**Rural Service and Recovery Web Meeting April 2016 Notes**

**Agenda Review**

Remember this is the first of what we hope will be a series of meetings. Just a start.

**Limited Human Resources—Topic 1**

Challenges include: trusted servant burnout, lack of experience, sponsorship limited options, lots of court ordered clients or treatment center folks can overwhelm the meeting, not many sponsorship options.

Anything we missed?

• Not much mentoring of new trusted servants

• Distance. It takes time to get to a meeting or from one meeting to another.

• Travel challenges (like glare ice, no public transport)

• Logistics--including challenges getting to meetings. Geography--Lots of small towns with lots of space in between. Keeping folks involved in small towns can be a big challenge.

• Technology challenges in trying to get folks to collaborate electronically

Solutions include: changing the group format, big celebrations of anniversary, activities among groups (like steal the banner--where one group steals a banner from another and in order to get the banner back they have to visit the group to get it back)

Anything we missed?

• Lots of treatment center clients and about 4 local members. The meeting had a lot of chaos and disruption. Changing the format helped a lot. Some of the folks didn't know, for instance, not to cross talk. The group changed to a more structured format--made it a book study 3 of 4 nights. People were better able to stick to the topic and not talk about treatment issues, for instance. Ask it basket night became repetitive, but the newer members let them know that was their favorite night of the week. That was a good reminder to the longer term members.

• Lack of mentoring and training--changing guidelines to create overlapping terms. 18 month terms that are staggered. So the last six months of the "veteran's" term are mentoring the newly elected member.

• In Montana they "Steal the Rock" It is apparently a BIG ROCK

• Speaker jams, pot lucks, etc. on a weekend to pull together people.

• One group with multiple meetings so that there can be fewer trusted servant positions than if those meetings were all organized by different groups.

• Share activity and celebration announcements. Get people excited.

• Outreach committee--take a road trip once a week (or so) to a remote meeting. Take a car-full to support the meeting. Called "Old Timer Invasion" in Nor Cal. OK--once a month visit a meeting in the area. Announce in advance. Called "circuit rider" in OK.

• UK uses outreach to support up and down the area. A two-member team is reaching out to do FD all throughout the UK--workshops, etc. Pull in other members when they can and when needed. They list in every report--that they will respond to whatever needs there are throughout the region.

• Holding a Learning Day--workshops on service, sponsorship, building stronger homegroups.

• Use a website email address to connect folks with sponsors. Connecting folks around the globe with sponsors. People can connect through Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, etc., UK connects them to one another through the website email. There are guidelines and a form for folks to fill out. Ade will send to Nick who can post at na.org.

• Make your committee work seem more fun. Don't call it a service commitment (chore). Call it a road trip. Disguise service as a fun party!

**Starting and Nurturing Groups—Topic 2**

Challenges include: Limited people and money, distance, no NA community in place, limited meeting space options.

Anything we missed?

* Stigma of being an addict can still keep people away and going to AA, where they feel it is more socially acceptable. In a rural place or small town people can see what you are doing more than in an urban place.

• It can be very challenging to find local people to keep the meeting going. Starting the meeting is less difficult than figuring out how to make it grow roots.

Solutions include: Reach out to ASC, more activities from group to group, open participation in home group business meetings.

Anything we missed?

• Make sure you have a number of committed members with some amount of clean time.

• Ask visiting members to share. That keeps folks from hearing the same shares from the same members all the time.

• Use speaker tapes from NA conventions for isolated meetings with a few members. (On Virgin Islands, for instance).

• Read BT stories

• Conventions in more populated places can perhaps provide an opportunity for folks in other places to listen in live to the speakers through some kind of live stream.

• Have some sort of event to fund raise for rural parts of area. "F&E"--fundraising and entertainment-- "Quiz and curry night"

• “Skype" in speakers that live in other places.

Process of Change & Overall Success

H&I is a great avenue, in some cases, the best means, for bringing people into NA. In Montana the most successful form of outreach. Retaining members can be a challenge.

Don't get discouraged! Eventually if you bring enough new members in, some of them stick.

ASC or RSC can run an ad letting local people know about a meeting in a more remote place.

Virtual or online meetings may be a way for isolated folks to connect.

Maybe we need to be more strategic about where we start meetings. If there are many meetings in a number of small towns, that might not function as well as one more centrally located meeting. Think about the 30-40 mile radius of members or potential members.

Could there be a kind of traveling meeting that goes from town to town in a place where there is a cluster of towns.

Maybe a meeting that has in person and online members. "Come in person when you're in town. Attend online when you can't make it in person."

Stay connected to the ASC through sending in reports. Be committed to stay there by yourself if need be every week. Sometimes folks will be attracted because they like the smaller town atmosphere.