

Report to the Greater Seattle Intergroup (GSI)
on the
Region 1 Assembly,
September 27 & 28, 2012, Spokane, WA

For the second time, I was honored to be one of your Representatives from Greater Seattle Intergroup (GSI) to the 2012 Region 1 Assembly in Spokane, WA.

Your 7th Tradition contributions sent me there, and I hope that my service has been and will be worth it to help all of us – inside and outside our fellowship -- recover from compulsive eating. That's our primary purpose.

What is an OA Region?

There are OA meetings all over the world. To help these meetings support each other and their members, OA is organized into 10 Regions, each directly responsible to those they serve, i.e., the Intergroups that affiliate with that Region. Some are geographically small but densely populated with meetings such as Region 7 which includes Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Delaware, Washington DC, and Maryland. Some are huge but support fewer meetings per mile, such as Region 9 which includes Western Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. But even in such a vast area, you can find a meeting in Manama, Bahrain, at noon on Thursdays. (You can check this out on the “Find a Meeting” feature on our international website, www.aa.org. Another example of your 7th Tradition contributions at work at the OA World Service level.)

Let's say that you're in Mozambique, you need a meeting, but there are no face-to-face meetings. However, you've got great mobile phone service. This is where virtual OA meetings – telephone and online -- become especially important. Just like face-to-face meetings, to be included in the OA World Service meetings directory, virtual meetings must be registered with OA World Service, agree to affiliate only with Overeaters Anonymous, and meet to practice the OA Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Service. As of the 2012 World Service Business Conference (WSBC), all these virtual meetings now have a Trustee representing them on the OA World Service Board of Trustees – just like our Region 1 Trustee.

A piece of business we passed at the 2012 Region 1 Assembly changed our Region's by-laws to be in agreement with OA World Service by-laws so that a virtual meeting without a specific geographic location may affiliate with our Region.

GSI is affiliated with Region 1, a middle-sized Region in terms of number of meetings, Intergroups, and geography. Its geographical area ranges north to Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, east to Saskatchewan; and south from Canada through Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. To see the composition of each Region, go here: <http://www.aa.org/pdfs/oaregions.pdf>

How does all this infrastructure work?

I think of OA infrastructure working like a coffee percolator:

Heat (OA members) get the water (GSI reps) boiling. Their steam (WSBC and Region delegates) blasts up through the fertile coffee grounds (delegates from all over the world), condenses (in the WSBC committees, the OA Board of Trustees, and the Region Chairs), and drips back down (via WSBC and Region delegates) to serve a delicious beverage of recovery – better than the water they started with -- to everyone (all OA members).

Does that image work for you? If you're abstaining from caffeine or have never seen a percolator in action, think "Convection Currents of Love."

Anyway, just as GSI has trusted servants who help keep us somewhat organized, so does our Region. Each Region board member (chair, vice-chair, communication coordinator, secretary, treasurer) has specific responsibilities that include being the liaison for specific Intergroups and for guiding specific Region committees. For example, GSI's Region liaison is our Region secretary, Cynthia. If I don't know the specific person to ask, I contact her when I have a question about Region matters.

As Chair of the Budget, Finance, Delegate Support Committee, my committee and I work with Deborah, our Region Treasurer, to accomplish our tasks. After we'd all been struggling to balance our Region budget during the Thursday Assembly meeting, several members of this committee met in one of our hotel rooms to see if we could help our Treasurer. Working together, we saw where we could cut and add income to our budget to bring it closer to balance. For instance, since we immediately sold all 150 journals we brought to Assembly, we realized we could probably sell more than originally estimated, thus adding income. After identifying unspent but budgeted funds, we were also able to work quickly to help Intergroups that hadn't sent a delegate in years, if ever, apply for Region support to send a delegate to WSBC.

We repaired the Region infrastructure at this Assembly by making changes to the way we use a Parliamentarian. The purpose of the Parliamentarian, as we see it, is to help the Region Chair run a successful and efficient meeting by advising the Chair regarding Roberts Rules of Order (the guidelines for running our meetings.) We clarified that the Parliamentarian is not a member of the Region Board and is therefore not needed at quarterly Region Board meetings, thus saving the cost of hiring and accommodating a Parliamentarian most of the time. However, delegates felt that, even if no by-laws amendments were proposed ahead of time, you never know what kind of business might occur at a Region Assembly, the order of which might be hard for an unassisted Chair to sort out on the fly. Therefore, we should always have a Parliamentarian present at Region Assembly.

Why do we need so many committees and another layer of organization?

*In all things OA,
There is no "They."*

OA service bodies are teaching grounds, particularly with respect to practicing the Twelve Traditions. They help participants (Intergroup reps, Region & WSBC delegates) learn principles before personalities. They help us learn that we're not alone, that we can ask for help, and that OA unity is most important. My ability to do a 10th Step gets a workout as I learn to practice humility; "my way or the highway" doesn't work well in the OA group conscience process.

And this kind of service is fun and benefits our local meetings: as I hear how Intergroup A puts on an inspiring 12th Step Within Marathon, I get to share with delegates from other Intergroups how giving out prizes at our GSI meetings seems to have increased attendance, participation, and enthusiasm. When I hear that Intergroup B encourages attendance by selling literature at its meetings, I can bring that idea back to GSI (we decided to try it). (By the way, we care that GSI reps attend GSI meetings. When they do, their meetings get stronger as they share information and ideas with each other, with GSI, and with the meetings they represent.) When several delegates attending Assembly share a meal between business meetings, we talk about what works and doesn't seem to work when it comes to welcoming newcomers and successfully encouraging them to keep coming back.

We don't have to re-invent the wheel. We can synergistically build on the experience of other service bodies to create new ways to serve OA members represented by GSI reps. And there isn't any one person who guides us all. We accomplish this service by what I think of as cross-pollination: for example, delegates from Yakima, Calgary, and Anchorage start working together at the Region Assembly on the Public Information/Professional Outreach Committee. Several of them are also delegates to WSBC and have chosen to serve on that same committee where they share their experience and ideas with other delegates from all over the world on how we can carry OA's message. And then those ideas come back to our Region, and back to GSI via individual discussions and written committee reports.

The Region functions as the link between Intergroups and the OA World Service Business Conference (WSBC). WSBC delegates determine the aspects of our OA program that will be emphasized over the next few years. For example, WSBC delegates agree that abstinence and the strong meetings that foster abstinence are of primary importance. WSBC delegates bring this message back to their local meetings and stay connected to their fellow Region delegates to continue this process by helping each other work on these goals.

How can I serve you?

My duties as your Region Representative (Delegate) include supporting your meeting as well as working on the Region's Budget, Finance, and Delegate Support committee. I would love to speak at your meeting – my story and/or about OA service. I hope to visit many meetings during the year, and I would love questions or requests from you. Please email me at:

Cathe.Brand@gmail.com

Thanks for electing me to be your delegate.
Catherine B