

# theDAfocus

THE QUARTERLY WORLD SERVICE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF DEBTORS ANONYMOUS

## 2Q2020

## D.A. in the Age of COVID 19

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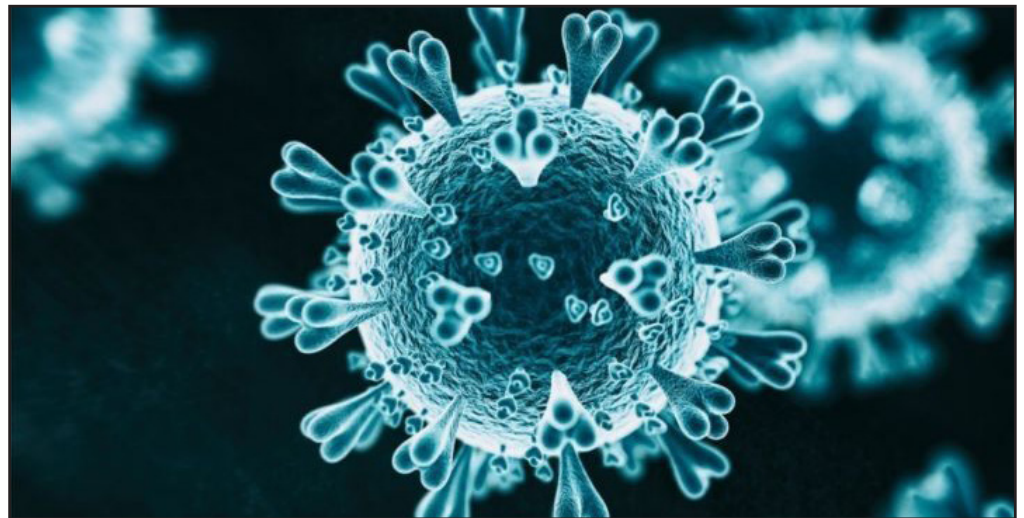
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**The DA Focus** is the service newsletter published quarterly by the General Service Board (GSB) of D.A. It is available as a download from the official D.A. website at: [debtorsanonymous.org/share](http://debtorsanonymous.org/share)

The General Service Board seeks qualified trusted servants to fill a number of service positions. The positions are non-paying. Positions include Trustees and Appointed Committee Members. For details, email: [office@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:office@debtorsanonymous.org)

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### The Pandemic as Experienced by the NYC D.A. Community



For months there were rumors circulating about a virus called COVID-19, also known as the Corona Virus. Many of us brushed this off as this year's SARS or Ebola: something that would ultimately blow over. In late February, I attended my D.A. home group. A handful of people were wearing surgical masks. People were wearing these things on the street occasionally. Were they necessary? Was this just paranoia?

A week later, workplaces and community centers were filled with dispensers of disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizers. Public service announcements urged us to wash our hands frequently. In many workplaces, company-wide mails suggested that employees could work from home ... if they wished. A week after that many were *ordered* to work from home. Gyms closed. Grocery stores were packed with people; nonperishables were flying off the shelves. Many restaurants closed, but a few remained open only for takeout.

On Friday, March 12, I got a text from the chair of the Sunday morning Writers Meeting held at the LGBT Center. She reminded me I was scheduled to speak on March 14th. I had heard a rumor they were closing the Center. "Am I really still speaking?" I was assured that the meeting would take place that Sunday—as scheduled—but it would be the last face-to-face meeting for the time being. The Center would be closing the next day: Monday. Five minutes later, I received another text. "The Center is closed as of today. The Sunday meeting is cancelled."

On the night of Sunday March 14 I texted eight D.A. fellows and told them about a D.A. phone meeting I was starting immediately. We would meet for

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# D.A. Prepares for a Virtual World Service Conference

Social distancing requirements due to COVID-19 have shuttered large gatherings, and most 12-step fellowships have moved their world conferences online. Debtors Anonymous had already voted at the 2016 World Service Conference (WSC) to allow remote participation from outside the U.S., and last year we had our first trial—a remote participant from Wales joined the 2019 World Service Conference via Zoom videoconferencing. Who knew what was to come? It’s one year later and here we are with our first all-virtual World Service Conference in 2020.

It took awhile to work out an amicable solution with the New Jersey hotel with which we’d contracted for Conferences in 2020 and 2021. There was an “impossibility clause” in our contract allowing us to cancel the contract due to extraordinary unforeseen events i.e. global pandemic. However the state of New Jersey had yet to issue any type of restrictionary precautions for August, and the hotel was unwilling to invoke the clause until that happened.

Although our hotel representative seemed willing to work with us in good conscience, a first draft of a contractual amendment by the hotel’s lawyers stipulated, among other points, that if we failed to meet our financial guarantee in 2021, we would have to pay the 2020 guarantee in full—over \$75,000. This was, of course, unacceptable. In the end, after some negotiation we reached an agreement for a \$5000 cancellation fee for 2020 which will be applied in full as a credit toward 2021. Although we have no idea what will happen with our contractual obligations for the 2021 World Service Conference, this outcome is fortunate considering all variables.

With our contractual obligations to the hotel for the 2020 WSC out of the way, the Board voted for a virtual World Service Conference this year.

## Videoconference Technology

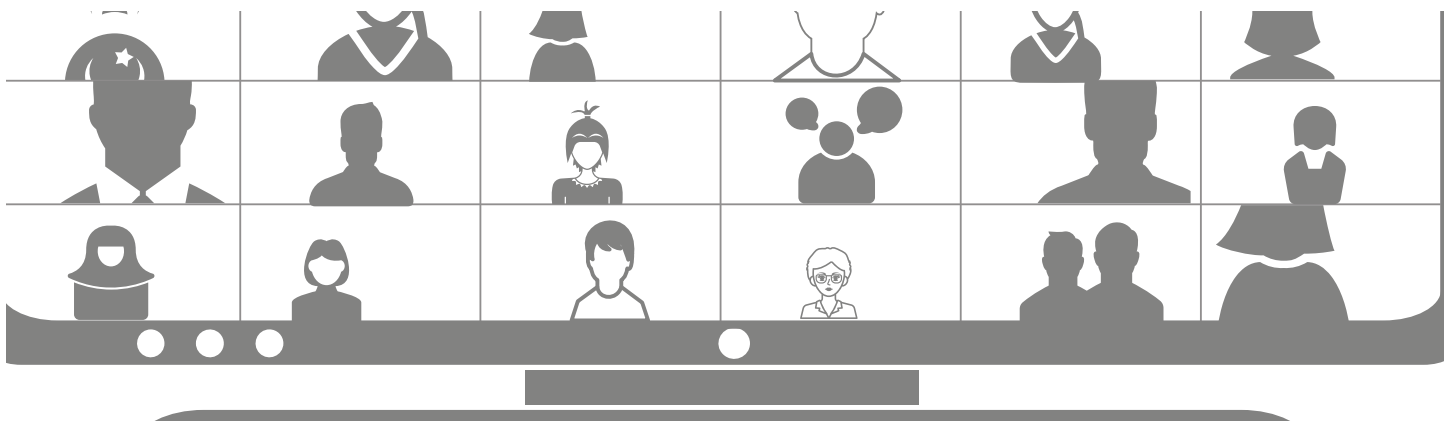
With input from helpful D.A. members, the GSB Conference Support Committee reviewed eleven major videoconferencing platforms. We settled on Zoom videoconferencing because they offered the most features we will need, such as voting, whiteboards, and file-sharing. Most of our members have already become familiar with Zoom technology as local meetings have gone virtual.

We heard some concern from a few members about security issues with Zoom in two areas: meeting safety and data encryption. Meeting safety involves the ability to prevent non-members from disrupting Conference proceedings. Since we will have the option to authenticate attendees and only allow registered delegates into the videoconference, meeting safety will not be an issue.

Data encryption allows a user to create an online account without undue concern that their personal information will be hacked. Since it is free to create a Zoom account, we are recommending that delegates create a unique email address for service and a unique password to set up a free Zoom account without providing any payment source. There is no need to even provide one’s own name. The Board is considering setting up a paid account with a pre-paid debit card as an extra security measure. More information about security precautions and how we will conduct the Conference on Zoom will be sent to delegates closer to the event.

The Board plans to enlist the services of a paid Zoom videoconference specialist to run the technology for the General Assemblies. Each committee and caucus meeting will have a volunteer from the Fellowship to handle their Zoom technology so they can focus on the business at hand.

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# Why and How I Became a GSB Trustee

My first World Service Conference was in Dallas, August 2016. I attended as the General Service Representative for my home group, the Tuesday 6:00 p.m. Progress Not Perfection meeting in Sacramento, California. In preparation for the Conference, I began to think about which committee I would serve on. My sponsor suggested that I show up at the Conference and that my Higher Power would help me make that decision.

I arrived in Dallas and participated in the customary opening day ritual of checking out several committee meetings to help me decide. This experience felt a little like fraternity rush week at the beginning of my freshman year at college. I dropped in on three or four committees and settled on Internal Operations. While some of the other committees seemed to have plenty of delegates showing interest or already involved, Internal Operations seemed to need help. I felt my professional skill set as an architect was a good match for Internal Operations, which supports the General Service Office. The choice became clear, and I joined the IOC.

The IOC chair resigned for personal reasons in November, and I volunteered to take over. I chaired the IOC for the remainder of the 2015–2016 program year. At the WSC, again in Dallas, in August 2017 I wrote and presented a recruiting message at the opening General Session on Wednesday evening. This message contained a request for delegates who had certain professional skills to consider joining the Internal Operations Committee. We were looking at all the issues surrounding our 442 square foot General Service Office with a 169 square foot storage room down the hall located in the basement of an office building in Needham,

Massachusetts. The GSO lease was expiring in October 2022. The IOC and the GSB Office Committee were beginning to think about long term planning issues surrounding the General Service Office, its physical infrastructure, and its ability to serve the D.A. Fellowship.

After hearing my recruiting message, one of the delegates who showed up to check out the IOC at the 2017 WSC was Pat T. from Minnesota. She had retired from a career as a project manager for a major manufacturing company headquartered in the Twin Cities. Her experience included years of managing physical plant projects throughout the United States. This experience was a great fit for the work connected to the D.A. General Service Office that IOC was about to begin. Pat joined the committee and began contributing immediately.

I continued to chair the IOC at the 2017 and 2018 (Minneapolis) World Service Conferences. Due to a previous work commitment, I was unable to join the 2019 WSC in Los Angeles until Thursday evening, arriving in the IOC room about an hour after the evening committee meetings had begun. I had written another recruiting message that Pat presented at the Wednesday evening opening session. I texted with her on Thursday about my arrival time. I was welcomed warmly and was pleasantly surprised to find the room filled with 8 delegates with an array of very useful skills for the IOC. Pat had led the meeting in my absence. All the officer positions were filled, with Pat chosen as the Chair. This was another piece of evidence that God was in charge.

Another significant aspect of my WSC experience is my involvement with the Spiritually Sustainable Earning Caucus. This caucus was authorized by the 2016 WSC. Its

Statement of Purpose in the 2019 DAMS reads “The SSEC serves to support the D.A Fellowship in gaining clarity around issues of earning in the D.A. program. Our vision is to broaden the Fellowship-wide understanding of how spiritually sustainable earning fits into D.A. recovery, encouraging a comprehensive and spiritual approach to by working the Twelve Steps and using the Tools of Debtors Anonymous.” (Page 83, 2019 DAMS). The enthusiasm of the members of this caucus and the leadership of founding chair Lolly A. from Los Angeles have been a source of inspiration for me.

I arrived late at the 2019 WSC. While I was uncomfortable about this at the time, it turned out to be a chance for me to consider the next step in my D.A. service career. I began to consider submitting my name to the GSB Nominations Committee. I had a series of conversations with my D.A. sponsor about service at the GSB level and if it might be right for me. I spoke with my wife, Sigrid, about considering D.A. service at the General Service Board level. She told me she would support my D.A. leadership work. With Sigrid’s support, I submitted my nomination material to the Nominations Committee on December 7, 2019. I was interviewed by telephone by three members of NomComm that next weekend and was unanimously elected as a Class A trustee about a week later.

— Paul M.

**Paul presented this article at the “Meet the Trustees event held at NYC’s LGBT Center as part of this year’s Mid Year Conference on Saturday, February 8, 2020**

# A Tribute to Jerry M.

D.A. friend and fellow Jerry M. died from Covid-19 complications on the morning of April 4, 2020. Jerry was an author and speaker known for helping people in D.A. get out of debt, stop underearning, increase income, and gain happier relationships with money. He was also a literary coach. Perhaps Jerry was best known for writing two bestselling books that—although they are not Conference-approved D.A. Literature—helped many people find their way into the rooms.

To me Jerry was an ex-sponsor and dear friend, in that order. I don't remember how or when our sponsor-sponsee relationship ended, but thankfully our friendship never faded. The last time we met we never veered far from the way our sponsee calls went. After pleasantries Jerry would eventually say, "So tell me what's been going on," and I would attempt to sum up. He'd respond with wisdom from program literature or Buddhist or Taoist teachings.

Jerry once said in a D.A. meeting at 12 West 12th Street, "I want sponsees who will go to any lengths to stop debting." I approached him as soon as the meeting ended saying, "I am Mark

and I will go to any lengths to recover from debting." He agreed to take me on after promising that I would pass the work on to another sick and suffering newcomer. I did do that but am better at it many years later.

That was around 1998 or 99, and it continued well into 2001. I know that because of many milestones I went through with him. Suffering through a lay-off from my favorite job ever, I always credit Jerry with helping me learn how to keep a job. I should write a book on how to get a job, keep a job, and live solvently based on everything he told me. He taught me not to be Machiavellian, not to ever go over my boss's head, and most importantly to do *exactly* what I was hired for as well as I could—not to do less than that—or more. He knew many of us missed our calling as the CEO of any given company but told me, "You were hired to do some specific set of things. Before saving the world, *do those!*" He also helped me through the loss of my father. I'll never forget driving on the Hutchinson River Parkway to see my dad for the last time after he had breathed his last breaths on a Saturday morning in 2001, with Jerry on the phone, consoling

me about my decision to stay home with my toddler son instead of visiting my dad that morning. I had been there every day of his illness, and I even moved him from Florida to hospice care in the Bronx. Jerry's kind words stopped me from that human self-flagellation and prepared me for a meaningful goodbye to such a turbulent force in my life. Jerry had helped me show up for that relationship's final days and then, in its final minutes, consoled me again.

Jerry was an award-winning author of 13 non-fiction books and 17 novels, including dozens of ghostwritten books we may never know about and over 100 short stories, essays and articles in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *American Heritage*, and other publications under his own name and a number of pseudonyms. Even though we were both writers, I never asked about his career in those early days. But he did admit he regretted those pseudonyms. Not that he was against fake names but he advised me to "Choose only one!" He also told me writers, even well-known ones, did not make much money.

When I revealed I was saving my letters for posterity he laughed and said he was too, adding that "a Shakespeare or Stendhal may have a handful of their letters published after their death, but ours probably won't be."

Other wise things he told me pepper the margins of my Big Book and 12 & 12. "What we think is shitty is not what we expected. Let go of the results." Anger? "Before I go to bed I become neutral. With genuineness I say 'I fully and freely forgive you. I do not wish to hurt you. This trouble between us is over forever. You and I are free, and I am not consumed with bitterness and all is well again,'" then adding from the Dhamapada, "Hatred



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## Hosted by A.A. in NYC – December 3, 2019

A.A. hosted a “Day of Sharing” on December 3, 2019, at the General Service Office (G.S.O.) in New York City. A number of Twelve Step groups participated, including members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Heroin Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous.

It was wonderful to be able to spend a day sharing with members of other fellowships. I was moved by the generosity of the A.A. G.S.O. staff. It was especially helpful to learn about A.A.’s literature translations and licensing process as D.A. continues to formalize our own translations and licensing processes.

The day started with presentations from A.A. focusing on literature translations and licensing and communications. The afternoon session consisted of a round-table discussion with all the participants and a tour of the G.S.O Archives.

David R., A.A.’s Publishing Director and Rosa Rodriguez, A.A. Publications staff member, shared that the A.A. Big Book is published in 71 languages. A.A. pamphlets and booklets are available in 110 languages. There has recently been a big increase in translations in the Americas and India.

David explained that the translations “all start locally.” Local A.A. members form a “translation committee,” and they undertake the initial translation process. The entire process can take several years. “Some translations of the Big Book, for example, have taken several years of diligent translation, editing, and polishing from start to finish.”

After the initial phases, A.A. obtains independent verification of every translation to ensure accuracy and to uphold their “legal, moral,

and spiritual responsibility to maintain the integrity of the A.A. message in all translations of A.A. literature” (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., Publishing Department, Licensing and Translation Process).

Once an acceptable version of the translation has received favorable independent translation-evaluation review, a license to reproduce and distribute is issued to the requesting country. The requesting country is responsible for producing or printing the translated works. In some instances, financial support can be provided by A.A. G.S.O.’s Literature Publication Fund.

Sometimes the requesting country “goes to any lengths” to share the message of hope in recovery. For example, in Ghana, the Twi-translated (dialect spoken in Southern and Central Ghana) Big Book was hand-sewn by a local committee of three women. (They made 1200 copies!)

David shared that there have been a number of recent exciting developments in translations in A.A., particularly, the Big Book translations in Navajo and in the American Sign Language (ASL).

The Navajo Big Book is available ONLY available as an audio book – the Navajo language is not written or printed. It is a 14 CD set—they do not have access to the internet—and about 1500 copies have been sold to date! The next Native American translation that will be done will be in Apache.

The ASL version took three years to complete and was accomplished with the help of a member in Minnesota. A.A. members describe being moved to tears by the process and by the finished video translation. More information about the ASL Big Book can be viewed on the A.A. website at AA.org.

David and Rosa shared several examples of unity involving diversity of language and dialects in A.A. One story that particularly moved me was the description of what is happening at some meetings in the West Bank area.

There are A.A. meetings at which Hebrew, English, and Arabic are spoken and read. Members are able to read the Big Book in their own languages and are also able to connect in prayer at the meeting in a unique way. David shared that some members (for example, those of the opposite sex who may be unable to touch each other for religious reasons), use their copy of the big book as a conduit, each holding an end of a Big Book, so they can connect in unity and solidarity without physically touching each other while reciting the Serenity Prayer.

There was also a discussion of other aspects of literature publications, including use of fulfillment centers for literature distribution, self-publishing, and electronic literature. A.A. shared that having electronic versions of their literature did not “cannibalize” the sale of their printed literature. It was helpful to hear about experiences of other fellowships regarding these topics, as D.A. continues to evaluate best practices to make our literature as accessible as possible to all of our present and future members.

The second topic was communications. G.S.O. staff member Clement C. spoke about the newly-formed A.A. Communications Services department that was launched in November 2019. The department will be responsible for development, implementation, and analytics for the A.A. website, YouTube channel, and Meeting Guide app, as well as for digital media projects and other initiatives.

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## **A New Questionnaire for GSB Applicants To Specify Unsecured Credit Use**

The GSB Nominations Committee continually seeks out qualified individuals to serve as Class A (Debtor) and Class B (Non-Debtor) members of the Board of Trustees at the world level. An unwritten aspect of the review process to date is that whenever Class A Trustee applicants have an unsecured credit card in their name, whether for business or personal use, their application historically has not been approved by the GSB Nominations Committee or by the GSB as a whole. The only exception is for members who use a company credit card charged to a company they do not own so they do not incur unsecured debt in their personal finances or their business finances.

There are certain higher standards of conduct that a Trustee must meet, including what’s known as the Duty of Obedience.

*“The duty of obedience requires board members to be faithful to the organization’s mission. They are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the organization.”*

— “Frequently Asked Questions about

Becoming a Debtors Anonymous General Service Board Trustee” service literature approved by the GSB in 1996 (available under the “How to Become a GSB Trustee” link at [debtorsanonymous.org/service](http://debtorsanonymous.org/service))

The Conference has no explicit opinion on credit card use, but some members do consider unsecured credit card use to be incurring unsecured debt whether or not the member pays off the card every month. For several years the GSB has had many, many discussions as to whether a GSB applicant should be outright disqualified for unsecured credit card use. At the moment, the GSB is considering how best to research this issue to make an informed decision.

The GSB International Committee commissioned a survey last year asking for details about unsecured credit card use in countries outside of the U.S. The survey was meant to determine whether explicitly barring unsecured credit card use on the GSB would automatically prohibit applications from members from any countries with financial cultures that might necessitate unsecured

credit card use. The survey received 95 unique responses, and the Board is in the process of analyzing the results.

While the GSB has not approved members who use unsecured credit cards historically, we are open to new information if a strong case can be made. Many members of the GSB have questions as to how D.A. members justify their use of unsecured credit cards. To that end, the GSB Nominations Committee has created a questionnaire that will be offered to all GSB applicants going forward in order to gather more information about this issue.

We’ve decided to publish the questionnaire here so as to inform potential GSB applicants. We welcome all members who meet the current requirements to consider GSB service! We also feel it’s important for our members to consider this line of questioning for themselves and for when interacting with their spouses, action partners, pressure relief groups, and outreach calls who may be dealing with similar issues around unsecured credit card use.

### **Class A Trustee Application Addendum: Credit Card Questionnaire**

Please respond to the following questions. Feel free to take as much space as you need.

- 1.** How many unsecured credit cards do you have in your name or in the name of your business and what are they used for?  
\_\_business \_\_personal
- 2.** Please describe the circumstances in detail as to your need for each unsecured credit card.
- 3.** Please describe all the steps you’ve taken to try to find solutions for your needs other than using an unsecured credit card.
- 4.** Have you discussed your unsecured credit card use with your sponsor? If so, (4a) do they support your credit card use, and (4b) how often do you revisit this subject with them?
- 5.** Have you discussed your unsecured credit card use with your PRG? If so, (5a) do they support your unsecured credit card use and (5b) how often do you revisit this subject with them?
- 6.** Do you have a dedicated savings fund as personal collateral for your credit limit? If so, please share any relevant details as to how you have set up and currently manage this arrangement to help the Board understand, including 6b) whether it is solely used as collateral for your card in its own separate savings fund, and (6c) whether it is greater than or equal to your credit limit.
- 7.** Do you have a contingency plan if you do not have the money to cover a credit card debt at the end of the month? If so, what is that plan and what is to stop you from incurring unsecured debt that you cannot pay back within 30 days?
- 8.** What is your definition of “incurring unsecured debt” as related to your credit card use?

## Section 3.5 Regions for Class A Trustees

The Bylaws of Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, Inc., is the legal document that outlines how the Trustees “are expected to exercise the powers vested in them by law in a manner consonant with the faith that permeates and guides the Fellowship, inspired by the Twelve Steps, in accordance with the Traditions, and in keeping with the Certificate and the bylaws.”

Although it does not happen often, the Bylaws can be amended by a vote of substantial unanimity of the GSB. Section 3.5 Regions was amended in 2019, and again in February 2020.

### Section 3.5 of the Bylaws:

Class A Trustees shall be elected from geographically diverse regions so that no more than three (3) Trustees may be residents of one region. One (1) Class A Trustee may be elected as a Trustee-at-large. Class B Trustees are elected at-large and are exempt from regional limits. [rev. 07/11, 6/19].

There has been an ongoing discussion about regional limits for Class A (debtor) Trustees and how this practice may not serve the interest of the Fellowship in having trustee vacancies available to the most qualified D.A. member-applicants, regardless of where they are physically living. To this end, in June, 2019, the GSB voted to

amend Section 3.5 to include one Class A Trustee-at-Large who would be able to be from any region.

However, after queries from several members of the Fellowship, the GSB had the opportunity to revisit the issue of Class A Trustee “Regions” again in February, 2020. When we looked more closely at Section 3.5, we noted that of the 14 “defined Regions,” nine of them were geographic areas in the United States and North America. The remaining five regions were comprised of the South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This rubric did not appear to embody the geographic diversity that Debtors Anonymous aspires to achieve in Class A Trustee representation on the GSB. The GSB voted to amend Section 3.5 to remove all regional limitations and distinctions as they apply to Class A Trustee applicants.

At first glance, it may appear that this change in the Bylaws might actually allow more Class A Trustees from one particular region to serve on the GSB. The Board did discuss this possibility. However, there has rarely, if ever, been a full Board. Typically, 12 Step fellowships implement regional limits when they have a surplus of applicants willing to serve. This would generally not apply to D.A.,

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*Sign up for special email announcements.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/announcements](https://debtorsanonymous.org/announcements)

*Download flyers to share at meetings.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/meetings](https://debtorsanonymous.org/meetings)

*Search our new meeting directory*

[debtorsanonymous.org/phone-meetings](https://debtorsanonymous.org/phone-meetings)

*Search specifically for phone meetings*

[debtorsanonymous.org/register](https://debtorsanonymous.org/register)

*Register your meeting annually for the website.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/contribute](https://debtorsanonymous.org/contribute)

*Contribute to D.A. as a member or a meeting to help publish literature and support the GSO.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/podcasts](https://debtorsanonymous.org/podcasts)

*Listen to audio recordings of speaker shares.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/channel](https://debtorsanonymous.org/channel)

*Access PSAs and non-English speaker shares that can be embedded on Intergroup websites.*

[debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks](https://debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks)

*Visit the official Author Page of Debtors Anonymous to purchase digital books.*

as we usually have multiple vacancies for Trustees, nor would it likely be relevant for a fellowship our size.

The Board is committed to encouraging Trustee applications from members who have a history of consistent and effective D.A. service, are willing to serve the entire Fellowship, and have the ability to work well in the context of the spiritual group conscience. In amending the Bylaws, Section 3.5, we hope to consider any and all qualified members interested in serving as Class A Trustees to be able to apply without regard to where they reside. If in the future we find that one geographic area is overrepresented, Section 3.5 of the Bylaws can be revisited, but at this time it appears to be an unnecessary limitation.



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an hour every weekday morning starting at 9 a.m. I figured that with all of the face-to-face D.A. meetings shuttered and with everyone I knew either working from home or suddenly unemployed, the existing phone meetings would be jammed. I thought that it would be nice if New York D.A.s could start the day with a small phone meeting of their own where they might know many of the people on the call. If half of the people I texted showed up, it would be a nice little group. And maybe if word got out that it was a good meeting, it might grow a bit.

The next morning, 30 people were on the call. Word had gotten out. In our preliminary business meeting, this new group voted that each day of the week was its own autonomous meeting. We decided on a format and elected officers. And then we did the same thing each following day for the rest of the week. And each day after we did the business of setting up the meeting, we shared. We have callers from California (how do they get up so early?), callers from Colorado, and even one from England. Many of us were out of work: the businesses that employed a lot of us were shut down because of the quarantine. Many of us were isolated. Many of us were scared. People kept expressing their gratitude to me for setting up the meeting. It was nice to hear this ... but in all honestly I knew I had basically started these meetings because would need a meeting myself. I was—as usual—doing service to save my own ass.

“We have a different economy in here.” I heard those words spoken by an oldtimer at a meeting in 2010, the first year of my recovery. I was both comforted and terrified by those words. On the one hand, I took it to mean that as long as I was willing to be of service, I would always be able to provide for myself ... no matter what was happening in the outside world. On the other

hand, it meant that I couldn't blame the outside world for my financial troubles and use that as an excuse to debt.

All around me are recovering debtors who are determined not to incur unsecured debt one day at a time ... even now. Especially now. Some of us became creative and found ways to move event-based businesses online. A personal trainer I know from the program started training his clients via teleconference. I hired him to create a new fitness routine for me since my gym had closed. Teachers learned to teach via videoconferencing. Artists and craftspeople turned to ecommerce. I gave a “virtual PRG” to someone who makes an excellent living managing props for commercial photoshoots—shoots that were now cancelled due to COVID-19. She started a daily ritual of making lists of alternative ways to make money from her home. “In a way I'm grateful that this crisis is forcing me to think of about a new career,” she told me. “I had been thinking of making a change.”

Some of us are simply turning to the program and, by extension, our higher powers more now than ever before. We are scheduling PRGs to help us revise our (newly reduced) spending plans. We bookend with action partners around filling out those dreaded forms applying for Unemployment Insurance, DUA, or emergency grants. Many of us are simply making extra phone calls to deal with the isolation of being stuck in our homes, unable to attend meetings, or socialize with friends and family.

Just about all of our face-to-face meetings have moved to teleconference. I am impressed with how quickly our D.A. community—full of individuals with various levels of technological competence—stepped up and figured out how to videoconference. I am also moved

by the sight of new faces at these meetings. I assumed they were all newcomers, but many of them are simply D.A.s who live in other parts of the country, wanted to attend a NYC D.A. meeting and now have a chance to do so without leaving their homes. A sponsee of mine who moved away after she finished working the steps with me is attending her old home group: the very meeting where we met each other and decided to work together.

Little did I know I would face some challenges of my own. At first I thought I had it easy: I am a graphic designer, and my clients let me work at home. I am accustomed to attending teleconference meetings. I could continue to earn my usual income without risking my health. However, the second week of quarantine I received a tearful call from my biggest client. The department I was working for was being shut down, and my services were no longer necessary. I was now having to take the very advice I was giving to the D.A.s who were out of work: get on LinkedIn, email your former clients, introduce yourself to new clients, update your portfolio, etc. I prayed to my higher power for my solvency to continue. I reminded myself that God was my true employer. I have never enjoyed the uneasy business of “networking,” but I noticed with great delight that chatting with my old clients was actually an enjoyable activity. We talked shop, and I listened to what they were up to. Before I knew it, I had plenty of work. And by the way, very little of this paid work actually came directly from the various people I contacted. Polish here, shine there ....

There are stories about how people in recovery deal with global crises. In the A.A. 12 and 12, it is said that during WWII, the A.A.s who fought overseas were carried through by their dependence on a higher

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## IN MEMORIAM (continued)

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does not cease with hatred,” explaining, “It fuels more hatred.” And finally one I heard many times due to my stubbornness, not his: “God will only do what we *can’t* do for ourselves, not what we *won’t*.” He’d then add, “God doesn’t do windows. He’ll give you a mop and a bucket.”

Jerry was born March 3, 1941, in Chicago, and raised in the Midwest. He was married and divorced there and returned a lot when his mother became ill. He was the father of two grown sons, one a step-son that he considered his own. He became an editor at The New York Times and was a member of the Authors Guild, PEN American Center, and Poets & Writers. He lived in a small apartment on the top floor of an apartment building on Jane Street. When he injured his knee he couldn’t easily climb the steps with ease, either within

his apartment with a bedroom upstairs or the several flights through his building. I was so honored when I saw him last, to do him a small favor by accompanying him to the Hospital for Special Surgery on the Upper East Side for a knee repair procedure to be followed by months of rehab. Unfortunately it was in that rehab that the Coronavirus struck. He came home for a day but then with a fever, returned to the hospital and fell into a coma before dying. He told friends that he knew this might happen. Jerry was a very straightforward person. In his last email to me, he sent link to a video containing a quote from the Stoic Epictetus: “I have to die. If it is now, well then I die now; if later, then now I will take my lunch.”

— Mark B.

## DAY OF SHARING (continued)

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The new department was convened to respond to the request from members for more modern communications. Members have expressed frustration with the fact that they do not see A.A. and other Twelve Step programs using the modern technological modalities that they are used to using in other areas of their lives.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss the possible and actual conflicts with the Traditions and with the anonymous nature of Twelve Step programs with regard to communications. We were able to share what all of us are doing with social media and other forms of technology. Most groups are *not* currently using Facebook or other social media platforms, although Al-Anon did report that they do advertise there and that they believe this has resulted in an increase in visits to their website. Participants wondered if perhaps Al-Anon, as a family group, may have different anonymity considerations and consequences of self-identification than members of other fellowships might have.

Clement shared that A.A. does produce YouTube videos and that the content needs to be updated frequently. “People are always looking for new content.” The Communications Department is careful to protect the anonymity of the participants in keeping with the Traditions.

The “Day of Sharing” closed with a roundtable discussion which provided a wonderful opportunity to share our experience—successes and challenges—on how we can use modern communication methods and social media without violating the Traditions. Most of

the participants reported that their fellowship is “erring on the side of caution,” with respect to social media, and are proceeding very slowly in this arena. Some have participated, but “shut down” after a brief time.

Most participants named “focus on primary purpose” as a challenge to unity and recovery in their fellowships. As is the case in D.A., most described having a “big tent,” inclusive approach rather than excluding anyone. Several participants reported that use of non-Conference approved literature created problems for their fellowship.

Some attendees described balancing the challenges regarding having literature provided at no or low cost with the understanding that literature sales fund the services of their fellowships. There were discussions of the dilemmas of how to provide affordable literature to members in areas that may not have the resources to produce or purchase hard copies and may also not have access to electronic versions either. D.A. is certainly facing similar conundrums.

The day ended with tremendous gratitude for what had been provided and received, a lot of hugs, and exchanges of contact information. My takeaway was that all of us in recovery, regardless of our addiction, have so much more in common than we have differences. One participant described Twelve Step recovery as the “greatest spiritual movement of the 20th Century and that we are protecting that legacy in the 21st.” I could not agree more. I am extremely grateful to A.A. for organizing and hosting this event and that D.A. was invited to participate.

— Sharon S., GSB member

## D.A. PREPARES FOR A VIRTUAL WORLD SERVICE (continued)

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### WSC Registration & John H. Scholarship Fund

We were able to set the registration fee at \$200 per delegate. This will cover expenses including two months of Zoom, a Zoom videoconference specialist, a professional Parliamentarian, professional transcription for the official report, and the 2020 hotel cancellation fee. This year we are able to offer online payment of registration fees for the first time.

Typically the registration fee for the annual WSC is between \$500-750. With travel fees, the World Service Conference tends to cost each delegate an average of \$1800, so with such a reduction in delegate expenses we do anticipate more meetings and Intergroups will be able to send General Service Representatives (GSRs) and Intergroup Service Representatives (ISRs).

Even with funding all delegates who applied for the John H. Scholarship this year, there is money left over so the Board has voted to re-open and extend the John H. Scholarship application submission period until June 21, 2020. If your meeting would like to apply for a scholarship

to pay partial or all costs for the \$200 registration fee, please visit <https://debtorsanonymous.org/wsc>

### WSC Schedule

We will have a shorter schedule this year spread out over two weekends from August 8 to August 16, 2020 with optional activities during the week. To accommodate different time zones of delegates who have reached out to us from Hawaii to Europe and Africa, the General Assembly will start at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time each of the three days the delegates will be convening together as a group. We encourage delegates from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and from meetings in other parts of the world where it will be quite late, and invite open communication so we can support delegates in any way. Feel free to email us at [wsc2020@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:wsc2020@debtorsanonymous.org)

Each delegate serves on at least one committee throughout the year and can opt to serve on a caucus. Due to the logistics of a shorter schedule and virtual Conference, delegates will need to select their committee and optional caucus when registering as a delegate. There will be a pre-Conference

orientation call on June 21 where each of the WSC committees and caucuses will give a presentation to help new delegates make this decision.

The Fellowship Day workshops, keynote speakers, talent show, and dance will take place on Saturday, August 15 from 2:00 p.m. until 10:00 Eastern Time. This event is open to all D.A. members for an optional donation of \$15. Volunteers are needed so please contact the New York City Area Host Committee for details at [wsc2020@danyc.org](mailto:wsc2020@danyc.org)

The 2020 WSC Registration Packet will be available at <https://debtorsanonymous.org/wsc>



## D.A. IN THE AGE OF COVID 19 (continued)

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power. They took orders, stood up under fire and endured the monotony and misery of war with few alcoholic lapses or emotional binges. At the meetings I attend here in NYC, I hear the stories of many gay men who survived the AIDS crisis of the 1980s which credit the support they received from the gay A.A. and N.A. meetings that flourished in Manhattan for keeping them alive despite few-to-none effective treatment options

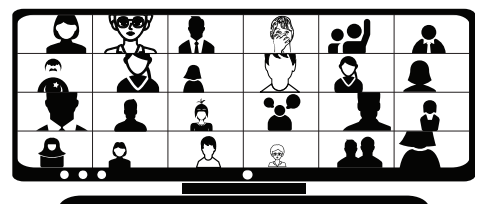
available at the time.

When I came into the D.A. rooms, I just wanted an end to the insanity around the way I spent and earned money; I wasn't seeking a spiritual awakening. But it soon became clear to me that if I was going to live within my means, I needed help from a power greater than myself. I heard oldtimers say at meetings that they had eventually become grateful to have this disease; it had brought them

closer to God, and it had brought them into the rooms.

Times like these inform me that I am truly lucky that I have this Fellowship. I am not alone.

— Matthew E., GSB member



## ANNOUNCEMENT CORNER

Here are possible announcements for members—especially General and Intergroup Service Representatives (GSRs & ISRs)—to make during D.A. meetings:

1. Please share at your meeting: all D.A. pamphlets are now available on Kindle! Buy them separately for .99 cents or bundled together. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks](http://debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks)
2. Registration will open this week for the virtual 2020 World Service Conference. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/wsc](http://debtorsanonymous.org/wsc)
3. Seeking member submissions to the D.A. Daily Reader by June 1, 2020. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/meditations](http://debtorsanonymous.org/meditations)
4. Coronavirus Update: The D.A. General Service Board of Trustees has released the following announcement regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the temporary closure of onsite General Service Office operations: Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/coronavirus](http://debtorsanonymous.org/coronavirus)
5. Make temporary updates to your meeting listing on the world D.A. website. Temporary updates—teleconference or video conference numbers, meeting closures, meeting contact info—will appear in red on your meeting listing and will revert back to the original listing when the World Health Organization recommends a return to public gatherings: [www.debtorsanonymous.org/temp-meeting-update](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org/temp-meeting-update)
6. Fellowship-wide calls with live speaker shares use the U.S. call-in phone number: 1-605-472-5540, access code: 617093#. International phone numbers (and online access) are available at [debtorsanonymous.org/call-in-access](http://debtorsanonymous.org/call-in-access). The Online Meeting ID is darecovery1. Let members know to mark their calendars for these upcoming events:
  - Sunday, June 7, 2020, time TBA, on the topic “P.I. Rep Training,” presented by the WSC Public Information Committee
  - Saturday, June 13, 2020, from 2 – 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic Spiritually Sustainable Earning: Topic TBD, presented by the WSC Spiritually Sustainable Earning Caucus
  - Saturday, June 20, 2020, from 1 – 2:30p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “Temporary Sponsorship,” presented by the WSC Resource Development Committee (RDC)
  - Sunday, June 21, 2020, from 1 – 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “Pre-Conference Orientation Calls: Selecting your Committee/Caucus,” presented by the GSB Conference Support Committee
  - Saturday, July 18, 2020, from 3 – 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “Being a Group Treasurer,” presented by the WSC Resource Development Committee (RDC)
  - Sunday, July 19, 2020, from 1 – 2 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “Ask-The-GSB: D.A.’s Finances,” presented by the GSB Long Range Planning Committee
  - Saturday, July 25, 2020, from 1 – 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “Pre-Conference Orientation Calls: Overview of the World Service Conference,” presented by the GSB Conference Support Committee
  - Sunday, July 26, 2020, from 1 – 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time, on the topic “TBA,” presented by the WSC Public Information Committee
7. Audio recordings of speaker shares from World Service Fellowship-wide Calls and Fellowship Days are available on our website at [debtorsanonymous.org/podcasts](http://debtorsanonymous.org/podcasts)
8. The latest issue of Ways & Means—the official recovery magazine of Debtors Anonymous—is now available. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/share](http://debtorsanonymous.org/share)
9. Consider serving at the World Level of D.A. as a General Service Board Trustee or recommend a member for service to one of the five (5) positions currently open. Download the flyer to distribute. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/service](http://debtorsanonymous.org/service)

For more announcements, visit [www.debtorsanonymous.org/announcements](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org/announcements)

Have you signed up for **eNews**? Has your group?

Get connected to D.A. worldwide.

Receive newsletters, announcements, event info, and more.

To subscribe, visit: [debtorsanonymous.org/enews](http://debtorsanonymous.org/enews)

Share your personal story in **Ways & Means**, our meeting in print!

Have you been of service to a meeting by giving a **lead share**?

**Write it down**, send it in!

You can also email us your original photo, drawing, or poem that represents your recovery and/or vision in Debtors Anonymous.

Email your story/artwork to:

[communications@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:communications@debtorsanonymous.org)

