

The D.C.M.:

Linchpin Between Group Reps And The Area Service Structure

Reprinted from *Box 4-5-9* (Holiday issue, Dec. 2003, page 8) with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc. (underlines added)

Of all the offices in general service, perhaps one of the least understood is that of the district committee member. Just what is a D.C.M.? How are these trusted servants elected, and what do they do?

To understand, let's start with the District itself. The term "district" was mentioned during early General Service Conferences, and both "district" and "district committee member" were used informally in the 1950s. The term "district" was included in the 1955 draft of The Third Legacy Manual of World Service (now titled The A.A. Service Manual) and 20 years later was formalized in a 1975 supplement to The Service Manual.

In today's Service Manual a district is clearly defined as "a geographical unit containing the right number of groups right in terms of the D.C.M.'s ability to keep in frequent touch with them, to learn their problems, and to find ways to contribute to their growth. In most areas a district includes six to 20 groups. In metropolitan districts the number is generally 15 to 20, while in rural or suburban districts it can be as small as five. (To encourage maximum group participation, some areas have incorporated linguistic districts. These usually have a bilingual D.C.M. or liaison, and their boundaries may be independent of the conventional geographic district boundaries.)

Now to the D.C.M.: The heart of A.A. is the group, which elects a general service representative. G.S.R.s attend district meetings that are made up of the groups in that district and elect a D.C.M. As noted in the flyer "Your D.C.M.", available from the General Service Office, the D.C.M., who serves a two-year term, is the vital link between the group's G.S.R. and the area service structure (including the area's delegate to the General Service Conference).

Usually the D.C.M., who is elected by other G.S.R.s, has already served as one of them and so knows the ropes. Time, energy, and commitment are important attributes, because D.C.M.s take the collective group conscience of their district's A.A. groups to the area committee. Among other things they hold regular meetings of all G.S.R.s in the district and keep them informed about Conference activities; help the delegate obtain and update group information for appropriate A.A. directories; and hold workshops on carrying the message of the Seventh Tradition of selfsupport to A.A. groups.

Across the U.S. and Canada several thousand D.C.M.s are doing all this, and more. In Long Beach, California, D.C.M. Phil L. stresses that "we D.C.M.s do not work alone. It takes a lot of people working together to accomplish whatever we are able to do here, and many of our ideas come to us as the result of the sharing of other A.A.s in service." One of them, the idea of putting together visitation kits, came, Phil says, "from seeing one at the Pacific Regional Forum in July 2002; and the idea of the flyer that's included came from a fellow D.C.M. Then it took a team to put them together, took the district to vote and approve it, and the D.C.M.s to take it out on visits to our groups.

"Our visitation kit consists of an information flyer listing the addresses of the area, district and local services committees, such as Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) Committee, our Harbor Area Central Office, as well as G.S.O. and the pamphlets 'Your A.A. General Service Office,' 'The A.A. Group,' and 'G.S.R. May Be the Most Important Job in A.A.' We remind them to include their group service numbers when making contributions to any of these entities. Our kit also contains the Self-Support Packet (F-19), which includes the pamphlet 'Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix,' the service piece 'Memo to a Group Treasurer,' Self-Support flyers and a Group Service Number Card." This Self-Support Packet is available from G.S.O. at no charge.

Once prepared, the kits are taken by the area's nine D.C.M.s to the groups they represent—approximately 30 in each district. "Wherever I've gone with the kits," Phil relates, "the groups have been receptive. Part of our purpose is to update and check the accuracy of group registration information that is forwarded to G.S.O., and to extend a warm welcome to our district meeting. It is held once a month and anybody can come."

Phil takes the demands of being a D.C.M. in stride. "I joined A.A. over eight years ago," he says, "and in my Icebreakers Group I'd see my service sponsor, Pete B. [now Mid-Southern California delegate, Panel 52], and a lot of other people keeping service commitments come rain or shine. They were staying sober — it was inspiring and in turn helped me to make and meet commitments. This is where the road took me, and I'm grateful. I love general service."