Round Table Topic: Newsletter
Date: 1 March 2019
Moderator: Mark S   **Secretary**: Aann D
Identified Topics:

1. Censorship in newsletters.
2. Being responsible to those we serve.
3. How do you start up a newsletter? What software formats/technology to use for this?
4. Attracting more of AA membership to read newsletters.

The four topics were discussed simultaneously, as follows:

What does "censorship" mean? Example of a GSR writing a "manifesto" in an Area newsletter that called out groups/individual people. Do newsletter editors have the right to decline these submissions? One member says he would check with his Area Chair. Also, that regardless of content that this would be over a word limit. The group felt that newsletter editors have the right of decision but that Area officers are supposed to be allowed to submit things.

Are there any guidelines on this? Should we put this together if not? Example given of the gray pages in the Grapevine being added or removed over the years. Things like this could be considered as affiliation, although it is thought that the Grapevine has kept the gray pages in more than it has left them out.

The newsletter in Western Washington, Area 72 is substantial, up to 800 copies. Newsletters are translated into Spanish, including 16-20 pages of newsprint. Some newsletters are monthly, some quarterly, and some twice a year. Some are printed, while others are electronic. Guidelines can be helpful for editing submissions. One way to be responsible to those we serve is asking "how do we serve you?" It it's punitive, that's against our Traditions but otherwise we shouldn't censor (unless it's outside of you District or Area's guidelines or policies such as no profanity). Delegates are responsible for helping with Tradition breaks at the Group level when requested.

In New Jersey, no formal District map, so DCMs were asked to write a profile of their District. One DCM wrote about an "evil" clubhouse and a "good" clubhouse. The article was sent back with suggestions for edits and "what do you think?"

There was concern regarding passing along of information (guidelines) with the spirit of rotation. Idea to have Group members be "reporters" to get more people involved. There was concern about putting out information that people don't read. Hard copies are available, but many newsletters are electronic. There was a suggestion to have people contact the "reporters" if they want their content in the newsletter. Start with volunteers and then slowly build a committee (in inactive Districts).

How much should newsletters and websites correlate? Those that had newsletters and websites are publishing them on their websites. It is difficult for new people to duplicate previous efforts if too high-tech. The best idea is to have a template in Word or other software.

We reviewed several examples of newsletters (physical and online). Some people had flyers and submissions from each DCM.

There is an issue with using software like Google Docs where some people don't use that software. Other software that is being used includes Word, Adobe Creative Suite, etc. There is concern about newsletters being too hard to find on websites.

There was a request for URLs of Area websites to be provided. Represented Area included 08, 05, 72, 58, and 48. One Delegate has been assigned to be an Appointed Committee Member. It is a Past Delegate (original stepped down due to health problems). The goal for one member was to make a product that's repeatable, making content that readers will find interesting, reproduced, and uses reporters and volunteers.

What should the purpose of newsletters be? We are unsure if people are reading the newsletters, unless we ask them what they want. So, newsletters should ask readers what they want to be included. There was a suggestion of having a common message in newsletters and websites. One member produced a newsletter for many years without guidelines until they were eventually developed. The newsletter then became like a cross between Grapevine and Box 459. They received reports from all committees and if committees failed to write, the editor would point out their complaints of lack of participation on committees. There was a suggestion to prompt participation at Assemblies by everyone. They would write one to two sentences, articles on "here's what you had to say about…" There was a suggestion for people to send in photos of themselves reading the newsletter (covering their faces) while traveling.

DCMs are busy! This looks different for different Areas. There was then discussion regarding different Areas.

There was a suggestion to not have a set deadline (every 30th) but still have a due date. If there are reporters, it is going to them, so can publish when we want to instead of relying on submissions.