

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Carrying the message of hope to the still-suffering sex addict since 1988

Plus:

- CONVENTION REFLECTION
- MIXED-MEETINGS
- THE GOD OF OUR UNDERSTANDING
- FINANCIAL UPDATE

GRATITUDE





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1988, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on page 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

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Share *The Outer Circle* with your recovery friends in SAA and encourage them to submit their experience, strength, and hope (see page 31).

FROM THE EDITOR

Universal, encompassing gratitude

BY ALEX B.

THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*No matter what
story you bring,
we'd love to
share it with our
community.*

It's fitting that I am starting my service as editor of *The Outer Circle* with an issue that focuses on gratitude. Since my first days of living in recovery, the concept of universal, encompassing gratitude has grounded me through many difficult moments.

One of my first friends in program taught me to find gratitude in the smallest things — in the fact that the sky is up and the earth is down; in the fact that I live in a world with trees and clouds; in the fact that I am alive and breathing oxygen in this moment. If I find what I am grateful to have been given, no matter how small, I know that I can find my next step in recovery.

This issue is being put together just after the international convention in New York. We hope you'll read the reflection from an attendee on page 17 and think about joining us in person in 2024!

I also want to encourage you to share your stories through *The Outer Circle*. This newsletter connects you to your sisters and brothers in SAA, bringing together folks through our experience, strength, and hope.

The next issue, in September/October, will be centered around the idea of "Spiritual Awakening." No matter what story you bring, we'd love to share it with our community.

I'm very excited to be sharing this issue with you, and I'm grateful for the chance to be of service. Here, as before, my gratitude grows.

In service,

Alex B
Editor

FROM THE DIRECTOR

From Convention to the Conference: Many chances to serve!

**BY TRACY R.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ISO OF SAA, INC.**

*Every member
has a voice in
their group,
which elects a
group service
representative to
carry that voice to
their area, which
elects an area
delegate to carry
that voice to the
ISO Conference.*

The 2023 ISO Convention is now behind us, and the 2023 ISO Conference lies ahead. New York did a phenomenal job hosting the convention. I spoke with several members – veterans and first-time attendees – who told me how wonderful it was to gather together in recovery while there. I hope many more will be able to join us at next year's convention.

Although convention attendance was up from last year, we still fell short of the contracted room minimum, resulting in additional costs. We will be able to provide further information on the financial impact of the convention in the next issue.

While the convention serves as a nexus for personal recovery, the conference functions as the group conscience of the entire SAA fellowship. Every member has a voice in their group, which elects a group service representative to carry that voice to their area, which elects an area delegate to carry that voice to the ISO Conference. In this way, decisions are made which affect the entire fellowship. By following this process, we remain faithful to 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.").

Tradition One states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on SAA unity." Together we can continue to grow stronger in our individual recovery and collective service. I have heard from some members that there is a sense of disconnection between the ISO and the groups. I would like to see that sense fade as we continue to join together in our common solution – a spiritual awakening resulting from working the Twelve Steps of SAA, bringing about recovery from our addiction – and in carrying the message of this solution to the sex addict who still suffers.

DEAR GRACE

Is SAA sex positive?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

Sex-positive and sex-negative can be seen as two extremes, but people have nuanced beliefs between them.

Dear Grace,

I'm hearing a lot about sex positivity and it has me wondering if SAA is sex negative since we limit behaviors as part of abstinence. Can I be sex positive and a recovering sex addict?

Greetings,

While SAA takes no official stance on sex positivity, some members have found it helpful in developing a new understanding of sexuality in recovery.

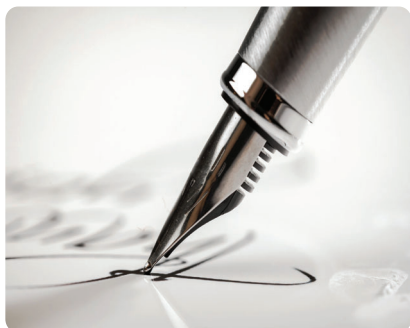
"Sexuality is a fundamental part of being human. It can bring great pleasure to our lives. And yet, non-addictive sexuality has seemed elusive for us. One of the tragedies of our addiction is that we may never have learned to enjoy our sexuality in a healthy way." (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 70)

Sex-positivity views sexuality as a healthy and positive aspect of human life. It emphasizes the importance of sexual education, communication, and empowerment, and seeks to reduce shame and stigma around sexual behavior. On the other hand, sex-negativity is often used to refer to the view of sex as something that is inherently bad, dirty, or sinful. It's often associated with shame, guilt, or fear surrounding sexual behavior. The opposite of sex-positive is not necessarily sex-negative. Sex-positive and sex-negative can be seen as two extremes on a spectrum of attitudes towards sex, but just like everything in life, people have more complex or nuanced beliefs between these extremes.

At first glance, sex positivity and sex addiction recovery may seem incompatible. Since we remove some sexual behaviors in our lives, this may seem at odds with the principles of sex positivity. However, the two can coexist and even complement each other in certain ways.

One member shared:

"When my therapist said that he was 'sex positive' my initial reaction was fear. I was afraid he would judge me and think that SAA is sex shaming, when in actuality, through SAA I have let go of my shame. My addictive behaviors were all I knew and they kept me in a perpetual de-



structive cycle. It's been through abstinence that I've had the freedom to reclaim my life and explore healthier sexuality. I realized that SAA gave me the tools I needed to embrace sex positivity in my personal recovery and how I relate to other fellows."

One of the main goals of sex positivity is to empower people to take responsibility for their sexual behaviors and make choices that are in line with their values and goals. By embracing sex positivity, those of us in recovery can learn to view our sexuality in an empowering light. We can explore sexual behaviors that align with our own ideas of healthy sexuality, rather than engaging in compulsive and destructive behaviors.

As another member put it:

"My sexual acting out and acting in were my means of coping. Sexual behavior was my way of defusing my sensory overload; it was a release. Sex was not the problem. Reframing my thoughts, beliefs, and the role of sex as a coping mechanism is the foundation of my program. Through my healing in recovery, I examine the role of my sexual activities as it relates to my expectations of what sex is do-

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 (grace@saa-women.org) receives.

**Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

ing for me. In recovery, the tools of the program have offered me connections amidst others like me for healing my whole self."

Sex positivity might help us overcome shame and stigma. As many of us addicts have experienced, shame can be a powerful barrier to recovery, often preventing people from seeking help and receiving support. A sex positive outlook can help recovering sex addicts feel more comfortable and supported by promoting acceptance and non-judgmental attitudes towards sexuality.

Sex positivity is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Much like defining our abstinence, what may be empowering and positive for one person may not be the same for another. It is important for us to work with our sponsors and other program fellows to develop a personalized and tailored approach to sexual recovery that is right for each of us.

It is important to note that sex positivity is not a solution or a cure for sex addiction. Sex positivity can be a helpful tool for individuals in recovery, but it shouldn't be seen as a substitute for working the steps in SAA.

**In service,
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 Committee

God of Our Understanding

BY JEFF W.

When I first walked through the doors of a twelve-step program for alcoholism, my temporary sponsor — a friend for years with more than fifteen years of sobriety — told me not to be discouraged by the spiritual aspects of the program. She knew that I professed to be agnostic and may have a problem. Most organized religions do not have a place for me at their table since I am gay.

When I arrived at SAA the following week, I was prepared to make anything that was greater than myself my Higher Power. I was told that I could even go outside and hug a large tree; if I could not pull it out of the ground then it too could be my Higher Power. With blind faith and an open mind, I made the group my Higher Power, since they had more experience and sobriety than me.

This continued until I got a sponsor, and we started to work the steps. My sponsor knew that I had put my Higher Power on hold for forty years and was running on self-will. He was gentle with me, and gradually I came to believe in a Higher Power of my understanding — one who had unconditional love for all. My Higher Power was working through my sponsor, and I was finally accepting and on my way.

Every time I hear the words, “God of my understanding,” I smile and reflect on this gift. Being sober for a year in March 2023 has given me many opportunities to appreciate my Higher Power daily. My relationship with it continues to evolve, and the joys of the program continue to reveal themselves. I would tell anyone to begin where you feel comfort-

able and grow over time. Life is a journey, and recovery is offered from your Higher Power, one day at a time.

When I read or say the Serenity Prayer, I find great depth and wisdom. Each word seems so perfectly placed. I use this prayer during emotionally challenging moments. In the throes of my addiction and acting out, while self-will was in the driver's seat, my Higher Power was relegated to the back. Now, I surrender daily to my Higher Power and let him drive and lead the way. Boy, is it a relief!

If I am open and looking, I can see examples of my Higher Power working through others. Sometimes a share is exactly what I needed to hear on that occasion, and I am reminded that my Higher Power is present. I am very grateful for the "God of my understanding." I have learned much by working the steps and being open to new ideas and experiences. If someone would have told me that I would be having a

laughed. I came to SAA to get sober—not for a spiritual experience.

But getting sober was only the beginning. The gifts of recovery reveal themselves over time. I have received much more from the program than I could have ever imagined: Peace plus serenity, as well as the unconditional love of my Higher Power. Through working the Twelve Steps, I came to forgive myself and also to love myself.

The God of my understanding also teaches me, "In order to keep it, you must give it away." I readily attend meetings, share often, participate, involve myself as a trusted servant, and sponsor others. My Higher Power gives unconditional love to all. Giving back to the fellowship seems like the completion of a huge cycle, leading to a whole new way of living. ©

Host cities still needed for future conventions!

The ISO is still in need of host cities for future conventions. Local groups, intergroups, and areas are asked to step up and place a bid so we can continue this beloved recovery activity! To learn more or to place a bid, email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.



Grateful for the Journey to SAA

BY CARMELITA B.

I've been a twelve-stepper since February 1973. During those 50 years my gratitude has increased.

In my first program, they told me to try it for six weeks. In less than that, my sense of humor returned, and I still have it. After three years I got a sponsor. She asked me; I was too proud to ask her – even though we had many nonprogram things in common. That woman with less formal education than me helped me develop a strong spiritual relationship with my Higher Power. Mind you, I'd had sixteen years of parochial education, but with her help I learned the difference between religious and spiritual.

My second program began in 1990. I learned how to select a sponsor using my Higher Power's help instead of relying on my own criteria. Instead of selecting from two who also belonged to my first program, I was led by "HP" to select someone at the meeting whose shares consistently offered me guidance. She later introduced ritual into my Step Five: We sat in a library carrel in a quiet location, she said a nondenominational prayer, and I began, notebook in hand. She didn't look shocked, and she didn't shame me; she just listened. When I finally finished, she had us close with another nondenominational prayer, and then we hugged. I felt cleaned out – better than any confession I'd made in my own denomination. Later on, when she heard my angry remarks about another member, she had me make an appointment with the one I resented to try to work things out. We two

enemies met, but both of us denied any problem. Then I told her what she did to annoy me in not the most friendly terms, and that allowed my enemy to loosen up and tell me what I did that annoyed her. Despite our emotional interactions, our honesty came out and we even hugged as we bid farewell. I learned then that making amends can be messy, but with honesty, we can move on.

My third, a sex addiction program, began in 1995. I learned to see the similarities between my work relationships and my romantic/sexual relationships. As I didn't give in to desperation, I became more selective with my job options; the saying "No" in my first and second programs now extended to closer encounters than service or volunteer work. I realized that I was a rescuer to my adult children, so I went through withdrawal from rescuing. (I thought I'd die!) I also realized that good parenting and rescuing were not synonymous. It gave me hope that maybe one day I could have a healthy romantic/sexual relationship. My third realization was that my sugar addiction was a trigger for me to act out.

The miracle that occurred while practicing that program was that I became more comfortable sitting next to men. Former sexual abuse had so traumatized me that until that program, I could not. I'd thought I never would. I also realized that

backbiting, instead of confronting, endangered my recovery, so with the help of my Higher Power, I discussed my concerns with the people in charge instead of behind their backs.

I learned many things along the way to prepare me for this program.

My sponsor in my second program recommended that I attend my fourth program, which had helped her with her anger. So I did in 1998. By then I had moved from central Illinois to Chicago, learned I had ADD symptoms and was willing to get additional professional help and learn how to accommodate the way my brain processed information. I got a sponsor who continues to make time for me and listen, just like her sponsor did. I learned that my current liabilities of fear of failure, fear of making a mistake, and rescuing kept me from taking risks to enhance my life.

This journey is how I came into SAA in early 2008 through several twelve-step back-doors. I learned many things along the way to prepare me for this program. Since S-programs are scarce, when I traveled and needed a meeting, I went to SAA if none of the other meetings were convenient. To my surprise it was similar to the other sex addiction program, just with different terminology. For instance, SAA has

middle and outer circles, which in the early days of the other program were nonexistent.

I've learned to replace my inner-circle behavior with healthier and more rewarding outer-circle behaviors. For instance, I replaced unrewarding work with the vending of items dear to my heritage for nine years. I found my passion is to create – to write, act, sew, paint, garden, cook, improve my health, plan. At the ripe young age of 70, I took the risk of online dating. This time I was more confident in myself – and surprised.

Overall, I'm grateful for face-to-face meetings, which I missed during the COVID-19 pandemic, some of which still have not returned. I miss the use of more senses than hearing – touch, sight, smell, and taste. I'm grateful for telemeetings that don't mute across the board because my landline makes it difficult for me to share. I'm grateful for video meetings that keep the technologically inept in mind. I'm grateful for retreats and conventions that not only offer a variety of ways to pay, but also ride shares since I no longer drive.

Most of all, I'm grateful that my Higher Power gave me the courage to attend, for the members that made me feel welcome at my first meeting in each of the programs, and for the gifts I have received along my journey so that I can love myself more as I continue to “peel the onion” of my layers of recovery. ☺

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- » TOC Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org
- » Submit literature to LitCom:
saa-recovery.org/submit
- » Submit to *The Outer Circle*: saa-recovery.org/toc
- » Find a meeting: saa-recovery.org/meetings
- » More on page 30

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

ISO to Hire Accountant

The International Service Organization of Sex Addicts Anonymous, Inc. (ISO of SAA), a non-profit organization, seeks an accountant reporting to the Executive Director (ED).

The accountant is responsible for general accounting operations, ledger accuracy, and timely and accurate financial processing and preparation of monthly and annual financial statements. The accountant will also assist the ED with the general direction as well as the daily operations of the organization.

Candidates for this position must have unrestricted access to the Internet.

For more information, visit:

<https://saa-recovery.org/news/job-announcement-accountant/>.

Members are requested to share this announcement in their meetings and with others who may be interested.





Mixed Meetings Saved Me

BY CONNIE B.

I went to my first SAA meeting more than twenty-five years ago. I was in another Twelve-Step program and had been in therapy for a while, too. Once I gave up substances to deal with my feelings and problems, I felt pretty good about my life. I had close friends that I could trust and loved being around. I had fun at parties and other gatherings and went to meetings regularly.

My social life was good, except for the fact that I hadn't seriously dated in fifteen years. If I was honest, I knew why—I had lost my soul in my last relationship, and I swore I would never let that happen again. I talked to my best friend about it and she suggested SAA. I started going to women's meetings. I was ambivalent about it, thinking I really didn't need meetings because I didn't have any out-of-control sexual behaviors, and I figured I would eventually meet someone and all would be fine.

So, I stopped going to meetings. I was accustomed to just drifting along in life and avoiding any situation where I felt out of control. As a result, I was totally separated from the truth of my insides. I could not see myself. However, I now know the truth, because I finally hit a bottom in sex addiction. I felt that truth so deeply that I was crawling on the floor in pain. It was the bottom I needed, and one I hope never to repeat.

I learned at a young age that I could not trust my dad to protect me from the inappropriate behaviors of my uncles. When we visited in Kentucky, I would strategize ways to get across a room without my uncles acting inappropriately with me. My dad never spoke up for me or my sister. He was a kind man, but very passive.

At a very young age, I had responsibilities that no child should be given. It is still hard for me to trust that anyone has my back, especially men. Yet I still longed for someone to love me. That longing turned into a deep emptiness that I wanted someone else to fill, so the few times I got into a relationship, I totally lost myself in it.

The first time I lost myself, it was also my first sexual relationship. I was nineteen years old when I met him, and we stayed together for seven years. I compromised myself sexually—and in many other ways—to keep the relationship going.

One day I realized how unhappy I was. I felt like I had awakened from a bad dream. I realized how absent I was from all my relationships. My parents were separated and my mother worked until midnight, leaving my twelve-year-old sister

alone most of the time, and I had never called and checked on her or spent time with her. I was estranged from my friends and I had dropped out of college and lost any sense of what I wanted for my life. This was addiction, even though I didn't understand that at the time.

I can only believe it was the grace of God that got me out of that very dysfunctional relationship. However, I knew if I stayed in Chicago, I would go back to him. So I moved to Florida. I managed to avoid any sort of relationship for the next fifteen years because I was afraid of losing myself again. There were times I would impulsively act out sexually by picking up a guy at a bar or other social setting. I think it was mostly to prove to myself I wasn't asexual but, needless to say, they were very empty experiences.

After I got sober from drugs and alcohol, I made a lot of friends in the beverage program and decided I didn't really need SAA. I began dating a friend in Sex Addicts Anonymous. I never thought I would lose myself again because I was sober, but I did. I still had not addressed that emptiness inside. Again, I wanted a man to fill that hole in my gut. I kept pushing for sex even though I knew he was a sex addict and alcoholic and was trying to stay

sober. He told me I was triggering him but I kept pushing. As a result, he ended the relationship. That was my bottom. Without substances to use, I felt that desperation in a way I never had in the past, like someone was pulling my insides out and stepping on them. It took a long time to get through the pain and shame of that but, it convinced me I needed SAA.

**My friend kept telling me
that I needed to go to
mixed meetings and try to
understand men instead of
judging them.**

I realized I was a very lonely, afraid woman who hadn't the slightest idea what men were really like because I had avoided and judged them all my life. My friend kept telling me that I needed to go to mixed meetings and try to understand men instead of judging them. So, I finally started going to a well-established and strong mixed meeting with my friend and a couple of other women. From the beginning, my heart started opening when I heard the men share their stories. They were different, but the result was the same: pain and fear. They were hurting just like me. I

saw the blame and expectations I put on men. Over time, I began to see the men in that meeting as my brothers and could share my deepest pain and fears. They made it possible for me to forgive myself and the men in my life. They opened my heart to working the steps in a way I never had before.

When we are very young and do not feel safe or taken care of, our first longing is for a person to care for us and make us feel safe. That is why I believe we are set up for sex addiction at a very young age. Looking at that gave me compassion for myself and for the men and women that shared in meetings about their own mistakes, fears and longings. The pain we experienced goes deep, but so does the healing if we let it. I was eventually able to be in a loving relationship for three years. It ended, not because he wanted to get away from me, but because I saw some issues that we needed to address that he was unwilling or afraid to look at. As difficult as it was, I chose to take care of myself, and ended the relationship. It broke my heart and his but, I now know that I am capable of having a healthy, loving relationship—thanks to my brothers and sisters of Sex Addicts Anonymous. ©

A Letter from the New York ISO Convention 2023

Scott S. from Ottawa, ON

Welcome to New York and my first convention!

As a grateful recovering sex addict, twelve years into the program, I am now questioning why it took me so long to get to a convention. I can certainly create an extensive list of reasons, but none of them would hold much water upon examination.

The two main reasons that this was the right time for me are the destination was within driving distance and, having been involved for the past year with an ISO committee, I had extra incentive in the opportunity to meet face-to-face some of the people I have encountered only in virtual settings.

What is the convention like? Well, if you've been as privileged as I to have attended a local one-day or weekend event hosted by your intergroup or area, with multiple presentations and workshops, you have a good idea of what the convention entails.

Beginning Friday evening and running all day Saturday and Sunday morning, the agenda was packed with presentations on different recovery topics, opportunities to attend one of several meetings, or to meditate or merely to interact with members in informal settings. I also heard some wonderful speakers, including stories (like Step One shares) from courageous souls in our fellowship.

It was a recovery-packed weekend filled with learning, laughs, some tears, but certainly plenty of experience, strength, and hope. Like my own local meetings, it felt like home. I left New York renewed in my resolve to keep pursuing recovery, one day at a time.

I'm grateful for new connections, new insights, and increased awareness about ISO and all the services and resources available to the fellowship. And I am certainly grateful in knowing that while this may have been my first convention, I know it will not be my last.

I encourage all members to attend an upcoming convention (contact the ISO for 2024 information) – and don't wait twelve years like I did! ☺

Grateful for Second Chances



BY MIKE P

For me, gratitude is a perspective. You can choose to be grateful for not only blessings and accomplishments, but for lessons learned through adversity and poor choices. Like a great many of us, in order to learn how grateful I was, I first had to comprehend what I had to lose. While in active addiction, I dragged myself through concepts and precepts that most people experience only in nightmares until I hit rock bottom and lost everything.

I am now on the waking side of my nightmare, but as with all dreams, there is that feeling of palatable confusion left over upon waking. How much was real? How much was forced imagination? And most importantly, will I return to that nightmare of addiction?

Five months into recovery while at a residential treatment center, I began to feel closing in on me the awareness of never being able to return to my life before the addiction. Never again seeing my children was becoming not only more of a possibility, but a reality that I was beginning to face as law enforcement continued to investigate my past actions. A couple weeks before finishing my time in treatment, I was tasked with writing an essay entitled “Saying Goodbye to being

a Daddy.” That assignment broke me down to a point where I was open to understand the depth of all I had lost to my addiction.

So where am I now? I have returned home and am grateful to work at rebuilding what I have lost.

Choosing to live a life of gratitude has allowed me to reconnect with others, to rebuild self-worth, and move past the shame that has gripped me for so long. I am living the culmination of all I have learned, and in a sense, my life now is a daily adaptation of that essay, but with a much more challenging title: “Saying Hello to Being a Healthier Dad.” I am grateful for the opportunity, as I now possess wisdom that has

been gained from experiences I would not wish upon my worst enemy.

I am grateful that I do not need to live under the bondage to my past actions. I am grateful to learn that in spite of all my failings, I am not a failure. I am grateful that I have far more to offer the future than my past.

And while enjoying more of life in my outer circle, I find myself believing the promises, and believing *in* them. I not only found the road back home free from a fear of unknown roadblocks, but I am so much better equipped to face anything that does appear – just now as a much healthier husband and father. ☺

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

DEAR WILL

The importance of gratitude to recovery

BY WILL

*A fellow in
recovery
explained to me
that gratitude
is more than a
feeling. Gratitude
includes and
requires action.*

Dear Will,

A fellow in my home group sends out a text message every day where he shares a gratitude list. I can appreciate the effort he is making to connect with others in recovery, but I'm not clear on how writing out a gratitude list helps us in our recovery. His gratitude list includes things like a beautiful sunrise, laughter, his new puppy, or a good meal. So, I'm curious, what's the point in writing a gratitude list?

Dear Gratefully Curious,

Like you, I have heard many people talk about being grateful in recovery and sharing about that by way of gratitude lists. Early in my recovery, it was suggested that I try writing gratitude lists. It was difficult. I was still acting out, hadn't gotten a sponsor, and wasn't sure I wanted to work the steps. It was hard to even conceive of being grateful for anything because I still saw myself as a victim, others as abusers, was full of shame, struggled with basic honesty, and continued to try to tackle this problem on my own and on my own terms.

A fellow in recovery explained to me that gratitude is more than a feeling. Gratitude includes and requires action. I took this to mean that if I am truly grateful for something then I should show it. Sometimes I can do this by expressing gratitude, and other times I can demonstrate it. Feeling good about something someone said to me or did for me was part of the equation and there was another part that involved how that feeling informed and impacted my behavior. This helped me understand gratitude in a different way and it helped, but my gratitude seemed to always be contingent on what others said to me or did for me. I think I was

actually caught being thankful and not experiencing gratitude.

Later on, once I got a sponsor, I learned that gratitude wasn't confined to how I felt and how I behaved. Grateful could be a word that described me, not just my thoughts, words, and actions. Grateful can be a state of being I can arrive at and live in but only if I take specific recovery action. As I worked with my sponsor, took responsibility for my sexual sobriety and my recovery, worked the steps, and became of service to others I was able to become grateful. I was grateful not just because of what others had done for me but recovery had changed how I behaved, how I saw things, how I experienced life, how I treated myself, and how I treated others. Recovery was

allowing me to be grateful. When I was in my addiction, acting out — around recovery, rather than in recovery — it was difficult to feel grateful and behave gratefully because I was not grateful.

Today I am grateful because of what the Twelve Steps and SAA and my Higher Power have given me. So to your question: When I am working my program, a gratitude list becomes a to-feel list, a to-do list, a to-accept list, a to-surrender list, a list of things and experiences I get to have and appreciate as long as I continue to work my recovery. A gratitude list can exist because of our recovery.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to*

Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.



STORIES OF SERVICE

Who, in their right minds, wants to do service?

BY A NOMCOM
MEMBER

*Being of service
and doing service
has brought me
into contact with a
wonderful mix of
people.*

Fellowship, service, sponsorship. I could not have imagined when I came into recovery how important those three words were going to be in my life. All three have been and continue to be the foundation from which I get to be sober.

I needed a fellowship that had people who came before me to show me the way, and with whom I could identify. I needed to do service to rebuild my fragile self-image and to be able to give back to others the gift so freely given to me. I needed a sponsor to guide me through the steps and who helps me see the truth.

Service has also made me true to my word. On the nights, especially in winter, when I didn't want to go out in the rain and cold (we get a lot of both in the UK), I remembered that I had a commitment to keep. As a wise person once told me, "In early recovery we train our feet to go to meetings, so that when we don't want to go, our feet still take us."

I have found too that service keeps my programme fresh. On every sober anniversary I reflect on what I am going to do for the coming year to shore up my programme. The answer is often some sort of service.

Being of service and doing service has brought me into contact with a wonderful mix of people. No matter whether I am making coffee at the start of a meeting or sitting in a Board meeting, there is always something I can learn

from others. It has also opened the door to understanding and patience. Neither of these traits being natural to me! I am constantly awed by the people I meet.

I also have to remember, though, that whilst I am lucky enough to be able to be of service both in the UK and internationally, the greatest gift of service I will ever receive is to stay sober.

So, if you want to get sober, stay sober, and give back to the fellowship, without which none of us would be sober today, come and join us. No matter how small your contribution you can make a difference. From tiny acorns, giant oaks grow.



Stories of Service inspire others to be of service. Send your 250-300-word story to toc@saa-recovery.org.

FROM THE BOARD

Strategic Goal: Fostering a Culture of Service

**BY BJ M.
BOARD MEMBER**

*We value your
input. Email the
board at*

board@saa-recovery.org

I recently had an opportunity to reflect on my personal journey within the SAA fellowship which began nearly 20 years ago. As part of this exercise, I was utterly amazed by the impact that numerous fellow addicts had on my own recovery, as well as the recovery of others. Their commitment to service and being available to help other suffering sex addicts allowed me to fully engage in this program and to return to being an appropriate and productive member of a local community and of society in general.

Acknowledging for myself that I came into this fellowship alone, broken, afraid, and incredibly selfish, my immediate goals were to address the utter chaos of my personal life and hopefully to minimize the numerous negative consequences of my actions. I expected quick answers but was afraid that I could not find them, nor that I would be accepted within this fellowship.

I quickly discovered individuals, both men and women who were willing to be vulnerable, honest, loving, and committed to walking alongside me on my path of recovery. As a byproduct of their selfless service, I received a blueprint of how I could also begin to live a life in integrity by being of service to other suffering sex addicts. I learned that to reinforce my sobriety I must freely give what I have received!

Now, my purpose in recovery is to live a serene life of service to other sex addicts through sharing my personal experience, strength, and hope. Numerous opportunities to impact the SAA fellowship at the

ISO NEWS

local and international levels exist when I freely give my individual talents, resources, and interests.

By fostering a culture of service at the ISO level, I can further put into practice Step Twelve and help and encourage others to get involved in service as part of their recovery program.

To get involved in service within the ISO, submit a service résumé and to be willing and ready to make a commitment to service. Various positions are available and offer the opportunity to serve in several different roles. Each committee can benefit from the many experiences and of their members.

Board Actions

April 2023

- Tracy R. promoted to Executive Director from Acting Executive Director.

May 2023

- Motion approved regarding inventions and creations by ISO staff.
- Motion approved limiting remote work to state of Texas.
- Motion approved to allow executive director to approve SAA medallion logo on non-SAA websites and publications.
- Motion approved regarding hotel and proposal for 2024 convention.
- Motion approved regarding contract for hotel for 2023 Conference meeting.

Host City Needed for 2025 Convention

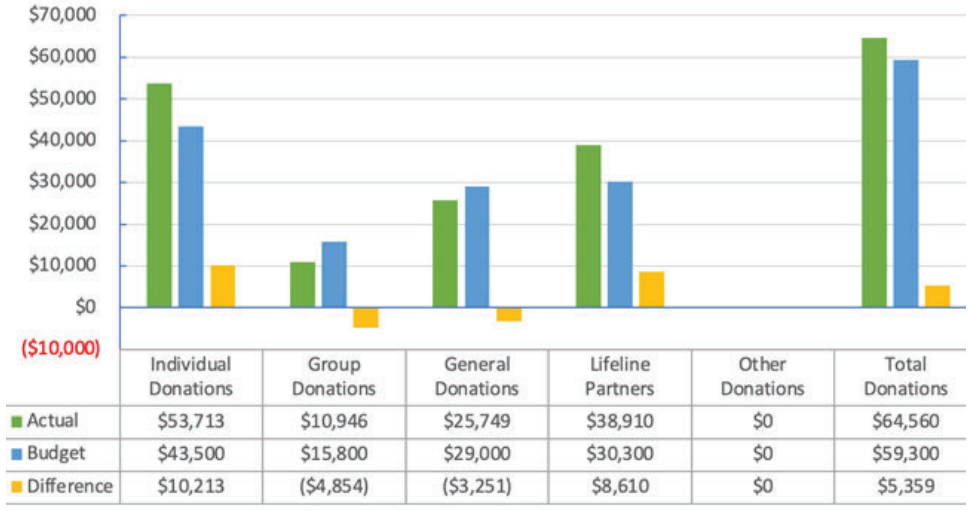
The ISO is still in need of a host city for its 2025 convention. Local groups, intergroups, and areas need to step up and place a bid so there will be a convention in 2025. To learn more or to place a bid, email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.

Don't Skip Step Twelve!

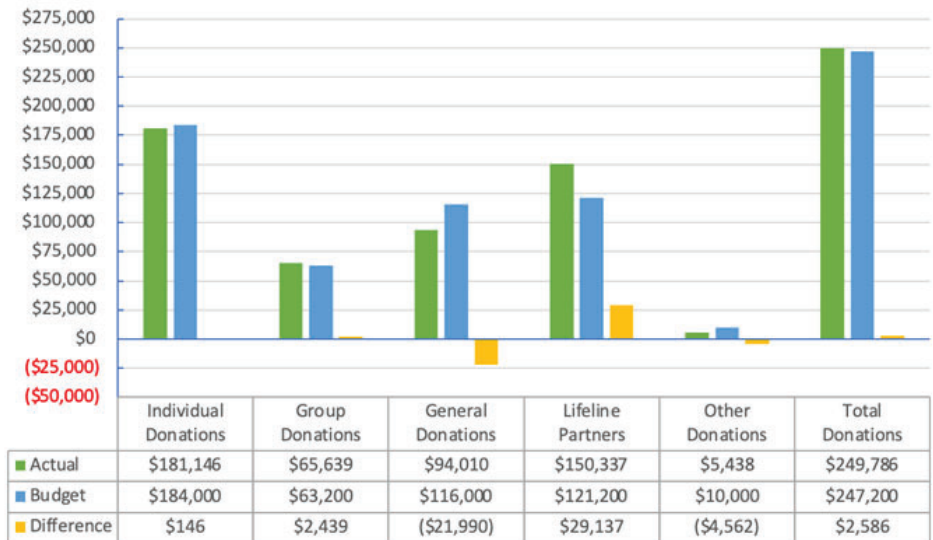
A great way to work Step Twelve is to participate in international service. To learn more, visit <https://www.saa-iso.org/svc/>. Opportunities exist for a variety of skill sets, even yours! Fill out a service resume today.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

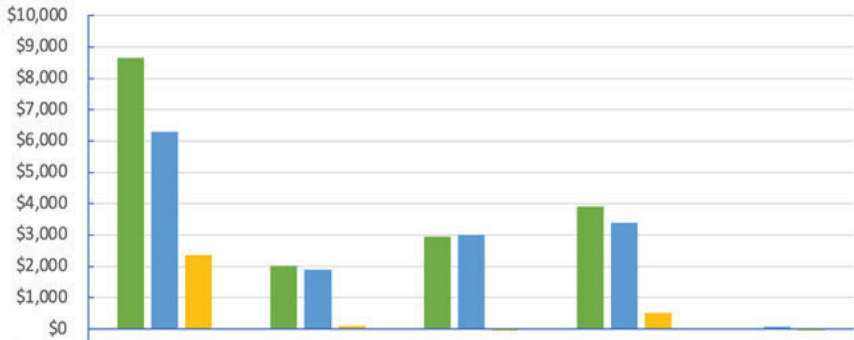
April 2023 Donations



YTD Donations (to April)



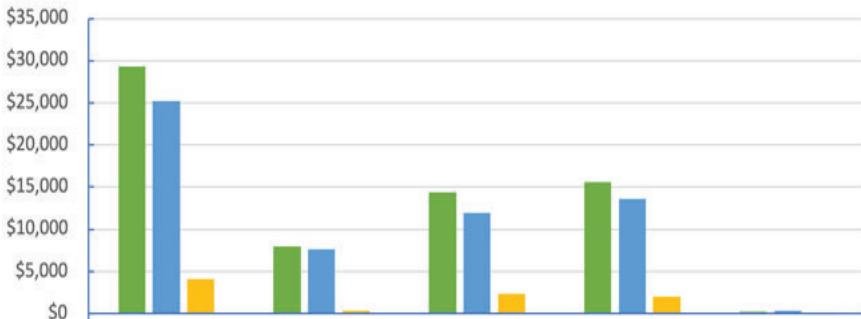
April 2023 Sales



(\$1,000)

	Green Book	Voices of Recovery	Pamphlets & Booklets	Chips, Medallions, Key Tags	Other
Actual	\$8,663	\$2,009	\$2,946	\$3,918	\$29
Budget	\$6,300	\$1,900	\$3,000	\$3,400	\$75
Difference	\$2,363	\$109	(\$54)	\$518	(\$45)

YTD Sales (to April)

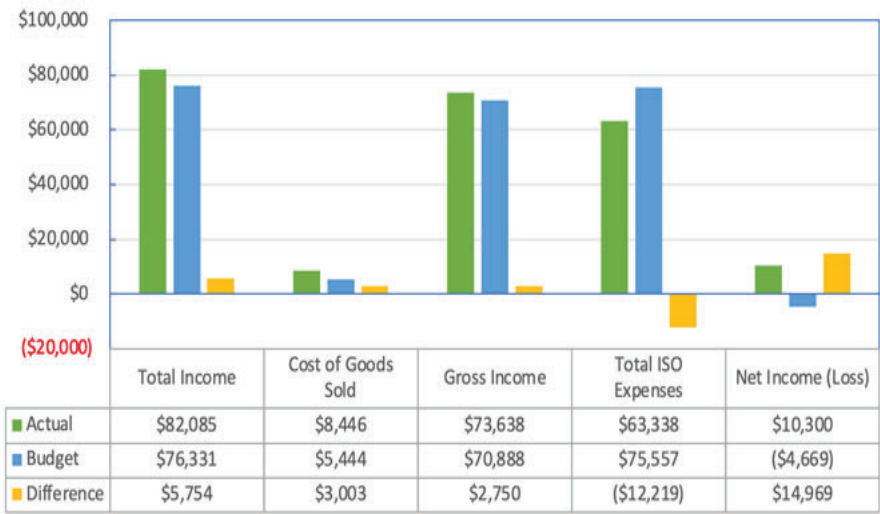


(\$5,000)

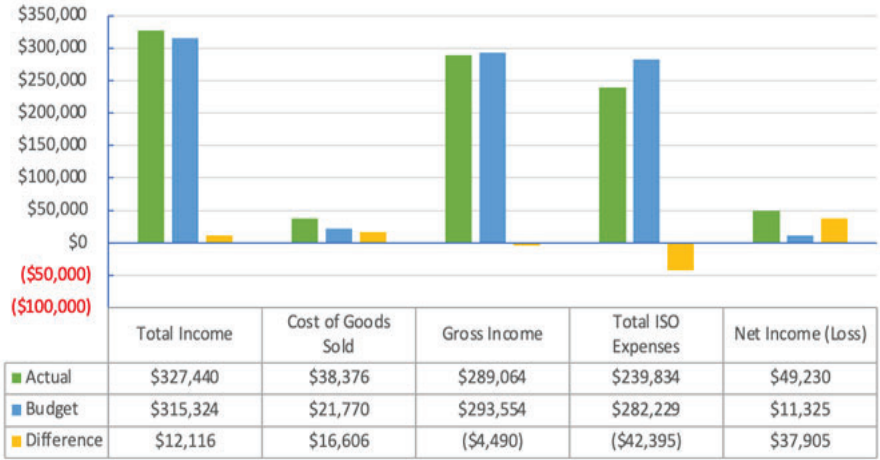
	Green Book	Voices of Recovery	Pamphlets & Booklets	Chips, Medallions, Key Tags	Other
Actual	\$29,275	\$7,952	\$14,355	\$15,574	\$246
Budget	\$25,200	\$7,600	\$12,000	\$13,600	\$300
Difference	\$4,075	\$352	\$2,355	\$1,974	(\$54)


FINANCIAL SUMMARY

April 2023 Net Income



YTD Net Income (to April)





Total donations were above budget for April, due to an increase in individual LifeLine donations. Donations have been declining since January, but this increase keeps the year-to-date contributions just slightly above budget.

Sales were above budget for March except for pamphlets which were slightly below budget. Sales remain above budget for the year-to-date.

Net income for April and for year-to-date is above budget. Total ISO expenses are below budget in part because we have one less staff than we are budgeted for. We will be hiring a new staff person soon, which will increase expenses to be more in line with the budget.

Convention income information should be available by the next issue.

Tracy R.

Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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The Outer Circle

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Administrative Assistant: Evan E
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Board

Bill I; BJ M; Bob H; Bob L (Chair); Carl D;
Eddie N; Jim L; Karen S; Les J; Michelle W;
Wayne K

Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Cara A; Chris D; David C; Deb W; Jim P; Juan K;
Maud D (Secretary); Mike K; Rachel R (Chair);
Ruth; Stephen P; Zach R., Alex B (TOC Editor).

Calendar

The most up-to-date committee schedule and information about joining any ISO committee can be found at saa-iso.org.

Prisoner Letter Writing Program

Writing and sponsoring prisoners by correspondence continues to be the mainstay of the ISO prisoner outreach program. In addition, the Prisoner Outreach Committee has encouraged members of the fellowship to consider the possibility of starting SAA meetings in a nearby prison. As a result of the pandemic, a new possibility has emerged—namely, meeting by video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference can open new opportunities to carry the SAA message of recovery into prisons. If interested in learning more—whether you are in the free world or in prison—contact the ISO office by telephone (713-869-4902), email (info@saa-recovery.org), or postal mail (PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community)

The Twelfth Step says that, “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” At the ISO level, this is done in part through the work of the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee. If you would like to work the Twelfth Step at the ISO level, contact PhillipB@saa-iso.net or call the ISO at 713-869-4902.

LifeLine Partners

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship.

Don't worry if you're not a writer. Tell us your story and we'll do the rest. If we have any questions, we'll contact you.

There are three ways to submit your story.

- First, you can submit online at saa-recovery.org/toc. This is the easiest for most people.
- Second, email toc@saa-recovery.org. If possible, include a copy of the release form below.
- Third, mail your submission, with the release form, to ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Requested deadlines and suggested topics are below. Email toc@saa-recovery.org if you have any questions.

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

The Twelve Steps of SAA

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.

The Twelve Traditions of SAA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

