



ABOUT A.A.

...a newsletter for professional men and women

Spring 1983

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS REVEAL NEED FOR INFORMATION ON THE NATURE OF A.A.

In the December issue of *About A.A.* we enclosed a questionnaire to help us focus on your needs, opinions, and topics you would like to see covered in this newsletter. Of the 12,243 questionnaires mailed 2,173 (18%) were filled out and returned to G.S.O. Approximately three-fourths of those replying are professional people, which assures us that we are reaching the right audience. The professional breakdown was 33% medical (doctors, nurses, therapists), 16% educational (teachers, guidance counselors, administrators), 17% treatment facilities personnel, 14% alcoholism counselors, 9% social workers, 5% clergy and 5% legal (lawyers, judges, parole officers).

Replies to the questionnaire are both interesting and disturbing. In answer to the question regarding topics about A.A. that you would be interested in, many requests were received for kinds of information that A.A. is not equipped to supply. Apparently there still exists some misunderstanding by the professional community about the purpose and organization of the A.A. Fellowship and, in fact, about the purpose of this newsletter. Our aim in *About A.A.* is simply to present interpretative information on A.A.'s program of recovery, not to deal with the illness of alcoholism.

Perhaps the following brief outline of the nature and purpose of A.A. will be helpful:

What Is A.A.? Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who once had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, nondenominational, multiracial, apolitical, and almost omnipresent. There are no age or educational requirements, and membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

What Does A.A. Do? A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service, or "sponsorship," to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source. The A.A. program, set forth in the Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol. This program is discussed at group meetings.

What A.A. Does Not Do. A.A. does not: furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover; solicit members; engage in or sponsor research, join "councils" or social agencies; follow up or try to control its members; make medical

or psychological diagnoses; provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment; offer religious services; engage in education about alcohol; provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services; provide domestic or vocational counseling; accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources; provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, or court officials.

Other topics which surfaced in the returned questionnaires:

Drug Addicts and A.A. The topic of most concern to our questionnaire respondents is the issue of drug addicts and A.A. The phenomenon of a heavy influx of nonalcoholic addicts to A.A. groups in recent years is also of great concern to A.A. members themselves. In fact, this topic has been included on the agenda of the 33rd A.A. General Service Conference to be held in New York City, April 17-23, 1983. The General Service Conference is A.A.'s decision-making body, where delegates convene annually to discuss and take action on matters concerning the entire A.A. Fellowship (United States and Canada). Delegates to the Conference are elected from their respective geographic areas by general service representatives from the A.A. groups in those areas. Results of any Conference discussion or action on the subject of addicts and A.A. will be reported on in a future issue of this newsletter.

A.A. Unity through Traditions. The Twelve A.A. Traditions evolved from A.A.'s beginnings, and the unity of the A.A. Fellowship is insured by these Traditions. Because the individual recovery of each A.A. member depends upon the unity of the A.A. Fellowship, and the unity of his or her A.A. group, A.A. members are very protective of the Traditions and very uneasy in the face of any activity which seems to threaten or jeopardize them in any way.

Treatment Facilities and Court Referrals. A concern expressed by many A.A. members replying to our questionnaire is the influx of large numbers of referrals to A.A. groups by treatment centers and the courts, and the effect on the groups and individual A.A. members. We quote one such concerned A.A. member:

"[We have] the problem of large groups of patients from treatment centers invading A.A. meetings and disrupting

them. The A.A. groups have asked the treatment centers to send [patients] in smaller groups—the centers say they can't or won't do this and simply ignore the request. A.A. groups have had some bizarre incidents with patients...and because of these incidents, A.A. groups are getting a bad reputation with the churches and organizations that house their meetings."

Another problem often arises when courts refer offenders to A.A. groups requesting that attendance sheets be signed by A.A. members. Although most groups cooperate with these requests, it should be emphasized that reporting of attendance is *not* part of the A.A. program.

The topic "Ways of Dealing With the Large Number of People Coming to A.A. From Various Agencies" will be discussed by the Cooperation With the Professional Community committee at the 1983 General Service Conference. (This will be reported in a future issue of *About A.A.*)

Cooperation, advance planning and friendly discussion between members of A.A. groups and those responsible for sending newly-sober alcoholics to A.A. meetings is of the utmost importance. Open communication and cooperation will help all involved to remember Alcoholics Anonymous' Fifth Tradition "...to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Literature and Information. We urge all professionals to study the A.A. pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate," which outlines basic ideas that A.A. experience shows about cooperation, explains cooperation by A.A.'s co-founders and early A.A.'s, and answers questions on

BOX 4-5-9

The questionnaire revealed that *About A.A.* is reaching an audience other than the professional—A.A. members who say they find this newsletter useful because it provides information for their groups and topics for A.A. meetings.

Are you aware of *Box 4-5-9*—the bimonthly newsletter for the Fellowship? Eight news-filled pages give information on A.A. around the world, news and notes from G.S.O., and a calendar of A.A. gatherings and events worldwide.

Box 4-5-9 is available through the group's G.S.R., or by contacting the General Service Office. Bulk subscriptions of ten: \$3.50; individual one-year subscriptions: \$1.50.

A.A. RECEIVES PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER ACTION AWARD

Alcoholics Anonymous is one of twenty recipients of the 1983 President's Volunteer Action Awards. The Awards

cooperation where misunderstandings are most likely to occur. The paper entitled Information on Alcoholics Anonymous is also invaluable in helping professionals to more readily understand A.A.'s principle of cooperation but not affiliation.

For copies of A.A. literature mentioned in this newsletter, write to: A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163.

Readers who are interested in learning more about the general nature of A.A. should also consult the following A.A. pamphlets:

- "A.A. in Your Community"
- "A Member's-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous"
- "A.A. as a Resource for the Medical Profession"
- "If You Are a Professional"
- "The A.A. Member"
- "A.A. at a Glance"
- "Problems Other Than Alcohol"

Additional information on the subject of alcoholism can be obtained from:

National Council on
Alcoholism
733 Third Avenue
Suite 1405
New York, NY 10017
(212) 986-4433

National Clearinghouse
for Alcohol Information
Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 468-2000

The National Council on Alcoholism is not affiliated with A.A. It provides a program of public and professional education, community services, and research into the causes and improved treatment of the illness of alcoholism.

are sponsored by the National Center for Citizen Involvement, a private nonprofit organization, and ACTION, the federal agency for voluntary service.

Dr. William Flynn, of Georgetown University School of Medicine, (nonalcoholic trustee of the General Service Board) accepted the Award for Alcoholics Anonymous. Winners were guests of the President and Mrs. Reagan at a luncheon at the White House on April 13, following which President Reagan presented the Awards at a ceremony in the Rose Garden. Dr. Flynn was accompanied by a G.S.O. staff member.

"A.A. as a Resource for the Medical Profession"

Included with this issue of *About A.A.* is a copy of our latest pamphlet directed toward the medical profession, "A.A. as a Resource for the Medical Profession." It is a brief, succinct presentation of information on A.A., together with some approaches used by doctors who are familiar with A.A. in helping problem drinkers.