

The Outer Circle

The Newsletter of the
International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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The following actions were approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2014

- That caller ID functionality be restored in the ISO office.
- That, pursuant to the motion passed at the March 2014 Board teleconference, the [attached to motion] letter be approved for mailing to all registered ISO member groups and for continuing use as may be needed.
- That the ISO provide the chair of the Conference Steering Committee reimbursement of expenses in an amount of up to \$600 to attend the 2014 Conference.
- That the ISO provide \$600 to defray expenses of Bruce M. (LitCom Alternate from North Pacific Region) to attend the Literature Committee meeting at the 2014 SAA Conference & Convention.

The following actions were approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2014

- Approved the theme and logo for the 2015 Convention.
- Approved bid to host the 2016 Convention.

Delegate actions at the May 23-24, 2014 International Conference in Los Angeles, CA

At the 2014 Conference, the delegates voted on multiple motions, including the creation of a Conference Charter, as well as bylaws changes relating to the future structure of the ISO Board, Literature Committee and Conference.

The detailed minutes of the Delegate meeting may be accessed at the ISO's [service](#) website, in the "Delegates" section of the Members Area:

<http://saa-iso.org/>

(Contact the ISO office for login information)

Conference Charter Committee News

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) gratefully reports that the assembled delegates in Los Angeles voted overwhelmingly to adopt the Charter on May 23, 2014.

The approved Conference Charter is available for download on the SAA Service website (www.saa-iso.org), in the "Conference Charter Committee" section of the Members Area (the username and password for that area of the website may be obtained from the ISO office). This area of the service website contains the Charter and other documents, such as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Please download the Charter and study it with your group.

The CCC met on May 24, 2014 in Los Angeles and voted unanimously to suspend the CCC until such time as the Conference Steering Committee might request them to reform. For now, the CCC requests that the Conference Steering Committee create a Conference Charter subcommittee to handle feedback on the Charter and recommend future motions needed to bring the Charter into alignment with the Bylaws.

The CCC thanks all the many trusted servants who worked to bring this project to fruition since work began in 2007. We look forward to an exciting future with a more empowered Conference doing its part to build the ISO and carry the message to the sex addict who still suffers.

Elizabeth S.
—Chair, CCC 2013-2014

Volunteer Services Needed

Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?

Not sure where to get started?

Contact the ISO!

or go to www.saa-iso.org/

and select "Volunteer" to fill out a volunteer form.

Conference Steering Committee News

The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) met on May 25, 2014 in Los Angeles.

Members elected to the CSC for 2014-2015 are listed below. Please contact the ISO Office at info@saa-recovery.org to send questions or concerns to the CSC as a whole or to your regional representative. The ISO staff will make sure your comments get forwarded. You can also contact the ISO Office to be added to the CSC email mailing list.

Representative	Alternate	Region or Committee
Morris B.	Joel S.	Great Lakes
Chris D., <i>Secretary</i>	Brian S.	Intermountain
Lisa S.	Rob Y.	North Central
Jeff K.		Northeast
Brian R.		North Pacific
Ward M.		South Central
Larry G.	Jim C.	Southeast
Damon M.	Mark H.	South Pacific
Elizabeth S., <i>Chair</i>		CCC at-large
Tom N., <i>2nd Chair</i>		CCC at-large
Bill K.		ISOS at-large
Tom W.		ISOS at-large
Richard S. (non-voting)	Bill I.	Board liaison
Garrett I. (non-voting)	Kashi B.	LitCom liaison

The CSC has a very full plate this year, given the two Bylaws amendments that were ratified by the Conference in Los Angeles on May 23, 2014. These Bylaws amendments will radically restructure the International Service Organization (ISO).

In a nutshell, the amendments require the Conference to come up with:

- a new nominating process for members of the ISO Board of Trustees and the ISO Literature Committee, which in the future will be elected at-large by the Conference rather than from regions;
- an area formation process for transitioning from our eight current regions to an undetermined number of smaller areas, which in the future will hold area assemblies and send delegates to the Conference.

In addition to these large tasks, the CSC plans to:

- continue to develop and recommend policies and procedures for the operation of the Conference in between annual meetings;
- work with the Board to transfer some Board committees to Conference oversight

- oversee the newly approved Conference Charter and recommend Charter amendments and/or Bylaws amendments to align the Charter with the Bylaws and support the group conscience of the fellowship;
- develop and improve communications with the fellowship as a whole.

There is a lot of work to do, and your help is needed! Please consider attending CSC meetings and getting involved in the work of one of the subcommittees. This is an excellent way to put your Twelfth Step into action, do service, learn about the ISO, and build your recovery.

The CSC meets on the 4th Sunday of every month at 2:00 p.m. Central time. Please contact the ISO Office at info@saa-recovery.org to get on the CSC mailing list for conference call invitations. We will next meet on June 22, July 27, and August 24.

Please note that meetings of the CSC are "open," meaning that any SAA member may attend and participate (although only elected reps may vote). Subcommittees will be formed at the June 22 meeting and those meeting times will also be publicized once they are determined. Any SAA member may attend and participate at a meeting of a CSC subcommittee, and all registered 2014-2015 delegates to the Conference may vote at a CSC subcommittee meeting.

We look forward to seeing many more members involved in the work of the CSC this year. Please consider in prayer and meditation whether you might be called to join with us as we seek to serve the fellowship and find better ways to carry the message to all seeking recovery.

Audio Version of SAA Green Book Available for the Visually Impaired

The National Library Service has produced an audio version of our SAA Green Book (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*). This audio book was produced by the government and is not available for sale by or use by the ISO of SAA, Inc. However, those who qualify for eligibility under the government guidelines may receive the SAA audio book from the National Library Service.

The website address for the National Library Service is:
www.loc.gov/nls/

***If you know of someone who could benefit from this service,
please let them know about this available format.***

ISO Structure Committee — Going Forward

The ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) wishes to thank the delegates who attended the annual meeting of the Conference in Los Angeles for their support in ratifying the two sets of Bylaws amendments that ISO-S had developed and presented the previous year.

Going forward, the primary responsibility for implementation of these changes will shift to the Conference Steering Committee (CSC). However, because of more than three years working on the restructuring project, the ISO-S will continue to work closely with the CSC to provide perspective and to serve as a resource in fine tuning the details of the implementation plans.

These proposals will include a process for nominating and electing Board and Literature Committee members from the fellowship at large. There will also be a proposal to begin the transition to an area-based Conference.

There is still a lot of work to be done, and your trusted servants on both the ISO-S and the CSC are committed to bringing proposals to the Conference that will serve the best interests of the fellowship. Watch for progress reports in *The Outer Circle* and in special *SAA News* e-mails.

Feedback from the Fellowship

Both of these transition plans will be complex, and both the CSC and the ISO-S desire as much feedback as possible from the delegates and the fellowship at large. As the proposals are drafted and ready for comment, they will be posted on the ISO service website (www.saa-iso.org) in the Member Services area. The username and password for that area of the website may be obtained from the ISO office.

Questions and comments about ISO-S activities may be sent by e-mail to info@saa-recovery.org with "ISO-S" in the subject line or by postal mail to:

ISO
Attn: ISO-S
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

New Meditation Booklet Now Available!

We are very excited to announce that our latest addition to SAA literature — "**Voices of Recovery: Meditations on Steps and Traditions**" — is now available at our SAA webstore (<http://saa-store.org/>), on the booklet page (<https://saa-store.org/booklet/>).

This new booklet contains 52 meditations on the Steps and Traditions, written by fellow SAA members. We need your feedback and more meditation submissions as we *continue moving towards our goal of producing a larger 366-meditation book*.

We wish to thank everyone who has put so much hard work into producing this new addition to our SAA Literature!

NOTE: The Meditation Book subcommittee of the Literature Committee provides monthly meditation writing tele-workshops for those who are interested in creating and submitting their own meditations for publication.

Please come and participate! Dates of future tele-workshops can be found on page 9 of this newsletter.

A River of Recovery: 14th Annual SAA Retreat August 15-17, 2014 - Near San Antonio, TX

The fourteenth annual SAA retreat sponsored by the San Antonio Intergroup will take place on Friday-Sunday, August 15-17, in the beautiful Texas Hill Country near Mountain Home, Texas.

Activities include speakers, workshops, guided meditation, and, for the first time, a mid-year meeting of the South Central Regional Caucus.

For more information, contact Troy T at (210) 563-6623, Carey D at 210-568-9390, or Bob at 651-270-5867. Or email saa.satx@gmail.com.

ISO Literature Committee Guidelines for submission of entries to be considered for the *SAA Meditation Book*

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship at large for possible inclusion in the SAA meditation book. The meditation book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year. To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list at the bottom of the page). The quote must be exact and followed by a citation that includes the name of the publication and page number, using the following style: *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 20. Submissions using quotes from other sources will not be considered.

The main body of the entry should be a thought-provoking expansion of the topic or principle expressed in the quotation, ideally including some fresh perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery. What we are looking for is your experience, your strength, your hope, and your voice. **Please note that we have found that using “I” rather than “we” in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger meditation message.**

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation. **Each entry should be a maximum of 275 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page.** Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

Submissions must include your name and contact information and be accompanied by a signed release. By signing the release, the author grants the ISO of SAA, Inc. sole rights to edit, alter, publish, or reject any submission. A blank release form is available in this newsletter or may be obtained from the ISO office or downloaded and printed from the SAA website.

SAA Approved Literature

<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i>	<i>Abstinence</i>
<i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i>	<i>The Bubble</i>
<i>First Step to Recovery</i>	<i>Writing to Prisoners</i>
<i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>	<i>Group Guide</i>
<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>	<i>Intergroup Guide</i>
<i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>	<i>Three Circles</i>
<i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>	<i>Tools of Recovery</i>
<i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i>	<i>Getting a Sponsor</i>
<i>Safe & Sexually Sober Meetings</i>	
<i>SAA and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict</i>	

Meditation Book Vision Statement

(approved by the Literature Committee)

“The SAA meditation book carries the message of recovery by collecting into one volume diverse voices of the SAA Fellowship to serve as a resource for meditation and prayer for the addict in recovery and the sex addict who still suffers.”

Send your meditation, contact information, and signed release form to the ISO.

(release form is located on the last page of this newsletter)

Please send a digital copy of your submission (attached as .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, or in the body of the e-mail) to meditation@saa-recovery.org.

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send a release form – one per author – before submissions can be considered.

You can also send your meditation, contact information, and signed release by postal mail to: ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

If at all possible, please send your submission in digital form. We will, of course, consider all submissions. You will be sent a confirmation that your submission has been received.

Meditation Writing Tele-Workshops

All those interested in contributing to the meditation book are invited to attend one or more tele-workshops. We will go over the guidelines and process for submission; there will be ample time for writing, and time for sharing as well. Please consider joining us for this unique service opportunity!

All workshops are the ***4th Sunday of each month***, at 5:00 p.m. central time, and last until 6:30 p.m.

June 22, 2014
July 27, 2014
August 24, 2014
September 28, 2014
October 26, 2014
November 23, 2014

To register, call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191,
or send an e-mail to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

Personal Story Submissions for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

Do you have a personal story to tell?

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept personal stories for consideration for future editions of the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Guidelines for Submission of a Personal Story

Stories in the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are an intensely personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers. While there are no absolute requirements for the content of a personal story, the Literature Committee recommends that a story describe:

- What it was like before entering SAA;
- What happened to bring you into SAA;
- What happened within SAA;
- What it is like now with the ongoing experience of SAA recovery.

It is recommended that a story emphasize the experience, strength, and hope found in SAA recovery. It is further recommended that the writer disclose his or her length of sobriety (or abstinence from addictive behaviors).

Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As much as possible, highly explicit descriptions of places, people, or acting out behaviors should be avoided. The best stories provide sobering details of unmanageability contrasted with the hope of recovery from sex addiction.

The preferred format for manuscripts is double-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides in MS Word (or similar). Each submission must be accompanied by a signed release conveying ownership to the ISO of SAA, Inc. The release form is available on the last page of this newsletter or from the ISO office or SAA website (www.saa-recovery.org).

Submissions and a signed release form may be e-mailed as attachments to the ISO Literature Committee at info@saa-recovery.org.

They may also be sent in hard copy by postal mail to the ISO Literature Committee at ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

IMPORTANT

Please carefully read the following before submitting a personal story for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

Every story submitted for possible inclusion in the SAA book will be thoroughly reviewed and given in-depth consideration by the ISO Literature Committee, which is deeply grateful to every member who takes the time to write and submit a story.

The ISO of SAA, Inc. and the ISO Literature Committee do not guarantee that any particular story will appear in a future edition of the SAA book. Once submitted with a signed release form (located on the last page of this newsletter), the written story becomes the permanent property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited or modified as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee.

Please also note that, while the ISO Literature Committee will acknowledge the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not communicate further with the author about the suitability of the story or the likelihood of publication in *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

“Getting a Sponsor”

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This pamphlet addresses many questions SAA members may have about sponsorship, including the importance of having a sponsor, how to find one, what to expect from a sponsor, and much more.

Thank you so much to all who put so much hard work into producing and approving this important new addition to our SAA Literature.

ISO Income/Expense Summary as of April 30, 2014

	Apr 14	Monthly Avg	Jan - Apr 14
Income			
Sales	21,628.68	20,633.63	82,534.53
Shipping & Handling	2,328.84	2,233.83	8,935.31
Donations	24,928.42	29,865.50	119,461.98
Investment Income	13.60	1,278.86	5,115.43
Other Income	1.00	5.41	21.65
Total Income	48,900.54	54,017.23	216,068.90
Cost of Goods Sold	7,601.70	7,625.73	30,502.92
Gross Profit	41,298.84	46,391.50	185,565.98
Expense			
Wages & Benefits	24,103.29	23,257.39	93,029.57
Payroll Taxes	1,978.62	2,335.69	9,342.76
Payroll Expenses	19.18	18.79	75.14
Insurance	748.00	187.00	748.00
Office Expenses	748.67	778.16	3,112.63
Occupancy Expenses	1,198.76	1,904.89	7,619.57
Communications	710.72	635.51	2,542.02
Travel-Related Expenses	0.00	3,000.54	12,002.17
Professional Fees	0.00	377.00	1,508.00
Board/Committee Expenses	1,132.67	1,545.69	6,182.76
The Outer Circle	588.77	913.50	3,654.01
Financial Charges	1,930.66	1,638.67	6,554.67
Depreciation	175.00	175.00	700.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	0.00	86.00	343.99
Total Expense	33,334.34	36,853.82	147,415.29
Net Income	7,964.50	9,537.67	38,150.69

Financial Results for April 2014

In the month of April our budget showed a surplus of \$7,964.50. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$2,192.00. We were over our budget estimate by \$5,772.50. Some of the reasons for the additional surplus in revenue were: Our total sales exceeded our budget by \$3,593.68 and our total donations exceed our budget by \$1,878.42.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was over our estimate by \$1,292.36 for April and has exceeded our estimate by \$3,831.08 for 2014.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$842.32 for April and have exceeded our estimate by \$2,648.39 for 2014. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$1,070.00 in April and have exceeded our estimate by \$2,761.88 in 2014. Our Chip sales exceeded our estimate by \$269.50 in April and have exceeded our estimate by \$1,348.93 in 2014.

Our total sales for April exceeded our estimate by \$ 3,593.68.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$4,658.87 for April and have exceeded our estimate by \$19,056.36 for 2014. Group donations were below our estimate by \$2,780.45 in April and are below our estimate by \$8,194.38 for 2014.

Our product inventory is valued at \$38,255.72.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2014 to April 30, 2014):

- Sales have exceeded our estimate by \$ 10,394.53
- Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$ 10,861.98
- Expenses are below our estimate by \$3,538.71

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,
Joe H.

Executive Director
director@saa-iso.org

[Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of The Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the SAA fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor by Mike L.

This was one of the sadder conventions for me, just because of my knowledge that at the end of it, I would be stepping down as editor of *The Outer Circle*, a decision I announced to the Literature Committee last August. In making this announcement, it was difficult for me not to think back to the days when I got involved in LitCom.

My first SAA convention was the one in Ann Arbor in 1995. I was a delegate that year and I remember the day of the delegate meeting being one of the most perfect days I had ever experienced; one of the days in Los Angeles at this last convention was almost as perfect, and caused me to remember the Ann Arbor convention.

I saw a little table set up in Ann Arbor that spoke to the fellowship's need for translations of our literature. This was an area where I thought I could be of some help. I spoke to the appropriate person about getting involved and soon found myself an unofficial member of LitCom. I attended the then-quarterly meetings (oh, the good old days) of LitCom, and the chair always scheduled me early in the meeting so I could give my little report on translations and then be dismissed.

I always enjoyed working with LitCom in my unofficial years with them. One of my fondest memories of those pre-official years was, as a member of the 1997 Houston convention committee, rushing unannounced into the face-to-face LitCom meetings that preceded that convention to deal with some little business item or another, only to be greeted by a room of smiling faces. I was on the giving end of those smiles when a member of the Albuquerque convention committee in 2010 rushed into one of our meetings.

Over the years I stayed active with LitCom and was even South Central alternate in the one or two years leading up to Y2K. I was privileged to attend the second and final LitCom mid-year face-to-face dealing strictly with the writing and arranging of what was to become our Green Book. As secretary, I took minutes of the meeting, at least until my 486 laptop (remember those?) crashed, and somebody else had to take over, since my handwriting is far too poor for me to be able to decipher it once the events it recorded have started to recede into the background.

Then came the day in 2002 when I stood before the LitCom in San Francisco and interviewed with them. I was very happy to step into the

position of editor of what we then called *The Plain Brown Rapper*.

My particular favorite memory of my years as editor was hurrying up to the podium at the 2007 convention in Minneapolis to announce to the delegates the new name of the publication, a choice that LitCom had made in the couple of days prior to the delegate meeting. Many reasons had been brought forth over a few years as to why the fellowship would benefit from the name change. One reason that I don't think I ever mentioned to anybody was that the old name could be difficult to remember. I recall getting e-mails and letters where the writer said that he or she was submitting an article for, for example, *The Brown Paper Bag*.

One area where I really grew during the period of being editor was gaining a greater understanding of the role of God in the fellowship. Similarly, I had the mistaken belief that our fellowship was okay with all religions except for the one that predominates in the United States. However, a couple of years ago, an article came in that was focused on one of the Eastern religions, and the oversight committee was as quick to express its concern about that article as it had always been to express concern about articles that have too strong a bent toward the principal Western religion.

And speaking of the oversight committee, who reviews the articles before I send them to the office, it has been a real blessing to me over my years as editor. I have always tried to give just about every article that has come in a chance for publication, even some that might have been less deserving than the ideal, and I have really learned from the rotating members of the committee what constructive criticism is all about.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank my wonderful layout guys at the ISO, Jonathan C. and then Chris F., who have both made my job immeasurably easier over the years. Jonathan used to run the same drawing each month along with my "From the Editor" piece, and over the years I started to think that maybe that guy really did look a bit like me. Chris has patiently suffered my detailed comments on the draft of each issue, and especially my idiosyncratic beliefs about such things as capitalization.

Finally, thanks to all of the folks who have taken the time to give me their comments about the publication over the years. I hope I have been able to improve *The Outer Circle* as a result of your comments.

I am very grateful for my years in SAA and my years on *The Outer Circle*, and so my final suggestion as a topic—this time for the March/April 2015 issue—is "Gratitude." I think this is the first time I am repeating myself, since this was also the topic for the September/October 2013 issue, and some things bear repeating.

I have held back a few articles I have received lately to send to our new editor and get him off to a good start. Please continue to send in your articles, remembering to keep the focus on the solution, to toc@saa-recovery.org, or to the office at ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949,

Houston, TX 77270-0949.

Somebody asked me in Los Angeles if I was going to continue to come to conventions. Of course; I can't imagine not coming to these wonderful SAA conventions year after year. I'm encouraged by the presence of a couple of Concerned Group Members—affectionately known as CGMs—at the LitCom meetings each year, and I look forward to being one of those in the future. I'm also looking at other areas of opportunity for service work, some of them—gasp!—having nothing to do with LitCom.

Have a wonderful year. I hope to see you in person at next year's convention or elsewhere around the SAA campus.

Electronic Formats Available!

SAA e-Book

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of the SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in downloadable electronic format.

The eBook can be purchased from the ISO office, or online from the SAA Store at www.saa-store.org/book/.

After online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail with a link to download a zip file that contains both the mobi (Kindle) and ePUB (Nook) versions of the book. One of these formats can be read on most e-readers available today.

mp3 Audio Downloads

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of mp3 format downloads of our convention workshop and speaker recordings.

The files are in mp3 format, which may be played on almost any portable music device or computer.

Currently, the mp3 files are available for convention years 2004 through 2013, and can be purchased from the SAA store at www.saa-store.org/audio.

We will be uploading the remaining past convention years as we get them formatted.

What to Meditate On?

by Jim C.

I really enjoy reading the chapter in the Twelve and Twelve about meditation. Part of the reason is that the St. Francis quote that is now often referred to as the Eleventh Step prayer is one of my very favorite pieces of AA literature, along with page 164 of the Big Book and the section in Tradition Three of the Twelve and Twelve about the “strange alcoholic” (p. 142). However, I am also reminded of how things have changed in terms of finding materials on which to meditate. Nowadays we have all sorts of books that give us materials for meditation. Just about every Twelve-Step program has its own book; there are books for men, books for women, books designed for nighttime meditation, books for LGBT folks, books for people with HIV, and so forth.

One of my very favorite meditation books is still the very first one that came out. Published back in 1954, it has never, to the best of my knowledge, been out of print. Early editions of the book use the spelling “programme,” later changed to “program.” The idea is still the same. The meditations themselves were quite lengthy, possibly longer than the standard length of meditations in more recent books. Still, there is plenty to chew on in that sixty-year-old book.

And new books keep coming along. For the moment, possibly the newest one is *Voices of the Fellowship*, the new SAA meditation book. It contains fifty-two meditations on the Steps and Traditions, enough for groups to use as a topic each week of the year. It also serves to whet the appetite for the 365-day meditation book that our Meditation Book Committee continues to diligently prepare.

We are very fortunate to have such a wealth of material on which to meditate. And yet, as the co-founder of the first Twelve-Step program knew, I am surrounded by material on which to meditate. It is a reminder that God doesn't need to be enclosed within the pages of a single 365-page book. He speaks to me, among other ways, through my daily experiences and through the words of others. If I am open to hearing from my Higher Power, he will always be there to speak to me.

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: *To reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity**

Dear Grace:

If I have a relapse do I have to start my steps over?

—Not Sober

Dear Not Sober:

The best thing to do if you have had a relapse is call your sponsor. "There is no one correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps." (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 21). Your sponsor will give you specific instructions on how to proceed based on her experience. The fear and shame we feel when we have to be honest is part of the insanity of our disease, but if we want to stay sober we have to be willing to do whatever it takes to get abstinent and stay abstinent.

The most important thing after a relapse is to take care of yourself. You may want to focus on attending more meetings, allowing time to pray, meditate, and stay in your outer circle behaviors. There are no failures in this program. We are all powerless over our addiction. If our sponsor wants us to go back to previous steps we can keep in mind that "they contain a depth we could hardly have guessed when we started" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 21) and we may find something which we previously missed. If you are asked to start the Steps over, consider it a wonderful way to nurture yourself by seeking the solution to this addiction. "Working the Twelve Steps leads to a spiritual transformation that results in sustainable relief from our addiction" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20). Ultimately, it is not as important which Step you are on, or if you are asked to repeat previous step work, as it is that you work the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

Blessings,

—Grace

Disclaimer: We cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.

—SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Being Open and Honest

by Joseph R.

With twelve years in the program and eight years sober, I was in prison for sexual acting out for fifteen years. Now I am still being held awaiting trial to determine whether I can be released into society.

I have come across so many people over the years who have not only meant a lot to me but with whom I could talk since I wasn't able to get to any real meetings. I have found that as long as I could be with some people with whom I could be completely honest, then I could stay on course.

Some people believe that one can't act out in prison, but that is not true. If one wants to, one can find a way. I was lucky enough to have people around me with whom I could talk about anything; when I was going through a particularly bad period, I could go to someone and speak about what was on my mind.

When I got to prison, I decided that I would never hurt anyone again sexually. But some people responded to my helping them by offering me sex. I always refused, telling them that I wasn't helping them in order to get anything from them. One young man offered me sex many times, and I always refused him. Then one day I was going through a really rough time and of course my mind went into acting-out mode. Instead of acting on the thoughts I was having, I went to this young man and I asked him, "Do you remember what you offered me?" When he said, "yes," I told him, "I'm going through a really bad time right now and I want you to do something for me." He replied, "All right; we can go somewhere." I said, "No, but if I ever ask you for that, I want you to tell me 'no'; do you understand?" He said, "All right, if that is what you want." After that talk with him, my bad time was gone, along with all the thoughts I was having.

On that day, I discovered that just the act of being open and honest with someone I trusted was the first step to stopping my acting-out behavior.

Trust and honesty were the key for me to stop my acting-out behaviors. I'm sure that as long as I have people in my life who can understand me and who will stand by me, I will continue to be well on my way to stopping my acting-out behaviors.

Relationships and Tradition Six

by Freeman D.

[Editor's Note: This is the sixth part of a twelve-part series called "Relationships and the Twelve Traditions."]

Tradition Six: An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any unrelated facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

As I recovered from sexual addiction, I became motivated to help those who still suffered. Tradition Six guides us as individuals and as a group on how we may and may not use the name of SAA to carry the message. Once again I turn to our trusted Green Book for direction. There I learn, "we often come in contact with other organizations" (p. 86). Although we as individuals or as groups may cooperate with organizations outside of SAA to fulfill our primary purpose of helping the sex addict who still suffers, caution must be taken so that SAA is not perceived as being or endorsing the outside organization. Therefore, we make no public statements of endorsement, nor do we as an SAA group support other groups financially or lend any organization the use of the SAA name.

Why? Very simply ". . . money, property, and prestige [are identified] as potential obstacles" (p. 86). Our primary purpose is not to own property, earn a profit, or pat ourselves on the back. "[W]e need only rely on our Higher Power and our Steps and Traditions to sustain us" (p. 87).

"[W]e are able to cooperate" (p. 87). However, Tradition Six ensures the SAA message—our message—doesn't take second place in our endeavors. SAA is "separate and distinct" (p. 87) and "we stay on the simple path of service to our fellow sex addict" (p. 87).

Tradition Six (Relationship Form): In our relationships we ought never single-handedly endorse or lend the other's support or name to any outside enterprise. Nor should we be overly supportive spiritually, emotionally, physically, or financially, lest problems of ego gratification divert us from our primary purpose and commitment to each other.

Tradition Six clearly points out that I should not endorse anything for my spouse without my spouse's consent, given my spouse's own schedule, opinions, and personal beliefs. Nor should I commit my spouse to a project without permission.

A perfect example in my life comes from my childhood. I committed my mom to hosting my seventh birthday party and then proceeded to invite all the kids on the bus and in my class—about thirty children. Mom was not happy and I had to eat crow as I uninvited all the would-be guests. I learned that if I start making all the decisions, I take over the relationship. I set myself up to be the boss. As an adult, I want to remember that my

spouse and I are equals. As such, no one is in charge.

In order for me to be healthy in relationships, I let my spouse do self-care. I do what I have agreed to do, as does my spouse. If I start doing my spouse's part and carrying that part of the load as well, I relieve my spouse of the responsibility of self-care. I ensure failure. This inevitably hurts my spouse's self-esteem and ambition.

I am responsible for my own recovery. My well-being is between my Higher Power and me. Through recognizing my own responsibility, I am able to recognize my spouse's responsibility for recovery and relationship with a Higher Power. I cannot be overly supportive in such recovery. We each stand on our own with the support of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, home group, sponsor and Higher Power. Together we may walk our recovery as equals, sharing our burdens with one another while carrying those burdens for ourselves.

Being overly supportive in any area hinders the personal growth of the other. How often have we heard of a spouse passing away, leaving the survivor without income and without marketable job skills, possibly even unable to drive. The same may happen if we are overly supportive spiritually, physically, or emotionally. Being committed, there is nothing my spouse has to face without me being right there, with us walking hand-in-hand in our recovery and in our relationship.

***“Sex Addicts Anonymous and the Lesbian / Gay /
Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict: A Message of
Hope for Sex Addicts in the LGBT Communities”***

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This booklet has valuable recovery suggestions and insights that are useful for ***any recovering member or group***, regardless of sexual orientation.

Thank you to all who put so much hard work into producing this addition to our SAA literature!

Destination: Grace The Twenty-Seventh Annual SAA International Convention

by Mike L.

The Twenty-Seventh Annual SAA International Convention which took place in Los Angeles from May 23 to 26, 2014, at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott was the last SAA convention I would attend as a voting member of the Literature Committee, since I am stepping down as editor of *The Outer Circle*. In this article, I'm just going to touch on a few highlights of the convention, since this is our post-convention issue and there is plenty of great stuff from the convention that we also need to shoehorn into this issue.

Even though I checked the Los Angeles weather before I left, I was a little over-optimistic about how well I would be able to handle the cool weather, and ended up having to buy a sweatshirt at the hotel after a day or so. The last time this happened was at the 2002 San Francisco convention, the convention where I was hired as editor of *The Outer Circle*, where I bought a jacket while on the Sunday afternoon outing. So my time with the publication is bookended by clothing suitable for chillier weather.

I attended two days of LitCom meetings before the convention actually started, and these seemed to go more quickly than they normally do. One of the highlights of those two days was the joint Board/LitCom dinner which took place on Wednesday evening at a Mexican restaurant near the Pacific Ocean. This was not my first time to see the Pacific, since I had seen it a couple of years ago at the 2012 convention in Vancouver. We did go down and take a look at the ocean after dinner, and I was reminded once again of my experience at the 1999 Los Angeles convention where I discovered how hilly Los Angeles is, especially compared with the flatness of the area where I live. Indeed, I got sort of dizzy on the Sunday of the first LA convention when a few of us were driving around that part of Hollywood where the stars live and which is also far from flat.

The delegate meetings all day on Friday and on Saturday morning were devoted to the restructuring of the fellowship that was the main topic of last year's delegate meetings as well. Some of the changes were more hotly debated than others, although ultimately all of the proposed changes are taking effect. These changes certainly do reflect the growth of our fellowship, and indeed it was pointed out that SAA is finally "coming of age," just as our principal predecessor fellowship found itself doing back in 1955.

The convention committee did a wonderful job of putting everything together and seeing that everything ran smoothly, with the hospitality room being especially nice. One of the highlights of the convention itself was a

wonderful workshop called "Off to See the Wizard." It dealt with recovery messages contained in one of my very favorite movies. I hated to see the workshop end, just as I always hate to see that particular movie end. My kudos to the presenter for seeing the very valuable lessons of that workshop and for putting together a workshop that was both informative and entertaining.

Speaking of movies, I also attended one of the screenings of *Thanks for Sharing*, a movie about Twelve-Step recovery from sex addiction. The particular fellowship of which the characters in the movie are members is never named, and the film probably isn't a completely accurate depiction of any of the fellowships. However, I believe the one portrayed in *Thanks for Sharing* comes closer to SAA than it does to other S-fellowships. It's a very powerful movie that inspired some great discussion afterwards, especially since I attended the last screening of the movie for the night, and so we didn't have to hurry out to allow the next screening to start. The only thing about it that I didn't like is that we will probably be seeing less of my beloved Stuart at conventions and retreats to come.

We were reminded at the various group events of where the 2015 convention would take place, and also learned which city would be the host city of the 2016 convention. The calendar in the program ended with the words "Head Home and Prepare for [next year's city]." Since SAA conventions have long been a part of my life, I'm looking forward to next year's convention and to the ones coming in the future.

***"Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings;
Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting"***

is now available online at the ISO website store:
www.saa-store.org

In addition to providing many helpful suggestions for "Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting," the pamphlet has valuable recovery suggestions and insights that are useful for ***any recovering member or group***, even if a group does not have women members.

Thank you to all who put so much hard work into producing this new addition to our SAA literature!

Prayer Works

by Ariel D.

I recently sent the following experience I had in a mass email, and got many responses on how inspirational and helpful this was for many of the recipients. It was suggested that I send this to your publication for possible printing in an upcoming issue.

I want to share with you a beautiful experience that I had this morning that literally took ten minutes to occur.

I received a text from a fellow addict this morning stating that he was feeling overwhelmed with deadlines at work, and that he recognized that he might need to pray. I responded by commending him for having an initial plan for himself, and urged him to pour his heart out to God, without any expectations.

After sending him my response, I was getting ready to leave for work, when I realized that I, myself, didn't do my daily prayers this morning. I was already feeling rushed, but I always like to do my morning routine (reading, prayer, and phone call) as early as possible, certainly before leaving the house, because otherwise, my day gets too hectic as it progresses.

So I sat down, got comfortable (kept my glasses on my forehead because I didn't want to take them off and risk messing up my hair), set my alarm for ten minutes, placed my phone on alarm only so I wouldn't be disturbed, turned my phone over, so as not to be distracted, and did my thing. As I began praying, I suddenly felt an emotional jolt of resentment, fear, and anxiety that I didn't even know I had in me. These particular defects were certainly at least partly directed toward certain people and situations that I happened to be dealing with at the time. But considering the intensity of it, I don't think it would be accurate for me to say that it was all identifiable to anything in particular. I started asking God for help, but I noticed that I was trying to be fancy with my wording, because I thought that's how he wanted me to talk to him. That is, until the intensity of the emotions started to intensify. So in one swoop, I wiped away any objects such as papers, books, etc., that were too close to me, carefully ripped off my glasses, threw my hands up, and just yelled out something like: Enough! I can't deal with this anymore! Take me now, God, take me now and do what you want with me; I am yours! I can't handle this. No more fancy words; I am done; I am yours! Do with me what you will, and leave me out of it! I can't you can; please do!

Suddenly, within a matter of seconds, and without any explanation that I can offer at this point, I felt a tremendous calm come over me, total serenity, and gratitude, freedom from all the anxiety, fears, and resentments that I was chained down to. I took three deep breaths (three because that's how my guided meditations would end in rehab), and suddenly started laughing, for no reason whatsoever. Yes, I can

understand feeling better and all, after all that, but laughter? My wife and closest friends and family will attest that I don't laugh at the funniest sitcom episodes on television. But now, I laugh?

I guarantee that I wiped off the milk mustache I had on my face after finishing my cereal this morning. And even if I didn't, there was no mirror in front of me to even cause me to chuckle. And most notably, nothing external changed. All that I was feeling anxious, fearful, and resentful about, was still present in my life. Nothing went away in those few minutes. The difference? I suddenly felt like I don't have to control any of it any more. And therefore, I don't have to worry about anything.

When my alarm went off, I decided to write the following in my phone notepad, in order to have something to refer to when this feeling of total serenity subsides. Here's what I wrote:

"From shame, anxiety, resentment, fear and just plain anger to grace, serenity, happiness, freedom, and just plain laughter. All because I said and meant: take me now and do what you want with me; I am yours. I can't handle this. I'm yours. Thy will, not mine, be done."

And to be completely honest, not too long ago, I decided to substitute the words "Thy will, not mine be done" with "Thy will be done" because I couldn't bring myself to completely give up my will, at least not officially. That is, until today, when not only do I feel more comfortable now, saying the words "not mine," but I actually prefer to say it now, because why would I want my will to be done, when that simultaneously involves me having to make decisions and trying to control things, when it's just so much more relaxing to let God drive the car I call "my life." I'll happily come along for the ride, but He knows I will be very careful not to volunteer to navigate again.

Prayer works. I just pour my heart out, allow myself to feel the emotions, both good and bad; I don't judge them or myself, and I listen. Prayer works.

Finding “a Power Greater than Myself”: My Search for a Spirituality

by Jason H.

My first exposure to the philosophy of an organized religious sect was that of one of the mainstream Western religions. My paternal grandmother would take my cousin and me to church on Sunday. I remember having to dress up in nice clothes, which I hated doing. In fact, the whole ceremonial process of getting ready was as predictable as anything else that my grandmother engaged in; she is a creature of habit, and many of these repetitive occurrences are not conducive to mental and spiritual serenity. This, looking back in hindsight, may be one of the reasons that I assigned such a negative meaning to religion, especially the Western version.

Let me elaborate on what would occur on Sunday mornings. My cousin and I would get dressed first and we, at the ages of seven or eight, were instructed to sit on the couch in the formal living room; it was a rule that we not play while my grandmother took a bath and got dressed. We inevitably started fidgeting and then we would start playing. My grandmother would verbally scold us and say that God was watching. She held the doctrine that people who did bad things would be eternally punished. In hindsight, I see that she was attempting to comfort me because I was experiencing abuse at the hands of my stepfather; she was letting me know that God would punish him for his bad deeds. Unfortunately, because of my stage of development and the negative concept of myself that I was getting from my home environment, I added one and one together and made the assumption that I would be eternally punished. This irrational belief became a fact in my mind, so I saw no reason to go to church or practice a religion. This belief system turned into hate of this Western religion, which led to guilt because I was told by those in authority that if I displayed or entertained the idea of hate toward God, I would be eternally punished. I was left to cope with life on life's terms without the comfort of a power greater than me. This was until the Great Spirit intervened and sent me on a journey that I am still on today, and most likely will be on until I move on to the unseen world again.

I want to share my struggle with the concept of finding a power greater than myself and coming to the point where I could trust him in handling my day-to-day affairs, namely keeping sober from sexually addictive behaviors, as is prescribed in the Twelve Steps of SAA.

On February 19, 2009, I was sent to High Security due to a disciplinary case involving one of my inner circle behaviors. I was frightened and I felt totally alone. I began to look into my sexual behaviors because I was noticing that they were consistently getting me into trouble.

Back in the mid to late nineties, I was in a local bookstore and stumbled across a book about sex addiction. At the time, my attraction to the book

was for professional rather than personal reasons; but, looking back on it, maybe it was my Higher Power doing for me what I could not do for myself. Maybe he was planting a seed in me that he planned to grow when I needed it most. I wrote home and asked my father to order the book for me, and soon it arrived. I found in the book the addresses of organizations that deal with sexual addictions. The one that was the most helpful and ended up saving my life was Sex Addicts Anonymous. I signed up for the prison pen pal program and got a sponsor. We began to work the Steps. Now, I had had experience in other Twelve Step programs and had been clean and sober for two years at the time, so this was not my first time at the rodeo. Looking back, I realize that this time I was dealing with my core addiction, the one that had always caused me grief, mentally, emotionally, and especially spiritually, since I was eleven years old. This was going to have to be a major project in my life.

I started with Step One and did all the work my sponsor suggested. I hit a wall when it came to Step Two and coming to believe that a power greater than me could return me to sanity, especially in regard to my sexual behaviors. The reason for this evolved around my sexual orientation. Other family members had indoctrinated me to believe my sexual orientation was a sin and that until I stopped engaging in that behavior, I would continue to experience problems. In my heart of hearts I didn't feel that this was the case. I was gay and if God didn't like it, then he would just have to deal with it. I began to see that I really had my work cut out for me, that I was going to have to deal with my issues on religion and the spiritual aspect of the program. Previously I had always focused on the cognitive rather than the spiritual aspect. I contacted the chaplain on the unit and he responded by heavily promoting the Western religions. I believe this is a mistake because it alienates those who don't feel a connection to those religions.

I became frustrated, and my sponsor reminded me of a saying I heard a lot when I first came into another program. It says that religion is for those who are afraid to go to hell, and so engage in rules that the religion feels will keep them out of hell, and spirituality is for those who been to hell and have come back acting out in their addictive behavior; now they have a map and can see they have to navigate their way around life in order to keep a connection with a power greater than themselves. They and they alone define their relationship with that spirit.

With this concept, I started to develop a belief that I could find a Higher Power that accepted me for me, including my sexual orientation, and that that power or spirit could restore me to sanity. I had my father do searches about spirituality and religion. I questioned the doctrine of the mainstream Western religions and their rigid stance. I soon stumbled across information on alternative spiritual principles from other Western groups and identified with the principles of two groups in particular. I then could comfortably take Step Two because I came to believe that there was a power greater than me that could restore me to sanity.

Step Three was another sticking point. I feared that I would become a string on a puppet, a robot going through life. My sponsor pointed out that, no matter what I did, if I was a puppet on a string or if I bucked and kicked all the way, my Higher Power's will would always happen. I could either accept this principle or I could fight; also he pointed out that my Higher Power allowed me to do the footwork; all he did was provide me with a plan and a desire to carry that plan out. I came to the decision to turn my life and my will over to my Higher Power.

As I took time to practice Steps Two and Three, I could tell a difference in my attitude and behavior. I began to see positive things happening in my life. Steps Five, Six, and Seven fell right into place, and I continue to practice Steps Four and Eleven every day as I wake up, before I lay my head down, and any time that I need to during the day. I am still evolving in my spiritual walk and, as I said before, I most likely will continue to evolve until I return back to the unseen world. I look upon where I have come from and where I am now, and it amazes me.

The path that I took to uncover my Higher Power was a long one in some aspects and in others seemed to just happen. I know that I continue to put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into working this spiritual program. My Higher Power knew exactly what he was doing when he put me in that bookstore and drew my attention to the book I mentioned earlier. Again he knew what he was doing when he placed me in High Security because there, in a single-man cell for twenty-two hours a day, I had the opportunity to begin. I say "begin" because I will be working on myself, striving to be that person that my Higher Power wants me to be.

Reflecting on the eighteen months I spent in High Security, and I realized that my worst fear, that of becoming a puppet on a string, didn't come true when I turned my life and will over to my Higher Power. If this had been so, I would have had no choice in working on myself. However, I did have the choice, because there were days when I chose not to work on myself, and he left that up to me. He gave me the opportunity; it was up to me to decide to seize it.

Volunteer Services Needed

Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?

Not sure where to get started?

Contact the ISO!

or go to www.saa-iso.org/

and select "Volunteer" to fill out a volunteer form.

How My Sex Addiction Inspired a New Venture

by James P.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the May/June 2010 issue of The Outer Circle]

Hello, my name is James and I am a sex addict. In June 2008, my partner and I celebrated twenty years of recovery from my most destructive bottom-line behavior by visiting friends in Florida. I was excited to visit Florida, but upon arriving found many triggers that were difficult to cope with. The most challenging proved to be an airboat in the Florida Everglades where I found myself sitting next to an attractive woman. I bumped into her at one point and my addiction was completely triggered.

Later in the day, I vented my frustration by saying that our next trip was going to be to Antarctica. My wonderful partner actually began to research trips to Antarctica and other such places. However, we talked and our talk began to center on the underlying issue, which was much more important: traveling, be it for business or pleasure, can create dangers for me.

Now when I travel, I plan to attend SAA meetings in my destination city. I most recently requested a temporary sponsor in the city I visited. Having a temporary sponsor while traveling provides the accountability I need to maintain sobriety.

Our idea has morphed into a new business venture for people suffering from addiction who travel. It is exciting for me to utilize my experience, strength, and hope to benefit others. We are clearly struggling in this economy and with choices that limit my income potential. At the same time we would love to hear ideas or experiences of other sex addicts who travel and how they cope. This can be done by contacting the editor of *The Outer Circle* who can forward responses.

Lost Without Literature

by David F.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the March/April 2011 issue of The Outer Circle]

SAA literature has been amazingly important to me. Without it I'd still be lost.

I sit and write this from behind barbed wire fences. My sex addiction involves internet pornography. Similar to other addictions, it started with what seemed harmless, and progressed over a number of years until my actions landed me in prison. I'd say I'd be lost if it weren't for literature because, until I began reading sexual addiction recovery material, I didn't recognize and admit that I had a problem. Some reading this may ask how I could have not known I had a sexual addiction problem since it landed me in prison. Others may understand that river of lies known as denial. Yes, I knew I was wrong for committing my crime, but I never realized I actually had an addiction.

After almost eighteen months in prison I read my first self-help book; it dealt with online sexual addiction. It was then I realized and admitted to myself that I had an addiction, that I was powerless over it, and that my life had become quite unmanageable.

I'm fortunate for many things, one being that I now attend weekly SAA meetings. Many prisons don't make available that resource or the great self-help library that I have access to. I have been attending SAA meetings since January 2010 and I am glad to say that I am making progress. The ISO has been very supportive and has sent me various pamphlets and books; I also now have a temporary sponsor.

As I am in the process of forming a program for myself that will work once I am released, I further realize the importance of literature. I know I can't just eliminate bad thoughts and activities from my life, but I need to go further and replace them with good ones. Actions don't just happen, but rather they begin with thoughts. What better thing is there to fill my mind with than positive literature from SAA to keep me focused on recovery?

My Three Circles are part of my literature. It is even suggested in the SAA booklet "Tools of Recovery" that I write them on a wallet-sized card to carry with me. That same booklet also suggests that I carry pamphlets or books with me, especially when traveling.

Reading SAA literature has become a daily activity and an integral part of my program. I say "has become" because at first I thought that once I had read a particular pamphlet or book I was done with it. How wrong I was, and how glad I am to realize that that is not true. Not only do I learn or see something different when I continue to read these materials over and over, but I am inspired by them. I receive strength from them. Reading literature

daily reinforces the fact that I am now on the right path, and that I enjoy this path and who I am. The literature gives me hope and courage to continue each day.

I love the mediation book that deals with sexual addiction, and I look forward to the SAA meditation book. I can't get enough!

I'm so thankful for SAA, the program and the fellowship. I'm proud to say I'm a lifelong member, and that I never need to feel alone again. I look forward to my release one day, and to being active with SAA in as many opportunities as are available. My thanks to ISO of SAA and to my temporary sponsor. I'm no longer lost; I'm alive and well!

Step Eight

by John H.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the July/August 2012 issue of The Outer Circle]

"Made a list of all persons who we have harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."

My Eighth Step amends list is vastly bigger than the addict I had become. This statement is true because the list of people I have harmed not only includes those who I directly harmed, but the entire state where I reside. My list is long because I'm incarcerated as a direct result of progressively acting out my sex addiction and committing a sex crime. I include on my list the taxpayers who bear the burden of my addiction and incarceration for a few more years.

Guilt from my acting out behavior was destroying me internally, but I didn't know how to start the amends process with those I had harmed. Then God, my higher power, sent me an inmate who introduced me to SAA. Once I started to work the program and my secret addiction was disclosed, I was relieved to learn that I was not alone. There was hope for a positive future free from the insanity of addictive behavior.

The first part of Step Eight for me was to stop blaming others for my situation. When creating my list, I focused on what I had done and not what had been done to me. I was abducted by a man when I was nine years old, but my actions as an adult were not his fault; they were mine to own. Every person has his or her own story of traumatic life events. No one escapes the pains of life. It is how I react to them and what I learn from them that makes me stronger or brings me to addiction.

Once I accepted this fact, then I could honestly see how my actions had harmed others and how severe the damage had been. Not just the sex-related damage, but the other defects of character I had developed. The

manipulation, the self-centeredness, the thinly veiled egotistical and arrogant attitude, all became a front to hide the scared hurting child inside that I had not dealt with. I learned all this from my Fourth Step inventory, which is where I got the first set of names to put on my list for amends.

God helped me along the way by keeping me focused on the task at hand. It was difficult at first to include some names without stressing on how I was going to make amends for the wrongs I had done. Initially, I felt that I had no right to even ask for the opportunity to make amends to my victim, the one I had hurt the most. But I put her on the list. With SAA's help, I was even able to include myself on my list. My behavior had hurt me as well.

Empathy entered my life and I wanted to do anything I could to make amends, and then some. Embracing my higher power and his will, I read, "If I have extorted anything I shall repay it four times over." Then I moved on to Step Nine and took action to start making those amends. I dedicated my life to helping educate inmates as an amends to all those I would otherwise never be able to repay. With regular inventories, I add any new people to my list that I have harmed. I have found inner freedom and peace in my life. Thank God and thank you, SAA.

On Just Being There

by Carol Ann R.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the January/February 2013 issue of The Outer Circle]

A year or so ago, as part of a Fourth Step process, I traveled to a town in North Texas where I once went to college. Thirty years before, I had witnessed an accident in the woodshop of the art department in which a classmate lost her hand. At the time of the accident, I was standing just a few feet away with my back to her. I turned and saw her clutching her arm. The next thing I remember is the voice of the shop steward yelling at me to get out and I realized that somehow he had run in to help her and the other two students had already run out. I left and hid in my dorm room for three days.

Rationally, I knew that I was not really culpable for blacking out, but the feeling of regret for not doing more to help her had reappeared on many Fourth Step harms lists over the years. I had gotten relief around a similarly persistent regret by revisiting the site of another event, so I decided to try going back to the woodshop to see if I could put my feelings about the accident to rest somehow. I wasn't sure what I was looking for exactly, but I went anyway.

I arrived on campus about an hour before the art building was scheduled to open, so I walked over to the library to look for background information in

the archives of the campus or local newspapers. To my amazement I found articles in both papers. The details were consistent with my memory – and included the full name of the girl who had been injured. I had remembered her first name, but now I had her middle and last names as well.

When the art building finally opened, I braved a thirty-second look into the basement woodshop. I was struck by how close it was to my memory. Every machine, every door and window was just as I remembered. The only significant difference was the scale of the room. In my mind it appeared much, much bigger—but in reality it was quite compact. Of course there was blood on my shirt! I was only a few feet away from her when the accident happened. Seeing something that violent and bloody at such close range would have stunned anyone. Blacking out somehow seemed more understandable.

When I got back to Houston, I entered my former classmate's name in a search engine. I clicked on a likely site—and there was her picture! Her name was the same but now she was the vice-president of a media corporation. I sent a brief email telling her my name and that we had been in an art class together that terrible spring. I gave her my phone number and told her I would welcome a call if she was willing to talk. To my delight she called the next day.

She told me she didn't know anyone from that class, but that she was glad I wrote to her. I told her about my trip to campus and the articles I found. I also told her I was sorry for not doing more for her at the time. I explained that I had blacked out but I was glad the shop steward was there to help her.

Then she said she knew exactly who I was—I was the one who stood by her. I said that while I supposed that was true in a literal sense, I was actually just frozen. She said she didn't care. All the others had left her but I had stayed.

And there it was. We remembered the same basic facts, but we attributed very different meaning to them. Her truth and my truth were side by side and I had a simple choice as to which I wanted to emphasize. I could continue to regret an automatic response over which I had no control—or I could adopt her more benign view. I could insist on beating myself up for doing nothing—or I could accept that doing nothing apparently did more good than harm.

What that suggests to me today is that I can run and run and run on the hamster wheel of doing, but I also have the option to relax in the reality that sometimes just being there is enough. It also tells me that doing a Fourth Step is not just a matter of filling in columns on a sheet of paper. Sometimes I am also called to go somewhere, check out the facts and risk seeing things differently.

E-mail Addresses

The following is a list of Board E-mail addresses and the LitCom e-mail addresses for the various regions, and the ISO staff E-mail addresses. The Board, LitCom, and the staff are always happy to hear from the fellowship.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees also receives a copy of e-mail to the service addresses of regional Board representatives.

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“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step Twelve

First: Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say. Suggested Topics are listed below.

Second: Send your article: by e-mail to: toc@saa-recovery.org

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Third: Send in the below **Release Form**. Download an extra from the

Submission Deadlines & Suggested Topics

Next Issues	Deadline	Suggested Topics
Nov-Dec 2014	Sep 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and <i>“Experiences getting/staying sober early on”</i>
Jan-Feb 2015	Nov 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2, and <i>“Success”</i>
Mar-Apr 2015	Jan 5, 2015	Steps & Traditions 3 & 4, and <i>“Gratitude”</i>
May-Jun 2015	Mar 5, 2015	Steps & Traditions 5 & 6
Jul-Aug 2015	May 5, 2015	Steps & Traditions 7 & 8
Sep-Oct 2015	July 5, 2015	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10

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