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Trustee Line for July 2013

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 7/31/13.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

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Is The BOT Of GA Becoming A Rich Man's Club?

7/1/13 - 12:01 AM

Gambling, in general, as well as compulsive gambling occurs everywhere around the world, not only in major cities, states and/or countries - i.e. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Moscow, etc. and the building of casinos and gambling meccas is on the rise. Not all areas are well-healed, financially. Not all areas have an intergroup. How then does any member - who truly wants to serve as a Trustee - afford airfare, hotel accommodations, registration - a sum close to \$1,000 per conference or Trustee meeting (in the U.S.), and even greater overseas, - as well as take time off to pursue the goal of 'being of service' to their area?

The answer then, of course, is that they cannot. Does this mean they cannot or do not have the privilege of serving their fellow members? Should they not even consider running for election to become a Trustee? I should hope not. We offer financial assistance for overseas participation; however, we offer nothing for the local U.S. member, perhaps from a rural community, to assist them in this opportunity. Personally, I have been blessed by having other members assist me financially to be able to attend - but I'm not quite convinced it is their responsibility to do so - it is their personal choice. It is also my personal choice to save, take out a loan (a prior gambling behavior), or do without in order to be able to participate, a choice I have never regretted.

I bring this to the attention of the body of Trustees for suggestions and/or solutions. What would you do if (1) you had no access to personal funds to participate, (2) you did not have an intergroup fund your conference/trustee meeting participation, or (3) have a friend to help? Would you no longer be

willing to be a Trustee? Would you no longer participate? Would you ask for help? Would you help another member in your community who wanted to be a part of the Board of Trustees? I am looking for answers to pass on to local members in Area 7C. Thanks for sharing your thoughts and ideas on the Trustee Line.

With love, faith, hope and trust in our Fellowship,
Linda S. - Member, Area 7C, Oklahoma - Former Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

Orlando and Literature Changes

7/1/13 - 12:01 AM

To My Fellow Trustees,

Many of us have expressed concern at the ever growing agendas at recent conferences. With Orlando's conference coming in the Fall of an odd year, there are already a number of literature items submitted with likely many more to follow.

I encourage many of the people submitting these items to not only add them to the Trustee Poll Agenda but perhaps add an explanation as to the reasoning for the proposed change on the Trustee Line. Irrespective of how the Trustee Poll vote goes, no items can be rejected from the agenda although they would likely provide a fair idea as to how they would be received as well as save all of us from some of those items that would have little chance of passage.

This way we can use the conference to address many of the concerns that can have a greater impact towards our meeting our collective mission.

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/1/13 - 11:41 AM

Steve,

I couldn't agree with you more. I've been involved with the BOT, one way or another, since 2008. During that time, several things have become clear. Changes to the Combo Book are hard to pass, regardless of their merits. Utilizing the Trustee Poll to gauge the likelihood of passage is a great idea and why the poll was instituted. If an item appearing on the poll is getting a super-majority of "no" votes, then the author should consider not putting the item on the agenda. The biggest problem is not many Trustees vote on the poll items. I'm still at a loss on why more don't vote. I've voted on every item since the poll was instituted and I've been a current Trustee. Why? Because it's my responsibility. And I have the 3 seconds it takes to cast my vote. I won't take anyone else's inventory, and if Trustees don't have those 3 seconds, they don't have those 3 seconds. However, it is still the author's prerogative as to whether or not to put these items on the agenda, especially if Trustees don't have those 3 seconds to let their feelings known. Even though Steve, you are correct, that the author should consider not putting these items on or withdrawing them so we can focus on items that may affect GA as a whole, the author still has the right to put whatever they want on the agenda.

Also, since my time as a Trustee began in 2008, I've noticed Combo Book items that have appeared more than once. In fact, on this agenda alone, it is the third time I've seen such items appear. Each of the previous time these items were defeated by wide margins. True, each time around there have been a new crop of Trustees, however one thing is paramount. That these items continually get defeated and the author should also take this into consideration. We constantly talk about the size of the agenda, yet no one seems to want to do anything about it. I'm not saying not to put items you or a member in your area feels strongly about, but we have a diligence to the entire Fellowship and we have to look at the bigger picture.

Pete K. - Area 13B, South Jersey

'Word Changes' in GA Literature, etc.

7/1/13 - 6:23 PM

After looking at recent submissions for the upcoming Trustee meeting that is being held in Orlando, I have noticed that as usual there are a number of items requesting one or two word changes to the combo book. To be honest, I think that this is getting ridiculous - no doubt the trustees will spend an hour (or two) discussing these agenda items and then the vote is taken, and 90% of these items will fail. And so another few hours are wasted. This is happening at every conference! Why change a word in the combo book that has been accepted for years?? No wonder the trustee meetings are stretching into Saturdays. Surely, there must be a better way of doing things. Maybe there should be a committee who can look at these agenda items and they can decide what 'goes in and what stays out'. I would be interested to hear any comments from members.

Yours (in peace!),
Malcolm B. - Past Trustee. Area 3A, San Diego

A Need For Tolerance And Civility
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7/3/13 - 7:50 PM

Dear Trustees,

I suppose it has been six or seven years now that the Trustee Line has been published on the Trustee Website under the direction of the Trustee Website committee. Over these years countless numbers of articles have been submitted and published. Many have been thought provoking and were well received while others seem to have fallen flat and have gotten little or no reaction.

Overall, even though I think it has been terribly underutilized, it has proved to be a valuable tool to disseminate information and to debate issues of importance to Gamblers Anonymous and its members. We have also had our fair share of controversy and disunity here.

It is the latter that prompts this submission. As chairman of the Board of Trustees it is my responsibility to oversee the operation of the Trustee Website committee, and by default, the publication of the Trustee Line. Part of that responsibility is to ensure that the guidelines in place for the Trustee Line are adhered to. It was pointed out to me recently that I have not been doing a very good job in this regard. I have to agree.

Far too many submissions have been published which included personal attacks, negative characterizations and or inflammatory statements about individuals or groups. This stops now.

As the old saying goes we have the right to disagree but not to be disagreeable. There is nothing wrong with having strong opinions and expressing ourselves passionately. Controversy and disagreements are fine (change and growth are difficult without them) but we must always remember to place principles before personalities. In thinking about this I'm reminded that we are a fellowship and as members of the BOT It is our obligation to foster the principles upon which we are founded.

I have had several conversations with the chair of the website committee and both of us are committed to ensuring that the guidelines are followed and that the Trustee Line be for and how it was intended. It is my sincere hope that all of us will keep this in mind when writing our submissions and that this will encourage greater participation from the entire Board.

Thank you all for your anticipated cooperation and I look forward to seeing all of you in Orlando.

Brother Denis, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

7/5/13 - 11:04 AM

Three cheers for the chairman's post. Many thoughtful and useful posts are apart of the members entries to this forum, but the personal attacks are out of

order. Was taught by the tough but loving Sisters of Charity in grammar school. One of their favorite expressions when we were talking too much in class was, "Empty barrels make the most noise." In our fellowship, we are taught to "Learn to listen, and Listen to learn". Most trustees, former and current ones, choose to listen to the comments on the trustee line without commenting. Hopefully, we will no longer be subjected to the inappropriate rants of empty barrels.

Vinny B. - Former trustee, Area 12, New Jersey

7/5/13 - 4:41 PM

I agree with the Chairman's message of tolerance and civility and embrace it. However, I am personally offended by the post listed above when the poster gives "Three cheers for the chairman's post" about tolerance and civility and then closes by saying " Hopefully, we will no longer be subjected to the inappropriate rants of empty barrels." Any Trustee, current or past, that takes the time out of their day to share their experience, strength and hope with the members of our fellowship (whether you agree with them or not) are not "empty barrels." What is even more offensive to me is that these comments were made in a post about tolerance and civility.

Tom Z. - Trustee, Area 14, Long Island

7/6/13 - 3:03 PM

I have been sitting on the sidelines waiting for the appropriate posts for this thread. The combination of Vinnie's and Tom's response got me thinking. The reference to the empty barrels is, in my mind, a reference to past postings that have come out of nowhere in response to provocative subject postings. They were rants and much worse. No doubt that it might have made those reading the Trustee Line think to themselves, 'What the hell is that person talking about and why is he/she going after....?' Seldom do we have Trustees post frivolous topics. The Trustees decide what interests them from what has been submitted and they step into the batter's box for a swing at the issue. The Trustee Line is about voicing opposing opinions and they aren't always sugar-coated, and that's just fine. What I'm talking about, which I think is mirrored by what Vinnie wrote, is legitimate subjects that attract these empty barrels. The noise from those barrels has sent a chill through the Trustees for too long. We shouldn't be consumed with worrying about comments that aren't made with white gloves, we should be focused on 'vituperative' comments. I saved that word from my divorce, as my attorney described my now ex-wife's remarks to me. It is when someone blames or insults (someone) in strong or violent language. That should be the hard line in the wet concrete of inappropriateness and cause for not posting on the Trustee Line. That's what we have seen in the past that didn't get pulled from the Trustee Line, lest it be said that we didn't allow the person to air his/her responses. Yes, a mistake in retrospect on the part of the committee and multiple Executive Boards. If you uncover a problem somewhere and bring it into the Trustee Line, it's not always going to be a bed of roses. Let's not forget that the Trustee Line is not a GA meeting.

It was actually Tom's post that lit a fire inside me about what is going on in the background. The situation from Long Island in last month's issue brought a lot of criticism directed at me. Interestingly, most of those complaints went to other people rather than me directly. Things that were thrown at me were why I chose to step into this issue, which had nothing to do with me or New Jersey. I also took flak for commenting on issues without knowing the facts. Last, but not least, why did I always have to bring up something controversial, which alienates the Trustees.

Let me first say that the Long Island situation has been kept under wraps for years. If anyone asks members from the area, especially those who have moved from the area, they will tell you what I seem to not be able to do right now, lest it be determined to be derogatory. I have been to a number of Long Intergroup meetings in the past and never brought up any of the problems on the Trustee Line. I broached the subject last month because the minutes of the May Intergroup meeting were distributed nationally, as they have been for many years. GA members see this and therein lies the problem.

Areas cannot just assume that what happens in Long Island, again as per the minutes sent out to everyone, is acceptable and should constitute behavior

they should adopt locally. That was my motivation. To make sure others understood the absurdity of what was in the minutes. I did it because I'm a Trustee and have a moral obligation to uphold the Guidance Code and carry on the precepts of this Fellowship. That applies to every Trustee, but most choose to not get involved or look the other way, in direct contravention of the responsibilities of being a Trustee. The outlined situations affect GA as a whole. Typical of most things, nobody felt that it could be mentioned, so I did.

The arguments of me not understanding the entire situation and the background of what 'really' happened' were completely unimportant. I cited that my response was based solely on the minutes. If the minutes are not accurate, then don't publish them. Don't malign others or misrepresent any situation in a publically distributed document. Accountability and responsibility were completely absent, if anyone even hinted at me not understanding the background or situations in the minutes. Do we need a footnote at the bottom of the minutes that say: "Situations depicted in these minutes probably don't reflect the real events that happened. If you need more information on who is really at fault, responsible or what is going on behind the scenes, contact....."

I have put an item on the Trustee Agenda to change the wording of the Trustee Line guidelines regarding inappropriate postings, from derogatory to defamatory. Everyone reading this posting should look at the home page of the Trustee Line. The function of the Trustee Line has been there for 7 years. If we are going to uncover problems created by those who take back their wills in defiance of group conscience, then we are going to ruffle some feathers in the process. If you look at the posts for as long as we have archives on the website, you will see critical attitudes. It's part of the process. Let's not be so sensitive and roll up our sleeves and get busy.

Do not forget the effectiveness of the Trustee Line. Many items that have passed from the Trustee agendas with high approval margins, came directly out of problems that were uncovered on the Trustee Line. If some are uncomfortable with this process, I say, stop whining and 'man up' to help the Fellowship fix itself. That means, say what's on your mind. What happened to 'get involved and be of service'? Be a part of what a huge gift we have as Trustees – helping the members to give us the guidance we as Trustees need to make enormous changes within the Fellowship – changes for the better.

How about some of you chiming in about this subject of turning the Trustee Line into the Kumbaya Line or letting opinions stand, as long they don't become defamatory. Making everything on the Trustee Line peaches and cream will spell the end of the Trustee Line. Remember you heard it here first.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

7/8/13 - 11:34 AM

In Boston 2006, I helped David M. co-author the Trustee Decision to create the Trustee Website. The following is the verbiage regarding the Trustees Line:

“C. - The Trustee Line will be published on the Trustee Website and will be under the supervision of the Trustee Website Committee that will also decide content appropriateness (inappropriateness will include profanity, derogatory statements about another member or person, derogatory statements about another room, and matters unrelated to Gamblers Anonymous). Disputes over the opinions of the committee and members who challenge the committee's decision will be decided by the three (3) Chairs of the B.O.T.”

Boston, 2006 (see Past Trustees Decisions – Section 1)

I sent this to the three Chairs last week and asked them to suspend the Trustees Line and remove many past postings. Denis told me he did not have the authority to do so and that he could only prevent improper postings in the future. According to the past decision, I believe that if I (a member) challenge a derogatory posting, the three Chairs should convene and vote whether or not it is inappropriate. If it's inappropriate it should be removed. I was told my thinking was incorrect. I was amazed since I wrote the verbiage and presented it in Boston in 2006. In fairness to Denis and Unity I agreed to move forward, and he agreed to be more diligent in keeping bad posts off in the future and to write something in the Trustees Line regarding derogatory postings. I was very pleased when I read it.

Then, it happened again – in the same thread. Unbelievable!

I'm asking the Chair once again to remove the postings regarding "empty barrels". Whether innocent or not, it is derogatory to call other Trustees that previously posted negative names. This should not be a judgment call. I have been in the Fellowship over 30 years and believe the core of our principles include zero tolerance against judgments, bigotry, prejudice and bullying. I know we are not perfect. These negative qualities sometimes rear their ugly head during and around meetings, Intergroups, and even the Trustees. But this is one hundred percent preventable. I thought we had safeguards against this. These foul posting are in print on a PUBLIC website. How "attractive" are we to the Fellowship, new members or the whole wide world when we display dis-unity by printing negative comments of others. The foundation of Gamblers Anonymous is The "Unity" Program. I'm not saying to ignore the problems we face in strengthening our unity. I'm just saying the Trustees Line is not the place. Please feel free to call me anytime to discuss this further.

With Unity and Serenity,
Marc L. - Area 1A, Orange County, California

7/8/13 - 8:34 PM

Apparently not just beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

When Marc first contacted me I could not help but agree that some of the postings on this forum had crossed the line and that I would do my best not to let this happen again. I am still committed to that promise. I did mention to Marc, at that time, that we would have to remain reasonable and still allow ourselves to express our thoughts and feelings without undue censorship.

Does this now mean that every innocent, playful, even sarcastic remark is out of bounds? I think not. When I saw the post from Vinny I appreciated his remarks and did not, for a second, consider any of it inappropriate (although the blessed Sisters of Charity may take exception).

Frankly, I think both Tom and Marc are being overly sensitive and critical. Does that statement now cross the line?

If we are going to play by Marc's rules is not his posting inappropriate? Depending on how you read it he either referred to Vinny's post or my allowing Vinny's posting as "Unbelievable". An obvious slight at one or both of us. Is this any better than calling some phantom trustee in the future and empty barrel? I believe brother Marc also referred to some postings as foul. Is that not a negative comment? Again, if we adhere to his zero tolerance policy is not inappropriate in and of itself to say that something is inappropriate?

I think we all see how crazy this can get. I sincerely hope that no one will take seriously Marc's suggestion to shut down the Trustee Line or even to water it down to such an extent that it becomes useless. It would be negative and inappropriate indeed to destroy such a valuable tool.

Brother Denis - Area 12, New Jersey
Chair, Board of Trustees

7/13/13 - 1:56 PM

I could not agree with Marc L more. I have been stating this from almost the beginning of the trusteline and in many comments over the years.

The trusteline has been for many a personal editorial. The negative outlook that Denis brings up and stating that now the BUCK STOPS NOW WITH HIM is something that should have happened a decade ago.

While we are being honest.

1. How many of us do not enter in OUR thoughts for the fear of being crucified by some.

2. How many of us stop reading it due to the fact that such Dis-Unity is posted. IT should be about a fellowship of unity by sharing, caring and being grateful for what we have vs. the opinions of a less than a handful that enjoy to

complain of the lack of effort.

3. How many times have we had from other trustees that they stop reading the trusteline cause it disrupts their serenity and feelings of a unity and love for a fellowship that should be so grateful for their recovery and new life.

David M who is the #1 contributor and editor statement is exactly what our Chairman is referring too? Where is the positive of unity to stand behind our Chairman instead of undermining his efforts?

“turning the Trustee Line into the Kumbaya Line or letting opinions stand, as long they don’t become defamatory. Making everything on the Trustee Line peaches and cream will spell the end of the Trustee Line. Remember you heard it here first.”

Maybe it will be the end of what David’s viewpoint of the trusteline should be – but the majority clearly disagrees.

The trusteline could and should have been a positive tool for the entire GA world membership to shine as a positive, unity tool of example of what/who the trustees are. Instead it knocks, condemns people, rooms, areas, its executive offices and chairs with personal editorial that wrongly influences many to the point of dis unity. IT should be by showing the positive things that people and area does rather than highlighting and embarrassing what people and areas do wrong.

I am in favor of “Kumbaya Line” instead of what we have. What we have does NOT and HAS NOT worked from day one. We have over 120 current trustees, let alone of all the past trustees in the last 10+years, and maybe 5-10% of them submitted anything. I hope that it does turn around. This is a fellowship of hope, sharing the positives things that recovery has taught us. Not the character defects that the Trusteline has clearly shown over the years. Bravo Denis, about time.

Gary S. - Area 12, New Jersey

7/13/13 - 8:07 PM

A past Trustee introduced me to this site 3 or 4 years ago and I have enjoyed nearly all the components of this incredibly comprehensive resource since then. Since becoming a Trustee last year, I have been able to vote on the Trustee Poll and the ability to post to the Trustee line, also.

I will preface this with the idea that civility and mutual respect need to be the order of the day but I have seen a number of posts like Gary's and each time I do, I want to scream. Replying to his (and others) honesty:

1. If a person post thoughts about how they feel, based on their thoughts and experiences, who cares how people reply? I understand nobody likes to be crucified but it makes me wonder what kind of therapy they might be giving. Are they more concerned with sharing what's on their mind or the type of comments they may receive?

2. Is it dis-unity or differing opinions? Since being a Trustee (past or present) is a criteria for posting, I have to believe the posters at least at one time in their life had enough gratitude to serve as a Trustee for their area. Also what you see as a complaint for a lack of effort, I see as an attempt to gather all of the incredible energy that is accumulated when compulsive gamblers channel their efforts towards improving this fantastic fellowship.

3. Why would people stop reading something because of a few posts they don't agree with or are they not strong enough in their recovery that reading a message on a message board can disrupt their serenity?

There are times when things need to be exposed as they affect the greater good of Gamblers Anonymous. As Trustees, we must strive to live the GA principles in our lives and in our handling of GA matters. Many people like to be reactive while others are proactive. If the majority of people disagree with the way the Line is being utilized, I say send in some posts about positive experiences from your areas, thoughts for improving Gamblers Anonymous

from the International Level all the way through our meetings or just some of the ways you have seen GA work in yourself and others.

One of the recurring themes on this Line is that we all have different feelings and ideas and won't always agree. More often than not posts with little interest don't get replies. The bottom line is anyone reading this can be part of the solution. We as a whole, owe it to ourselves and each other to set the tone irrespective of how many rules and bylaws are in place.

Respectfully,
Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

7/15/13 - 8:46 AM

If someone represents their position as outrage regarding the malicious postings of someone else, and in the process asserts that doing so is injurious to the Fellowship as a whole, but in reality is the source of the most vicious attacks towards other people, do we call that hypocrisy?

If someone chooses to constantly levy personal attacks on someone who is trying to highlight a problem that needs attention or fixing, do we call that obsessive and retaliatory?

If someone represents things as facts when they are nothing more than contrivances on that person's part to try and create credibility, do we call that being delusional?

I'm curious if my thoughts are correct or if those conditions could be called something else. In my pursuit of those answers, I took the time to personally go through the 6.5 years of archived Trustee Lines to see if I could make the following statement: I stand by my postings, past and present. The answer is yes.

Would it be fair to say that someone who might be characterized by those words, could not support any of the statements they might have made over that same time. I would answer yes to that.

Luckily, we have a Fellowship with problems that our Trustees bring up on the Trustee Line, in an attempt to stop, or fix, certainly at the very least, to highlight them for discussion. It's also comforting that we don't have anyone who commits such transgressions that I hypothetically cited above, because it would speak very directly to page 10 of the Combo Book. An inability and unwillingness to accept reality. Isn't GA terrific.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

7/15/13 - 10:11 AM

Gary, in my opinion based on my experience in the fellowship and involvement since becoming a Trustee, if we have a problem it is neither that we are blessed with upstanding members who give freely of their time to uphold the principles and foundation of our Fellowship, nor the fact that we have a transparent Trustee Line at our disposal if we wish to use it.

The problem as I see it is more likely to be the misuse of our resources and members accessed through those resources to further continual, unresolved personality attacks, using distortion of facts, factoids and implied support for the indefensible by quoting un-named members and groups, as well as those who choose silence, to be supporters of such indefensible behavior. A common ploy of those who seek to undermine democratic and spirituals.

As posted elsewhere, like night follows day, we have people discussing, agreeing, disagreeing, perhaps even taking the time to contemplate and reconsider their viewpoint or even assist others altering theirs, all part and parcel of what the Trustee Line is about, a real microcosm of our fellowship.

Then along it comes, an invariably singular purpose attack from often singular source. I could be mistaken but it is hard to escape the frequency of singular purpose, personality driven attacks from a singular source directed against a clearly identifiable target with the clear purpose of diminishing the respect with which the objects of those attacks are held as a result of being upstanding

members of this fellowship. To claim that this behavior could in any way be representative of the principles of this fellowship is beyond my comprehension. To claim or imply that those who remain silent are automatically supporters of such indefensible behavior is an insult to ALL who choose to remain silent.

Of course this is the antithesis of unity, a surefire way to divide and conquer, creating havoc along the way and slowly undermining the efforts of those who espouse unity. Nothing could be more dis-unifying on a large scale. How do I know that, same as any of us, years of experience pre- recovery.

Given the title of this topic, this of course also has the propensity to change the tone back to that which we seek to move away from, so I will instead try to find out what the Fellowship thinks in a manner in keeping with the Chairman's request for civility and tolerance, driven by unity.

In such spirit and to lighten the mood let me suggest this as an aside.

While the Blessed sisters of CHARITY may expend a tiny amount of charity wishing us good speed on continuing on the road of our travels as the sometimes blessed Sisters and Brothers of CLARITY, it will take effort on all sides to reach and preserve that CLARITY. Unity of purpose, if you will.

To clarify the situation for me, as I am intrigued by your premise that all who remain silent support what you seem to continually aspire to, please consider the following.

- Can you list those who you claim by implication are silent supporters of your persistent modus operandi.
- Can you list the anonymous members you refer to as A Handful.
- Can you clarify if you have checked with the member you claim to agree with, again the implication being that that member supports your purpose, and whether they are of the same opinion having considered any response they got.

With all due respect, if silence is taken as unilateral agreement with anyone who claims it as support, particularly for dis-unity, then I caution against silence and I urge the Trustees to speak up and speak out. I will go further than that and end on a positive note, this has probably served to highlight the need for the Trustee Line as a valuable resource and indicates why silencing the Trustee Line would be a counter-productive move. There is also argument here that this also highlights why we should favor the argument to include the word Defamatory in the guidelines for the Trustee Line. Perhaps you have single handedly served to highlight those two points, so I thank you for that.

Odie B. - Area 36, Ireland S/East

7/18/13 - 11:50 AM

I will make this short....I support KEEPING the Trustee Line, and also favor DEFAMATORY over derogatory.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

7/18/13 - 11:42 PM

Hi All,

First and foremost, I would like to thank all of you for the support that Mary and I have received over the last month. It truly makes me proud to be a Gamblers Anonymous member and a grateful, recovering compulsive gambler in recovery, one day at a time.

I did want to update the Trustees on our local Intergroup meeting for July. Our new Intergroup Chairperson did a good job keeping the meeting on point. Except for one unruly member that the Chair dealt with whenever he would act inappropriately, the meeting ran smoothly and the issues of our local area were discussed with respect for one another. It was not Kumbaya but it was as close as we have come in a very long time.

The reason I am passing this along is because I believe that the Trustee Line had a major impact on the betterment of our local area, and that affects GA as

a whole. Last month was messy but the end product yielded a better result. Nothing good comes from not dealing with issues no matter how unpleasant it may seem at the time. I am grateful to the Trustees that requested our local minutes, offered me advice and contributed to the Trustee Line debate.

Based upon my personal experience, I am for keeping the Trustee Line. As mentioned in one of my previous post, I agree with the message of a need for tolerance and civility and I also favor defamatory over derogatory. However, as a teacher and student of history, I am one hundred percent against censorship. History has repeatedly showed us that nothing good can ever come of that. Let's have our debates but let's also remember what "principles before personalities" really means when having these debates.

Tom Z. - Trustee, Area 14, Long Island, NY

Did Someone Mention the Trustee Poll?

7/6/13 - 2:06 PM

Rise and shine! There may just be a hint of optimism surfacing.

There must be something special about the month of July. I know it may be hard for you to believe, but the Trustee website is getting submissions for the Trustee Poll. As of this posting, there are 10. Someone pinch me quick to make sure I'm not dreaming. Does this really mean that the Trustees are getting down to business and taking the Trustee Poll seriously? I'm beginning to have my faith restored in the Trustees. Hooray for us!

Personally, I'm tired of agenda items failing with almost unanimous margins and the authors not having any indication that the items have problems. I think that is deceitful and operating in bad faith when we know that all we want to do is slam these agenda items into the ground. What's the problem in contacting a Trustee with an item you feel strongly against and giving your thoughts about how to make it better, in advance of the agenda closing, so that the author can think about modifying it to make it better? Are we only at these Trustee meetings to vote so many faulty agenda items down? I sure hope not, but that's the message we as a group send to those brave souls who only want to improve the Fellowship.

Hopefully, with the results of the poll items, we might see fewer agenda items that will fail in Orlando. The other option is that the items in the poll show a heavy negative bias that will either help the authors realize the items are damaged goods in their current form or endeavor to change them to make them better able to fight the negative comments and ultimate defeat or just withdraw them.

Also, when you send in an item to the Trustee Poll, there are 5 default answers for the Trustees to select when they vote. Remember that if the submissions include the options desired for the answers, they can be modified to fit the author's intent.

Thanks to everyone who is sending them in and also thanks to the Trustees who are voting on them. Maybe we have awakened a sleeping giant – the Board of Trustees.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

Pins? Not For Us. Give Us The Medallions

7/13/13 - 4:58 PM

Pins have been part of our literature for many decades. It's nice to get a 1-year pin, in fact it's nice to get any pins. However, wearing one invariably beckons the question from those who see it about what the pin is for. It's hard to maintain your anonymity with the letters GA located on a pin that when wore is so prominently.

My homeroom abandoned giving pins to our members many years ago because

of this. Few people wear the pins and they are almost always relegated to a dresser or jewelry box at home. The yearly medallions are a staple for us. They are personal and carrying them around in our pockets is a steady reminder of who we are. Let me tell you how we make the medallions more valuable to all who hold them in our room.

On 7/11, our room was honored to host a 4-year anniversary for a very special woman by the name of Pui C. She came to this Fellowship a broken woman who basically could only speak a little English, since her native tongue is Chinese. I won't get into her background, but she basically learned her English through the program and a Chinese version of the Combo Book. To this day, she makes many meetings in many parts of North and Central New Jersey. Each time she gives therapy, she brings more GA members into the family of those who are so smitten with her story of her tragedy and the triumph of her regaining her soul and her life. Her strength exudes from every word she speaks and she truly is an inspiration to everyone.

The point of this submission is that in our room, Westfield Thursday, we do something special with the medallions instead of just presenting one to an anniversary celebrant. We take the new medallion and put it on the front table where the person celebrating is seated. The one the person had goes on top of that. Here is the really special part. EVERYONE who comes to that meeting brings their individual medallion to the front table and stacks it on top of all the other medallions. The symbolism is very intense. The hope is that everyone's personal experience, strength and hope, will filter down to this new medallion.

The sponsor of that person, as the default person, or the person of the celebrant's choice will present this new medallion to the member after we close the meeting and does so by saying a few words of gratitude on behalf of the room and hope for the well-being of this person. I will tell you that we had 264 years of medallions at this meeting and there were probably another 50+ years of people who did not have or bring their medallions.

We always look for the ties that bind us as brothers and sisters in this Fellowship. Doing this exercise for an anniversary, makes the day very special, and brings a sense of spirituality to the medallion they will hopefully carry with them for the next year. I urge everyone who reads this to try this. You will quickly see that immediate benefits.

David M. – Westfield, New Jersey

Thoughts To Ponder

7/23/13 - 6:56 PM

To all current and past trustees,

I believe the ideas of tolerance and civility presented by Denis M. are long overdue in the manner we communicate our opinions of what is best or good for the Fellowship of Gamblers Anonymous. All comments submitted to this forum over time only reflect the opinions of the writers. We are all entitled to our opinions. They are not absolutes, edicts, or even a reflection of the group conscience of Gamblers Anonymous as a whole. The ideas presented are personal opinions, nothing more, nothing less. The group conscience will decide the merit of all ideas and make their decisions using the precepts found in the Twelve Steps of Recovery and Twelve Steps of Unity. That is how we honor our Fellowship.

In addition to tolerance and civility as guidelines to communication among fellow members, I believe what has been missing--and is sorely needed--for real unity of purpose is the principle of respect. Simply put, look before we leap.

The short definition of respect is as follows: Deferential esteem felt or shown toward a person or quality, heed or regard, avoid interfering with, harming and treat with consideration and courtesy. Is it possible for compulsive gamblers to temper their emotions (particularly anger, resentment, or frustration) and honor the idea of respect in our communications?

To respect each others' passion for recovery and true respect for the spiritual

concept of Unity is paramount as we go forward in all our recoveries. We should find and have respect for all G.A. members at all levels who seek the answers in what will produce the best results for our primary common purpose.

The other issue at hand is the definition of what were derogatory remarks toward other member's opinions on the trusteeline, and the new proposal as to what will be the exclusion of defamatory remarks made on the trusteeline.

I thought it would help our awareness as to how "Derogatory" and "Defamatory" are defined.

Derogatory: Involving disparagement, insulting, offensive, debasing, denigrating, belittling, demeaning.

Defamatory: To attack the good name of by slander or libel, disgrace.

The question I raise regarding this agenda item to be presented at the next trustee meeting in Orlando regarding this word change from "derogatory remarks" to "defamatory remarks" is: Would that allow derogatory remarks to be permissible? I suggest this agenda item be amended to include that both derogatory and defamatory remarks be excluded from trusteeline postings.

Then the trusteeline would not be a battleground for conflicting opinions fueled by anger and most importantly dis-unity.

Yours in Recovery and Unity,

George W. - past trustee area 12, residing now area 16, Upstate New York
