

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 4, Issue 4

July - August 2010



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ISO News Articles

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**The Following actions were taken by
the Board of Trustees at the
March 20, 2010 Teleconference:**

- Motion approved that “the ISO Board direct the Policy Committee to work with the Literature Committee and Online Presence Committee on amendments to the public web site as follows:
To insert text or a link on ‘Confidentiality’ in the Contact Us box which will provide or lead to the following message:
‘Be advised that under Texas State law, disclosures of abuse or neglect of minors must be reported to the authorities. SAA staff can provide more information on reporting and disclosure issues.’”
 - Motion approved that “the Board directs the International Development Committee to:
 - (1) Advise the Board on actions to further the international development of SAA; and
 - (2) Under the direction of the Board to support the Literature Committee, Office, autonomous groups and Intergroups on issues of international development.”
 - Motion approved that “all ISO Literature Committee approved pamphlets and booklets be posted on the SAA outreach website (www.saa-recovery.org) in READ ONLY format that would not allow downloading, copying, or printing.” (Note: the SAA Green Book is not included in this motion.)
 - Motion approved that “the current office policy regarding calls for or by people under the age of 18 is acceptable to the Board pending review.”
-

**The following actions were taken by
the Board of Trustees at the
April 17, 2010 Teleconference:**

- Motion approved that the Board approve the [...] Logo and Theme for 2011 International Convention.
- Motion approved that ISO conventions and conferences shall adopt all the following, which the Board will review annually:
 - unregistered guests under 18 will not be permitted at any ISO event.
 - unaccompanied under 18 year olds will be dealt with as specified in the final report of the Minors at Convention Working Group dated 2010-02-19.

**The following actions were taken by
the Board of Trustees during their meetings in Albuquerque,
New Mexico:**

- Motion approved “to allow the Director to set a day-rate for any convention.”
- Motion approved “to nominate Chris X. for a second term as At-Large Trustee for election at Conference.”
- Motion approved “that the Board approve the Hotel Proposal for the 2011 Convention per the document entitled ‘Approve Hotel Proposal for 2011 ISO of SAA International Convention’ dated April 5, 2010.”
- Motion approve “that the Board authorize an annual, international event entitled “Freedom from Addiction Week,” during the week of July 4th, starting at 12:01 am on the Monday of that week and concluding at 11:59 pm on the following Sunday, said event to be conducted according to the description found in the Business Motion proposal entitled “Freedom from Addiction Week: An Annual 7th Tradition Event” dated April 5, 2010.”
- Motion approved “that the Board hereby create an unpaid service position under the title of ‘Volunteer Services Coordinator’ with access to ISO Office resources and budget including, but not limited to, printing, phone calls, mailings, and teleconferences; the position is limited to a one-year term, renewable annually upon agreement of the current Volunteer Services Coordinator and the Director of Operations.”
- Motion approved that “the Board modify the compensation plan for the meditation book editor to read as follows:
 - \$95-\$115 per page for 366 daily entries plus up to a maximum of 34 pages of ancillary features to include a foreword, front and back covers, and index and cross referencing system, not to exceed 400 pages to be paid as follows:
 - 5% of total for 400 pages be paid upon signing of contract,
 - 5% of total for 400 pages be paid upon completion of book,
 - 90% of total for each submission or other page upon approval by the LitCom.”
- Motion approved “to approve the Finance Audit report [attached]”
- Motion approved that “the Board interprets the Bylaws to mean that the Conference can create a Conference Charter Committee as proposed by the Board’s Conference Charter Committee.”
- Motion approved that “the board endorse the Conference Charter Committee proposed motion to establish a Conference-driven Conference Charter Committee.”
- Motion approved that “the Board adopt changes to the ISO Office organization as described in the document entitled ‘Proposed Organization Change’ dated 2010-05-16.”

- Motion approved that “the Board adopt the Emergency Succession Plan Template in the document dated 2010-05-25.”
 - Motion approved to nominate for election as at large members of the Literature Committee Cecilia P., Andres P., and Steven P.”
 - Motion approved “to approve the budget and present it to the delegates.”
 - Motion approved “to adopt the 2010 conference agenda as attached.”
 - Motion approved to “dissolve the Women’s Outreach committee and appoint a new Women’s Outreach committee reporting to the General Outreach committee.”
-

**The following actions were taken by the
Delegates during their Conference in Albuquerque,
New Mexico:**

- Motion approved “to accept Annual Report and 2010-2011 Budget.”
- The following At-Large Board/Literature Committee members were approved:
 - Chris X. as At Large Board member;
 - Cecilia P. as At Large Literature Committee member;
 - Andres P. as At Large Literature Committee member;
 - Steven P. as At Large Literature Committee member.
- Motion approved that “the ISO Board, as trusted servants, will provide local SAA groups with suggested safety guidelines for conducting meetings for underage members by May 2011, and that the ISO Literature Committee will work in concert with this effort by encouraging and assisting members to craft SAA literature that will communicate the suggested safety guidelines throughout the SAA fellowship.”
- Motion approved that “the Conference hereby establishes a Conference Charter Committee to draft a Conference Charter to present to the Conference; Membership is open to all who can vote in the Conference; The Committee would elect its own chair and secretary.”
- Motion approved that “SAA have a nation-wide 24-hour toll-free hotline staffed by sex addicts. This hotline is to be overseen by the ISO Board, its committees, or as delegated by the board. This hotline is to be located where there are no reporting requirements.”

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees during their meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico:

- Trusted Servants were elected to the following positions:
ISO Board Chair: Eric M.; ISO Board Secretary: Chris X.; ISO Board Treasurer: Wayne K.; ISO Board Vice-Chair: Ken S.; ISO Board Vice-Secretary: Staci S.
 - The following Board members were appointed, by the Chair, to Standing Committees:
Fellowship: Byron W.; Finance and Operations: Ken S.; Policy: Tom W.
 - Trusted Servants were elected to the following positions:
Conference Charter: Ken S.; Literature Committee Liaison: Shira K.; 2011 Convention Committee Liaison: this position will be elected at the June Board meeting.
-

Are You Planning to Attend the Convention in Canada in 2012?

If you are planning to attend the convention in Canada in 2012, please be aware that Canada has strict laws on people with past criminal histories entering the country.

Depending on the nature of the crime, whether it is a misdemeanor or a felony (by Canadian standards, which are sometimes different than U.S. standards), and how long ago the offense took place, it can take up 18 months to get permission to enter the country and will involve a nonrefundable fee for processing the application which in the case of felonies can be quite steep.

More information about the requirements is available at:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1082.html.

We hosted a workshop on this subject at the recent convention and a **CD of the workshop is available** from the ISO office.

Literature Committee News



New Project: History of SAA

The ISO Literature Committee is pleased to announce plans for a new project to compile and document the history of the founding and development of SAA. The research and initial writing will be done by a long-time member of the fellowship, who has graciously volunteered to spearhead this project.

Questions about the project and information or anecdotes for possible inclusion in this volume can be sent by postal mail to the ISO office, or emailed to:

litcom@saa-litcom.org

“Pocket” Edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

Now Available from the ISO!

The SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, is now available in a convenient size that fits easily into pocket or purse.

Now you can discreetly carry your recovery program with you.

Order one for yourself or your sponsee from the ISO office or through the online SAA Store.

Literature Committee Report from Albuquerque Convention

Your ISO Literature Committee finalized numerous projects during their face-to-face meetings in Albuquerque, including:

- Group Guide – final approval
- Intergroup Guide – final approval
- Writing to Prisoners Pamphlet (revised) – final approval
- Anonymity Letter to Media – final approval
- Meditation Book Editor Application – approved for posting on website and in newsletter

These documents will be available soon for purchase from the SAA Store or downloadable from the ISO website.

We start this service year with a full complement of LitCom Representatives and Alternates, after vacancies were filled by elections at the Regional Caucuses, as well as three At-Large Representatives approved by the Board and Delegates.

Many projects this year welcome each member's participation, including Meditation Tele-Workshops and *Sex Addicts Anonymous* survey forms and personal story requests. Please see the announcements in this newsletter and on the ISO website.

This newsletter also carries email addresses for your Regional Literature Committee representatives. Please contact us with any questions or suggestions. We look forward to serving this year in order to more effectively help our member groups carry the message of SAA recovery.

In fellowship,
John R.
Chair, ISO Literature Committee

ISO To Hire Editor for Meditation Book

The ISO has announced plans to begin the search for an experienced writer to serve as editor of the new SAA meditation book that is presently under development. The application period is open until August 1, 2010. The following job description has been developed by the ISO Literature Committee and approved by the ISO Board of Trustees:

Meditation Book Editor Job Description:

The successful candidate for editor of the SAA meditation book will have demonstrated superior skills in writing, copy-editing, and project management. Experience as a published writer/editor is strongly preferred. The editor shall be responsible for editing the submissions received from members of the fellowship to conform to the prescribed format of the meditation book and the SAA style sheet, and writing additional material as necessary to complete the project. The writing style of the editor must be fluid, easy-to-read, consistent throughout the book, and written in a compelling style that promotes the experience and hope of recovery contained in the SAA message.

Specific tasks include:

- Receiving and compiling submissions from members of SAA; editing the submissions into consistent, meaningful entries.
- Writing original material as needed to complete the project.
- Organizing the entries to assure continuity over a wide variety of topics, and adequate coverage of the fundamental principles of the SAA program.
- Working with the Literature Committee and ISO staff to coordinate design and facilitate publication of a finished and polished product.
- Reporting to the Literature Committee and responding to feedback from the Literature Committee.
- Communicating with the authors of the submissions.

Additionally, the editor must have access to the Internet and Microsoft Word. Regular reports of time worked and work accomplished will be required. Paid travel may be required for the person in this position.

The editor is required to have a working knowledge and background with regards to the SAA message of recovery including the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the concepts of service and the basic tools of recovery. Preference will be given to a member of SAA who meets the Guidelines for International Service.

Compensation will be \$95 to \$115 (based on experience) per completed and approved page for 366 daily entries plus up to a maximum of 34 pages of ancillary features to include a foreword, front and back covers, index, and cross referencing system, not to exceed 400 pages to be paid as follows:

- 5% of total for 400 pages to be paid upon signing of contract,
- 5% of total for 400 pages to be paid upon completion of book,
- 90% of total for each submission or other page to be paid upon approval by the LitCom.

Applications should be submitted no later than August 1, 2010, and should include a cover letter, personal resume, description of experience in SAA recovery, and samples of written work. **Note to current applicants: If you originally applied for the editor position before January 1, 2010, please confirm your continuing interest in the position by contacting the office at one of the addresses listed below.**

Please send applications to:
ISO, Attention: Director, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270,
or by email to:
meditation@saa-recovery.org

Any questions can be directed to Joe H. at 800-477-8191/713-869-4902,
or by email to:
director@saa-iso.org

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 the month at 5:00 p.m. Central Time and last until 6:30 p.m.:

Sunday July 25
Sunday August 22
Sunday September 26
Sunday October 24
Sunday November 28
Sunday December 26

To register, call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191,
or send an email to:
meditation@saa-recovery.org

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 on next 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 from your own experience, strength and hope.

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 200-300 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>From Shame to Grace</i>
<i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>	<i>Group Guide</i>
<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>	<i>Tools of Recovery</i>
<i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>	<i>Three Circles</i>
<i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>	

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

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

Send by postal mail to:

ISO
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

OR

Scan and email to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

You will be sent confirmation that your
submission has been received.

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 emailed 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*.

Outreach Committee Reports

“Our voluntary efforts are essential to the success of the fellowship and the recovery of every sex addict who is a part of it.”

(Sex Addicts Anonymous, Chapter 5 “Our Purpose – Service”, pg. 75)

General Outreach Committee

This umbrella committee was established by the ISO Board of Trustees in 2006, and consists of numerous subcommittees, which are designed to address specific areas of outreach for the SAA fellowship:

- Public Information subcommittee
- Teen Outreach subcommittee
- Men’s Outreach subcommittee
- Young Adult Outreach subcommittee
- GLBT Outreach subcommittee
- Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach group
- Women’s Outreach Subcommittee

The Focus Group meetings at the 2010 ISO Conference in Albuquerque, NM were well attended and those present were eager to share their knowledge and participate in the service of carrying the message of recovery.

General Outreach Committee welcomes all SAA members who desire to be of service in these areas. Monthly teleconference information for General Outreach and any of its subcommittees can be obtained from the ISO office.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.glbtsaa@saa-recovery.org

Public Information Subcommittee

The Public Information Subcommittee works to create documents and processes to carry the SAA message of recovery through the Twelve Steps, to the addict who still suffers. Recent Projects include:

- Development of SAA Speakers Bureau and Training workshops.
- Development of an SAA Speakers Manual, to establish standards, policies and procedures for the SAA Speakers Bureau to accurately present the SAA message to outside organizations and media.
- Establishing a process to respond to media requests.
- Producing a draft revision of the Anonymity Letter.
- Development of a Public Information Workbook.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.pisaa@saa-recovery.org

Teen Outreach Subcommittee

The Teen Outreach Subcommittee works to create tools and materials to support addicts from age 13 - 17 in finding recovery. Supporting teen sex addicts is a complex and sensitive issue. It is our task to do everything possible to make our program available to anyone who wants help, according to our Third Tradition. This subcommittee is currently developing a set of guidelines for carrying the SAA message of recovery to teen sex addicts, and is developing informative pamphlets describing some options for the SAA fellowship in helping teen sex addicts.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:
genoutreach.teen@saa-recovery.org

Men's Outreach Subcommittee

The Men's Outreach Subcommittee is tasked with reaching sex addicts who do not have the ability to attend a meeting in their immediate vicinity. A Men's Contact list has been established for the purpose of contacting others for support and/or sponsorship. It has been and continues to be an effective tool for supporting those who wish to recover but lack local support. Members are needed to keep this group active and to help carry the message to those in remote areas. This subcommittee is seeking members to actively participate in service. Please consider including Men's Outreach in your service activities. Women and transgender persons are most welcome to participate on this subcommittee.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:
genoutreach.men@saa-recovery.org

Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee's focus is on carrying the SAA message to young adults aged 18 to 39, with a current emphasis on college students. College-age adults are being exposed to the dangers of sexual addiction at a rate that seemed impossible just a few years ago. Pornography and dating services are available to anyone with the touch of a keyboard. "Sexting" (Sex Texting) is also becoming rampant among young adults. Up until now, in our fellowship, there has been little focus on carrying a message that specifically targets the college-age population. The goal of the Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee is to explore and develop ways to effectively reach out to those young adults who need to hear the message of recovery that SAA has to offer. Activities included sending an informational letter about SAA to approximately 200 college counselors. An informational article about SAA targeted to college newspapers was drafted for possible distribution.

If you are interested in participating on this committee, or for information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.ya@saa-recovery.org

GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

The GLBT Outreach Subcommittee is tasked with developing and providing outreach activities to sex addicts in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender communities, as well as to current GLBT members within Sex Addicts Anonymous. SAA members of all genders and sexual orientations are invited to participate in developing methods to best carry the message of SAA recovery to sex addicts within these communities.

Since its establishment in early 2008, our members have responded to over 300 inquiries per year to our Outreach email address, providing information on SAA, as well as support and sponsorship. Recent projects include sponsoring a monthly Public Information announcement in a national GLBT newsmagazine and drafting pamphlets focusing on the needs of sex addicts in the GLBT communities.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

GLBT@saa-recovery.org

Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach

“For some of us, the compulsive avoidance of sex and intimacy became a destructive pattern, dominating our thoughts and actions.”

(Sex Addicts Anonymous, pg. 6)

Members interested in participating in a service group to address this important issue are invited to join us. This group pursues outreach efforts including: providing outreach contacts for those struggling with compulsive sexual avoidance (or sexual anorexia) issues, and creating literature around recovery from compulsive sexual avoidance.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.avoidance@saa-iso.org

Women’s Outreach Subcommittee

Reaches out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviors and help them find our Fellowship for recovery. The Women’s Outreach Committee is made up of both women and men sex addicts from all over the world. Members meet regularly to discuss and implement ways for recovering women to reach each other and maintain contact with each other. We also offer an e-mail list for women in recovery. If you are interested in participating on this committee, or for information, questions or suggestions contact the International Service Organization at 1-800-477-8191.

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of May 31, 2010

	May 2010	Monthly Avg	Jul '09-May '10
Income			
Sales	20,033.34	17,407.78	191,485.55
Shipping & Handling	1,277.75	1,476.64	16,243.07
Donations	15,050.21	22,442.58	246,868.41
Delegate Meeting Registration	5,424.50	743.14	8,174.50
Interest Earned	43.24	175.32	1,928.54
Convention Revenue	29,158.44	6,427.21	70,699.35
Total Income	70,987.48	48,672.67	535,399.42
Cost of Goods Sold	8,465.26	8,551.78	94,069.60
Gross Profit	62,522.22	40,120.89	441,329.82
Expense			
Wages	16,942.87	15,761.69	173,378.58
Payroll Taxes	1,184.59	1,219.36	13,412.97
Payroll Expenses	14.56	3.16	34.72
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	3,073.33	2,320.26	25,522.90
Insurance	277.41	260.96	2,870.57
Depreciation	175.00	165.91	1,825.00
Postage/Shipping	7.52	47.52	522.74
Communications	485.30	458.89	5,047.82
Office Expense	1,402.52	815.67	8,972.37
Occupancy Expenses	1,277.43	1,547.90	17,026.95
Board/Committee Expense	1,091.50	1,515.17	16,666.84
The Outer Circle	331.98	1,354.79	14,902.70
Financial Charges	1,834.47	1,244.53	13,689.80
Bad Debts/Refunds	2.53	135.73	1,493.03
Translating/Literature Projects	0.00	106.41	1,170.48
BUSINESS TRAVEL-RELATED	8,124.47	887.67	9,764.37
DELEGATE MEETING	7,174.88	857.63	9,433.93
CONVENTION EXPENSES	46,904.46	4,627.41	50,901.49
Miscellaneous Expenses	0.00	116.96	1,286.57
Total Expense	90,304.82	33,447.62	367,923.83
Net Income	-27,782.60	6,673.27	73,405.99

Financial Results for May 2010

In May, we had a deficit of \$27,782, which was \$3,109 over budget. Our projected budget deficit was \$30,891.

In May, our sales for the SAA Green Book were \$681 under budget, and are \$2,613 under budget for the current service year.

Our pamphlets and booklets sales were over budget by \$688, and are \$5,156 over budget for the current budget year. Two other significant sales areas during this service year are our Bronze Medallions, which are \$1,599 over budget and our chips, which are \$1,610 over budget. The sale of outside literature is under budget by \$2,820.

We made a change in our accounting process on how we book our revenue from CD sales. We used to book CD sales in two different income accounts. One account was for ongoing sales during the year and the second account was used to book sales at the convention. We now book all our CD sales under one income account. This change affects the budget, which is why it shows we are \$6,177 over budget. In reality we are only \$2,333 over budget, which is still a significant increase in sales.

Our total sales for May were over budget by \$3,493.

Individual donations in May were under budget by \$1,458, and for the service year are under budget by \$4,306. Group donations in May exceeded budget by \$1,458, and for the service year have exceeded the budget by \$31,824.

Our total donations for May exceeded the budget by 21 cents.

Our product inventory is valued at \$49,501.

In taking a look at how we are doing against our current year budget, which runs from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, we have done very well. After eleven months of our budget year:

- Sales exceeded the budget by \$9,545
- Donations exceeded the budget by \$27,518
- Expenses are under budget by \$11,594

Our operational reserve amount is fully funded at \$118,322. This is the estimated amount needed to run the office for four months and is reset each January. Our other reserve accounts, which are funded based on sales, were all fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Director of Operations

director@saa-iso.org

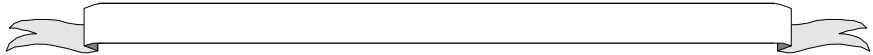
[Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of The Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the S.A.A. fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor

by Mike L.

Greetings. I am writing these words with less than a week left before leaving for the SAA International Convention. Because I normally have and make use of the opportunity to write an article based on my experiences at the convention, I will keep my comments here brief.

I hope that you enjoy the articles in this issue. One that particularly struck me was "Vibradores" by Rich S. To a large extent, this was because my first convention was also the one in Ann Arbor back in 1995 where I likewise served as a delegate. While I don't specifically remember the display Rich refers to in the article, I do have a specific literature-related memory from that convention, and that is learning that we were already beginning to work on translating our literature into Spanish.



"...our suggested topic for the March/April 2011 issue of The Outer Circle: "Reading and Using SAA Literature."



I had the opportunity to begin studying a second language when I reached the eighth grade. Two eighth-grade sections would be studying French and one would be studying Spanish. Even though it was considered slightly more "prestigious" to be in one of the classes studying French, since these were the top two sections of the grade, I chose to drop down to the third section because something told me I would get more benefit out of studying Spanish.

After a few weeks of struggling with the language, I had one of those "aha" moments one day during class—I still remember the moment—and after that I became very enthusiastic about the language. I couldn't get enough

of going through our textbook and I flew through the classes. I went on to major in Spanish in college and graduate school. It was only when I saw the plans being made at the Ann Arbor convention for beginning to translate our pamphlets that I finally understood why I was led those many years ago to choose Spanish as the language I wanted to study.

And now, fifteen years after my first convention, we have translated most of our literature into Spanish. And not only that, but our basic pamphlet will soon be making its debut in French. I did take a minor in French in college, and while I have never considered my French to be on the level of my Spanish, I was blessed to have a hand in reviewing the wonderful French translation done by two other members of the fellowship.

Regardless of the language, I have always found SAA literature to be a blessing, and I always feel refreshed and renewed when reading it. This brings me to our suggested topic for the March/April 2011 issue of *The Outer Circle*: "Reading and Using SAA Literature." Which piece or pieces of our literature have been particularly meaningful to you? How do you use the literature? What role does it play in your program? Or any other things you would like to talk about concerning our literature. I hope to hear from you with regard to our literature, or about Steps and Traditions Three and Four. The deadline for submitting articles on these topics is January 5, 2011. The topics for the next several issues can be found at the back of the book.

As I said, my piece on the 2010 convention is elsewhere in this issue. I look forward to talking with you again next issue.

Giving Thanks

by Joanne B.

Four years ago, I moved from my tiny SAA fellowship in my home town where I had found sobriety to a large fellowship on the other side of the country. A month later, I was whisked off by total strangers – soon to be close friends – to another's house to attend my first Giving Thanks. It was a blast! The host had started Giving Thanks several years before as a way to bring the fellowship closer together, and now it had become a highlight of the year for us, where we were able to see everyone and catch up and enjoy each other's company and support ISO in the process.

This year, my original little fellowship having expanded in the meantime, about ten of its members came to the convention. Afterwards everyone was on fire to be more involved and raise money for ISO. So we started talking about how to put on our own first Giving Thanks. Since I had all the

inside scoop, I was able to pass on the details: pick a date, find a house, get some chips and dip and drinks, and invite everyone to come.

The following letter that I sent to the director of operations and the chair of the ISO Board of Trustees tells the results:

Hello,

We are grateful to report the results of our first annual Giving Thanks Fellowship Event which took place with tremendous success on October 17th. One of our group members graciously volunteered his home to host this event, and approximately forty to fifty members and their partners attended.

First, many service opportunities were created during the months of planning preceding this event. These provided many great learning and growing experiences, as group members responded to these service needs with grace and dignity. Many subjects were covered and discussed, including: Primary Purpose, Twelve Traditions, locations, members attending, focus on fundraising, money and outside issues. One main purpose of this event was to build "service muscle," to create and increase our service experience and infrastructure, which we hope will allow our groups to plan and sponsor future events, such as workshops and retreats. We believe progress was made in accomplishing this goal.

Second, much fellowship, fun and food took place in the planning and on the night of the event. Members donated funds and provided a huge range of food, and other members prepared a gigantic paella, the classic Spanish rice and seafood dish. A couple of group members spoke briefly about the ISO and service needs of the fellowship. Old friendships were renewed and new ones were made.

Third, we are grateful for the generous contributions of many group members. At the event we hosted a "silent auction," for which many beautiful items were donated, including artwork, jewelry, professional services, gift baskets, concert tickets and more. Over \$1000 was raised by the auction items, and additional contributions from group members brought the total donations to our goal of \$2009. We are seeing so much spiritual growth in our members and groups, and we're glad their expressions of this growth can assist the ISO in carrying the SAA message of recovery.

The attached schedule details the checks and cash (in the form of cashier's checks) which were received. We are awaiting a final couple of "checks in the mail," and will forward the entire package to you via registered mail this week.

And finally, we very much appreciate the guidance of the ISO and the ISO office in sharing its experience, as well as the published guidelines on the SAA website. The examples and motivations that our group members experienced at the Convention, and our members learning of the "Giving Thanks" activities in other cities around the country, were primary motivating factors encouraging our groups to undertake such an effort ourselves. We look forward to sponsoring many more service-oriented SAA events in the future.

In fellowship,
Intergroup Secretary

We received the following response from the man who hosted my first Giving Thanks event:

To the Giving Thanks leaders:

Thank you for carrying the message through Giving Thanks. What a wonderful journey you've illuminated for us in your email which I will share with our Giving Thanks team here. I imagine they will be as moved as I am.

Your objective, "to build service muscle, to create and increase our service experience and infrastructure," is just wonderful. Without service it seems a fellowship stagnates; without the service infrastructure, it seems fellowships struggle to carry the message beyond their core meetings.

To grow in order to reach the thousands who appear to need our fellowships, we must push beyond our fears and our limits. May the seeds you are planting for your fellowship grow beyond any vision you and others may have for them.

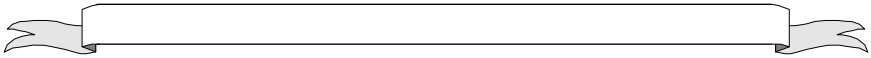
Post-It Progress at the Convention

by Shira K.

Before heading to Albuquerque, I wrote down these vows on little post-its and when I got there, I hung them around the mirror in our hotel bathroom. There were six of them. They said:

- I will orbit AROUND the dramas
- I will not overeat
- I will work out
- I will get sufficient sleep
- I will be a considerate roommate
- I will be kind to everyone I have contact with

I know this from my step work, but there is such power in the act of writing this stuff down, and looking at it. It is amazing.



I feel so blessed that I found my way into these rooms. I sat back for a brief moment to extend my gratitude to God for this program, for these people, and for my life in recovery. Ironically, I found here what I'd been searching for out there all that time: fellowship, bonds, and belonging.



I do this at home with my God Box. After chewing and stewing on a problem for several days (okay, sometimes several weeks), I write it down and literally put it in my "God's In-Box," and the simple act of doing that really seems to set me straight, to relieve me of the burden; to remind me that it's simply not in my purview. Anyway, the act of writing down these affirmations and putting them up in my hotel room at convention was so powerful. I think I did all of those things.

I was there for six nights, and I got to sleep by eleven each night. Eleven!! At conventions past, I was lucky to roll into bed by two! And then up by seven to be somewhere at eight! I think this is largely due to the dramas

(post-it #1). I think I stayed up past my bedtime at conventions past because I wanted to be in the middle of whatever drama was unfolding. In early recovery, I wanted to *be* the drama, then later, I wanted to *solve* the drama, and now, finally, I want *nothing to do with the drama*. This, Family, is progress!

I got to Albuquerque and texted two of my favorite sober women in recovery. They said they were at this cool Italian restaurant within walking distance of the hotel, and that a bunch of people were getting together for dinner. So we had a few minutes of catch-up chat, and then some people from the Literature Committee and some Board members showed up, and we got a big table and ate awesome Italian food. It was such a pleasure to be with so many sober people at one table.

I feel so blessed that I found my way into these rooms. I sat back for a brief moment to extend my gratitude to God for this program, for these people, and for my life in recovery. Ironically, I found here what I'd been searching for out there all that time: fellowship, bonds, and belonging. In adherence to my second post-it, "I will not overeat," I shared an entrée with a brother in recovery. It was great and just the right amount of food. We got back to the hotel, hung out in the lobby for a bit, and went upstairs to bed. Early!

The thing about getting to bed early is that I really don't mind getting up early. It is rare that I wake up at 6:15 willing to get vertical. But I had my running shoes on, and was headed out the front door by 6:45 am. This is so not my M.O. But it was fun! I used to think morning people were crazy, but I see now what the appeal is. It's very serene.

The Literature Committee, a/k/a LitCom, met for two days. We got a lot done, and when we left each day, we were all still friends. And here's my plug for the Traditions (anyone who knows me even a little bit knew this was coming): When a group of sober people who have a clear understanding of the Traditions get together to do service work for the fellowship, God is very present. This is nowhere clearer than when we disagree. We all maintain the understanding that first and foremost are the needs of the fellowship, and reaching out to the still-suffering addict. Sometimes we disagree about how best to do that, but we are all aware of what our primary purpose is. And so, the disagreements are only about tactics to best accomplish this objective. The objective itself remains crystal clear. (And by the way, it's great how well the Board and the LitCom get along. It really helps us be productive.)

Then we had a day and a half of delegate meetings. Some really interesting motions came up, and some people said some good stuff. You can read all about it in the business report. I only spoke to one motion, which was about the Green Book. The fellowship remains split on the Green Book. Some think it needs a complete overhaul; some think it needs only slight tweaks. One thing is clear, though: we do not have a group con-

science about what to do—yet. I know that a plan will emerge; and it will be one guided by God.

LitCom has formed a Green Book work group. At convention, the work group was joined by one of the original author/editors, which I think is fantastic, and I believe that a God-centered direction will emerge soon. For right now, my job is to surrender and pray. I am grateful for all the work that has been done, and for the work that is yet to be done to get this book together. It's a journey for the whole fellowship, and akin to traveling by plane: Sometimes we hit rough air, but we all know where we're going to land. We all want a book that reaches out to the still suffering addict and offers a solution based on the twelve steps and twelve traditions. That book will emerge in God's time. Surrender and pray.

On Friday night, a large group of women got together for dinner. I think there were about twenty-five of us. Again, it was so powerful to be around so many sober women in recovery. I feel so blessed.

The next few days flew by in a blur of great speakers, nice meals, workshops, impromptu business meetings in the hall, and getting to know some very awesome women in recovery.

I spent some time pleading with a very talented writer to give us our own "Twelve and Twelve." I am tempted to mention his name so that you all can implore him as well, but I have a little more decorum than that. I do not, however have so much decorum to abstain from telling you that he is the author of *Sexuality in Perspective*, a well-written and comprehensive page-turner about sex addiction and more importantly, recovery. I think we're approaching readiness for a "Twelve and Twelve", and I'd like to see it written by someone who's been around (and sober) for a long time.

I went to several great workshops. My favorites are the ones that really focus on the steps and the spiritual awakening that happens as the result of them.

The last night approached before I knew it, and I felt supremely grateful that I was able to abide by all of my post-it affirmations. I got out running four out of six mornings, swam laps the other two, ate three appropriate meals each day, was kind to everyone I dealt with, and got lots of sleep each night. Finally, I must have been a decent roommate, because my roommate agreed to room with me again at the 2011 convention.

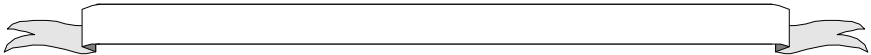
So, next year, I'm bringing back the post-its.

Re-Experiencing My First Convention

By Mike L.

I'm very fond of reliving the experience of my very first convention, the 1995 one in Ann Arbor. That's the one where I had so much fun that I called the airline and moved back my original return plans so I would be there for the closing. Accordingly, I am always telling folks attending their first SAA convention that I am envious of their experience.

I have been noticing at my last couple of conventions that I wasn't having quite the satisfying experience that I recalled from earlier years, and I wondered why that was. Well, I've been around long enough to know that when something is not going quite the way I want, I have a part in it. So I looked a little further. I came to the conclusion that I wasn't putting into the recent conventions the same energy that I had been putting into the earlier ones. So I decided to change that part.



*Well, I've been around long enough to know
that when something is not going quite the
way I want, I have a part in it.*

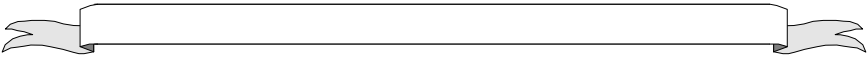


I decided back when I made my plane reservation that I would arrive early enough this year to be able to attend the traditional Board/Literature Committee dinner that takes place that first evening. There was at least one year when I arrived too late to be able to make the dinner. As it turned out, the dinner had been postponed until Wednesday.


So after I took some time walking around the area, experiencing the beauty of Albuquerque (the only more perfect weather I've ever seen at a convention was Friday in Ann Arbor, with the dry heat of Tucson in 2000 an unexpected runner-up), I grabbed a bite to eat. Then I came back and met up with my roommate, with whom I talked for a while. Another difference: most of the last few years I chose to get my own room. While doing so had certain conveniences, I have come to realize that staying by myself made it easy for me to lose continuous contact with what was going on around me.

Even though the convention technically didn't start until Friday evening, I was still determined that I would take this "new" approach I had decided on for the first two-and-a-half-days as well. I participated fully in the Literature Committee meetings, more fully I think than I have in quite some time.

Similarly, at the delegate meeting I spoke on three of the five delegate motions that we had time to address. I almost spoke on a fourth and, while I was listening to a speaker on the other side of the issue, I made a spontaneous decision that his argument outweighed anything I could offer on my side, and so went and sat back down. Indeed, I went back and forth on a couple of motions that I was hearing discussed, and in one case I ended up voting on the side opposite the one I had spoken on. (During all of this, I couldn't help but think back to the 1996 convention in Minneapolis where I championed a motion I knew would be very unpopular for somebody from my home group who wasn't able to come to that convention. Chalk that up to "one of those things I'll only do once in my life.")



*Still, did I get what I came for in Albuquerque?
No. I got much more. And I can't wait for
next year's convention.*



I had no idea what a "double winner" was when I got off the plane on Tuesday evening. Not only did I learn what the term meant, I stepped up to lead a double winner meeting; I think this was my first time to chair or lead a meeting at a convention. There were just a few of us there, so everybody had a chance to spend some time sharing without time constraints.

I stayed present during the meals and took part in the conversation around me; that is, except when I was selling raffle tickets, a real stretch for me. I already had a conversation piece sitting right in front of me with my vegan meal. I don't think I have always done vegan meals as I did this year, and when I do there are always folks who want to know if I'm a vegetarian. (Answer: I'm still a somewhat guilty carnivore.) At one of those meals, my roommate from the Dallas convention in 2004 told me, "I've seen more of you this year than I saw of you the year we were roommates." Considering my intentions for this convention, I was happy to hear him say that.

I made a point of attending as many workshops as I could, something I have made less of a priority in recent years. I also dropped in on four of the different focus groups on Saturday afternoon, where I met some great folks involved in service work, and discovered some additional areas where I could be of service.

I kept myself open to impromptu invitations to join others for meals at the hotel or outside of it. Accordingly, I got to renew some old friendships, such

as one with a very special man who said to me, "We haven't done this in years." And I got to spend time with a wonderful woman from my city whom I've seen far too little of in the last couple of years.

I certainly did a few things differently. I think this was my first time ever to skip the almost annual showing of *Stuart Saves His Family*. However, by Saturday night I was in serious need of recharging my batteries and I chose to spend some time sitting listening to music in a (concrete) park across from the hotel. The weather in Albuquerque, especially in the evenings, was just too inviting to ignore.

On Sunday morning, my roommate, who was a man on a mission, and I took a walk (with my short legs, more of a forced march), a walk that reminded me of a wonderful stroll I had with some guys around the pond near the hotel in Portland in 2003. Sadly, Tuesday evening and Sunday morning were the only times this fine man and I really spent any time together. I hope we get a chance to remedy that in future conventions.

I really enjoyed the Albuquerque sampler on Sunday afternoon, especially the Rattlesnake Museum I saw mentioned in the convention program. "Been there, done that, and got the t-shirt," which I got a \$3 discount on in exchange for wearing it out of the museum.

The Sunday night candlelight meeting has been a feature of the conventions since my first one, and probably before that as well. I have come to most of them, and it's been a few years since I shared. This year I changed that as well. And my eternal gratitude to the man (you know who you are) who went out of his way to make me feel welcome in that wonderful setting.

Once again, I had plans to leave mid-morning on Monday since I thought a few months ago that the prospect of a nonstop flight back home was too tempting to refuse. This time I wasn't as successful in changing my ticket. No matter. By that time I had had a very full and enjoyable weekend and regretted all the more that I chose to miss the convention in Oakland last year which, it turned out, I could have made at least the last couple of days of. I came back home fully ready to increase my meeting attendance and have been accordingly blessed, especially by some of the comments I heard at a Green Book study where we discussed the third step. Once again, keeping an open mind, I'm more much likely to vote in favor of keeping our book in close to its present form than I was during that discussion at the Literature Committee meetings.

Gee. I'm getting excited just writing all of this down. It of course would be absolutely impossible to completely recreate the experience of my wonderful first convention. Still, did I get what I came for in Albuquerque? No. I got much more. And I can't wait for next year's convention.

Vibradores—“Wake Up” or “Relapse”?

by Rich S.



In 1995 I had a slip that might have disqualified me as a delegate for the annual business convention. It happened at the convention hotel, just hours before the opening session. Here is the story of my dilemma. But first, an important paradigm:

While living in Mexico I came to admire several traffic controls that accomplish their mission without a need for police enforcement, issuing tickets or fining motorists. *Topes* (speed bumps), sometimes called the horizontal police, are two to three times the size of speed bumps in the U.S.A. and Canada. The *topes* aren't gentle. They cannot be ignored. If a driver ignores the warning sign and doesn't slow to five mph he or she may lose parts from the underside of the car. The passengers may suffer whiplash. Pedestrians, including small children, are thus safe despite a highway running through the middle of their village. Motorists comply or experience immediate and serious consequences.

Another observation is the way the edge of the concrete pavement on state highways often has a sudden drop-off, an abrupt one-to-six-inch drop to a narrow shoulder, and no guard rails to prevent crashing down into the adjoining terrain. Another place where consequences are a stern teacher.

The new *maxipistas* (Mexican interstate highways) have followed the example of other nations, and built a control into the roadway that they call *vibradores*, the vibrators. They are little indentations in the road surface between the right lane and the shoulder that are like a washboard. When a driver's tires run over them, the *vibradores* cause a loud whirring sound. It startles the driver into realizing that he or she is drifting off onto the shoulder and that a crash is about to result.

For me as a recovering addict, consequences are a similar learning dynamic. And while some slips lead to total disaster, other momentary slips, especially of the non-predatory type, can serve as vibradores, a “wake-up” to get back on track before heading off the road into a deeply painful relapse.

In 1995, I flew to Ann Arbor, Michigan for the annual Sex Addicts Anonymous delegate convention and international conference. I arrived late that night and I was exhausted. As I stood at the hotel check-in desk, a mem-

ber of the convention planning committee said "Hello!" and asked if I'd mind taking a few minutes to talk after putting my bags in the room. I agreed and met her in the coffee shop. She explained that the committee had discussed whether to allow our service group to display its traveling literature display containing all the Twelve-Step literature of all the "S" fellowships. It contained more than a hundred pamphlets and books from thirteen fellowships.

They were concerned that it would be a violation of Tradition Six: "SAA as a whole ought never endorse...any outside enterprise" and clearly non-SAA Conference-Approved literature was something "outside." I had worked for six months creating this display to broaden the realization of recovering members that there were over a hundred Twelve-Step titles dealing with sexual addiction problems and not just the six pamphlets we had created to date within SAA. We had put out this display at several of our statewide conferences. I had lugged the fifty-pound carton containing the display all the way from my hometown to that hotel and here she was telling me they wouldn't allow me to put it out for others to see.

I felt crushed! Correspondence regarding bringing this display had gone on for months and no decision reached. On faith that it would be approved, I brought it in hopes of sharing with members from around the world, in hopes that they would feel encouraged and find out how to obtain information they needed from other fellowships. And too, I had a lot of my own ego invested. I wanted to feel important and be recognized for my service work and creativity.

My heart raced. I wanted to cry. I stuffed the feelings and discussed the issue for a half hour. I was trying desperately to win the argument intellectually. Finally, we reached a compromise: she agreed to take it back to the committee the next morning before the general session and ask whether I might be allowed to put the display on a table in the hallway outside the delegate meeting with a disclaimer sign saying it was not SAA Conference-Approved Literature, is displayed here for the information of delegates, and is not an endorsement. However, they would not allow it to be available for the general membership attending the conference that followed.

It was midnight. I was exhausted. My roommate had left a message that he was delayed and wouldn't arrive until the next day. I made my safe-arrival call to home, was getting ready for bed and switched on the TV. Briefly scanning the channels, I discovered a soft porn channel and in a blink was off to never-never land. While acting out felt comforting, at the same time I knew I shouldn't be doing it. At 3:00 am I came to, switched off the TV, got under the covers and came to the horrible realization that I had just cut the legs out from under myself! I had slipped. I was no longer eligible to be a delegate. They suggested at least six month's SAA sobriety. I'd have barely six hours when the opening session was to begin.

I debated phoning my sponsor for guidance, but not at 3:00 am. I wished I could talk with my wife, but she would feel personally betrayed. And too, she would criticize such a narrow-minded requirement for delegate service. What a dilemma! Should I just catch a cab to the airport and take the next plane home? Should I wait until morning? Could I show my face and admit what I'd done? Should I go on as if nothing had happened?

Finally, I realized that my roommate would be arriving in the morning and I could talk it over with him. I decided to show up for the delegate meeting and say nothing until then. I would trust that he would guide me. It was 3:15 am and I turned out the light and went to sleep.

The next morning I went to the delegate meeting and sat near the back. After my roommate's arrival I was anxious to talk with him. During the first break I divulged my story and asked how to deal with my dilemma. He said I needed to forgive myself and to stay and fulfill my work as a delegate. He spoke of "feet of clay" and said he understood. Rather than being duty-bound to divulge this slip to everyone, he suggested I be gentle with the deep shame and guilt I was feeling and reveal this later to my sponsor at home and to others when it felt safe.

I did as he said. I stayed and gradually regained my confidence, participating in the discussions and getting to know members from other parts of the world.

Was the three-hour slip late that night a crash? Was it off the *maxipista* into a six-foot ditch, totally wrecked, requiring hospitalization? Or did I go to sleep at the wheel for a moment, with the vibradores getting my attention to steer back into the drive lane? Was the behavior the result of days of obsessing and a compulsive plan? Or was it an impulsive decision at a weak moment?

Reflecting on it after all the intervening years, it seems to have been more of a wake-up moment and a lesson about not having handled my distress well that evening, that I had slipped into forgetfulness in an old and tried manner to ease the pain. Did I get back into my right mind, and go ahead with my weekend responsibilities? Yes. Did it become a lost weekend? No. Did it escalate into a prolonged slide? No. Did I stay hung over for days with guilt and remorse? No, not this time. Because my convention roommate, my temporary sponsor, helped me to forgive myself and encouraged me to go on. It was one more lesson in my journey "from shame to grace."

By the way, the program committee did approve placing the literature display in the hallway and I set it up during the lunch hour. There were dozens of delegates who thanked me for bringing it and asked how they might order pamphlets from other fellowships. Overall, that year's delegation was glad that we shared our Inter-Fellowship Literature Project with them.

A Seventh Step Prayer

by Larry E.

I know a little:

That I am powerless over my addiction;
That I cannot remove my shortcomings alone but must do my part;
That I must humbly ask for help;
That I must surrender the result;
That I must be grateful;
That I am now ready to have You remove all my shortcomings.

Thank You for being with me and answering my need.

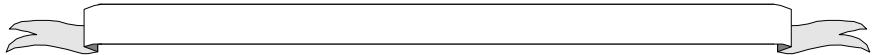
To You who are certain, I surrender my doubt;
To You who stand ready to forgive, I surrender my blame;
To You who know the future, I surrender my fears;
To You who never fail, I surrender my victim-thinking;
To You on whom all depends, I surrender my codependence;
To You who are perfect, I surrender my perfectionism;
To You who live forever in joy, I surrender the pain of my past;
To You who wait for nothing, I surrender my impatience;
To You who reveal all, I surrender every secret;
To You who share life, I surrender my isolation;
To You who give compassion, I surrender my rage;
To You who ask for nothing, I surrender my neediness;
To You who know only love, I surrender my resentments;
To You who grant life without reward, I surrender my entitlements;
To You who see every person's soul, I surrender my objectification;
To You who care only for others, I surrender self-serving;
To You who created the universe, I surrender my grandiosity;
To You who imagined all that is, I surrender fantasy;
To You who allow me to feel, I surrender being numb;
To You who are all-giving, I surrender my greed;
To You who made man and woman equal, I surrender my lust;
To You who know no equal, I surrender competitiveness;
To You who speak only truth, I surrender my dishonesty;
To You whose love knows no bounds, I surrender self-loathing;
To You who spread mercy, I humbly ask You to take these shortcomings from me.

And I trust Thy will, not mine, to decide when that happens.

Step Six

by Shira K.

About five years ago, I bought a trailer park. I was given the lowdown from the previous owners on all the problem tenants. Among the most problematic was this old guy, Dave, who had that hoarding disease where he can't throw anything out. His front porch was overflowing with random items, like two bench-sized Buick car seats, old bedpans, walkers, and various vintage foods. As you can imagine, he had more small animals around him than Snow White. Dave favored a different costume, though. He wore blue plaid flannel pajamas. In the winter he wore the matching top and bottom; in the summer he wore the bottoms with a white sleeveless tank top. He smelled as though he had not showered since just after Nixon left the White House.



In my thinking, Step Six is about correctly perceiving trash and becoming disgusted. So disgusted, in fact, that I no longer want to climb into the dumpster and drag it back into my life.



Dutifully, I went to the landlord association and asked for guidance. They told me that I am legally required to give him two notices to "remove material from exterior." They furnished me with the notices. When I delivered the first notice, Dave had some choice words for me, words that I didn't even know people his age knew. He slammed the door in my face. The second notice was met with similar grace.

I was already in recovery (I had almost two years sober at the time, and I'd had my first journey through the Steps), so I knew that it was not about me. I kept repeating that as a mantra.

The third time, I told Dave, "Listen, tomorrow, I'm coming back, and Bill [my park manager] and I are going to throw all this stuff in the truck and take it to the dumpster; so if there's anything you want to keep, take it inside the trailer." Again, I was shocked at what he called me.

The next day, I showed up with work gloves and proceeded to throw all the stuff into the back of Bill's truck. It was one of the grossest things I've ever done (since I got sober). The whole time, Dave was screaming obscenities

at us. "This is not about me, this is not about me," I kept repeating under my breath. And "Pray for him, Shira; pray for him to get everything you want for yourself. Okay. God, please give Dave serenity and peace. Please give Dave your light. Please take him in your arms." This stuff really does work for me. So I was mostly able to drown out his four-letter words.

Meanwhile, I was encountering all manner of putrid food, and scat from rats, squirrels, and possums and god-only-knows what else. I have almost no sense of smell (a life full of allergies and sinusitis will do that), which is, occasionally, a fantastic gift. (Also, after I have babies, I can claim ignorance of the full diapers.) Another lesson from God: Most curses are also blessings, if looked at in the right light.

So anyway, Bill and I loaded the truck, backed it out and took it to the dumpster on the other side of the trailer park. Then we loaded it all in the dumpster and went to lunch.

When we came back, about an hour or so later, Dave was in the dumpster. I don't mean by the dumpster. I mean *IN* the dumpster. He was close to eighty years old. And he was rooting around pulling all his treasured possessions out, and then dragging them back to his trailer. I decided this was fine, as long as they were inside and out of sight. But the image of this old man dragging a cracked bedpan back to his very old trailer was sad to me. (I had, of course, called Social Services several weeks before and they said they were well aware of him, and were keeping a close eye.)

Then it hit me. This is why we do Step Six. There is an *entire step* devoted to "becoming ready" to have God remove our shortcomings. We don't just go from acknowledging them to asking God to remove them. We have to get prepared. Otherwise, we wind up back in the dumpster rooting for our trash. It is important to get ready for the look of the empty porch. Even though to all of us, Dave's porch seemed disgusting, to him it was comforting. He found comfort in having all that stuff around in case he needed it one day. This was a man who was raised during the depression (aka childhood trauma), who thought that *everything* was worth holding onto. And here I was removing all of his valuable stuff.


I have my character defects from my traumas too. I keep them because I think they're worth holding onto. I know logically that my porch would look better if it were clean, but I just can't help myself from stacking old icky things on it. And then I notice how putrid they are, and I throw them out. And I wind up in the dumpster more than I'd care to admit.

In my thinking, Step Six is about correctly perceiving trash and becoming disgusted. So disgusted, in fact, that I no longer want to climb into the dumpster and drag it back into my life.

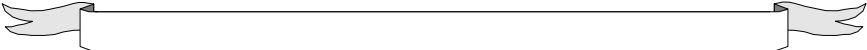
Status in Recovery

by Larry E.

As I look out the window, I see a beautiful sunny moment in the Pacific Northwest; a rare treat in the long rainy season here. But I am feeling pretty low down, sad, a little resentful and angry, a little afraid of the future. These are middle circle feelings. So I slept in late this morning, isolating from the world; another middle circle behavior.



*I am blessed every day,
free of the compulsion to act out, to lie, to
serve only myself and to be numb and apart
from everything that is beautiful.*



For forty years I was an active sex addict. More than three years ago, I was outed very publicly. I was arrested. My picture appeared on the television and in the newspaper. My life turned upside down. Everything that mattered to me was threatened, including my marriage of thirty-some years. I lost my job and professional credentials.

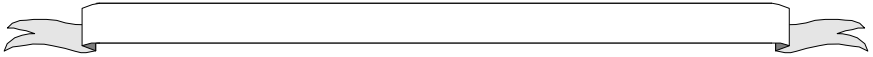
Yesterday was a double whammy day for me. One of my professions declined my second request for reinstatement. Wham! Another of my professions declined my offer to volunteer as an unpaid leader in a continuing education program. Wham! Wham! I was triggered big time. My dreams last night were a cavalcade of acting out adventures.

I asked myself what more do I have to do to regain the world's respect. After all, I graduated from a program, attended daily SAA meetings for a year after that, and still go to three or four meetings a week. I sponsor half a dozen guys. I am complying with the terms of my probation, including passing polygraphs and doing three hundred hours of community service. My remarkable wife and I have rebuilt a wonderful relationship. I continue psychotherapy. I have taken refuge in a rich spiritual tradition that has become my higher power. I have been doing well in recovery for forty-two months. What more does it take?!

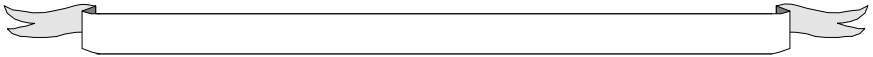
Then I realize what a foolish question that is. It takes what it takes. I am blessed every day, free of the compulsion to act out, to lie, to serve only myself and to be numb and apart from everything that is beautiful. Every

moment spent in conscious contact with my higher power is a spiritual kick in the pants. Each act of selflessness and service to others moves me up out of the funnel of addictive regression and trauma re-creation and into a light that glows from within.

That light illuminates my shortcomings and character defects so that I can work on them and, perhaps, have them lifted from me in time. That light also warms me, dries my tears, helps me see what really is (and is not) important, provides the energy to go on and points me in the right direction.



*You see, I have come to understand that my
addiction was not and is not really about sex.
It is about life. I used sex to hide from life,
from feelings and from intimacy.*



It is not important whether I have the ascribed status of being this or that kind of professional. Sure, the extra income is nice. But having been largely unemployed for the past three and a half years, I know I can survive pretty comfortably, much to my surprise. What is important – vitally important – is that I stay in recovery.

You see, I have come to understand that my addiction was not and is not really about sex. It is about life. I used sex to hide from life, from feelings and from intimacy. I was afraid of failure, embarrassment and shame. And, lo and behold, I ended up with a tanker truck full of shame and guilt to haul around, fueled by fear and self-loathing. In recovery I have been emptying that tank, and feeling lighter and more confident and connected as a result.

That's not to say that I don't stop at the "Shame and Regret" filling station once in a while and tank up a little – like yesterday. But I just wrote this essay, and I'm feeling irritable again – a little on the empty side of guilt. You see, I am doing (almost) nothing wrong now. I am being present, rigorously honest and involved in the lives round me. I took three program calls this morning while I wrote this essay, and I know that I am helping others. That is status enough for me now. It is status no one else confers on me.

And it feels good.

For Today

by Cheri C.

I have very recently discovered that while I detest journaling, I love writing. This is an example of something I wrote as I reflected on having recently gotten to Step Twelve. It was an amazing discovery that I didn't have to "journal" about my day, but rather to "write" my feelings in whatever form I choose.

She looked around the room. Her Twelve-Step fellowship felt more accepting, more loving, more *real*, than anything she had ever known. She began to realize that all her life had been about hiding who she really was, hiding her thoughts, hiding her feelings, hiding her behavior. Never before had she heard such genuine honesty and openness. Here, people were not perfect and didn't pretend they were. Here, the mask came off. It was the beginning of a journey – a journey to give herself permission to "be" who God intended for her to be.

She learned she was powerless over her behavior. The faith she always carried with her became genuine, deep, to the core of her soul. She gave up.

She surrendered to her Maker. She said, "My way doesn't work." Here she looked deep inside herself. Why did she seek others' approval? Why did she yearn for Truth? How many had she trampled on and harmed? Could this search be channeled in a different way? Becoming honest with another for the first time, she was *done*. She humbly requested that those old coping mechanisms be replaced. She did her part to right her wrongs – a lifetime of wrongs.

Today she cleans up after herself. She is not perfect. She relies on support from others. She communes with her Maker. She helps others. She is blessed. She is alive. She is HOME.

E-mail Addresses

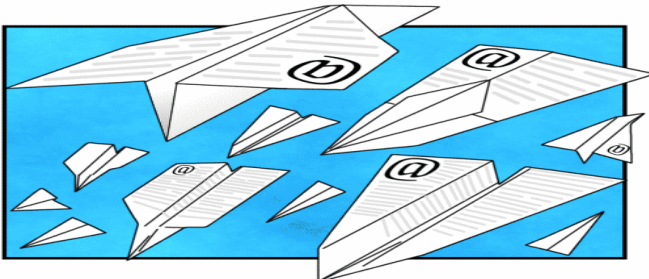
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