

“How Money and Spirituality Mix”

First and foremost, I want to thank Area 50 for the opportunity and trust to serve in the capacity of the Treasurer for 2018-2019 (Panel 68). It has offered me a lot of personal and spiritual growth and I hope the next officers get as much benefit and more than I did over the past two years.

Because of groups and individuals voluntary contributions to Area 50 we had the chance in 2019 to fly in and hear from 4 different Past Trustees offering their unique perspective on AA at large. From the history of how the 4<sup>th</sup> edition big book was created, to the importance of singleness of purpose, AA in Western New York was able to hear from the experience of people we would have not otherwise met.

We were fortunate to afford to send 11 different trusted servants to 18 different events where they were able to report back on the growing energy in Area 50 and gain insight and experience from other areas on how we can better further grow. In some cases if it were not for the use of 7<sup>th</sup> tradition funds, some of these trusted servants would have otherwise not been able to attend these events and come back better learned and more useful servants to AA as a whole.

We helped several Districts with Days of Sharing covering the importance of Sponsorship down to getting more information out on the important Conference Agenda Items that were for vote in 2019 which did change AA literature and Policy. And most importantly we were able to help pay for our Delegate to attend the General Service Conference to see that Area 50's group conscience could be heard as to how we felt AA can serve the alcoholics not yet at our doors.

Because of a bank balance which exceeded our normal annual expenses, we were able to help give financial support to some of the up and coming districts with their tireless efforts of the district committee members who are now bringing more AA meetings into prisons and jails where there were none before. We've been able to help support the Cooperation with the Professional Community efforts to get in front of counselors and attorneys who see alcoholics and potential alcoholics who formally had limited information on what AA is and how we can help.

We are small in our numbers but effective in our efforts when we work together to help reach out to the all the untold alcoholics still not yet at our doors.

While some fantastic growth has occurred, in retrospect there are a few mistakes I made this year which I feel remiss to not pass on so we can grow better as an Area:

1. Holding onto the purse strings too tight. Along the lines of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tradition, we want to see there are no other requirements to serve AA outside of a sincere desire to do so, and that money or conformity never be a requirement. Along these lines, Area 50 has had a standing policy to advance budget approved funds to Area servants for travel and supply expenses. We do need to see legitimate receipts back from the events and retailers before

further funds can be advanced, but we need to have a healthy balance between financial oversight and to ensure our trusted servants can actually feel trusted.

2. Producer of Confusion rather than Harmony. At the current moment, almost all of Area 50's individual committees entrust in Area 50 to have the budgeted funds on hand in order to help their individual committee's needs when the time comes. I had made what I believe to be a mistake, out of a decision of personal convenience, by liquidating the remaining amount of budgeted funds to a standing committee for their ease to manage purchases on their own. While this made my life easier by eliminating the need to disburse multiple checks in a timely manner, I have concerns if that trend were to continue a great sense of dis-unity that could arise within Area 50 and create a situation of the committee have's and the committee have-not's within our body. A later Assembly might decide to change the current practice to avoid doing this, but it was not within my scope to make that decision for the body and I believe it is imprudent to have that occur.
  
3. Promotion of a top down structure rather than AA's inverted triangle. Because active districts in great number is relatively new to Area 50, there has been a lot of effort and direction given from the Area Officers and Area Committee members to assist getting started –this has included the use of capital from Area 50. I think while it had been necessary to get started quickly, I know I could have done more to go out to the individual groups and districts to discuss and promote the importance of self-supporting your local districts. Unless we greatly modify the responsibilities of the Area Assembly, our current average annual contributions of \$14,000 per year is sufficient to help cover our costs. If groups decide to give more of their contributions to their district instead, we should still remain self-supporting as an Area without concern.

In addition, the less need a district has on the Area to support for their functioning, the more effective they can truly become in confidently directing the Area on decisions they feel must be made to best serve AA as a whole, and thereby help us to “right side” the upside down triangle.

4. Improved Financial Transparency/Communication. Initially after taking up the position and reviewed the former year's books, I was bothered by what I felt were some under reported deviations from the budget. This year, I failed to keep a close enough eye on our Area Events spending, and we have effectively over indulged in this category without effectively communicating that to the body. In order to ensure continued trust in Area 50, we must make sure to continue to ask the body in which we serve if they are agreeable to planned spending of the money we have been entrusted with, and to effectively request any needed or desired modifications as they come. In almost all cases there are no

emergencies within AA and we should always have ample time to ensure the groups and districts in which we serve have a chance for a voice.

Thank you again for the blessed opportunity to serve. God Speed!

In love and service,

James C. Panel 68 Treasurer, Area 50.