

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 at the
June 15, 2013 Teleconference**

- Approve transfer of \$15,000.00 from the ISO of SAA Operational Reserve Fund to the ISO of SAA checking account.

**The following actions were approved by
the Board of Trustees at the
July 20, 2013 Teleconference**

1. That the Board approve an annual mid-year caucus meeting of the SE region for the following purposes:
 1. To encourage participation in ISO activities at the regional level, and
 2. To conduct any business that may arise, including planning for future regional caucuses.
- That the Board approve a mid-year caucus meeting for the NE region for the following purposes:
 1. To encourage participation in ISO activities at the regional level, and
 2. To conduct any business that may arise, including planning for future regional caucuses.
- Change the name of the GLBT Outreach Subcommittee to the LGBT Outreach Subcommittee.

The ISO is pleased to announce the approval of
our newest piece of SAA literature:

***“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 new 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 new addition to our SAA literature!

Conference Charter Committee (CCC) News

At the 2013 annual meeting in Summerlin, Nevada, the ISO Conference affirmed the work of the Conference Charter Committee (CCC) and requested that a final draft of the Charter be brought to the 2014 ISO annual meeting for consideration and possible approval.

To this end, the 2013-2014 CCC has adopted a new mission statement to guide our work this year.

CCC Mission Statement

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) was established as a committee of the ISO Board of Trustees in 2007 and transferred to the ISO Conference in 2010. The primary task was to research and draft a Charter for the ISO Conference. The CCC shall continue to solicit and collect feedback from the fellowship in order to prepare and present to the Conference for adoption a final draft that reflects and incorporates our collective wisdom and can serve to guide the Conference in the years ahead. In preparing this final draft, the CCC will work closely with other components of the ISO to ensure coordination of the Charter with other foundational documents. Upon approval of the Charter, the CCC will gratefully disband and pass oversight of the Charter to the Conference.

In keeping with this mission, the CCC is planning a series of tele-workshops this year to answer questions and collect feedback on the draft Charter from the fellowship. Please stay tuned for upcoming dates. In the meantime, please check out the draft Charter on the ISO Service website.

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

Contact the ISO office (email below) for the username and password to gain access to the Member Services area of the ISO service website.

Please send any comments, questions, or concerns to the CCC at:

ccc.feedback@saa-iso.org

ISO Structure Committee News

The chair of the ISO Board of Trustees, Bill I, has appointed the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) for the 2013-2014 service year. Those who have agreed to serve are Bill K, Carl D, Daniel L (secretary), Jim L (chair), Thea D, and Tom W. ISO Executive Director, Joe H, will also serve *ex officio*.

The Committee will follow up on the actions of the ISO Conference in Summerlin by continuing to receive and consider feedback from members of the fellowship and by continuing the work on specific details of how the proposed bylaws amendments might best be implemented. In doing so, the ISO-S is working closely with the newly formed Conference Steering Committee (CSC), which will ultimately be responsible for bringing final proposals to the conference and for coordinating conference activities with other components of the ISO.

The ISO-S anticipates presenting to the CSC by mid-year recommendations for an area formation process and a process for nomination of trusted servants to serve on the ISO Board of Trustees and the ISO Literature Committee. It is anticipated that, upon ratification in 2014 of the Bylaws amendments passed in Summerlin, the CSC will present to the Conference detailed proposals for implementation of these structural changes to the ISO.

In an effort to communicate effectively with members of the fellowship during the year, the ISO-S plans to submit articles for publication in *The Outer Circle*, to send periodic progress reports to members via the SAA News email list, and to sponsor tele-workshops, where members can ask questions and make comments on the proposals under consideration.

Any questions or comments about the work of the ISO-S may be directed to the ISO office at 713-869-4902 or by email to:

info@saa-recovery.org

Please place "ISO-S" in the subject line of any email for the ISO-S Committee.

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.

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're 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>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**](mailto: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.

September 22

October 27

September 24

October 27

November 24

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

[**meditation@saa-recovery.org**](mailto: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*.

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 Income/Expense Summary as of July 31, 2013

	Jul 2013	Monthly Avg	Jan-Jul 2013
Income			
Sales	18,403.14	17,785.85	124,500.93
Shipping & Handling	1,995.01	1,813.45	12,694.17
Donations	31,464.84	24,066.32	168,464.22
Investment Income	16.70	719.32	5,035.23
Other Income	997.63	153.23	1,072.63
Convention Income	0.00	6,833.36	47,833.54
Delegate Meeting Income	0.00	828.57	5,800.00
Total Income	52,877.32	52,200.10	365,400.72
Cost Of Goods Sold	6,070.23	6,898.09	48,286.63
Gross Profit	46,807.09	45,302.01	317,114.09
Expense			
Wages	17,119.64	19,150.36	134,052.52
Benefits	4,663.31	3,841.90	26,893.32
Payroll Taxes	1,315.98	1,560.66	10,924.62
Payroll Expenses	18.54	18.54	129.78
Insurance	3,333.00	831.53	5,820.70
Financial Charges	1,263.79	1,177.49	8,242.44
Communications	520.98	547.97	3,835.81
Occupancy Expenses	1,276.62	1,501.39	10,509.74
Office Expenses	414.11	1,276.61	8,936.25
The Outer Circle	1,383.01	893.80	6,256.58
Professional Fees	1,035.00	443.57	3,105.00
Depreciation	175.00	175.00	1,225.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	0.00	10.37	72.56
Travel-Related Expenses	-272.08	5,466.99	38,268.96
Board/Committee Expenses	1,095.77	2,803.61	19,625.30
Convention Expenses	0.00	5,619.40	39,335.80
Delegate Meeting Expenses	0.00	1,739.98	12,179.85
Total Expense	33,342.67	47,059.18	329,414.23
Net Income	13,464.42	-1,757.16	-12,300.14

Financial Results for July 2013

In the month of July we had a surplus of \$13,464.42. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$299.02. The above-expected surplus of \$13,165.40 in July was due mainly to increased revenue of \$8,272.25 from group donations.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$1,002.14 for July and has exceeded our estimate by \$8,204.88 for 2013.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$2,398.37 for July and have exceeded our estimate by \$5,578.89 for 2013. Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$420.52 in July but have exceeded our estimate by \$1,361.87 in 2013. Our Chips exceeded our estimate by \$94.60 in July and have exceeded our estimate by \$893.78 in 2013.

Our total sales for July exceeded our estimate by \$2,863.14.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$529.59 for July and have exceeded our estimate by \$4,471.00 for 2013. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$8,272.25 in July and have exceeded our estimate by \$1,566.22 for 2013.

Our product inventory is valued at \$52,526.73

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$750.31 in July.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2013 to July 31, 2013):

- Sales have exceeded our estimate by \$14,820.93
- Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$6,037.22
- Expenses have exceeded our estimate by \$3,902.25
- Net surplus is below our estimate by \$8,078.16

Our operational reserve amount is \$123,100.00. \$15,000.00 was transferred from operational reserves at the beginning of the month but we were able to move \$2,000.00 back to the operational reserve account at the end of the month. The operational reserve still needs \$13,000.00 to be fully funded. This is the estimated amount necessary to run the office for four months, and is reset each January.

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.

Not too long ago, I saw one of these sixties cult horror movies that were so common back then. One of the characters in the movie was particularly repellent, and I commented every time that he appeared on screen what an abhorrent character he was. I had to stick around for the credits and see who played this obnoxious so-and-so. When I saw the name, I recognized it and couldn't place it.



The topic for the May/June 2014 The Outer Circle is, as suggested by one of our readers, "The Outer Circle."



It occurred to me a day or two later to look him up via a search engine. He was the director of one of the big summer theater festivals in town, one which I have been attending for years. One time, I got there a little early and he was fielding questions from the audience. I thought him charming and delightful; no wonder that I did not recognize his screen persona.

A few months after seeing the film, I received a DVD of it as a gift, and I had the idea of asking him to autograph the box. Normally there are no performances at the theater for about four or five days before the festival. I figured this was to allow time for dress rehearsal, and that I could probably just watch the rehearsal, waiting for him to show himself. When he did, I called out to him, committing the *faux pas* of addressing him as "Mr." instead of "Dr." (I knew he was a university professor). I told him how much I loved his performance in the movie, and told him how sleazy I thought he was; his response: "Oh, yes, I was *real* sleazy." Of course, I asked him to autograph my DVD. Afterwards, he commented to the actor with him, "I'm *really* going to be insufferable tonight," and the actor replied, "'Tonight?'"

I'm very glad that I took the time to meet him, because I learned since the

last issue of *The Outer Circle* that he died a few months ago at the age of 72. He is much beloved and missed by his family and the many actors he has mentored over the years. And yet I had a chance to connect with him on the level of his very brief movie career, something that most people probably don't even know about him; none of the obituaries that I read mentioned the movie or its remake some thirty-five years later in which he had a bit part.

The summer festival starts up tomorrow, and I will definitely be there early. I'm sure there will be nice things said about him, and I don't want to miss a one of them. Maybe they'll even mention the movie.

I didn't really know the guy, and I wanted to share this story because I miss him; his work with the theater has given me a lot of enjoyment. Before recovery, I doubt I would have made the time to let him know how much I appreciated him, and, being in recovery, I thought it had no choice but to do so, living in the same city and all.

I want to spend the rest of my time this month talking about upcoming issues of *The Outer Circle*. First of all, the comments about the article by Freeman P. last month were overwhelmingly positive, so I'm going to run the other eleven parts, starting with one more part this issue. I may bump it up to two parts per issue starting next issue, so I can present the entire piece by next summer. Also for the next year I'm going to go back over the past issues of the newsletter and present what I think are some of the best articles we have run. In this issue, I've included several articles from the years 1990 through 1993.

Contributions to *The Outer Circle* have been on the low side of late, so I have the extra space for these articles. So this is an ideal time for you to submit that article you've been working on.

The topic for the May/June 2014 Outer Circle is, as suggested by one of our readers, "The Outer Circle." No, not the publication, although comments are always welcome, but rather your personal Outer Circle. Some possible subjects to discuss: what activities are in your outer circle, has your outer circle evolved over the years as the other circles sometimes do, and so forth.

November 5 is the deadline for articles for the January/February 2014 issue. The topic for that issue is "The Only Requirement": Tradition Three in other words. Articles on Steps and Traditions One and Two are also especially welcome.

I look forward to talking to you again next issue.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I urge you to publish the remaining eleven parts of Freeman P.'s "Relationships and Traditions," part one of which appeared in the July/August *Outer Circle*. The series would be especially valuable, I think, for readers who haven't had the opportunity to understand the deep and practical value of the Traditions in the biggest challenge we SAs face—establishing and sustaining healthy, committed relationships (with anyone!). I mean, why am I working recovery? To discover the joys of being a truly humble member of our incredible fellowship! To experience a truly intimate relationship—warts and all. Thanks for your editorial service, and best wishes trudging the road.

Dave

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.

Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude in the Slammer

by Harvey A.

I can be miserable without being in prison and happy, joyous and free in spite of being incarcerated. How can that be? Someone once told me that the thoughts I have influence how I feel and that I can improve my emotional state with positive thinking. When I heard that, I was experiencing a lot of depression, anger, fear, isolation, loneliness, and other negative emotions. This was especially true around Christmas when thoughts of not being able to be with family made me feel miserable.

I mentioned these Christmas blues to an SAA pen pal several years ago and he suggested making a gratitude list of all the things I was thankful for when I felt that way. He said doing that could help me develop an attitude of gratitude that would make me feel better, so I tried it. It helped.

Over the years since that time, I have made a practice of listing my blessings. The spiritual community I belong to has a practice of listing answered prayers in something we call "Praise Reports" which we pass around and share with each other along with our requests for prayer. I've also made a practice of listing my blessings when I write letters. People respond more favorably to this than they do to unhappiness and complaining. Practicing this, doing a gratitude or thanksgiving inventory, improves my perception and attitude. When I count my blessings, answers to prayer and the way God has watched over me, it gives me peace, comfort and assurances that God cares. This brings inner joy.

There is an old hymn from the end of the nineteenth century that talks about counting one's blessings, written long before Bill W. or A.A. It always seemed like a nice song, but its message suggests a practical reality that it is possible to practice that can bring good results. Counting my blessings helps me to have a positive attitude in negative circumstances, some of the worst possible. If it will work for me, maybe it will work for you.

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,

I am new to SAA and just finished my First Step, I am struggling with Step Two and am feeling everyone else is making more progress than I. Am I doing something wrong?

—Desperate

Dear Desperate,

First of all, congratulations on finishing your first step! What a huge accomplishment! A reading many of us find helpful is "Identify—Don't Compare," found in the booklet Tools of Recovery page 31. I would suggest you start there. We work the steps with the guidance of our sponsor. Some complete a step more quickly than others and no two experiences are alike.

Your sponsor can be a great resource here. If you do not have a sponsor yet, this may be a great time to find one! If you do have one, are you following the suggestions given? Sometimes when we feel stuck in a step, it is because we are not willing to make changes. Our sponsors give us guidance based on their experience of how best to facilitate the spiritual growth in each step.

Coming to believe that a Higher Power can restore us to sanity is a very personal journey. The time that journey takes can vary widely, because we may begin the journey in various places. Some of us come in believing in a Higher Power. Others of us were far, far from that place. Some believed in a Higher Power, but only for everyone else. Some of us rebelled at the phrase "restore us to sanity." It is helpful to ask others how they came to believe, as well as study the SAA literature for guidance.

Blessings on your recovery journey,
—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

From Taker to Giver by Mike P.

What we do really matters

No longer putting lives in tatters

Reaching out to right our wrongs

Singing a humble, sincere, amends song

From each situation and person we can learn

To each situation and person we reaffirm

We take responsibility for the harm

We do it in a way not to alarm

Praying for strength and guidance

On our God we can have reliance

In our commitment to recovery have patience

And with God a willing forgiveness

Gratitude

by Carp

I felt cursed, alone. How could anyone possibly understand the despair and shame that haunted me? I was out of control, powerless, helpless. I was evil. My acts went against every value and boundary society had put in place. I longed for peace. The more I resisted, the more helpless I became. I felt that I had been weighed on honest scales and was found wanting. I did not choose this...did I? Why am I like this? These are the questions that haunted my dreams. My tear-soaked pillow would testify of my pain. My heart was in turmoil. Would I ever escape the grasp of this affliction? Would its hold on me last forever? Was death the only way out? Lord, please help me!

Then I was arrested. My life was over. I had been exposed. My crimes were no longer events that haunted my dreams and the dreams of my victims. They were front-page news that would bring my nightmares to the masses. Despair and hopelessness were at their peak. Yet somewhere deep within me, there was finally a hint of relief. Although it was only a speck, I could still feel it through all the fear and shame.

After two years in the penitentiary, I was moved to a different facility. I had no idea of the significance that move would have on my future and recovery. I met a man there who, out of the blue, told me of a class he facilitated on Sundays and invited me to join. He also had been arrested for a sex offense, and he gave me some background about his case. He was fearless as he spoke to me, a complete stranger, about the crimes that he had committed. I stood in awe as he bravely spoke of his offense. He gave me a book called *Out of the Shadows* by Patrick Carnes to read. As I began to read, tears came. Sex Addiction. I finally knew the name of the demon that haunted me. A tremendous weight lifted the very moment that I read the words "sex addict." That is what I was. Someone had written a book about me. There were others. I was not alone.

Sunday morning came and I went to the class the man had invited me to. It was an SAA meeting, my first of many. I sat and listened without speaking while men boldly spoke of the crimes that they had committed and the pain and despair they had suffered. For the first time in my life I experienced hope. "Are these extravagant promises?" At the time I certainly believed they were. How could all those promises be possible? But in time I learned that these promises were "being fulfilled...sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly," and I discovered a true passion, not for deviant, unhealthy behaviors, but for recovery. And most important, through hundreds of stories told by the courageous men at those meetings, I began to gain insight into my own deviant behaviors. Each story gave me another

drop of insight that made up the river that was my story. Long-forgotten memories began to emerge with each meeting. I had found the catalysts that have driven my addiction, and I now had a visible enemy that could be seen and confronted.

It has been eight years since my arrest. I have been free from all inner-circle behaviors for three years and now am living in a residential treatment program for sex offenders. This is a six-month intense therapy program designed to help sex offenders re-enter society as healthy individuals. On only my third group session, I was asked to give a full disclosure of my crimes and the events and experiences that led me to commit these crimes. I was a nervous wreck; although I had talked about my crimes in SAA and had done a Fifth Step with my most trusted sponsor, this was not the same. This was a professional setting with a therapist and eight experienced group members whose names I didn't even know. And on top of all that, this disclosure would be followed by, for lack of a better term, an interrogation. I was just a tad intimidated, to say the least. And so I admitted before God, myself, and eight complete strangers that exact nature of my wrongs. I could not hold back the tears as I relived the pain of my childhood and the pain I had inflicted on my victims. Everyone quietly listened, handed me tissues, and gave me an occasional word of encouragement as I poured all that I was onto the floor of that tiny, well-lit room.

I felt a tremendous relief as I finished my disclosure, and then braced myself for the next step—the hot seat: the time when everyone would have a chance to question my statements and try to connect my dots. It is typically a somewhat confrontational moment. But the interrogation never came; even the psychologist had no questions. It was over before it had even begun. I'm sure I'll have future "hot seat" moments, but they will not compare to the moment described.

I have, since that day, grown closer to several of the group members, including the therapist, and consider them kind of a home group; attending is typically the highlight of my day. I owe so much gratitude to the courageous men of our group. Without their years of experience and willingness to share their stories, I would not have been able to piece together my own recovery. I thank them and encourage them as they continue to carry the message to the still-suffering addict.

Gratitude as a Tool in Recovery

by Jim L

Gratitude has proven to be one of the most powerful tools in my recovery armamentarium. Simply defined as genuine, heartfelt appreciation for the gifts of God, including the relationships with the people in my life, gratitude has become for me a key ingredient in my recovery program.

I have experienced gratitude in two different ways. I am generally thankful for life, for met needs, and for friends and family. I am thankful for sunshine and rain. I call this passive gratitude. It is the backdrop against which I try to live everyday life. Although only a quick thought away, it is often not within my immediate consciousness.

Even more important for my recovery is what I call active gratitude. This is gratitude actively practiced and celebrated on a conscious level. It has become for me the centerpiece of the daily program prescribed in Steps Ten and Eleven.

In practicing Step Ten, I am reminded daily how grateful I am for a program that has taught me to keep short accounts – to admit willingly and promptly when I am wrong. What a stress-reliever! What a blessing!

In Step Eleven, when I meditate and reflect on my recovery journey, I am flooded with a sense of gratitude, and that immediately spills over into prayer of thanksgiving. It ramps up my conscious contact with God. I have discovered that I can even be grateful for the inconveniences and annoyances in life, because this program has taught me that in all things I learn and I grow spiritually.

For me, gratitude has proved to be an effective antidote against anger, resentment, fear, and other self-centered emotions. I cannot be angry and grateful at the same time. I cannot hold a grudge and harbor resentment and be grateful at the same time. When I am afraid, I am forgetting that I decided to turn my life over to the care of God. In effect, I am saying, "God, I don't trust you to take care of me." Gratitude restores my trust that God's will leads to the best outcome.

Additionally, the by-products of gratitude are many, but three seem particularly important to me. First, gratitude encourages me to be rigorously honest. We all recognize that honesty is a quintessential ingredient in the Twelve Step program. When I am actively grateful for what this program has done in my life, I am motivated to be mindful of the benefits of continued honesty.

Second, gratitude creates in me a desire to be accountable. Accountability affords me the ongoing opportunity to check my thinking with another person and to recalibrate as needed.

And, third, gratitude leads to surrender and genuine humility. I cannot purchase, borrow, or steal humility, but I can become humble when, in gratitude, I acknowledge that I am not in charge, that God is, and that I can trust God to meet my needs.

Although much more could be said about gratitude, I would simply conclude by saying that I am profoundly grateful that God has given me the opportunity through this program to choose to practice active gratitude. In doing so, I discover God's will every day. Gratitude makes me realize that God is doing for me what I could not and cannot do for myself.

The ISO is pleased to announce the approval of our newest piece of SAA literature:

“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 new 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 new addition to our SAA literature!

Dear Will

Submitted by the Men's Outreach Committee

Dear Will,

I am only on Step Four, and I have been looking ahead to the other Steps. I can already tell that I am going to have problems with Step Nine. For one thing, I don't understand the wording of Step Nine. It says "Made direct amends...except when to do so would injure them or others." Does the word "others" include myself? Some people in SAA have told me that it does, while others aren't so sure.

—Full of Fear

Dear FOF,

Will wants to congratulate you. You have already stumbled onto an issue that many folks in recovery have grappled with for a long time.

To begin to answer your question, Will suggests, as long as you are peeking ahead anyway, that you look at Step Five. The language of Step Five says, "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." In other words, Step Five includes a reference to ourselves. Will therefore believes that if Step Nine were generally meant to include ourselves, the language would be there also. However, Will, who never wants to be rigid about things, does not want to be rigid about this matter either. He thinks that a good rule of thumb is, "It depends; will you be the only one injured, or will others be injured as well?"

In other words, His suggestion is that a good point of departure is that you never approach the issue primarily from the standpoint of whether you may be injuring yourself. His concern is that if you start fixating on that particular question, soon that will be the primary focus of all of your introspections regarding the Ninth Step. As a result, you may end up not making any amends, as it will always be possible for you to find a way that you will be injuring yourself, even if it is only by losing sleep, even lots of sleep, over the fears of making that particular amends. Additionally, you may lose sight of how your amends may injure others if you are thinking too much of their effects on you. So, Will suggests that you put yourself last in these kinds of situations.

For example, Will remembers a friend of his who had stolen a bunch of expensive silverware from a neighbor when he was just a pup. He believed he was relatively safe in making that amends since he would just do it and

leave. However, his sponsor, a man much wiser than Will, suggested that he talk to his parents first.

Will's mother told him in no uncertain terms, "Don't you tell them about that." It did not take Will's friend long to figure out the reason. His parents, who still lived next door to the former owners of the expensive silverware, would have to face the brunt of the neighbors' anger. Will's friend thus determined instead that he would make that particular amends after he could make the financial restitution also, or at least after he could talk his parents into relocating to the Arctic Circle.

There are certainly times when you run the risk of being injured by making an amends. One of the best examples is an amends that might land you in prison when others are depending on you; this example is not original with Will, by the way. This would not be a good amends to make, and not, or at least not only, because you would be injuring yourself by doing so.

So Will suggests that you always consider how the amends may harm others first and put yourself last. Of course, it is always good to discuss your amends list with your sponsor as well before making any amends.

Will hastens to remind you that the main focus of Step Nine is not injury but amends. So when he considered amends and self, FOF, he found that there is one way in which the two undoubtedly came together in Step Nine, and that was in Will's making amends to *himself*. A good deal of what Will did—all those nights of getting little or no sleep or putting his freedom, not to mention his life, in danger, to give just a couple of examples—were things that Will would never have subjected another person to; yet he didn't hesitate to do it to himself. One might even say that Will was suffering from low self-esteem, and one would be right. Fortunately, the Steps did give Will the option if not indeed the mandate of making amends to himself. The amends was not so bad, but sometimes forgiving himself could be extremely difficult. Will does find that he is making some progress in that area, however.

Will hopes that this explanation has clarified matters for you. Now he suggests that you get back to your Fourth Step and worry about Step Nine when you get there. One of Will's friends once told him, "If a person, having just completed Step Four, is spooked about Step Nine, he does not have his eye on the road. He's looking at the ditch!" Agreeing with that statement, Will, who has never been noted for originality, has said many times, "the Steps are in order for a reason." So Will will close by wishing you the best with the rest of your Fourth Step and, looking ahead also, your Fifth Step as well.

—Will

Relationships and Tradition Two

by Freeman P.

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

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. (Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 79)

Once again we turn to our Green Book for guidance. What we learn is that there is no one in charge of anyone else. We are all "trusted servants" to one degree or another. "We discover that in SAA, no single member has authority over any other member, but that God has ultimate authority over us all" (p. 79).

Our Second Tradition builds stronger unity. Since I am committed to finding a solution, I take my own inventory. I ensure that I trust those chosen by the group to serve. I encourage where I once criticized. Acceptance of group conscience helps me learn humility and place principles above my personality. I ask "What is right?" instead of "Who is right?" (p. 79). Others can depend on me to be honest, even in secret, with the responsibilities I've been entrusted with. This ensures I won't have to minimize or avoid questions to save face during group discussions. Furthermore, I ask myself if I am commenting on subjects of which I have little or no knowledge. Am I helping mend or am I being derisive?

Often after I take inventory, I recognize in myself "the familiar methods of human power and control" (p. 80) that I once used, attempting to get my own way. This recognition allows me to learn to seek "the will of [my] Higher Power as expressed through the group" (p. 80). As I realize, love truly "is the force that guides [my] service activities" (p. 80).

As I seek to apply Tradition Two in my relationships, I have modified and expanded the definition.

Tradition Two (Relationship Form): For our relationship, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express himself in our family-relationship. Conscious decisions relating to the welfare of the family-relationship should come as a direct result of each person communicating his or her opinion.

Here again—just as in a group conscience—we recognize there is no boss. We are each here to serve the others to our best abilities. In families it is

important to include even the youngest members in the discussions so we may understand God's will and the full impact of the decision. At times members will disagree. As in Tradition One, we can disagree without being disagreeable.

It is important for me to realize I do not know what God's will for others may be. I recognize my desire to use power in an attempt to control others, so it is imperative that I "turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand God." Even though I may not know what God's will may be for other members, I do know what it is now. I know it is not God's will for me—or others—to manipulate, yell, scream, or be mean and abusive to God's children. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable. Period.

One aspect that I've come to recognize is my "want" to be right. This could be in regard to something as small and insignificant as which dish detergent is proven to clean the best. As I stand on my right-ness, or righteousness, I notice this causes conflict due to hurt feelings. My self-righteousness is driving away the ones I love. So I ask myself, do I want to be "right" and lonely all the time, or do I want to hold my opinion and be happy?

In all relationships I find three little words can heal a multitude of hurt and damage. "I am sorry." If need be, I make it six words by adding, "I was wrong." For best results, I add, "Please forgive me." Once I have apologized it is important to not repeat the behavior which caused the hurt feelings to begin with.

Through our family consciousness we become unified and establish the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. This way we may hold ourselves, and each other, accountable to the standard we've agreed upon. With our unified front, we let it be known to all what we stand for.

There are two prayers I say often in conjunction with Tradition Two, in order to help me recognize how significant my behaviors are and the impact they have on my family, my friends and myself: (1) "God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my spouse and others today"; and (2) "God, help me not to do anything today that I'd be ashamed to tell my spouse tonight."

If It's Possible Here, It's Possible There

by Joel D.

In 2012, I was excited to come back to my home group in Montréal, Québec after the Vancouver convention to announce that the next convention would be in Las Vegas. I was so grateful to be able to pass this on to the young fellowship where the majority of our members were still struggling to get some time in sobriety. During the announcements, I shared my great news. I thought people would be excited and start preparing for their first convention in sunny Las Vegas. Instead, I was met with laughter and comments about what a dumb and dangerous idea that was. I was devastated. I have never encountered this level of negative reaction from a group even when the convention was hosted in San Francisco or New Orleans. After the meeting, I called my sponsor immediately to check in with him. During the rest of the year, I generally did not mention or announce the convention at the meeting. If I did, I referred to it only as “the SAA convention.” *[Editor's Note: technically, it is the “ISO convention”; however, to change it here would misrepresent the author's direct quote.]*

I volunteered to represent our group at “the SAA convention” and was unanimously voted in as our group representative. I was anxious after having booked the plane tickets, made the hotel reservations, and registered for the convention. That was a lot of money to spend, but I told myself “it will be worth it; just wait and see.”

At the convention, I got to see friends I hadn't seen since the Vancouver convention in 2012. I finally got to meet one of the office personnel who had contacted me a number of times with regard to my address difficulties related to my book and pamphlet orders. It turns out he is a super-nice guy in person as well as on the phone. I had an amazing, fun, and memorable time with my sponsor. I went to morning meetings and heard touching stories from incredible people. I had heart-to-heart talks with friends, and met new people from the Las Vegas fellowship as well as people from across the country. I was not alone. I felt connected with our fellowship. I felt grateful. Being at the Sex Addicts Anonymous convention in Las Vegas, I was reminded why I introduce myself as a “grateful recovering sex addict.” I was, and still am, grateful to be a part of this fellowship, our fellowship.

At the closing brunch, a member of the convention committee shared a similar experience with hosting the convention in Las Vegas: why do you want to host an SAA convention in Las Vegas which is also known as “Sin City”? He replied, “I want people to know that they can get sober here. And if they can get sober here, how is it impossible to get sober anywhere else?” I thanked him after the close of the convention.

When I returned to my home group, a member asked me if I enjoyed myself at the convention. "I had a great time," I replied. He added that he would have had problems being in Las Vegas. I had forgotten to share at the meeting what I had heard at the Monday brunch. I find it easier to act out where I live than to act out at a convention of Sex Addicts Anonymous. At a convention I am surrounded by people in recovery. There are reminders that I am not alone and that I'm loved.

A Need for Love and Intimacy

by Anonymous, Iowa

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the July 1990 issue of the SAA newsletter, then called The Plain Brown Rapper, or PBR for short.]

As I write this I am in much pain and sadness. However, these are both parts of life and recovery. Today I am free to bear and express all of my feelings without having to act out.

I have been in recovery and twelve-step groups for a very long time now. I have good abstinence from all my addictions. It would appear that for years, looking at myself outwardly, I had "things under control": I did not drink, I did not use drugs, I did not use food or sex to control my fears, pains, loneliness, and so on. However, there was always something missing, an empty place way down deep in my guts. It chewed at me constantly; I was scared, real scared, of being real close to anyone. And especially a partner. I asked myself what was love and intimacy. I wanted to know, but was too scared to find out; I'd been hurt too many times.

I didn't know where to go with all of my shame. Guilt was so much easier to deal with. Yet the shame was keeping me from being close and intimate. What if someone knew about my past and my childhood? Could they still accept and love me? I was having a hard time with it.

When God began to remove the outward signs and symptoms, what was left were the inward fears and shame. Yes, I could get somewhat close and intimate with friends. That was safe. I didn't have to live with them. I could run if it got too scary or too close. In a partnership, I believe we are

much more afraid, naked, and exposed. The more I loved someone the easier it was to be hurt or misunderstood. That was the codependent part of me—my core beliefs.

All I knew before recovery was control, which wasn't love. It was fear, mask-wearing, and games, doing things to please others out of fear of being abandoned or punished.

I think of how “the first couple” was once described as being naked in front of each other. For years I thought that meant physically naked. Today it means something very different to me, that we're naked emotionally, spiritually, mentally; no secrets, nothing to hide. That we are free from all the lies, games, control, setups, get-evens, compromising of ourselves and of our dignity, to be loved and accepted. That we could share all our feelings, our sins, our shortcomings, and so on. That we are always in respect of one another and loved for who we are, not what we did or didn't do. That we were first individuals before we were a couple. And always our Higher Power was in the center holding us together in love, forgiveness, truth, and grace.

Thanks to God, recovery, and SAA, I truly know the gift of love. I can't earn it nor buy it. It is always a gift. My partner and I have this kind of love. We both will fight for, defend, and stand true to this love at any cost; we now believe and have experienced that real love will endure the test of time or space. We have experienced some real adversities. If our love had not been real and most of all free with depth and honesty, it would have died or been crushed.

We spent many months talking and sharing, taking some real scary risks, exposing our shames, guilts, resentments, feelings about our pasts, and fears of our futures. We were able to talk very openly about our sexualities, both positive and negative, without having to have sex to fix us or make things appear or go away. I had never been able to expose my sexuality so freely without judgments or fears. How freeing to love and be loved with nothing hidden, not having to barter for that love. To be free to be ourselves always, whether we agree with each other or not.

Today, saying to my partner “I love you” is a different kind of love. I don't have to fix him, only love him and encourage him to be the very best he can be; he does the same for me.

I would have never known what God had intended love to be if the fellowship had not encouraged me to take some risky steps. They were there whether I was failing or succeeding. No one shamed me, made demands on me, or told me I had to do anything. They gave me an example to fol-

low and gave me the dignity to choose on my own. They let me take responsibility for the choice if it was a poor one and rejoiced with me when it was a good one. I can't tell you how grateful I am, even in my pain and my loss, to be free to love and be loved.

I have learned hard lessons on control, mine and that of others. Power struggles were a real trip for me to overcome. Today I know and believe it may appear at times that I am being controlled at times in my recovery by others. Yet deep down I continue to be true to myself. I own what I think, feel, and believe today. It belongs to me; right or wrong, good or bad, I take responsibility for it all. I learned in SAA that trying to modify my behavior won't change what is inside: my core beliefs. I need to go to meetings and share what is inside to get it all out; to be honest with my partner in all things. If I do these things we'll both stay healthy and free.

Thanks to you all for loving me as I was and I am, to God who has become a friend, and to my partner who helped bring out the real woman, the soft, sensitive, gentle person, I have become. His love and support helped me toward recovery and freedom. God bless you all.

***“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!

Freedom from the Bondage of Self

by Steve L.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the March 1994 issue of the PBR.]

Sexual addiction is like being in a prison of self. As is the case with most prisoners, early life for me was difficult. Faced with having to survive in what I perceived as a hostile world of emotional deprivation, I found sanctuary by spending an overwhelming amount of time and energy thinking about self. I constantly fantasized about being somewhere else. I kept thinking about how I could maneuver and manipulate others in order to get what I wanted. The majority of my life, it seems, has been centered around constant escape from my own private prison.

One of my best escapes happened the day I discovered my drug of choice: sexualized adrenaline and excitement. Up to a point, it worked. With the help of my drug, I was able to escape manifestations of self, such as boredom, emotional numbness, and paranoia, to name a few.

As my physical dependence on my drug deepened, however, my solution became my problem. I engaged in antisocial behavior; acted in ways that hurt others; and tried to get others to take care of my emotional and sometimes even my physical needs. This escape from my moral and practical responsibilities led to more "self" in the form of guilt and demoralization. As I spiraled downward, I tried to escape self by finding more powerful versions of my drug, i.e., riskier and more dangerous acting-out adventures.

Finally I hit bottom and sought help from other addicts. They helped me begin to take the Steps which resulted in my getting more honest and connecting with a power greater than myself. Inevitably, I found a measure of freedom from my own self and from my drug. I was able to abstain one day at a time from my worst self-destructive behaviors.

And yet, I often surrendered my more easily identifiable addictive behaviors only to continue as an emotional dry drunk. Why? One reason is because I was scared of the rigorous honesty that a life of moral inventory requires. Second, I was afraid of the intimacy that goes along with twelve-step work. Helping others went against the grain. I developed resentments against those seeking help. At first I thought to myself, "Why should I give to others, when I am still feeling deprived myself?" These inevitable resentments were good. They became challenges for me that led me back to taking more inventory of myself.

For unless I confront the basic foundations of self and deal with them, sober or not, I stay a miserable prisoner; self-contained in my own solitary confinement. I can't get out, and I won't let anybody in.

SAA is a spiritual program because even after I have been here for a while, I still cannot escape the bondage of my own self. Just as I could not get physically sober alone, neither can I get emotionally sober on my own unaided power.

It is part of the cunning and baffling nature of this disease that causes me to forget what it used to be like. Once I get even five minutes of sobriety, it is easy to fool myself into believing that I am smarter now and therefore do not need to work the Steps.

Therapies and other approaches to self-discovery can help me get honest. However, for a sex addict such as myself, attempts at personal growth, isolated from step and service work is like trying to put out fire with fire.

What I seek is some kind of Power greater than myself which will help me bypass my limited trapped thinking. I found that power by taking the treatment for my self-centered condition—the Twelve Steps.

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.

Coming Home

by Ginger

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the January 1991 issue of the PBR.]

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I first want to thank you for a home, for a place to come when there was no place left to go.

I want to thank you for a place to come when all lost hope in me, and no one else wanted me. You have given me a place that is safe to share my loneliness, my fears, my happiness, my sorrow, my shame, my quiet, and you've continued to love and accept me.

I thank you for holding my hand when I needed to cry, for handing me some tough love and truth when I was feeling pity for myself and wanted to run.

Thank you for showing me that life and recovery are a process of ups and downs, ins and outs. You are teaching me to flow with them one day at a time.

Thank you for showing me a God who loved and understood me long before I could accept it. Because of your love, I have accepted God's love.

Thank you for teaching me about the phone. You helped me to pick it up and call you when I wanted to hide or had fears of acting out. Talking to you gave me the hope to go one more day.

Thank you for showing me that no matter how I feel today, I would not die from it nor did I need to act out in any way to escape the feelings. You taught me that "this, too, shall pass," and I could and did live through it with love and support from you and my God.

Thank you for the acceptance you had from the start. Because of it I am learning to accept myself and know that I am a good person who is lovable and capable of loving.

Thank you for telling me I no longer had to be perfect and no longer had to continue to fail trying to be; that all I had to do was to put my best effort in what I was doing and accept that as my best for today.

Thank you for teaching me that pain was one of my best teachers; that in the pain I grew and became stronger.

Thank you for showing me that I didn't have to do everything in one day, for I had the rest of my life to do it; that you'd always be there to help.

Thank you for showing me I didn't need constant approval from you to be okay with myself; that if God and I approved of me, that was enough.

Thank you for showing me a way to find healthy sexuality for myself; that no one person could tell another what was healthy or not; that we give each other the right of dignity of choice with no control or demands, just love and support to explore and experience and be responsible for ourselves.

Thank you for helping me to believe I had rights and to set good boundaries that weren't selfish or self-centered; to always have respect for your rights and boundaries.

Thank you for giving me time for it has been my biggest healer. To keep myself helping others helps myself and we both grow in time.

Thank you for showing me that there is not always an answer to every question, nor are there always solutions to all problems. But acceptance is the key to all things.

Thank you the most for giving me enough self-love to begin to take a risk at moving into a relationship and find freedom to be myself as well as allowing freedom for the other person. Today I know what true love and true forgiveness are, but most of all I know how to share that with another in freedom.

Thank you for helping me find myself and to begin to live and love without fear, shame, guilt, demand, or control.

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.

Great Lakes Board Member and Alternate: BoardGL@saa-recovery.org
Intermountain Board Member and Alternate: BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
North Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
Northeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
North Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardNP@saa-recovery.org
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At Large Board Member: BoardAL@saa-recovery.org

Great Lakes LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComGL@saa-litcom.org
Intermountain LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComIM@saa-litcom.org
North Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNC@saa-litcom.org
Northeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNE@saa-litcom.org
North Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNP@saa-litcom.org
South Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSC@saa-litcom.org
Southeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSE@saa-litcom.org
Southern Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSP@saa-litcom.org
At Large LitCom Member: LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

The Outer Circle Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees has established an e-mail box which may be used to register comments, positive or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff: OOCChair@saa-recovery.org

ISO Office Mailing Address

PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902 or 800-477-8191, Fax: 713-692-0105

Website: www.saa-recovery.org

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org

Office Staff

Executive Director: Joe H. director@saa-iso.org

Associate Director: Chris F. chrisf@saa-iso.org

Information Technician: Jonathan C. webmaster@saa-recovery.org

Information Technician: DJ B. djb@saa-iso.org

Administrative Assistant : Philip A. philip@saa-iso.org

Administrative Assistant : Vann V. vannv@saa-iso.org

Prisoner Outreach: Klaus P. outreach@saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle Staff

Literature Editor: Mike L. toc@saa-recovery.org

ISO News Editor: Chris F. chrisf@saa-iso.org

Design & Layout : Chris F. chrisf@saa-iso.org

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