

Main Menu

- [Home Page](#)
- [Trustee Guidelines](#)
- [GA Reference Material](#)
- [Keyword Search](#)
- [Download Center](#)
- [Contact Administrator](#)

**Houston - Fall '08
Trustee Agenda**

[Houston Conference Info](#)

- [Agenda Information](#)
- [Unfinished Business](#)
- [Committee Related Issues](#)
- [Request for New Committees Steps](#)
- [Literature Changes](#)
- [New Literature](#)
- [Procedures](#)
- [2-Conference Bids](#)
- [Overseas Areas](#)

- [Houston Rolling Agenda 74 - Items](#)

[Submit an Agenda Item](#)

BOT Committees

- [Current Committees](#)

Trustee Line & Other Features

- [Trustee Line Home Page](#)
- [Trustee Orientation](#)
- [Local Area Help Flyer](#)
- [Board of Regents News Page](#)
- [Intergroup Trustee Funding](#)
- [Public Relations Area Ideas](#)

Future Conferences

- [Upcoming Conferences](#)

Trustee Line for September 2008

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A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 9/30/08.

From The Trustees

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

Item	Subject	Last Entry
1.	My first hello	9/2/08 3:28 AM
2.	Conference workshops - appropriate literature or not?	9/3/08 12:49 AM
3.	Owning race horses for profit or is it gambling?	9/3/08 12:48 PM
4.	The more things change, the more they remain the same	9/27/08 5:25 AM
5.	Houston agenda item #27	9/16/08 11:32 AM
6.	Public relations	9/16/08 2:37 AM

Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.

My first hello

9/1/08 - 4:42 PM
Hello Everyone,

At the suggestion of one of our Trusted Servants, I've decided that it would be a good idea to utilize this incredible tool that I have been given access to.

Right after I received the news that I was one of the new Trustees for Area 2-G , I was given the link to the Trustee Website. Since that time I have spent hours checking out every link on the site. My Thanks to all of the Trustees, past and present, who have made this possible. I can't even fathom the time that it takes to keep such an amazing amount of information current.

I have to admit that I might have a slight case of the heebie-jeebies just thinking about Houston and my first conference as a Trustee ,but the Trustee Line offers me total reassurance. It's very comforting to know that such an impressive amount of wisdom will be guiding me through this experience. I was relieved to see item # 25 withdrawn for Houston. The Trustee Line is my lifeline to the Trustees. I need the Trustee Line. For those of you who have posted submissions with ideas to help new Trustees, Thank You. Thank You for remembering what it was like for you, to help us new Trustees.

Please be gentle, I am a newbie!!!!
Looking forward to meeting ya' all in Houston

Debb W. - Area 2G

9/2/08 - 3:28 AM
Debb,

Welcome to the trustee world. Houston will be my 4th conference as a trustee and I want to assure you that it has been nothing but helpful in my own personal recovery. Sometimes the trustee meetings get bogged down with the typical BS that you get whenever you get a group of compulsive gamblers together, but the positive experiences will way outweigh any negative anyone could find. Some of the best moments of my recovery have happened between the meetings sitting on a couch in a hotel lobby or in the hospitality room listening and learning. The people that are involved on this level seem to me to be the ones that most want recovery and have found serenity in life. I am proud to call some of these fellow trustees my friends. Remember get up and voice your opinion and let yourself be heard.

In Recovery,

Matt H. - Area 16

Conference workshops - appropriate literature or not?

9/2/08 - 5:45 PM

In a recent response to one of my trustee line submissions it was written that conference workshops were approved by the board, hence making them appropriate literature. This is disturbing to me!!! We have a clear and concise definition of what appropriate literature is in the Guidance Code in Article VII section eight which reads, "Gamblers Anonymous appropriate literature is limited to local area member telephone lists, meeting and direction lists, flyers regarding events sponsored by the local room(s), Intergroup(s), surrounding area(s), or conference committees. Other appropriate material must be designated by the Board of Trustees." Approved literature is outlined under the same Article in section seven. I wanted to point this out because it is our duty as trustees to "uphold and try to implement the Guidance Code, and all decisions made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects GA as a whole)." Although it is too late now as I consider this maybe we can come up with a booklet of a certain number of GA approved workshops. This would then make these pearls of wisdom we call workshops available to be used in GA meetings. Thanks for your time.

Yours in Recovery,

Matt H. - Area 16

9/3/08 - 12:49 AM

Matt,

I don't remember the submission that said that conference workshops were approved by the Board of Trustees and as such any material produced for the workshop was designated as appropriate literature. Rather than sift through the previous issues to try and quote chapter and verse, let me explain what the real deal is on this subject.

The BOT Co-Chairs responsible for overseeing the various conferences are also responsible for evaluating and reviewing all the material that is to part of any conference, in advance of the conferences. This becomes problematic and much of the material that needs to be reviewed is generally not ready in time for the deadline for such a review. Procrastination is a theme that still runs deep with conferences. The chairs can only review what is available. I can tell you this from experience, as I was the 2nd Co-Chair under Bob W's reign as Chairman of the BOTs 2 prior terms ago. Nobody on the Board approves the conference workshops. That is up to the conference committee of the area hosting the conference. The designated Co-Chair of the BOT is to review the 'appropriateness' of the material that is used throughout the conference. If anything is deemed to be a problem, it is the expectation that the conference committee will work to sort out any potential issues. Having said that, if the material is not viewed to be a problem, it by no means constitutes that the material used is deemed to be GA appropriate.

As you said very clearly, we have definitions about what is GA appropriate material. The conference workshops are not GA meetings and that is the fine line that allows for material from the outside to be used in the workshops. This also very clearly means that none of the material from a mini-conference or international conference workshop can be used, displayed or even distributed in a GA room at any time. It also does not allow extra copies of any prepared booklets from a conference to be sold by any room or Intergroup.

If any GA member is convinced of the value of any material used in a workshop, they are completely within their rights to submit it to the BOT for consideration as new literature through one of their local area Trustees, either current or past. Other than that, there is no room in the Fellowship for the thinking by some that any workshop material was responsible for a great workshop and therefore is appropriate for the GA rooms, without the GA approved logo.

Up until last year, there was little structure of what GA approved and GA appropriate material actually were. The absence of specific language and structure contributed to widespread abuse of what some felt was good literature appropriate for use in the rooms. I for one, am glad that the gray areas are now black and white. I hope this helped you.

David M. - Area 12, NJ

Owning race horses for profit or is it gambling?

9/3/08 - 12:48 PM

Fellow Trustees,

I received an email from a good friend in program from South Africa. He has described the following situation in the email below. Some members have responded to this already and I promised Vigil I would insert this in the Trustee Line and possibly they

could get some more input. Had this been sent a little earlier I would have brought it to the agenda.

Vigil would appreciate any and all comments and maybe some similar occurrences. If you wish to send him an email instead of posting something on this site, please check your Confidential Trustee Listing for my email address and I will forward it to him.

Looking forward to Houston, Thank you in advance for your help.

Steve R. - Area 2B
Chairman, G.A. International Relations Committee --- Hi ISO team :

Steve please can you advise us of the view from the BOT on the following situation :

A new member comes into meeting for the first time. This member owns horses that compete in the horse racing industry. If and when the horse wins and the member who is still the owner takes or receives the stake on behalf of the winning horse will this be considered a bet or a form of gambling?

We took discussion on this last night and whilst members feel that whilst in the fellowhip the member should dispense of his interests in the racing horses but we cannot force a member to do this but would appreciate the guidelines on this from an experience point of view or be guided by the clause and guideline for such a scenario.

VIGIL

The more things change, the more they remain the same

9/8/08 - 9:55 PM

It is with great distress that I write this latest submission of mine to the Trustee Line. Unfortunately, I will no doubt ruffle a lot of feathers, but this matter really needs to be brought out in the open. I have made sure that I did not violate the guidelines of this forum by not making derogatory statements about another member. If you are interested in exactly who is involved, give me a call and we will discuss it further. This is a lengthy one, so grab a cup of coffee before you start reading any further.

My fellow Trustees, there is trouble in Los Angeles, and more specifically with the Board of Regents. My area of concern is an attitude of how GA members or Trustees are treated that don't stop complaining when the BOR tells them that the issue in question is finished, when it is clearly not finished. Explanations, incomplete or inaccurate as they may be, are given by the BOR and then they shutdown. Essentially, those who challenge the status quo with the BOR are told that if they want to change it, then put it on the BOR agenda. Returning Trustees know that if you want to put an item on the BOT agenda and you are not going to physically be there to express your point of view, then it's just not going to have the same impact if you are there to explain things or try to overcome any opposing viewpoints. Essentially, that item is most likely headed for a defeat. The same situation exists with putting an item on the BOR agenda and not being there in person to pitch your case.

What's worse is that no one from the BOR will discuss anything that happens at the BOR meetings until the minutes are officially posted. This is an unspoken code of ethics with the BOR that is not written in the Gamblers Anonymous By-Laws or the BOR Standing Rules. On numerous occasions I have asked what happened at a meeting on specific subjects and have been completely unable to get anything other than I would have to wait until the minutes are posted. That's it guys - keep this Good Ole Boy club called the Board of Regents in its Secret Society status.

Another tactic that is thrown at the 'trouble makers' like me, is the patronizing statement that if I want to change things then I should run for the Board of Regents. Sure, that's an easy statement to make when only 2 people from outside the 200-mile radius of ISO are allowed to be on the BOR. Article III, Section 6 of the By-Laws outlines that point. What's worse is the current system uses a Nominating Committee of current and past Regents to select a favored group of 18 candidates of their own choosing to be on the ballot for BOR election. Let's think about that... every year there are 9 Regents elected, 7 from California and 2 from outside 200 miles. If everyone was allowed to run only once, over a 10 year period, that would leave an eligible field of members of the nominating committee of 70 from within the 200 mile radius and 20 from outside. The committee has to physically meet, so it is unlikely that many committee members would take their own money to fly it for such a meeting. So we are left with the Good Ole Boy network once again, who are not interested in nominating anyone they don't know or who stands up for something that the BOR is not interested in listening to because of their culpability. Why nominate someone who is going to challenge them at the meetings? Yes, I see the agenda item that proposes to modify the Guidance Code, Article XIII, Sections 10 and 11, but it has yet to pass and where are the agenda items to change the By-Laws? That is approved literature too.

That brings me back to the real reason for my submission, the 'Holier Than Thou' attitude of the Board of Regents when they encounter opposition to what they are doing, or more properly stated, what they are not doing. Most of you know the struggle I have had regarding the business side of the National Hotline over the last 1.5+ years. I refer you to the June '08 issue of the Trustee Line under the 3rd section entitled, 'If we can't admit our mistakes, then we are bound to repeat them.' I suggest you read that before

you continue with this.

To say the least, I have been snubbed, rebuffed, denied and a few more choice verbs in my attempts to get questions answered regarding the details of the hotline. Only one person was willing to stay in communication with me via email, as I wanted a paper trail, which I got in spades. From the beginnings of trying to get a fact-finding series of questions answered and sticking to the principles, my quest turned into a single-handed battle that got quite ugly at times. Information that I had requested and was readily available that would have clearly shown that ISO was in a contract that squandered \$38,400 was refused under reasons of me being the only one asking for it and having to justify why I wanted it, which when explained still did not produce the desired result.

The situation went from the telephone service company telling ISO that the contract renewal would be for a 'little less than the current contract', which the BOR was very happy about, to what is now a no-cost contract proposal to ISO from the same firm. The minutes of the BOR meeting this month were nauseatingly patronizing at even hinting that this was the desired result and how everything was going according to plans. If you believe that, then I have a bridge I'd like to sell you. The bottom line is that ISO will no longer be shackled with a \$19,200 payment for the phone service with the new contract. Maybe it will help prevent a reoccurrence of the liquidation of the \$20,000 CD that BOR approved for ISO in the August BOR meeting.

Having said that, my communications with the current BOR has been limited to one person and have been cordial, focused and quite productive. Yes, I have not abandoned by quest for fiscal and legal responsibility on the part of the BOR with the hotline. Hopefully we can put this all to bed when the BOR decides it is okay for the GA members it represents as Trusted Servants to actually show us what is going on behind those thick curtains of secrecy with this new hotline contract proposal situation. The proposals were opened in the June BOR meeting. What possible complexity could be delaying the release of that information to the Trustees for what will soon be 3 months?

Evidently, my correspondences to this person on the BOR have been CC'd to others and without provocation, I received this email from another BOR member as a CC with the original being directed to the person I correspond with. And yes, this is verbatim with the name(s) removed.

* * * * *

Sent by one BOR member to another with a CC to me on 9/2/08 I appreciate your sharing these correspondences with David. That said, after several terms on both the BOR and BOT, I'm quite frankly tired of being diplomatic and catering to such a condescending, bullying and singularly bitter individual, and suggest that we stop doing so. If he wishes to affect change, he can choose to run for the next BOR, however slim his chances may be of being elected. Again, my suggestion is that we ignore him (which I will do if he chooses to respond to this message).

* * * * *

I later sent an email to the person who received the original email asking if he condoned any part of the email he and I both received and his answer was as follows:

* * * * *

Sent to me on 9/3/08 David- as a member of the BOR and GA and this being a free country he has a right to his opinion on any issue. He also has a right under freedom of speech to do so as well. In my opinion he also can choose to ignore you as he wishes except for any official capacity under our guidelines and the BOR by-laws.

* * * * *

Now I ask everyone, where do these BOR members get the audacity to decide that if they don't like a member that they can just choose to ignore that member? I'm not thin-skinned, so I didn't get upset with the characterizations that this fellow outlined for me, but I also know the source which only adds to its trivial and impotent nature. My questions are centered on whether or not BOR members like this should even be trusted servants in this capacity. I certainly liked that reinforcing statement about how I would hardly stand a chance at being elected to the BOR. Correct me if I am wrong, but that sounds vaguely like a personality issue? Besides, I thought we gave up handicapping events when we started our recoveries.

Evidently, these members of the BOR think we are powerless to do anything about this because we are told they are a California corporation and we can't make them do anything they don't want to do. What's wrong with that picture? The BOT elects the BOR and then we can't fix what is obviously severely broken, short of disbanding the BOR entirely and restructuring the entire operational aspect of ISO.

Adding to the astonishment is that the other individual to whom the original email was directed completely abrogated his responsibility by hiding behind the 'free country' and 'freedom of speech' nonsense in his reply. One of the very reasons that things escalated into a very tense nature with my dealings with the business side of the hotline with the BOR was because those involved felt they could ignore me and my requests due to being feed misinformation and not having the answers to questions that I or any other GA member that supports ISO should otherwise be entitled to, irrespective of how many people were asking the same questions.

So, my fellow Trustees, it's your turn. How about some suggestions on how to get the heads of the BOR members out of the place where the sun doesn't shine and concern themselves with giving direct answers to direct questions and reinforcing that when accepting the position as a member of the BOR, no one has the luxury of ignoring any GA member.

David M. - Area 12 - NJ

9/10/08 - 8:48 PM

In more than 28 years of being in this Fantastic fellowship, this is only the second letter that I felt compelled to send to Trustee Line and share with you my feelings and experiences. The first letter I started with ' SHAME ON US' this one I will start with " SHAME, SHAME, SHAME.;"

My heart bled when i read the article that brother David M wrote, specially on the comments and suggestions that he gave, such as " The more things change the more we stay the same " In addition, he suggests that we " DISBAND the BOR entirely and RESTRUCTURE THE OPERATIONAL ASPECT of I.S.O. "

I could only speak about my own experiences with BOR, BOT. specially with ISO and their help and COOPERATION in the past 20 years. We as GA members could have never been able to organize, establish and flourish GA in the following Areas ; Area19 Argentina, Area 20 Uruguay, Area 21, Spain, Area 23 Rio/ Brazil and Area 23A Sao Paulo/ Brazil. For which I THANK YOU BOR, BOT and ISO.

Therefore, I suggest that before we disband / or restructure anything that, we HELP and ASSIST, our brothers and sisters specially in ISO who are bombarded with questions from worldwide and work very hard to serve and try to satisfy us. .

George G. - Area 20

9/11/08 2:07 PM

I now get a chance to point out the beauty of the Trustee Line. It allows for someone to make a point, someone to make a counterpoint and so on.

Far be it from me to shy away from opinions that differ from mine, but periodically, those opinions completely distort quotes and stray from the subject. I write this reply to put the wheels back on the track with what George has written above, so that others who care to chime in with their thoughts stay on point.

With all due respect to George, he is comparing apples with oranges. George's efforts with the various overseas areas he mentioned is admirable and a testament to his commitment to help those areas. ISO is a essential and critical component of holding all the moving parts together with our ever-expanding world footprint. ISO is doing a super-human job. There is no contest or question with that, and any statements to the contrary are probably coming from people who don't know that the BOR and ISO are 2 different entities or have never had any interactions with ISO. My issues are solely with the BOR and have NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ISO.

One of my points above is that we, as Trustees, have no way to make the members of the BOR do what the people responsible for electing may want them to do. Referring to Guidance Code, Article XIII, Section 5: 'The sole purpose of the Board of Regents is to supervise the operations of the International Service Office (I.S.O.) and see that it is operated effectively and efficiently.' The only way to affect serious changes that the BOR was against would be to disband the BOR completely. If we did that, THEN we would have nobody overseeing the ISO, and AS A RESULT of disbanding the BOR, it would require an overhaul in the operational side of ISO because nobody would be in charge.

So we are back to my original issue. I'm looking for suggestions on how to fix the less than professional attitudes I mentioned at the beginning of this segment.

David M. - Area 12

9/13/08 - 10:47 AM

I just read in the trustee line-----"The more things change, the more they remain the same"

Boy that is so right !!!! .

Years ago when i read Doc Custers book When Luck Runs Out and the talks Doc Custer and i had he told how the sickness of compulsive gambling's main features are ego control and needing to be a big shot. Its unreal that after years in so called recovery people still act the same way as they did when in there addiction.

I read in the G A combo book the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop gambling.
We might want to add that it might be a good idea to recover and change.

Then you see on page 11 in the combo book no one can convince them that their great schemes will not someday come true . they believe they will, for without this dream world,life for them would not be tolerable.
It seems to me that if we keep wanting to do that kind of stuff (ego control and being a big shot) it shows we are still in our sickness.

Wouldn't it be better to focus on recovery them trying to be in control of everyone and every thing.
I was just wondering what step people are working on when they get into all this stuff.

Arnie W. - Area 12
last bet 4/10/68

9/18/08 - 11:39 AM Hello Everyone,

In response to #4 on the trustee line, I believe there is a lot of personalities before principles happening in this fellowship lately. It becomes tiresome to read the bickering that goes back and forth and I think it takes us away from our primary purpose. This in-fighting cannot have a positive affect on anyone's recovery. I know that I have spent a lot of time myself pondering which side to be on, after talking with my sponsor about it and much prayer I have decided that there are some valid points on both sides, however I think that we are not using the principles of the program here. I would ask all of you to refer to page 17 of the combo book where it says practice these principles in ALL your affairs its key to your growth. I know that no one member is more important than another but, I believe as Trustees we should be held to a higher standard to set an example for all. This includes BOT and BOR members. If everyone has so much extra time I am looking for help on the PR committee. Let's try to get along!!!

My Thoughts,
Matt H. - Area 16

9/18/08 - 11:17 PM

More on: The more things change the more they remain the same

The differences between the BOR and the BOT has been going on for years. I can remember the Chairman for the BOT even went so far one time to violate the Guidance Code during a Trustee meeting, in order to try to get both Boards together. We the Trustees had a change, or should I say wanted to have a change, to get the boards together with an Agenda item to form a committee with members from both Boards. So guess what happened the item was ruled out of order, why I still don't know, and the chair was challenged and after a few hands vote, with the challenge being ruled wrong, it was necessary to have a roll call vote. This was done and the challenge was lost by one vote, but the really sad thing about the vote that about 10 Trustees ABSTAINED from voting. I ask the question then and again now, why accept the responsibility of being a Trustee and when it comes to voting you ABSTAIN. So will both Boards ever get together to iron out some of the BS that was and still is going on, I don't think so .

Joe B. - Area 6C

9/27/08 - 5:25 AM

David,

I still think that apologies are in order to B.O.R and I.S.O., even though as you say they are 2 entirely different entities, which F.Y.I. I was aware of.

George G. - Area 20

Houston agenda item #27

9/13/08 - 7:36 PM

To all my fellow Gamblers Anonymous Members,

There is an item up for first vote at the upcoming Fall Conference in Houston, TX which I'm sure will be cause for much discussion amongst all trustees and former trustees. Since I will be unable to attend the Board of Trustees meeting in person, writing this letter for posting on the Trustee Line is the next best thing I can do to make my voice heard and hopefully heeded.

Attachment # 27, the proposed pamphlet that is the result of the Abuse and Harassment committee is one which cannot afford to go unread. I know that the mere mention of these two words, 'abuse' and 'harassment' cause many members a certain sense of discomfort, yet we, as Trusted Servants, can no longer deny the fact that these situations do occur in our rooms and the offended member and the groups themselves have no where to turn for guidance on how to handle such offenses. I also know that some of you when reading this pamphlet will simply state, "Well, this kind of thing has never happened in MY room!" which may well be true - for now, but to simply bury our heads in the sand and pretend that these situations do no occur would be a terrible neglect of Step 1 of our Unity Program. As we all know this step states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon group unity," so I will ask all of you this: How can anyone recover from this insidious disease if they are being preyed upon by a fellow member? How can they overcome their gambling addiction if they feel threatened by another member and simply leave the program? How does a room where dissensions over a situation of abuse or harassment maintain its unity? Where is the 'common welfare' we speak of so strongly in Step 1? It disappears rapidly and not only does the offended member fail to return to the group, the unity of the group becomes fragmented due to lack of direction on how they should have handled the situation in the first place.

When I entered this life saving program back in 1991, I read on page 9 of our Combo book that 'honesty, open-mindedness and willingness' would be the key to my recovery and I soon found this to be true. I am now asking all of you to read the proposed

pamphlet on how to handle situations of abuse and harassment in the same manner. Use your own 'honesty' to admit that these debilitating and often humiliating situations do happen; keep an 'open mind' on how we as Trusted Servants can best help to bring about a resolution to the problem; and be 'willing' to put in place some basic guidelines for everyone in the fellowship to use when dealing with these sensitive problems.

Thank you.

Yours in recovery,
Marlene O. - Past Trustee, Area 5A

9/16/08 - 11:32 AM
Hi Joe B here.

I was also on the Abuse and Harassment committee. This committee was formed during the Portland conference. It came from an agenda item that was tabled twice before, and I'm glad that the item was tabled. The request was made to form a committee to maybe go a little deeper into to this problem, and possibly come up with something that really could address this issue, rather than a few words somewhere in our literature.

In the Chicago conference in the Spring of 2007, the 2nd vote was passed, 95-0 on the agenda item 'If a member demonstrates any inappropriate action, whether physical or verbal, in or outside of the meeting room, please tell a Trusted Servant and/or Sponsor. We all have the right to feel SAFE in the Program.' This will appear in the next printing of the Information Packet, on the Suggested Meeting Format page. I received phone calls from members of our Fellowship, and also from other Trustees, thanking me for bring this out in the open, and then a phone call from a member who couldn't get help anywhere, but that's a story for another day.

The committee was formed in late April with people as far north as Canada, another from Michigan, Florida, North Carolina and New Jersey, there were seven in all (four women & three men). We had are weekly meetings via phone, but also worked on this pamphlet between each of the days before and after said meetings. We are asking everyone now to read thru this new piece of literature, and think while doing so to make sure we can help anyone in our fellowship if an Abuse or Harassment problem occurs. We hope you can see that it is written for both the new person, as well as the person with time in the program to allow them some help with matters of this nature. As Marlene said, keep an OPEN mind. There are situations that are going on in and outside of the rooms that may be chasing people away from Program, as they don't know where to turn to get help. So again, please read, and if you have any questions before we get to Houston, call any one from the committee. That information is part of the Current Committee listings on the Trusteewebsite.com.

Joe B. - Area 6C - North Carolina

Public relations

9/16/08 - 2:37 AM
Fellow Trustees,

I am writing this on behalf of the public relations committee to ask ALL of you to please ask your constituents for some questions that they may have in the area of public relations. Any questions at all, these questions can be either things they don't know the answer to or things that they may believe will help another member to better perform public relations work. We would like to create a piece of literature that can help anyone to get involved with PR work. There are several ways to forward these questions to the public relations committee. There is a link on the trustee web site, you can bring them with you to Houston or you can e-mail them directly to me. My e-mail address is on the confidential trustee listing. Please give this some attention I believe it to be very important and vital to the continued growth and strength of our fellowship. Let us not forget our primary purpose of carrying the message to those suffering. Help us to help others carry the message with the development of a public relations "blue print". Thank you all in advance for the diligent work that I know everyone will put into this.

Yours in Recovery,

Matt H. - Area 16 - Upstate NY
Chairperson Public Relations