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MARIONA IV

I thought I would share some experiences with you on the Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference IV that was held February 26, 27, 28 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. And no, that tongue twister that many group secretaries have been stumbling over is not a spelling mistake, and yes, we do report on events that are held in Pennsylvania in the New Jersey Regional newsletter.

What is a "convenference"? Well, it falls between a convention and a conference, a sort of hybrid, and someone invented a sniglet that describes the event succinctly. I must defend its appearance in the newsletter because it is, and this is only a personal opinion, one of the better NA events on the East Coast. Also, we have a good number of Pennsylvania subscribers and we like to please all our readers.

So what happens at this convenference, what is it all about? Well, it is strongly service oriented and by that I mean many of the workshops concern trusted servants positions at all levels of service and the corresponding committees. There are also recovery meetings that touch upon sponsorship, the 12 Steps, etc., but overall the emphasis is on learning.

What has always attracted me and a great number of other members is the WSC Agenda Report. If you are somewhat familiar with the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, you must have heard something by now of the World Service Conference that will be held in April. If not, I'm sure you will be when your home group GSR holds a

business meeting and tries to get a group conscience on the motions listed in the report. Hopefully, your GSR will carry the group conscience to your area who will pass it down to your region and by April, your RSR will present your Regional group conscience to the Conference. But what does this have to do with the Convenference? Well, the Agenda Report Workshop is a familiarization and review of the Agenda for all those interested and it has attracted over the years a great many members that take an active part in the service structure of NA. In the course of the weekend you will probably meet or hear a Trustee, an RSR, or a member of a World, Regional or Area service committee. And that is a learning experience! I have attended many NA affairs and I am always impressed with the spirit and the feelings that are found at the Convenference. I always sense that I am feeling the pulse of NA there. By talking and socializing with NA members from around the country, I get a much broader perspective of the Fellowship and a deeper understanding of the problems and issues confronting us.

One of the more illuminating workshops I attended was "The Purpose of the Board of Trustees". The reason I went was that I'm not quite sure of the purpose of the Board and now was the chance to find out. In attendance was two of our Trustees, Greg from Georgia and Jack B., and Greg gave a good presentation on the evolution of the Board and their ongoing quest of how to best serve the Fellowship. Of course, the question was raised on the issue of the Trustees voting at the WSC and we were given some honest, frank answers which showed me that I had to be more open-minded since I came to the convenference completely

close-minded on this issue. Every issue has two sides.

I guess one of the more amusing comments I heard during the weekend was by a newcomer at her first NA event. What she related was that she was amazed by the seriousness and dedication of the participants at the Agenda Report workshop. She felt like she was in Congress! But you know what I think is amazing about it? Here were addicts being responsible and productive and that is the miracle that we witness at events like M.A.R.L.C.IV. We can!

K.S.

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Regional Helpline 1-800-992-0401

Do you have an announcement about your meeting or event that you would like other members in the region to know about? Do you feel that you would like to share your experiences in recovery in print? If so, call Kevin S. at 201-541-5531 or Steve B. at 201-233-7391. Or send it in with a copyright release to SANITY, PO BOX 392, Carteret, NJ 07008-0392.

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MEMBERS

Dear Sanity,

On Saturday, February 20, I had the distinct honor to be present at what I can only describe as the singularly greatest outpouring of recovery and hope I've ever had the privilege to be a part of, the Manhattan Area Service Workshop--"Our Common Welfare"--a workshop about AIDS, ARC, HIV+ and recovery.

A great deal of controversy surrounded the planning and implementation of this sorely needed workshop and the planners were gratified at the turnout. There was a large number of people in attendance, however, I for one feel that if we (NA members) can fill a mammoth resort hotel or college campus to celebrate recovery, a reality such as this dreaded virus that is plaguing not only the NA community but the world community at large should have split the seams of the Gay Community Center where the event was held.

I saw and heard people in NA, many of whom were there for me when I came to the rooms, stricken with the dreaded virus have a platform for the first time to vent their frustration, rage and hope. I heard NA members share about other members telling them that "they had no right at NA meetings because they might infect others." One member shared about another member who told him, "I'm still acting out sexually with anonymous people without protection, but I'm afraid to hug you because you have AIDS". I was truly horrified hearing some of the stories/experiences shared by NA members about the hostility towards them from other NA members when they shared they were stricken with this virus. As I write this though, I shouldn't have been so surprised when I see the prejudices in the rooms of NA re: race, creed, color or sexual preference running rampant, and which is so totally against our basic tenets. How dare any of us have prejudice against a recovering addict and expect unity and recovery! We need only remember how we felt about other peoples prejudice toward us as addicts.