

Dark Districts, Re-Districting, and Area Boundaries Presented April 9th, 2006

Hello, friends. I've been asked to share on these topics from my experience as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, having served as a District Committee Member, and Delegate for Southwest Ohio Area 56.

The term, Dark Districts comes from a recent lengthy article published in *Box 459* (Vol 52, No 1/ Feb/Mar 2006) by GSO. It refers to terms, that I'm familiar with, Inactive Districts.

So, I paused to ponder the fact of Districts being indeed a vital link in the Service Structure or not. Upon searching and reviewing the *A.A. Service Manual*, the *Circles of Love and Service* pamphlet, along with the service piece titled '*Your D.C.M.*', I've concluded and offer to you, a strong affirmative opinion that Districts are in fact, an essential link in the structure of our Legacy of Service.

One of the latest concerns of Area 56 and the theme of the *Box 459* article is, has this increase in the number of 'dark districts' weakened the integrity of our communicating the Group's voice to the General Service Conference, and especially at this busy time of pre-conference activity? So let's practice now what the old railroad crossing sign stated: Stop, Look and Listen!

Let me please share now 'what it was like' for Area 56 Districts in early 1980. From the Oct 12th, 1980 archive minutes of the Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky Area General Service Meeting held at the Congress Inn in Monroe, Oh, reports that Chairman Ralph H. asked the G.S.R.s to caucus for the elections of Committeeman. The minutes further shows that all 17 Area Districts, of which four were sub-divided into two multi districts, elected not only a new Committeeman to serve for a two year term, each also elected a new Alternate Committeeman that day. Folks, that is 100% participation and commitment! I myself, am just blown away by that track record of dedication and energy committed to their sobriety first, and then to the fellowship that our predecessors entrusted to us. Talk about Trusted Servants!

Secondly now, 'what happened' for Area 56 Districts. Just ten years later, reported in the January 21st, 1990 Southwest Ohio Area 56 Committee meeting held at VFW Hall, Middletown, OH, archive minutes, revealed that out of the Area's 30 Districts, a total of sixteen D.C.M.s gave reports. This 53-1/2% of the total possible reports should have sounded a red flag concern for an Area Inventory. The results from a negative action expressing concern, either by an oversight, apathy, complacency, or even the then current influx of one month only new GSR attendees, that external bridge from the Group to Conference, has weaken and is so weaken as to cause a possible collapse.

But wait, there's more! 'What It's Like Today' for the Area 56 Districts is, that, that conduit to the Conference is now horrifically feeble. I must report that the Southwest Ohio Assembly December 11, 2005 at the Otterbein Church Dayton, OH, minutes listed a dismal two of now twenty-nine Districts. That's 1% and very disappointing, disturbing and painful to me and should be to you also, as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. All indications are: that the District heartbeat of our Third Legacy is nearing extinction.

I feel a belief, that it is not so much as how the car got into the ditch, but, how are we going to get it out? A solution? Let's examine the damage, repair to the best condition possible, and learn from the circumstances.

With that said, I ask myself these questions about what can I do?

1. How can I help communicate this service concern message to the Area's General Service Representatives and their Groups, about the benefits of a Bright District?
2. Do I belong to a group that has an active General Service Representative?
3. Do I support that GSR by encouraging them and listening to their reports?
4. Is my Home Group located in a Dark, Dim, or Bright District?
5. Am I only concerned about my Home Group's District?
6. Do I share my AA experience with others only when it's convenient?
7. Should I become an **Active Anonymous Area Attendance Advisor**?

I do believe also,

1. That **awareness, acceptance and action** are key words for me to gratefully meditate and pray concerning this point of History for Southwest Ohio General Service Area 56!
2. That **awareness, acceptance and action** are key words for Area 56 Panel 56 members!
3. That **awareness, acceptance and action** are key words for you, the guardian member!

Now, a few words about Re-Districting and Area 56 Boundaries. I getting a feeling that the members of Area 56 are confusing these two very different subjects that meet two very different needs

As with any organization, there will be from time to time, progress that reveals omitted importance. Growth from progress develops changes in principles, practices, and planning. As with the Area boundaries, there were some previous conflicting agreements in the perimeter or outside boundary of Area 56 with Area 53 to the east and a minor one with Area 55 to the north. Both of these were corrected and the Area's web site is accurately displaying the outside boundary of Area 56.

In the above mention details, it was stated that in 1980, several Area 56 Districts were subdivided. The Area committee at that time, felt an average of fifteen groups were adequate for a D.C.M. to serve. The Area completed a two year intensive re-districting in 1986, which reflects the current number of Districts and Boundaries today.

Although the District Boundaries are printed in text form, there are still some conflicting geographical identification of Groups and Districts. Some examples are: an uninformed or typo error was made upon the registration of a new group, or a district that is divided by the center of a highway, or a river located in a town. Area 56 has several Districts limited to clubhouses. Most confusion comes from members misinterpreting the guidelines from GSO on Clubs. This is respected the same as if ten or more registered groups meet at the same church, treatment facility, or with any rent-collecting landlord. It helps the DCM with their work and service by being generally located.

I hear of some groups wishing to change Districts, claiming that their group is not being served adequately. I'm concerned that this is just, is it not, a sense of 'boundary jumping' over personalities, places, or by the attraction of non-AA-practiced principles by a neighboring district.

I agree with the Conference-approved pamphlet *Circles of Love and Service* statement that G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, area committees, area assemblies and the General Service Conference are concerned with only Alcoholics Anonymous worldwide affairs.

To summarize, I've used several A.A. principles for my personal inventory, and again I must seek strength for renewed responsibility and commitment to this fellowship and my own area. Good leadership is vital. Am I to wait for someone else to sacrifice their time, to do what we could do together? Will I just point fingers and gossip about other members, or will I concentrate only on their assets to this legacy? Let it begin with me, to help a committee solve difficulties! I must pay back my debt owed, by greeting the new service member and take time to listen to their concerns, and to explain things as I was so lovingly explained to earlier.

Now, for some good news! Action already has begun to strengthen that external bridge from Groups to Conference. The Area's *ad-hoc* W.E.D.G.E. Committee has developed a long-range project to:

1. Locate all groups listed in various reports!
2. Visit each active group with a welcome and invitation to Area 56 Services!
3. Initiate a need to link up with a GSR.

The Area's Group Services would continue with this project at this point, while other panel members update this project. This would include: 1. reappointment of inactive GSRs and DCMs from the guidelines section title: Service Member Turnover and Replacement. 2. Updating mail list thoroughly.

"Therefore nothing can matter more to the future welfare of AA than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination!"

"We well know that our defects, as people and as a Society, have been and still are very great. And we hope that we shall never cease to rededicate ourselves to their correction,"

"May we so continue to deepen our humility and our devotion to man and to God that we may meet and transcend all future problems and perils. Let us pray that both we of today and the new generations of our tomorrow will come increasingly worthy of the happy and useful destiny that our Creator is most surely holding in store for us all." - **Bill W. 1960 AA Grapevine**

Thank you for your attention;
Good Day!

Rick S. 48-56