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Trustee Line for February 2016

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 2/29/16.

Questions and Answers Involving Individual BOT Committees

Any GA member can contact the Chairs of the Committees listed below with any questions or concerns they might have. The Chairs will answer the emails and the resulting issues will be posted under each committee involved in the email. This will serve as help for other members, Intergroups or areas, who may be going through the same situations. The emails will not breach anonymity and will be redacted to make sure names and areas are not included in this section. You are also invited to click the individual committee links on the left margin, for more information.

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Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

Disclaimer - The Trustee Line is a function of the Board of Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous. It is intended solely as a forum for members of the Board of Trustees to share opinions on issues related to Gamblers Anonymous. Any postings in this or any other edition of the Trustee Line are not to be construed as the opinion of Gamblers Anonymous, as a whole. The publication of any items on the Trustee Line do not constitute an endorsement or statement of approval or acknowledgement by Gamblers Anonymous of what the contents are.

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

Subjects that receive submissions from at least 13 different people, will trigger an email blast to all the current and past Trustees, signifying a 'Hot Topic Alert' on the Trustee Line.

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Telephone Conference Call

2/1/16 - 12:01 AM

The Telephone Conference call is approaching it's 2nd Anniversary (2/12) and it is incredibly alarming that we still have only the 1 call in place (Wednesday 9:00-10:30 PM ET).

The feedback I have heard from some is they feel the need for 5 Administrators is onerous. I wish that some of you would talk to the any of the Administrators or myself to understand this requirement.

Independent of this, we have still yet to have even a group of 2 or 3 come to us wanting to start a meeting. Not that we could do that, but at least we could try to find 2 or 3 other people and finally get a 2nd meeting off the ground.

Let's try to commit some energy to this. People from around the world (yes) have attended and in many instances have no ability (through many reasons) to go to physical meetings.

If you are looking to be part of the solution, please email me as follows:

www.trusteewebsite.com
 BOT Committees menu
 Telephone Conference Call
 And then click on the link for the Committee Chair

Thanks to All.
 Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

LifeLiner - Major Overhaul

2/1/16 - 12:01 AM

Last week, I received a very nice thank you letter from the ISO regarding my total contributions to Gamblers Anonymous under the LifeLiner program for 2015. I looked at the number and I thought that the amount was just not a lot of money, relative to what I could have contributed. Therein lies the problem, at least for me. My hope is that what I write here, gains a lot of traction with everyone who reads this submission.

I thought about the entire LifeLiner program and how we, as Trustees, Trusted Servants, and GA members, deal with contributions. Personally, I think it is time to revamp things from the top down.

Why is the LifeLiner program kept under such secrecy? I agree that it is inappropriate to let anyone know how much any GA member contributes, but why can't we list out the names of those who are LifeLiners? This should be done on a state-by-state basis. Why don't we start with the Board of Trustees? Let's see how that goes and then work it into the members at later time.

I looked at the back of our LifeLiner Bulletin, and if ever there was a need for a makeover, that page is a prime candidate. I don't know how old that page is, but the information is not a strong enough message to those who are looking at it.

Next is making a more effective approach that needs to be addressed at the Intergroup and room levels. Unfortunately, this is going to be a struggle in our area, same as it is to get members to register to our website, and trying to get members to volunteer for the National Hotline in our area.

Our area has 50 rooms and only 254 registered members to our Intergroup website. You do that math, it's pretty sad. I'll go one step more. We are happy to say that we have our hotline covered with a minimum of 2 volunteers in every hour of every day, throughout the 168 hours of every week. However, that is only for 49 volunteers, again you do the math with 50 rooms.

That brings us up to LifeLiners. We get semi-annual glimpses at LifeLiner data at the Trustee meetings, but only about how much is collected by each state and how many people contributed to those numbers. It's something, but it doesn't do much to add any structure to not just making others aware of LifeLiners, but to get our membership to step up and take what is generally a nominal plunge into

contributions.

Our pressure relief forms account for contributions and LifeLiners are mentioned, but usually, that is not the time to get a commitment from the member having pressure relief. As a result, becoming a LifeLiner always seems to not be a priority in the future.

The Trustee Website Committee hopes to submit a protocol in Phoenix to allow for online contributions directly to ISO. There are security issues and procedures that need to be put into place to ensure that we are getting contributions from GA members and no one else. This may help, but we have to get away from the promises that members make to be LifeLiners and get them onboard to help them follow-thru with those promises. It's a long-range project that we have to start sooner than later.

So in spite of what needs to be a major overhaul of the LifeLiner system, I have a very vivid image in my head of that thank you form that was sent to me, and I will become far more aggressive with getting people to become LifeLiners in the rooms I attend and visit. I hope everyone reading this posting, will also become more proactive in this matter.

How about others putting their experiences with the LifeLine process into print for everyone else to read?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey
PS – I'm increasing my monthly contribution.

2/2/16 - 9:03 AM

Grateful to see the LifeLiner situation addressed at the beginning of this month for consideration. How about a campaign to involve as many trustees, past trustees, and members to begin contributing to the LifeLiner program over the next eleven months. In this year 2016, let us all contribute: **20 IN 16!**

Between now and December 31, 2016, let us all contribute at least \$20.00 as a LifeLiner. For those who have been contributing, try to add an extra \$20.00 in this timeframe. If one is not a LifeLiner, make the commitment today to become one, and send a monthly or lump sum contribution to I.S.O. as soon as possible.

Simply mention **20 IN 16** in your rooms every week for the rest of the year. It is a small way of giving back what you have received from our fellowship.

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

2/2/16 - 11:18 AM

As David M. says, if we are going to "revamp from the top down", perhaps a good starting point would be to change Article VIII, Section I of Guidance Code to make LifeLiner membership yet another condition of being elected to the Board of Trustees. How can we look our membership in the eye and extol the virtues of LifeLiners when we, as Trustees, don't follow our own extolment?

Jack R. - Trustee, Area 1A, Orange County, California

2/2/16 - 11:47 AM

When I read the responsibilities and duties of a Trustee, one of the items was to be a Life Liner. At that time I was not, but after attending my first Trustee meeting, I signed up. I instructed my bank to make an automatic donation to ISO each month. I don't have to think about making a donation, it just happens.

When a quick poll of the Trustees last year (or maybe two years ago) was taken of how many currently were Life Liners, there was not a great response. I asked Karen H how many Trustees were Life Liners, and the answer was "not all of them". Actually her answer was not quite as P.C. as that, nor was my response.

If all the Trustees are not Life Liners, how can we possibly expect others to be Life Liners. Lead by example. Just do it!

See you in Phoenix.
Jim G. - Trustee, Area 6, Southern Florida

2/3/16 - 10:59 PM

I think David raises an important issue here. We sit in meetings time and time again and hear members say "GA saved my life" and yet many that know about Lifeliners choose not to contribute and sadly many others don't even know they exist. While having the pleasure of attending several meetings in California, Lifeliners were talked about and explained at every meeting I attended. I hope some of this can spread to other areas of the country and world.

Jim's post addresses a tremendous sore spot for me. As he indicated, 1 of the specific responsibilities of a Trustee is to be a Lifeliner. I would like to ask each of these Trustees how they think they are being a living example of the principles of the program but this part isn't necessary.

It probably wouldn't be a stretch to consider that this could overlap the same subset of Trustees that don't join Committees, don't participate in the BOT meetings and help the idea that the Trustee meetings are simply twice a year vacations permeate the fellowship.

I've know I've gotten off topic but these issues have gnawed at me for a while and are interrelated to the problematic larger picture at hand. I'd say I welcome feedback but other than the recent discussion on Fantasy sports, very few other threads have garnered much response other than those that involved personal attacks.

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

2/6/16 - 6:35 AM

I signed up to be a LifeLiner in my first year in program. It was a small sum, \$1.00 per month. In retrospect it was a part of my recovery. Being a LifeLiner was a commitment to responsibility, accountability and doing good. I've heard and I've said that Gamblers Anonymous saved my life. Those are not idle words or words of drama, they are true. On entering the program I was told by many "your problem is not money, it is gambling"; what did they know? Mostly everything.

What a wonderful feeling when my banks sends me my monthly e-mail notice that my check is being mailed and will arrive in California around the first of the next month.

Could Gamblers Anonymous survive without literature? Could Gamblers Anonymous survive without an organization and a hub that provides life saving information?

Where would I be today if there was no hands to grab onto when I walked into my first Gamblers Anonymous meeting?

How would you answer those 3 questions?

How does a non-profit organization operate day to day? Many non-profits apply and receive Government grants, sizable ongoing or one time donations from Corporations, Foundations, wealthy individuals and other Charitable organizations.

We are different.

Our non profit Corporation "business" portion is not like the household names we know that do good deeds for many good causes. The ONLY income Gamblers Anonymous has is via the International Service Office. There are only 2 forms of income, profits from the sale of literature and donations from our membership.

What is your part in the continuance of Gamblers Anonymous?

Bill B. - Area 6, Southern Florida

Reciting The Lord's Prayer

2/7/16 - 10:31 AM

David M. recently posted a question in the Trustee Poll that asked the question: "Reciting 'The Lord's Prayer' or any other prayer that is not part of GA approved literature is not permitted and a violation of the Guidance Code and the Unity Steps."

It intrigues me that as of 2/7/16 the voting on this item is running darn close to 50/50 in favor/not in favor.

Personally I see this as a cut and dried issue. As current and past trustees we all should have at least a passing knowledge of the Guidance Code. Article VII (esp. Sections 1 and 7) clearly define what Gamblers Anonymous approved literature is and that it is the only literature that can be used in a GA room.

To my way of thinking the use of any prayer not included in the approved literature is a clear violation of the Guidance Code and should not happen under any circumstances. Beyond the Guidance Code aspect it seems to me to be a matter of common courtesy and respect for others. We should be careful about bringing in outside issues such as particular religious teachings that might offend

and/or harm someone else's recovery. The Fellowship of GA is open to all who have a desire to stop gambling no matter their creed.

Judging from the poll results so far I'm sure there is a belief that I am quite wrong on this subject and I'd love to hear your opinions on the subject.

Kent C. - Past Trustee, Area 7C, Oklahoma

2/8/16 - 12:18 AM

I think the problem of reciting the Lord's Prayer at meetings is part of a much bigger issue, that is, how does one actually go about enforcing the Guidance Code at the meeting level. It is easy enough to say something is, or is not, consistent with the Guidance Code, it is yet another matter to actually address what to do if a meeting is not following one or more aspects of it. For example, I had the privilege of attending a birthday meeting this past Saturday when out of the blue, the chairperson began reading a meditation out of a book written by a famous philosopher that was obviously not part of GA-approved literature. Perhaps he was not conversant in the Guidance Code but just as likely, he was but felt there was nothing wrong with doing it. As a trustee (and the other trustee from my area attended the meeting as well), I could have easily interrupted the meeting and reprimanded the chairperson for not following the Guidance Code but it would have definitely killed the spirit of the birthday and probably incited a riot among the attendees. Therefore, as a followup to the question in the Trustee Poll about reciting the Lord's Prayer at meetings, perhaps we as a fellowship should begin looking at formal step-wise mechanisms within the Guidance Code for actually enforcing the Guidance Code so it is being done on principles rather than the whims of the personalities.

Jack R. - Area 1A, Orange County, California

2/8/16 - 3:18 PM

Jack, I would interrupt and state "you are out of order, what you are reading is not approved GA literature."

Yes, it is impolite. Yes, it might dampen the Birthday meeting. So what? Its has nothing to do with personalities, it has to do with respect for the program and Unity of Gamblers Anonymous. I'm usually the only one who speaks up when something happens. Yet, after the meeting people say to me "you were correct" and I ask them, "why didn't you support me". You will love the answer that I have heard many times, "you do such a great job we don't have to say anything".

Umm, sounds like the lack of LifeLiners, if I give they do not have to?

I wonder how many meeting Trusted Servants have ever seen the Guidance Code booklet, let alone read it...

Bill B. - Area 6, Southern Florida

2/18/16 - 12:43 PM

Prayer and meditation are a huge part of my recovery, thats how I came into the rooms, after being on my knees begging God to help me kill myself. Instead that prayer saved my life, and led me to Gamblers Anonymous. But for me that is where my praying stays, I do not bring it to the rooms, religion and politics DO NOT belong in the rooms. We are losing site of what we are here for, to stop gambling and carrying the message. PERIOD. Prayer is a very personal thing, we have many atheist in our rooms who struggle terribly with this issue, I for one will not force it on them. Our literature is based on spiritual principles not RELIGIOUS ideas. If we open the door to one denomination, you have to open it to all. Get ready to start changing some more literature, page 2, Gamblers Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; DOES NOT WISH TO ENGAGE IN ANY CONTROVERSY; NEITHER ENDORSES NOR OPPOSES ANY CAUSE.

The idea of a Higher Power is an individual decision, not a group decision. Y'all are walking a very thin line, the Serenity Prayer was accepted because it is universal and non-denominational, it just happens to be the one all recovery programs accepted. I don't have to recite that one either if I don't want too.

LEAVE RELIGION OUT OF OUR HANDS AND ALLOW EACH MEMBER TO FIND THEIR OWN WAY. PRAYER IS A POWERFUL THING BUT THAT IS NOT WHY I COME TO GAMBLER ANONYMOUS.

Betty S. - Area 7, Louisiana
Former Trustee Area 12

SUGGESTION

(for those who want to pray, close your meeting, announce the meeting is now closed, allow time for those who choose to, leave, announce that you are reciting

the Lords Prayer if you care to join and pray. This would not offend me in any way)

39 Meetings A Year

2/8/16 - 3:43 PM

Article VII, Section 4 of the Guidance Code states, "Abstinence from gambling and regular attendance of at least thirty-nine (39) Gamblers Anonymous meetings (exceptions can be made, via group conscience decisions, for medical reasons, and military stationed overseas) in the prior 12 months, by the member's own admission, is required for pinnings and all successive anniversaries. Date of abstinence starts from your first meeting after your last bet."

With the exception of the last sentence from Article VII, Section 4, I'm wondering if we still need the above language from the Guidance Code. While there have been no issues that I am aware of in my area as to anyone celebrating an anniversary by not meeting the 39 meeting requirement, I'm sure it occurs elsewhere. If it does, or if there is any question, do room secretaries ask if a member has the necessary meeting requirements? If not, is anything done? Or is there any question as to a member's answer? Also, how do others feel about this requirement? Do any trustees look the other way, or not want to enforce this provision of the Guidance Code? I ask for answers to these questions, as well as thoughts on whether or not we still need this provision. I'll give my thoughts on the need for this below. I also ask for any disagreements, or agreements, on what I say.

My thought is we should do away with this part of the Guidance Code. I feel that way because maybe this is one thing we can give back to rooms to decide who celebrates an anniversary, per their own group conscience. I, for one, wouldn't want someone who hasn't been attending any GA meetings to celebrate. But it wouldn't be just my decision, it would be my homegroup who would decide. After all, the only requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire to stop gambling. I think I read that somewhere. So why not allow each room decide who is worthy of celebrating an anniversary. After all, we don't take someone's time away if they don't attend meetings.

I look forward to any response, either in favor of eliminating this section, or not.

Pete K. - Area 13B, South Jersey

2/8/16 - 5:16 PM

Pete, you bring up a great point. I am in favor of your position although not for the same reasons. Even though this is supposed to be a program of rugged honesty, there is really no way to even verify if a member has attended 39 meetings. I supposedly if you attend the same meeting each and every week, there is a record of it, but if you attend different meetings like I do, nobody at whatever you call your "home group" can really say whether the 39 meeting requirement was met or not. And then there is the question of what constitutes attending a meeting. I was always taught that a meeting consists of a call to order at the beginning and the Serenity Prayer at the end, yet how many times does someone walk in 10 minutes before the meeting is over, apologize for being late, and still end up in the "book" as having attended? To my way of thinking, if there is no way of independently verifying that the person attended 39 meetings and there is no working definition of what constitutes a "meeting", why, indeed, leave it in the Guidance Code as a specific requirement for anniversaries/birthdays/whatever. Allowing each room to make the decision seems to me to be the only prudent way of handling it. Jack R. - Area 1A, Orange County, California

Spring 2017 Open For Bids

2/9/16 - 10:40 AM

Greetings Trustees, After the Cherry Hill Conference, Spring 2015, I started reaching out to areas primarily in the East Coast and Mid-West to see if their areas had considered hosting a conference. Specifically the Spring of 2017 which at the time was still open for bids.

I only reached out to these areas because our next two conferences were going to be on the West Coast following Cancun. Spring 16' Phoenix, Fall 16' San Diego, Spring 17' OPEN. In Cancun we approved Ontario, California Fall 17'.

To the best of my knowledge, no area has mentioned placing a bid for Spring 17'. That deadline is April 12th. If your area is thinking they might want to place a bid and are unsure how to go about doing so, please contact the Conference

Oversight Committee at committee.conference@trusteewebsite.com for assistance.

Our literature states in the HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "Any International Conference that does not receive bids at 3 successive physical Trustee meetings will be canceled. The Executive Board will be responsible for selecting a site to host just a Trustee meeting in lieu of the International Conference." Revised as of Cherry Hill 2015

Given the fact the the next 3 out of 4 Conferences will be on the West Coast and it is the responsibility of the Executive Board to choose a location for a Trustee meeting only, we started our work early.

If there are no bids in Phoenix for Spring 17', the Trustee meeting will be held in Cherry Hill, NJ. This is a unanimous decision by the Executive Board and requires the least amount of work. It will also give a break to all areas from outside of the West Coast.

You still have time to place a bid!!!!

Looking forward to seeing everybody in Phoenix!

Andy R. - Board of Trustees Chair
Area 13B - South Jersey

Shame Them, It Works

2/17/16 - 9:04 AM

Attended a meeting last night and during the time set aside for announcements, I offered the attendees the opportunity to support I.S.O. In making the appeal to the folks present, I reminded them of the typical donation made to the fellowship back in 1976 when I first attended the Asbury Park, New Jersey meeting. It was \$1.00. Today, sadly, forty years later that is the same level of financial support by members at each meeting. Looking around the room, everyone could see half a dozen of the 16 members drinking coffee or soft drinks from local convenience store cups. Such refreshments typically cost more than what people contribute to help GA survive.

Yes, I was using a bit of shame to secure more support for our vital fellowship. It worked; the I.S.O. can was passed around the room, and \$12.00 was secured for I.S.O. The group agreed to continue helping I.S.O. at every meeting going forward. Every little bit will be helpful.

Vinny B. - Area 12, Past Trustee, New Jersey

2/18/16 - 2:57 PM

Hello This is way out of line. Since when do we put ourselves on a pedestal and point out who isn't giving and who is. Yes, I am sorry we are in the position we are in but shaming members, I won't be a part of that. No dues or fees are a requirement for membership.

We need to start with education at the first meeting, I have found from my own experience by taking one or two new members under my wing and giving them everything I know about the program they are joining. Informing them early about how and what it takes to run this organization. You can't do it in a group they will lose interest. One on one or two works.

You want funds, start at the beginning, it is a REQUIREMENT for a trustee to be a lifeliner. It's in your guidelines, and no it doesn't say suggested requirement. Before I ran I made sure I could fulfill all the requirements. So start there. If you are a lifeliner then go to your area meetings and explain, don't demand.

I can tell you in my 18 years, the last 5 have been all about money, that is not our primary purpose. If Gamblers Anonymous crumbles, I can have kitchen table meetings the same way it all began, and still keep my recovery going.

I give quite a bit to Gamblers Anonymous, through being a lifeliner, bulletin subscription and donations in every room I attend.

WHEN I HEAR AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ALL TRUSTEES ARE LIFELINERS I WILL INCREASE MY DONATIONS.

Betty S, - Area 7, Louisiana
Former trustee Area 12