

Six years of serving as an Area Officer has made for quite the spiritual adventure. I have walked through fear and I have been surrounded by love. My skin has gotten thicker, while my heart has softened (and grown three sizes, like the Grinch). I will miss the intensity of the service work as I rotate on, but part of me is looking forward to joining the other past delegates on the "porch" at the back of the room.

The first duty as a newly elected Officer is to attend the last Officers' meeting of the year, immediately following the Area Committee Meeting (on the third Saturday in December). The outgoing officers will say their goodbyes and the new panel officially gets to work: appointing the standing committee members from the names of those who volunteered, going through the district and committee visit calendar for January, and beginning to build relationships in their new roles.

I knew going in that I would be driving long distances in our beautiful coastal area (and traffic) and taking time off work here and there to accommodate my service schedule. I knew I was giving up all other plans on at least one Saturday a month. I knew that I would be expected to know a little something about Traditions and Concepts. I knew I enjoyed General Service and seeing the lights come on in the eyes of new GSRs as they learned more about A.A.

What I didn't know is how much I would learn to work as a team with my fellow Area Officers, the DCMCs, and the committee chairs—such dedicated and inspiring alcoholics in action! We created bonds that will last a lifetime. Our mutual respect and trust as we fulfilled our responsibilities prepared me well for serving as a delegate, and also made me a better person out in the "real world."

This panel in particular has been a time of great change. I have witnessed the Area Chair and Assembly Coordinator positions especially grow in complexity, as they facilitate our hybrid meetings with the help of our Tech and Interpretation committee members. About 60% of the districts are now meeting in person (several of those are hybrid). The rest remain virtual for now, but are discussing their options. The Area standing and sub-committees, who all met on the 4th Saturday pre-pandemic, are mostly still meeting virtually on various days throughout the month. But who knows what Panel 73 will bring? Area Officers (and committee members) need to fit themselves to be of maximum service in a changing landscape, and this means showing up in person most of the time, and also being comfortable on the virtual platform. Being flexible and not taking yourself too seriously helps a lot!

Update on the Election Assembly: Thanks to members who reached out after reading last month's column. We will be able to accommodate the logistics of qualifying for Area Officer both in person and on Zoom. It seems prudent in our Covid-uncertain times to have that option in place to allow for full participation. It is still strongly recommended that eligible members who wish to make themselves available for election plan to attend the assembly in person. Something you may not know, but could be helpful for planning, is that the Panel 71 and 73 officers will take photos for Archives and go out to dinner immediately after the assembly.

The joy is in the journey,
Jennifer B., Panel 71 Delegate