

The Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly, referred to more commonly by its acronym NERAASA, first met in Danvers, MA in 1992. Modeled on the older Pacific Regional AA Service Assembly (PRAASA), NERAASA is a weekend long service oriented event with the stated purpose being "for GSRs, DCMs, Area Committee member[s] and Intergroup and Central Office Representatives of the Northeast Region to discuss General Service Conference related issues and concerns affecting AA as a whole, as well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity, and service common to the Areas of the Northeast Region." The Assembly is held every year the last weekend in February, and is hosted in turn by the various General Service areas in the Region willing and available to do so.

Historically, while NERAASA has always had its proponents in our area, Southeast NY has formally withheld its endorsement of NERAASA, accordingly has never hosted the event, and has either precluded or limited the participation of area officers and standing committee chairs. Some objections to the event have included: NERAASA was seen by some as having been founded by a relatively small number of individuals without adequate consultation with or approval from all the areas of the NE Region; the event is held during the busy pre-General Service Conference period adding to the pressure on an already demanding schedule when delegates need all available time to consult their areas; the event could misdirect delegates' attention to the conscience of other areas or even a regional sense rather than that of their own areas; information provided at the event by way of the discussions of Conference agenda items is sometimes incorrect or misleading. NERAASA was also seen by some as an attempt to form a regional conscience or voting block for the Conference, and seemed overly controlled by a very few individuals during its formative years. Individual NERAASA critics might cite additional objections. SENY's debate on NERAASA remained lively and at times divisive until recent years when the discussion quieted.

Over the history of NERAASA, some of SENY's trusted servants have attempted to encourage the event to consider shifting its focus to more standard service related topics (discussions less explicitly focused on the Conference agenda) and to change its scheduling to the fall and/or to be held only in years when there is no Regional Forum thereby taking some of the pressure off the spring schedule. These efforts were without success.

Initially, SENY was joined by a few other areas in its opposition to or at least in its questioning of the event as it has been scheduled and focused, but now appears to stand alone in the NE Region in its stance on NERAASA. Also, while some SENY officers have attended various NERAASAs with Committee approval or on their own simply as individual AA members, SENY continues not to endorse the event. That non-endorsement has taken different forms over the history of SENY's objection to NERAASA. At one time, SENY neither supported the attendance of any of its officers or standing committee chairs at NERAASA, nor would it list the event in its calendar of events refusing also to even allow NERAASA event flyers to be placed on information tables at SENY events. SENY has never offered to host NERAASA. Currently, the event is listed in our calendar and flyers are freely distributed. Area officers may be funded to attend with Committee approval while standing committee chair attendance does not receive funding support. For some, these shifts over time may reflect an unauthorized change from the formally stated area position on NERAASA, for others it may simply represent an evolution of that position in practice as participation within SENY changes and both SENY and NERAASA continue to evolve and mature.

NERAASA has grown in popularity over the years and is now well established as a Regional event. It enjoys consistently high attendance. This year's NERAASA gathered about 650 participants in Newton, Mass. It included panels discussing topics related to the Conference such as finance, CPC, reaching younger people, sponsor ship, and the home group, all organized under headings on carrying the message, literature, unity, Grapevine/La Viña, communications, service, and the Seventh Tradition. Most presentations approached specific Conference agenda items only indirectly. The quality of the presentations seemed generally high although some still missed the mark. Participants had the chance to comment or question at the microphone after the presentations. There was also a banquet and speaker meeting, roundtable discussions organized by service position (DCM, GSR, treasurer, etc.), and an ask-it-basket session where the Regional Trustee, the currently seated delegates and others responded to the submissions. The time-limited business meeting afforded participants the chance to comment on the event although suggestions for changes had to be submitted well in advance to be brought up for a vote. The event seems to maintain its focus on Conference related items and service topics.

It is hoped SENY will take the time now to clarify where it stands on the question of its relationship to NERAASA. If any level of prohibition or restriction is to be in place, that should be clear. If some other position is to be taken, that too should be clear. To that end, I have asked the Area Chair to schedule time at the November assembly for a discussion and vote on this question.

In service,
Bill C., Delegate

(From, *The Link*, #464, 9/05)