

# **Informed Group Conscience - The Key To Unity**From the SENY Delegate

As I look out my window this January morning the blizzard of 2016 is upon us and nothing but white snow can be seen and not a plow in sight. Can the 66th General Service Conference be far behind this wintry mix?

Sometime in mid-February, the Delegates will receive the final Conference Agenda. Questions relating to the agenda will be disseminated to Area 49 groups in the Delegate's Questionnaire, which seeks the conscience of our groups on the items put before them. Group responses will serve us as a key to Unity, the second leg of A.A.'s triangle.

Tradition 1 states: "our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity." Tradition 2 refers to "...a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Concept I links these two Traditions in stating that "the final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship." In Concept II (the A.A. Service Manual, page 8,) it states that the groups "...have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they own it." It goes further on to state: "...Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to 'trusted servants' must be implicit from top to bottom of our active structure of service...."

This delegated authority and responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of your Area Delegate. He or she is the messenger for the Area's groups to the General Service Conference. For he or she to effectively represent you at the Conference, your group's voice needs to be heard. So when the Delegate's Questionnaire arrives, please encourage your group to take the time to answer some or all of the questions put forth. Let your group's conscience be heard as a "Key to Unity" within this great Fellowship of ours.

Peace and serenity, **Jim W.** delegate@aaseny.org

#### Your voice in The Link

#### **Your SENY Office**

Are you willing to share your experience, strength and hope about your service in A.A. at the group, district, county or area level? *The Link* is published ten times per year and welcomes articles from all AAs in our area. Please limit your article to 275 words, and email it to link@aaseny.org or mail it c/o The Link Editor, P.O. Box 571, NY, NY 10116. Thanks!

Visit: 199 Lincoln Ave., Suite 302 Bronx, NY 10454

Send mail: P.O. Box 571, New York, NY 10116

General inquiries: info@aaseny.org

**Call:** 718-665-1253

"Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts."

Theme of AA's 2016 General Service Conference

## The Conference Takes Its Inventory From the SENY Alternate Delegate

The compendium of the three-year long inventory of and by the General Service Conference is out and I encourage you all to read it. To quote from the most recent final conference report, "We cannot underestimate the importance of this first-ever General Service Conference Inventory. It challenges us to look at how well the Conference functions as the voice and the conscience of our whole society. It asks us to consider how well the principles of our Twelve Concepts are reflected in Conference actions and composition. It calls upon us to examine how well the conference maintains communication throughout the Fellowship's structure. It requires us to look at how well the Conference does when selecting AA's leaders today and inspiring its leaders tomorrow."

For me this embodies the first two Concepts. Concepts I states that the final responsibility and ultimate authority resides in the collective conscience of the whole fellowship and Concept II states that the Conference has become the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

The report goes on, "We will do well to study it carefully and accept it with humility and gratitude. We will have a written record of our defects; this will be of great value as we look ahead and make good estimates for the near, and more distant future...Knowing that solitary self-appraisal is insufficient, we will gain much by sharing the report—throughout our interconnected circles of love and service. We will benefit greatly by discussing our shortcomings with trusted servants at all levels of our structure."

Wow! The trusted servants of our service structure are basically laying out their Fifth Step for all of us to see. I was really moved by the humility, vulnerability, and acceptance of such an action and truly found it aweinspiring.

I know that I am only going to change by taking the steps necessary, however imperfectly, to make that change happen. This report shows us that the Conference knows it's not perfect and is willing to allow us to be part of its change. Pretty amazing stuff.

In love and service,

#### John W.

altdelegate@aaseny.org

## Connecting With A.A. as a Whole Reaching Out to the Next Generation of AA's

Since one generation is equivalent to about twenty years, I have been surrounded by AA for one and one-half generations and hope to be around for a few more. I was first introduced to AA when people smoked in the meetings, there were no cell phones, no email, no social networking, and no texting or instant messaging. Members talked on landlines or public pay telephones and met face-to-face which is still considered AA "old school."

As the years passed, technology grew which enabled the AA fellowship and program to also grow. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is currently written in 67 languages and AA-approved books can be acquired in print, audio, eBook or pdf. People can attend meetings online if they are homebound, inmates in prison can become pen-pals with outside members, people can talk via Facetime, and our Grapevine magazine is our meeting in print, and digital.

Pondering about generations to come, I envision more and more young people coming into AA and getting help at earlier ages. Reaching out to schools, churches, and the professional community needs more emphasis to connect with the next one who may be suffering. As technology advances, the ideas are limitless.

In closing, I think that we need to continue to be openminded to change and willing to do what it may take to reach others. We may have to become more tolerant of people who used other substances in addition to alcohol. Furthermore, accountability is an issue that should be examined. Groups are disappearing and the recovery rate is declining. People are not going to any lengths to stay sober and people with time are not reaching out enough. What will you do to help the next generation? Let's show people that AA works and that we do have the solution by modeling a sober life, living by the Big Book, and helping others by finding prospects who want what we have.

#### Kathleen S.

GSR, Orange County Young People's Group



### **Love and Service with Boyce B**

From Past Delegate Richard S.

When I met Boyce B in February 1988, he was the speaker at a step meeting in Manhattan, the 6th step, territory that seemed far away from me, just short of two years sober at the time. But his meditative manner and his modest Southern accent got my attention. He had a calm assurance, something I needed, having just written out a 4th step but having no sponsor with whom I could take the 5th. It took me four months to ask him. We were most likely on our way to the old Saturday Night Step meeting on West 4th St. in Manhattan. Step meetings were important to Boyce, and from the first that's where we spent much of our AA time. When I finally blurted out that I'd like him to be my sponsor, he told me he was involved in what he called service beyond the group level. "If they'll have me," he went on to say, "this fall I may be elected the Area Delegate to the General Service Conference, so I don't know how much time I'll have to spare." My heart sank, but he rushed on to say, "We can work around that, though."

A few weeks later I was traipsing along behind him with my 4th Step burning a hole in my pocket. Earlier in his sobriety, Boyce had studied with a Jain monk for several years, then began to attend the Brooklyn Quaker meeting, which is where we were headed. The 5th Step, he told me back then, mentions God first among those with whom we are to share our inventory, and so he invited me to the meeting as preparation. As we walked down the street I was thinking, "Who is this man? What have I gotten myself into?" But it was a beautiful Sunday morning, and after the meeting we did my 5th Step in Prospect Park. I felt such shame about my defects of character, but Boyce seemed to think nothing of them, as if the stew I was in didn't amount to much, except that now I had gotten to know myself better. Thanks to his presence in my life over the years since, a feeling of having become part of AA spread over me.

I didn't know much about this "service beyond the group level" that Boyce often talked about. He told me he thought it was important he mention it in meetings, whether he was the speaker or just sharing from the floor, because there might be people in the room who'd never heard about that kind of thing. He also talked a lot about the first time he attended an AA International Convention, in Montreal in 1985. It had an enormous impact on him, the breadth and depth of AA. When the next International took place in Seattle in 1990, I was still getting to know Boyce, who by then was in his last year as SENY's Panel 39 Delegate. But he was going and so I went too, and there I found that huge new world Boyce spoke of, so many people, so much unity, recovery, service. It was overwhelming, but I wanted more. By the time of the 1995 International in San Diego I had volunteered to chair the SENY hospitality suite. He and

#### 1929-2016

I shared a room on Mission Beach, in walking distance of the Delegate's Reunion that precedes each year's International. Without my realizing it, Boyce had led me by the power of his example to what would turn out to be twenty years of general service work.

Boyce had so many sponsees, though he didn't like to categorize us that way. He thought of us as friends in sobriety. By 2005, I was Area Chair for SENY, the position Boyce held when I first met him. That year we drove up to the Toronto International together, shared a hotel room, one of so many hotel rooms we shared over the years going to weekend AA events. Yes, we'd become great friends. By 2010, when the International was in San Antonio, Boyce was doubtful of ever attending another one. I was SENY's Delegate, Panel 59, and I suggested driving out there together, but Boyce agreed to fly down, and so I was able to attend my first Delegate's Reunion with him before the International began. I met so many of the AAs Boyce had gotten to know during his service twenty years earlier, and I could feel the force of the service they had done.

A year ago I was thinking Boyce and I might not make it to another International. The only way we could do it was for me to drive down to Atlanta, but I was almost 71 and Boyce was turning 86. I had rotated out of general service, settled with my dog into a new home in the Bronx, and was content to sit this International out. But while I was on Cape Cod, a place Boyce and I spent a lot of time in and where we had had a one-on-one review of the 12 steps some years earlier, I had a change of heart, a moment of clarity, and I called him last June to tell him that if he was still interested in going to Atlanta for the International, then I wanted to make that drive. When I heard the change in his tone of voice as I told him that, I knew this was the next right thing. The trip took two days each way, plus the three days we needed to attend the Delegate's Reunion before the four-day International. It was a lot, and Boyce had lost some of his stamina and vitality, had fallen several times (once down a stairway on his way to an AA meeting in Brooklyn), and had suffered bouts of pneumonia. So he needed a companion, and that was me. They were wonderful days of sharing and, without saying it, I guess a kind of parting. Or maybe another chance to reconnect, there in the South where he was born, with all the experience, strength and hope that had brought us together in the first place. As it happened, Boyce had a major stroke in early November, and after two months in a nursing home, he passed away on Sunday, January 17, 2016. I will miss him immensely, but I'll never forget that 5th step and all the AA Internationals he and I attended together, which are just a small part of what I and others who have known him will carry with us forever.

## My Recovery is Based on a Triangle From a GSR

My recovery is based on a triangle. In the unofficial "logo" for AA, the triangle represents the Three Legacies of AA. Recovery is the base, one side is Unity and the other is Service. For this alcoholic I believe that one cannot "survive" without the other. Take away one and it collapses, smothering my recovery.

I have recovered, as it is says in the Big Book. But how did I recover? Well for me it was the triangle. Recovery through the program of AA, interacting and surrounding myself with the unity of other alcoholics in the fellowship of AA and most assuredly, service inside and outside of AA. I realized that part of my recovery journey and, to continue to stay recovered, I realized that I have to do as the Big Book tells us early on: "Faith without works is dead... For if the Alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive certain trials and low spots ahead." I need to stay active in my spiritual condition and the main way for me to do that is to be of service. It started with my speaking at a meeting when I had 5 months, carrying the message of hope, and continued through various levels of the upside down service triangle: cleaning up after meetings, chairing meetings, sponsoring others through step work, serving as group secretary and NY Intergroup Rep, serving on planning committees...and now I gratefully get to be the GSR for my group as well as the Grapevine Rep for Brooklyn County.

Do you want your recovery to get strong and to stay that way? Get involved in service early, and stay involved forever.

#### Mitchell K.

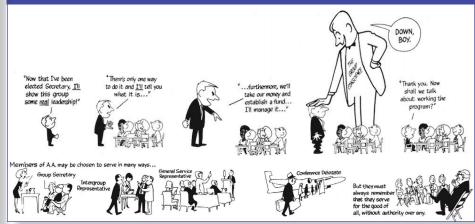
GSR, Greenwood Group, Brooklyn County





#### **Tradition 2**

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority...a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants...they do not govern.



## **Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix**

Based on information provided annually by the General Service Office, the percentage of groups that contribute to A.A.'s General Service structure has been dropping in the last few years, which is common cause for concern:

- 2014: 41.6%
- 2013: 42.5%
- · 2012: 42.4%
- · 2011: 43.9%

"When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer." The Language of the Heart

#### The 2016 General Service Conference

#### **Presentation & Discussion Topics for the 2016 General Service Conference**

Among the 2015 Advisory Actions that emerged from the 2015 General Service Conference were recommendations for the theme of the 2016 Conference to be "Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts" and for the topics of presentations/discussions to be:

#### A. Connecting With the Newcomer

- 1. All Inclusive Never Exclusive
- 2. Are We Doing Enough to Help the Newcomer Are We Going to Any Length?
- 3. Home Group Where It Begins

#### **B. Connecting With Each Other**

- 1. Singleness of Purpose Staying Pertinent in a Changing World
- 2. Informed Group Conscience The Key to Unity
- Be Involved. Be Inspired. Be of Service

#### C. Connecting With A.A. as a Whole

- 1. Participating in All of A.A.
- 2. Understanding Self-Support
- Reaching Out to the Next Generation of AAs



In the spirit of Unity, Area 49 groups and their members are encouraged to discuss and reflect upon these topics in 2016.

### **Concept 2**

When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference — excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter — the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.



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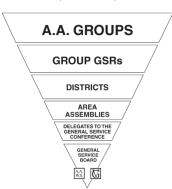
#### Why Do We Need a Conference?

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of the board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: "We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life.

"We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

"We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her reced is, what his or her social position is."





#### From The General Service Office of A.A.

# AA Grapevine Announces "Forming True Partnerships"



A collection of Grapevine stories showing the many ways members use the Twelve Steps, sponsorship, and the tools of the A.A. program to improve and repair

relationships, old and new (GV34), \$10.99; five or more copies, \$10.50.

To order this book or any other product from the GV collection, visit us at AAGrapevine.org and click on Store or call (800) 631-6025 US/Canada, (818) 487-2091 International or fax us at (818) 487-4550.

# Request for Shared Experience — Social Media

The trustees' Public Information Committee is gathering information about how A.A. members, groups, and service entities are currently using social media and social-networking platforms (such as, but not limited to, Twitter, Instagram and Google+) for A.A. purposes.

At this time the trustees' P.I. Committee is only asking for information regarding *actual experience* in using such resources for A.A. purposes.

Information should be sent via email to publicinfo@aa.org or by postal mail to P.I. Desk, General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. The committee has asked to receive this information no later than December 31, 2015. This request has also been distributed to area delegates and local A.A. service offices.

The committee would welcome your shared A.A. experience on this important subject.

# The Man on the Web': Online Intergroup of A.A. Nears 20-Year Anniversary

"Today's counterpart to the 'man on the bed' is the trembling, sick alcoholic in cyberspace," writes Dennis M. of the Bronx, N.Y. in a Grapevine article titled AA in Cyberspace. "And we see a good number of them looking for help for the first time. We see them coming back from slips; we see them finding A.A. at a time and a place where we can feel their desperation and share our hope, just as we do in f2f (face-to-face) meetings."

Excited about today's expanding ability to reach out to suffering alcoholics, A.A. members around the world continue finding new ways to carry A.A.'s message of hope.

One helpful development in this effort has been the growth of the Online Intergroup of A.A. (O.I.A.A.), an organization nearing its 20th anniversary. First formed to help unify the growing number of online meetings that began to mushroom in the late 1980s, many starting as bulletin board meetings and email groups, the O.I.A.A. was legally incorporated in 1996, giving online groups a forum for exchanging information and ideas and for helping one another carry the message of A.A. online.

Online meetings come in a variety of formats: real-time chat, email meetings, telephone chats, audio-visual meetings using video streaming applications, message boards/forums, and discussion board meetings. Some are targeted toward specific groups: women, military, deaf/hard-of-hearing, and there are meetings available in a number of languages. Many have regular schedules, and some are "catch-as-catch-can," with members posting when there is time and a burning desire.

Keenly aware that "personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity," as the First Tradition says, O.I.A.A. also encourages communication among online groups as well as with local intergroups, areas, G.S.O., and other A.A. service bodies. This is done chiefly through the work of its committees. In addition to a Twelfth Step Committee, which is comprised of approximately 40 members worldwide, speaking multiple languages and fielding between 350-400 requests for help per month, O.I.A.A. has formed committees for: Public Information, Cooperation With the Professional Community, Unity and G.S.O. liaison, Conventions, Finance, Policy and Admissions, and World Wide Web — all of which are described on O.I.A.A.'s website.

O.I.A.A.'s governing body, the Intergroup Assembly, is made up of an Intergroup Representative and alternate from each registered group, plus its committee chairs, their alternates, and five officers: a chair and co-chair, treasurer, historian, and secretary. With the lessons learned over nearly 20 years working together, they strive to practice the principles of A.A. in all web affairs, so that the hand of A.A. will always be there in cyberspace as well.

#### **Upcoming Events & Service Opportunities**



EACYPAA stands for the Eastern Area Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous. It's a chance for sober young folks from Florida to Maine and east of the Mississippi to come together and celebrate recovery, unity and service. This year's 14th annual EACYPAA, with the theme "From Darkness into Light" taken from Step 12, will be held in Manhattan February 19-21, 2016. Nearly 2,000 sober alcoholics will take over the Grand Central Hyatt for a weekend of nonstop meetings, dancing, laughter and fun.

There will be panelists sharing their experience strength and hope on special topics, like "25 with a decade sober?!", "Creating the fellowship you crave" and "How

to stay fired up in AA." Expect giant meetings Friday and Saturday nights with a sobriety countdown and powerful speakers. There will be speakers from GSO, service workshops and Al-Anon meetings. Every night of the conference we will have a DJ and an epic dance party. There'll be a fabulous drag show and stand up comedy.

If you've never been to a YPAA convention, you will see others experiencing the joy of sobriety, having fun and playing, as our big book encourages us to do. However, you will also witness a commitment to recovery, the 12 steps and God. As our founders said, "I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath, there is deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty four hours a day in and through us, or we perish." No matter what your age or stage of life, we hope you will join us in this spirit at the 14th annual EACYPAA. We love you all ("lots and lots and whole bunches!").

Jenn W., Literature Chair, EACYPAA XIV

To register please go to http://eacypaanyc.org/

There are many opportunities for general service! District, county and area committees always need more volunteers. You can find information about these committees on SENY's website at http://www.aaseny.org/service/. Please also take a moment to consider lending a hand to committees working on upcoming area or county events, such as the Area Convention or Manhattan-Share-A-Day. The Events section lists the dates and times for event committee planning meetings.

#### **Calling all Manhattan Groups!**

Manhattan Share-A-Day 2016 planning is underway and we could use your support! With over 40 meetings and 80 speakers Share-A-Day is a HUGE event, and as such, we have expenses. With the date rapidly approaching we will need to pay for rent, food, printing, and other costs to make sure Share-A-Day is a wonderful experience for all.

Please help us make this Manhattan Share-A-day 2016 possible by sending in your contributions as soon as possible.

Please make checks payable to: Manhattan Share-A-Day P.O Box 6990, FDR Station New York N.Y 10150

With Love and Gratitude, Manhattan Share-A-Day 2016

#### Manhattan Share-A-Day 2016: Planning Underway!!!

MSAD Date: May 7th (tentative)
MSAD Location: TBD (in the process of finding one)

#### **Upcoming Area Convention Planning Meetings**

Volunteers are need to ensure the success of this year's Area Convention, which takes place Friday, March 18 to Sunday, March 20 at the Westchester Marriott.

Please join us at the Convention planning meetings on February 13th and March 12th at 10am, St. Mary Gate of Heaven Church basement, 103-12 101st Ave. Ozone Park, NY 11416. *All are welcome!*  South Eastern New York, Area 49
General Service Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous
In Cooperation with

New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Lower Hudson Valley/New York City, Region 1

Presents

### **Corrections Connection Workshop**



Carrying the Message of Recovery to the Incarcerated Alcoholic

May 13, 2016

SING SING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY Quality of Work Life Building 354 Hunter Street Ossining, New York 10562

The meeting is easily accessible from the MTA Metro-North Railroad's OSSINING Station. The Quality of Work Life Building is within walking distance of the train station.

Prior clearance is not required.

Calenda	ır of Evei	Nisit www.aaseny.org for complete, up-to-date information. E-mail agenda@aaseny.org to add an event.
02/06/16	8:30 am	SENY Area 49 Assembly (hosted by BxUM County), Our Saviour Lutheran School, 1734 Williamsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10461
02/09/16	7:00 pm	Putnam County General Service Meeting, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 76 Gleneida Avenue, Carmel, NY 10512
02/10/16	7:00 pm	Bronx/U. M.General Service Committee Meeting, Bedford Park Congregational Church, 3008 Bainbridge Ave. Bronx, NY 10458
02/14/16	10:00 am	SENY Corrections Committee Meeting, SENY Office, 199 Lincoln Avenue, Bronx, NY 10454
02/15/16	7:30 pm	Nassau County General Service Meeting, Nassau Intergroup Office, 361 Hempstead Turnpike, West Hempstead, NY 11552
02/16/16	7:00 pm	Orange County General Service Meeting, First Presbyterian Church, Campbell Hall, Rte. 207 Campbell Hall, NY 10916
02/17/16	7:30 pm	Westchester County General Service Meeting, Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, White Plains, NY 10605
02/19-02/21	all day	14th Eastern Area Convention of Young People in AA, Grand Hyatt New York, 109 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017
02/19/16	8:00 pm	Suffolk County General Service Meeting, True North Church, 1101 Lakeland Avenue, Bohemia, NY 11716
02/21/16	9:30 am	Asamblea de los Distritos Hispanos, <i>El Grupo Cuscatlan</i> , 71 E 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11226
02/26-02/28	all day	2016 Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly, Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, 1 Monarch Pl. Springfield, MA 01144
03/06/16	9:00 am	19th Annual Suffolk County General Service Unity Breakfast, The East Wind, 5720 Route 25A, Wading River, NY 11792
03/07/16	7:30 pm	SENY Committee Meeting, Church of the Holy Family, Mechler Hall, 2158 Watson Avenue, Bronx, NY 10472
03/08/16	7:00 pm	Putnam County General Service Meeting, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 76 Gleneida Avenue, Carmel, NY 10512
03/15/16	7:00 pm	Orange County General Service Meeting, First Presbyterian Church, Campbell Hall, Rte. 207, Campbell Hall, NY 10916
03/16/16	7:30 pm	Westchester County General Service Meeting, Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, White Plains, NY 10605
03/18/16	8:00 pm	Suffolk County General Service Meeting, True North Church, 1101 Lakeland Avenue, Bohemia, NY 11716
03/18-03/20	all day	48th SENY Convention, Westchester Marriott Hotel, 670 White Plains Rd., Tarrytown, NY 10591
03/20/16	3 pm	Sullivan County General Service Meeting, Sullivan County Community College, 112 College Rd., Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759
04/09/16	8:30 am	SENY Area 49 pre-Conference Assembly, Our Saviour Lutheran School, 1734 Williamsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10461

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