons at both Christmas and New Years. These events have been going on since 1999, when the first Alcothon was held in Lexington Park, Md., by two men who are still sober today.

Every year we have these marathons so that people will have a place to go during the holidays, where they can get an A.A. meeting, a cup of coffee, and a snack. It is a potluck event, and has grown over the years.

This year, we had enough leftovers to send to the local shelter/soup kitchen afterwards.

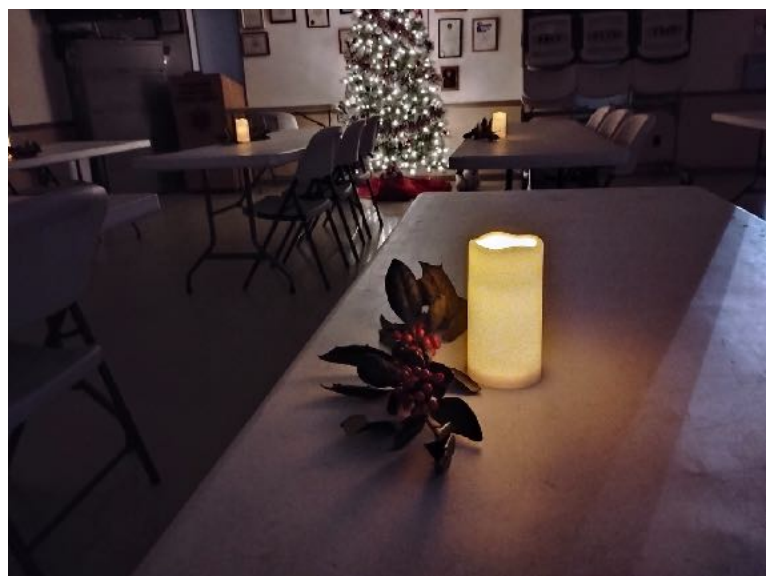
We have meetings every hour for 24 hours. People come to be reminded they have it better than they did when they were drinking, to help carry the message to the next sufferer, to gain insights and help solve problems related to recovery and alcoholism, and to share the holidays with likeminded folks who don't drink any longer!

As chairperson of the annual Christmas Alcothon, Mary F. says that she gets meeting chairs/leaders for all 24 marathon meetings.

This year the topics of surrender and willingness seemed popular, as well as gratitude, and dealing with adversity in A.A., among others. Leaders either shared their experience, strength and hope, or simply opened the meeting with a topic, or asked for one.

District 36 sets aside a budget for holiday Alcothons, so that any needed supplies can be purchased ahead of time. A seventh tradition basket goes round each hour, and that money is used to pay rent for the facility where the event is being held.

All-in-all, this year's Alcothons were a success, as they have been for many years now.



"It's really nice to have people get together during the holidays because we have a lot of people who don't have a place to go," Mary F. said in an article for the local newspaper about the holiday Alcothons. "And here they can listen or share their experience or just enjoy the atmosphere."

Swipe Right for Service... and Love

Diana R., CSR, Monday Night Grace

I came into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous in March 2021. Back then, most meetings were still online. My home group was #Haven, the Baltimore midnight meeting that didn't quite survive COVID. I quickly became interested in serving the group, and since there's no coffee to make but my own for an online meeting, I volunteered to secretary the meeting a few times a month.

Eventually, I heard about other opportunities for service at our group conscience meeting – we didn't have an active General Service Representative (GSR). A GSR is the person who brings their group's conscience to district and area assemblies and brings back key takeaways to their group. I started getting curious about whether that might be a good position to take on.

Right around that same time, in February 2022, I matched with #Haven's Treasurer, Doug McK, on Tinder, the dating app. We had only ever seen each other's faces in the Group Conscience meetings and maybe one or two other times when he occasionally came to the actual meeting itself. I asked him if this was a real 'match' or if he just 'swiped right' on me because we vaguely knew each other. He said he had some reservations given my being under a year in the program, but that he did have genuine interest in me. After we both consulted our sponsors, we had our first date – it was a success. We had a foundational connection by both being in the rooms and having a shared program.

Sometime after that first date, I must have mentioned that I was interested in learning more about service beyond our meeting. That's when I found out Doug was not just our group Treasurer – he was also General Service Representative for a different group, the District Committee Member for our district, a special worker at Baltimore Intergroup, and webmaster for Maryland General Service. What did this guy NOT do?! I had clearly stumbled upon one of the best sources of local A.A. service knowledge. I asked him to give me some more information about how to get involved in service beyond the group.

Doug showed up to our SECOND DATE with the A.A. Service Manual in hand. I still have our score sheet from our duckpin bowling game that day,



and I still have that A.A. Service Manual. I read it cover to cover, nominated myself to be GSR for #Haven, and started attending District Meetings (led by Doug).

Fast forward to today, Doug and I are set to be married in June 2025. We both serve the fellowship beyond our groups — Doug as Schedule Coordinator for the Baltimore Institutions Committee and myself as the GSR for my home group, Monday Night Grace. His entire wedding party is made up of A.A. folks, and we will have plenty of our friends from the program in attendance.

Looking back, it's incredible to think about how far I've come since those early days in the rooms

See **Love** on page 13

Our story is a testament to the power of the rooms of A.A. — not just for recovery, but for building relationships, exploring new possibilities, and living a life of service.

What did you think?

Tom R., Area 29 Panel 58 Delegate

When I received my Third Edition copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or Big Book, in an inpatient treatment center, I was told this was the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous. Having little knowledge at that time of who wrote this, I thought the author was erudite and the document wordy. I practically needed a dictionary side by side with the Big Book as I read it. Sometime later, I had the benefit of a sponsor who would take me through the book and most importantly, the Twelve Steps.

Then, years ago, I heard that a Plain Language Big Book was under development. I confess I was dubious at first. Is the Big Book being dumbed down? Will the A.A. message remain the same? What will be lost in translation? I understood that this was a translation into simpler language, to be used as a tool for carrying the A.A. message, and not a replacement for the Big Book itself.

After acquiring a copy of the new *Plain Language Big Book*, I went straight to Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism, a page my first sponsor had me read over and over. I found the message the same, in slightly different words. For example, "...pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization" was worded as "...we feel like we have failed completely in our lives and we may never be worthy again." Inside margins on each page highlight words or phrases with their definitions, helpful to anyone heretofore unfamiliar with those words. The Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts appear intact, alongside a plain language explanation of each principle. My only qualm has been that the pagination of the *Plain Language Big Book* does not match the Third or Fourth Editions. I have been pleased that the A.A. message remains the same in the *Plain Language Big Book*.

Have you read *The Plain Language Big Book*? Send us your review! Email to: margenser@marylandaa.org



Order the Plain Language Big Book for \$11 here.

Diana R., CSR, Monday Night Grace

The Plain Language Big Book is easier to understand and kept the meaning of the Founder's writings. We A.A.s come from all walks of life, and this translation of the Big Book should be a great tool to help folks tackle the Big Book with greater ease. This is especially true for folks who don't have access to somebody in person/a dictionary to help break down some of the old-time language and difficult vocabulary. With as broad of a vocab as I have, there are phrases and words in the Big Book that made no sense to me and had to be explained to me. Not once in reading the *Plain Language Big Book* did I get lost.

Love continued from page 12

of Alcoholics Anonymous Through A.A., I found a community that supported me, encouraged me, and gave me the tools to grow. What started as a search for a place of healing and connection led me not only to service but to a deep, lasting partnership with Doug.

Our story is a testament to the power of the rooms of A.A. — not just for recovery, but for building relationships, exploring new possibilities, and living a life of service. As we approach our wedding in June 2025, we're filled with gratitude for the program and the people in it who have become our family. Our shared commitment to service, recovery, and each other is the best foundation we could have, and we can't wait to see where this path takes us.

Order the new edition of the A.A. Service Manual here.

The A.A. Service Manual

Two titles in a single booklet.

The **A.A. Service Manual** opens with history of A.A. services, then explains the General Service Conference structure and its year-round importance. Chapters cover the roles of GSRs, DCMs, delegates, directors and trustees, as well as what happens at GSO and Grapevine.

The **Twelve Concepts for World Service**, written by A.A. co-founder Bill W., are an interpretation of A.A.'s world service structure as it emerged through A.A.'s early history and experience.

BM-31 A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Services
General Service Conference-approved

Share your story – in print

Workshop focuses on writing for publication in Grapevine, A.A. newsletters

Mary F., Events Coordinator, District 36

District 36 hosted a tri-county A.A. writing workshop December aimed at educating people in the many ways to share their stories and experiences, not only through traditional *Grapevine* articles, but to area and district newsletters.

We began with a guest host from The *Grapevine* editorial outreach at GSO, and she gave us many ideas on what they have found to be sound writing tips, topics and methods of delivery. She provided us with schedules, and how the editorial process works, how long it takes, how you get informed of whether your article has been received, and whether it may be published. She also explained all the tools that are available to help individuals with difficulties (language, literacy, hearing impairments).

After a short lunch break, we reviewed some organizational tips and held general discussions about next steps. All agreed that a follow up workshop was in order where we would put pen to paper and develop some ideas.



[Find out more about submitting material to Grapevine here.](#)

We will plan that event in February, with the date still TBD. We also discussed holding this workshop two to three times a year. I agreed to seek an opportunity at the next Round-up, so keep your eyes peeled for a chance to get started this spring.

Druid Hill continued from page 6

The breakfast was held at St. Peter Clover Church. Nat Tillman and Lee Stokes served those who attended the breakfast.

Bessie Thomas, Harold's wife, started the first black Alanon group in Baltimore City. A little later, Arthur's wife, Mae, joined the group. The group met at Knox Presbyterian Church. The group later moved to St. Pious Church. Nat's wife, Joyce, Lee's wife, Georgia, Catherine Cross, and Lynwood Crutchfield joined this group.

The following Druid Hill Group members have now gone home to the BIG GROUP: Tom Symington, Harold Thomas, Arthur Williams, Thomas (Chink) Wyatt, Julliette Nickens, Nathaniel Tillman, Melvin Tuggle, Lee Stokes, Alice Moran, Sarah Burgess, Dan Johnson, Wilbert Knight, Sam Young, George Conway, Irving Simpson, Edwin Allen, Nathaniel Lewis, and Sally and Bill Banks.

Any history of the Druid Hill Group or the black groups of Baltimore would be incomplete without mentioning those who came into A.A. who did not become members of the Druid Hill Group but supported the group in so many ways.

To name a few, Wayne Brooks, Richard Lewis, Arthur English, Winfield Ligon, have gone home to the BIG GROUP. The following members of the fellowship are still carrying the message of hope for 30 years or more: Fred H. Charlie W., Earl H., Walter W., Nancy H., and Naomi and Harry P.

Other members who have gone to the BIG MEETING are: Winfield Ligon, Robert McDaniel, Robert A. Ware, Jr., Charles O. Floyd, Henry Warren, Jr., Deacon Watson Fulton, James Barnes, Mary Randolph, Deacon Roosevelt Jordan, Lois Sutton, Al Ivey, and Archie Jones.

We, the members of the Druid Hill Group 2008, feel that it is very important to build on our history in Baltimore City. We feel that we need to mention by name those who have kept the doors of A.A. open so that we would have a chance to recover and live a better life. We know that we may have missed someone or an event, and for that we apologize.

If there's anyone who knows someone we have not mentioned, or of an event not included, please contact any member of the Druid Hill Group with that information so that it can be included in our history. It is up to us to keep the history alive for all to see.

How many A.A. books can you fit in the back of a Subaru Crosstrek?

Well....we didn't actually count.

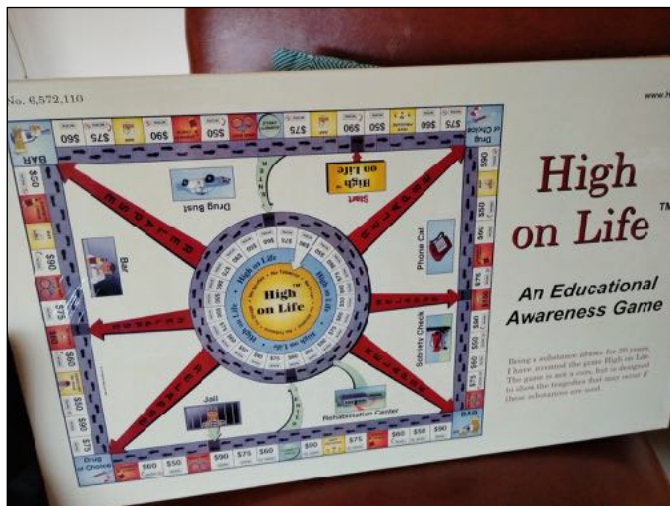
Let's just say, quite a few! Add to that pamphlets, racks, newsletters, and displays, and you've got quite a haul.

As part of her service commitment, Literature Chair Jean B. packs her car full of A.A. literature for each Area Committee and Assembly meeting, as well as other A.A. events. She's also in charge of ordering stock, among other duties.

The Literature Committee Chair is appointed by the Area 29 Chair and serves a two-year commitment, as do all other committee chairs. The Panel 74 rotation ends in December.

Find out more about service opportunities available in Area 29 on our website.

marylandaa.org



Sober Game Night smaller, but a success

Mary F., Events Coordinator, District 36

We held another game night the last Saturday of the month in December. We only had about 15 people who showed...but the holidays are a busy time.

We had a lot of fun. Some played Yahtzee, while others played Texas Hold 'Em no-money poker, and still others played the board game High on Life, designed some years ago by a member of our Fellowship, Mark K.

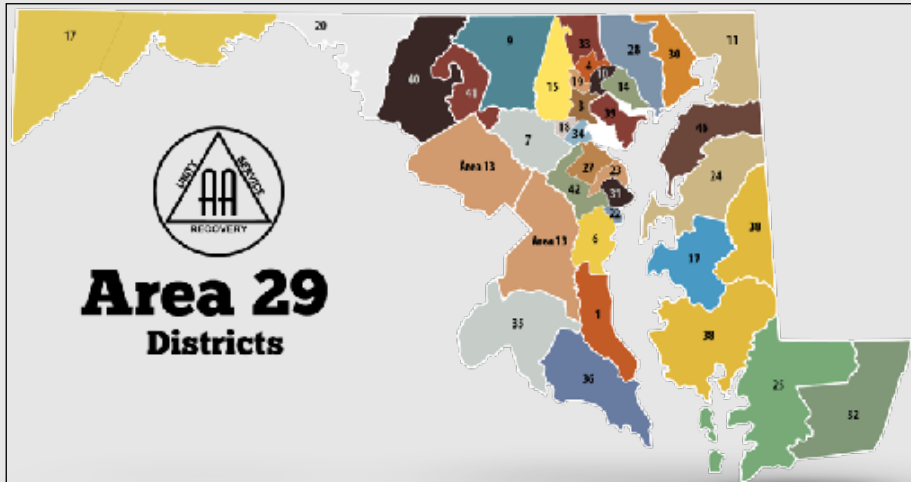
Those who played said it was a fun and challenging game.

90 in 90 continued from page 9

some really wonderful virtual meetings. There's a great Key West meeting every day at noon; it's a huge meeting but the warmth and welcoming spirit of this group is absolutely amazing. I attended a great Joe and Charlie meeting out of North Dakota, a compelling discussion about character defects and Step Six at a London-based recovery center meeting, and a "Long timers" meeting where a woman with 67 years shared her incredible story, including attending meetings with Bill W.

I have pages of my journal where I've listed all the meetings I attended during this time period, along with scribbled notes of some great shares. Here are just a few of the things I heard in virtual meetings: "Get a real sponsor, not just a taxi driver," "They didn't use to mince words in the old days we'd be asked at our first meeting: do you want to live, or die a horrible alcoholic death? No sugarcoating!" and "Look for the program in the people, not just the people who are in the program."

Once again, I breathed a sigh of relief on Nov. 1, 2024, when I celebrated 20 years of sobriety, and my self-assigned task was at an end. And like a true alcoholic I didn't attend meetings for a few days afterwards. That didn't last long. I had formed new friendships and strengthened others. I have reconnected with Frederick A.A. in a way that I didn't realize how much I had missed. If you haven't done 90 meetings in 90 days for a while, I am suggesting that it's a wonderful way to get reconnected to A.A. meetings and the fellowship – and it can be a wonderful way to prepare for your upcoming anniversary!



What's happening next in Area 29?

- **Feb. 21-23:** NERAASA (virtual event). Register at: <https://area45snjaa.org/neraasa-2025-registration>
- **March 22:** Area Assembly and MGS Board Meeting. Host District 29. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **March 29:** Mini-Conference. Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **May 17:** Area Assembly - Delegate Report Back from General Service Conference. Host District 22. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **July 19:** Area Committee. Host District 9. St. Paul's Church of Christ, 17 Bond Street, Westminster, Md.
- **Aug. 16:** Area Assembly. Host District 31. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Sept. 13:** Area Assembly: Held Virtually if there is urgent Area business.
- **Oct. 11:** Area 29 Corrections Day of Sharing. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Oct. 18:** Area Assembly: Area Elections. Host District 6. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- **Nov. 15:** Area Committee. Host District 28. Location TBD.
- **Dec. 13:** Area Assembly. Host District 7. Severna Park United Methodist Church, Severna Park, Md.

[Area 29 Events](#)

Area 29

Maryland General Service

- 11** Intergroups
- 35** Districts
- 886** Active groups
- 19** Committees
- 4** Committee meetings /year
- 5** Assemblies /year

Members of A.A. and A.A. groups can send contributions to:

Maryland General Service
PO Box 1834
Frederick, MD 21702

Or online at:

www.marylandaa.org

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