

PRAASA 2010

BY: Mike T.

First of all I would like to thank the H and I west committee for giving me the opportunity to represent Idaho area 18 at PRAASA. This year was my first PRAASA experience. I pray that I will have many more of these to come. It has enriched my sobriety and I have gained a new understanding of unity within Alcoholics Anonymous.

I attended PRAASA with the intent to soak in just as much as I possibly can. This year our H and I committee was well represented which gave me the opportunity to research an area of service that we have been asked to do but have not yet gotten around to, this is of course, special needs/accessibility. I have learned that special needs/accessibility covers a wide range of topics and individuals, including handicap accessibility, hearing impaired, vision impaired, elderly, and language barriers.

These topics are falling on our H and I committee because currently the special needs/accessibility desk at G.S.O. is found in the treatment facilities office. Most areas try to imitate the service structure of G.S.O., therefore the responsibilities of special needs falls on this committee currently.

My next question would have to be how other areas handle the work load of both special needs and treatment and correctional work. The answer is an obvious separate committee for both. Does Area 18 need a separate committee for special needs/accessibility? Well let me ask a few questions. Can a person who is using a wheel chair get to into enough meetings to stay sober? Can someone who speaks a different language get sober in your home group? What would your home group do if a deaf or blind person came through the doors?

I have learned that special needs/accessibility is an important structure within Alcoholics Anonymous. I have also learned that Alcoholics Anonymous should be all inclusive, and we need to make sure all persons who want to be sober can find the program.

Lastly I heard the importance of special needs/accessibility summed up with this phrase, "We need interpreters so we can hear what they have to say, not the other way around."

Thanks again for this opportunity.

In service,

Mike T.