

*MID SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA 09
REMOTE COMMUNITIES OUTREACH
2005 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
JUNE 30, 2005
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA*

Good afternoon, my name is Nancy, and I'm a very grateful alcoholic.

Mid Southern California Area (MSCA) 09's outreach to Remote Communities began with the Hispanic/Latino communities in the early 1980's. Although Spanish-speaking groups have been around Southern California since the mid-1940's, it wasn't until the early 1950's that any formed in Orange County and the Inland Empire (Area 09 geographical boundaries), they had almost no participation in the General Service Structure until 1978, in Los Angeles. Once in a while a group would elect a GSR, but since area meetings were conducted in English, with no interpretation available, interest waned and there was no GSR participation at a district level.

In January 1985, the Area 09 Assembly began discussion toward creating a Spanish speaking district, and by the May Assembly, 12 groups were found that became the first Spanish-speaking district in Mid Southern California Area. The June 9th Area Service Committee decided to create District 20, for all Spanish speaking members in Area 09, and reserved a block of numbers, 20-29 for future Spanish speaking districts. Over the past 20 years, four additional districts have formed, the last one being District 24, which came into existence in 1992.

Since the first Spanish speaking district was founded in Area 09, the area has worked to become fully integrated into one General Service Structure. All Spanish and English speaking districts participate together at the same monthly area meetings. Although the meetings (so far) are conducted in English, sound equipment purchased in the mid 1990's enables simultaneous interpretation of meetings to our

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Spanish speaking members. In 1996, beginning with the Literature Committee, the area commenced having Spanish speaking co-chairs for all standing committees, where possible. All area-generated literature, including the monthly area newsletter is translated and distributed simultaneously in English/Spanish. Beginning in December, 1992, the FORO, a special forum for the Spanish speaking community has become an annual event. Although co-hosted by a Hispanic and English district, it is held entirely in the Spanish language with interpretation provided. To our knowledge, Area 09 is the only area on the north American continent that holds this type of event.

In 1993, after the Grapevine started publishing one article per month in Spanish language, the Hispanic districts urged the Area 09 delegate to request a totally new magazine similar to the Grapevine, to be published completely in Spanish language; hence, the La Viña was born.

In 1997, Area 09 became aware of the need to reach out to a large Vietnamese population of alcoholics. Because of the extremely closed culture, this presented a problem of how to reach this community. The decision was made by the Area Assembly to translate an Area 09 generated pamphlet: "So You've Been Told to Go to AA - and You Hate the Idea," into Vietnamese language, and distribute it to the courts, DUI schools, police stations, social agencies, and some of the churches in the 'Little Saigon' location of Orange County. Over 2,500 pamphlets were translated and distributed, and although we are not aware of the results, a recent check of the distribution points revealed that they are all gone.

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One of the ongoing challenges for outreach to Remote Communities has been the Native American Indian population. There are 19 reservations within the MSCA boundaries, and alcoholism is as rampant and ravaging as everywhere else in the U.S. and Canada. Since the turn of the 21st century, we have attempted to get meetings started on various reservations, but without a "contact," found it impossible to get past the front gate. Our higher power provided as usual, and this past year, an ad hoc Committee for Native American Outreach was appointed, chaired by a past delegate (with experience teaching on reservations in another area) who now lives in Area 09.

In January, 2005, a meeting started on the Morongo Reservation, and another began in March, on the Torres-Martinez Reservation; discussions are continuing with elder councils on other reservations. Once again, we see evidence of a Higher Power's plan, servants and timing!

From information discovered in 2004, Long Beach, California (MSCA District 4) has the largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia. Although there is sense among those who are of Cambodian descent that alcoholism does not affect them, District 4 made a visit to the Cambodian Cultural Center and asked about resources available to the Cambodian alcoholic. There were none. The Center suggested that we contact local churches. The district approved the purchase of several Khmer language translations of the "Alcoholics Anonymous," book. One found its way to a local hospital, which has a Cambodian minister on staff. They also received a pamphlet to the professional.

A member, calling themselves a GSR for one of the groups in the district accepted five editions of the Khmer language Big Book, and

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offered to deliver them to five selected Cambodian churches. However, they did not return to the next district meeting to report on the results, and the GSR's phone number has been disconnected. We have no way of knowing what happened to those books. We can only hope and pray that they find their way into the hands of the alcoholic who still suffers. The district has presented to their groups that they need to purchase more copies, since there are dozens of Cambodian churches listed in the phone book, so many more can be distributed. Recently, the district presented three copies of the "Big Book" to the Long Beach Public Library. The Long Beach Library also houses the largest Khmer language written library in the world - it consists of two shelves!

Over 26 miles of Pacific Ocean lays our geographical outpost of remote communities, the island of Catalina. There are 12 groups on Catalina, both in Spanish and English speaking formats. These groups had a "one-size-fits-all" GSR for a panel rotation that came over for the area meetings, but encountered such formidable obstacles in expense, sail times and hooking up with other area members, that he wore/burnt out!

Several times each year, our District 21 goes to the island and holds meetings for our Spanish speaking members that live there. Last September, I had the privilege to join them along with members of District 4, to present the delegate's report-back to the GSRs /DCM, in a combined session of both languages, as it was interpreted by a member from District 21. We also had the honor of having a brand-newcomer, sober for two weeks, who came to the meeting. Wow! His service-oriented sponsor doesn't fool around! Districts 21 & 4 have

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already made plans for me to accompany them and deliver the 55th GSC delegate report on this coming September 18.

The latest MSCA 09 remote community outreach is to the elder community. In the Fall of 2004, our chair appointed a GSR to chair an ad hoc committee to coordinate this outreach. The (GSR) chair had been working in close communication with the efforts of a committee from Hawaii Area 17 for over a year (whom she had met at PRAASA), and she quickly began working in tandem with our CPC Committee in presentations at special event days to professionals. Since then, the committee has contacted senior centers and nursing homes to establish AA meetings in several locations. The area assembly voted in May, 2005 to turn this ad hoc committee in to an Area 09 Standing Committee, and the committee chair is making a presentation on outreach at this International Convention, during the elder topic meeting.

MSCA 09 continues to look and pray for insight to reach out to the still suffering alcoholic, with our hearts to God and our hands to humankind.

Thank you for my sobriety.

In loving service,
Nancy J
Delegate to the General Service Conference
Panel 54/ Mid Southern California Area 09