

THE OUTER CIRCLE

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

PLUS:

- MEETING MIRACLES
- THE CORNERSTONE
OF RECOVERY
- SELF-LOVE AND SELF-
CARE

SPIRITUAL Awakening





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.

© Copyright 2022 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle* may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way without the express written permission of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

* Registered Trademark Sex Addicts Anonymous and the SAA logo are registered trademarks of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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 34. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 35.

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

CONTENTS

Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 6 Dear Grace
- 18 Dear Will
- 20 Living in Sobriety
- 22 Stories of Service
- 24 From the Board
- 28 Financial Summary

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 26 ISO News
- 30 Calendar
- 34 Contact ISO
- 35 Submissions
- 36 Twelve Steps
and Twelve Traditions

Feature Articles



- 8 Cornerstone of Recovery



- 10 Pagan in Recovery



- 12 Expressing Spiritual Awakening



- 14 Monday Night Miracle

» Bonus:

- » Job Announcement: 7
- » Poem: 21

Share *The Outer Circle* with your recovery friends in SAA and encourage them to submit their experience, strength, and hope (see page 35).

FROM THE EDITOR

Spiritual Awakening

BY ALEX B.

THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*If you feel inspired
to share your story,
remember they
can be submitted
online ([https://
saa-recovery.org/
news-events/saa-
newsletter/](https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter/)) or via
[toc@saa-recovery.
org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

What does it mean to have a spiritual awakening? Will it be like an alarm clock, breaking us out of a state of slumber and opening our eyes to a new dawn? Or will it be more like a gradual emergence from a period of darkness, where we see the rays of light shining through? Or somewhere in between?

Whatever the means, we have been told that our spiritual awakening is the endpoint of this program of recovery. Step Twelve describes it as “the result of these steps” — not one of many results, but *the* sole purpose, and the ultimate goal. We will know our journey through the other steps has reached its apex when we begin to see ourselves awakening and walking forward to our new lives.

I, like many others, have found a deepened connection with my spiritual side as part of my recovery journey. When I am in nature and surrounded by the beauty of natural creation, I find myself inspired to contemplate my place in an enormous universe that I will never comprehend. This expansiveness of mind and belief drives my focus on recovery into high gear.

The personal reflections in this issue tell the story of spiritual awakening from a range of perspectives. They give us models to follow and test cases to examine. I hope you find them helpful as you walk the path of happy destiny. If you feel inspired to share your story, remember they can be submitted online (<https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter/>) or via toc@saa-recovery.org.

In service,

Alex B.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Speak: We are listening!

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

*The Conference
provides the
opportunity for
the fellowship
to speak and be
heard by the ISO
trusted servants
and committees.
For the ISO to hear,
the groups need to
speak!*

The 2023 annual meeting of the ISO Conference is fast approaching. Soon, area delegates, board members, and literature committee members will gather to listen to and act upon the voice of the fellowship.

This meeting provides the opportunity for the fellowship to speak and be heard by the ISO trusted servants and committees. This works as the groups elect Group Service Representatives (GSRs) to represent them at their area assembly where area delegates are elected to represent the areas at the Conference. This process was designed to enhance communication between the groups and the ISO; the more participation at the local level, the better the process works.

At present, of the 2,226 registered groups, 503 (26 percent) have GSRs; of the 87 areas, 60 (69 percent) are registered as assembled, and 8 (9 percent of all areas, 13 percent of assembled areas) have registered delegates. These numbers indicate the lack of communication between the groups and the ISO.

For the ISO to hear, the groups need to speak. I ask every group to elect a GSR and every area to elect a delegate and send that delegate to the annual meeting of the Conference in October so the true voice of the fellowship can be heard.

We all are the fellowship of SAA and every voice counts. The ISO exists to help the groups carry the SAA message to the sex addict who still suffers. The ISO does this by providing an international website, publishing SAA literature; translating SAA literature; coordinating outreach to prisoners, women, the LGBT community, and others; providing information about SAA to the public and to professionals – and more!

These services require support from our members. They require financial support and they require volunteer effort. Please be part of providing the solution to the countless suffering sex addicts by encouraging your group to participate in the ISO, by stepping into service yourself or encouraging others to do so, by sending your donations, or by simply continuing to show up and carrying the message that recovery from sex addiction is possible.

DEAR GRACE

The one and only way?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

Listening with an open mind can give us the opportunity to avoid certain mistakes others have made and adopt ideas that have been successful.

Dear Grace,

I'm confused. Our Green Book says that there is no one right way to work the Steps and to get sexually sober, but I've attended several different meetings where I've heard that if you don't do things in just a certain way, you are not going to be able to get abstinent or stay abstinent. How can this be?

Befuddled

Dear Befuddled,

Twelve-Step fellowships are based on the knowledge and experience of those who have come before. Listening with an open mind can give us the opportunity to avoid certain mistakes others have made and adopt ideas that have been successful. It is human nature to think that our way is the only way. However, there isn't an "only way."

Our book is very clear on this point: "There is no one correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20). Remembering that we all come to SAA seeking a solution to our problem of sex addiction, we can learn to respect that there are many paths on this road to recovery and our task is to find the one that works for us.

Let's look at this question, using the Serenity Prayer as our guide. "God, grant me the serenity to:..."

1. "Accept the things I cannot change." Sometimes strong personalities can dominate a meeting and make it difficult to work the program in a way that makes sense to everyone attending the meeting. Remember that the only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior (Tradition Three). Those who seem controlling and opinionated have a place in SAA too. We find it best to follow the guidance of our sponsor in how we work our program.
2. "Change the things I can." If your meeting is costing your serenity, perhaps you can look for meetings in other towns, or attend telemeetings

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.*



or web meetings. There are many styles of meetings and you may meet addicts using a different format from your local meeting. Once you have achieved a measure of recovery in SAA, perhaps you and another trusted member can start a new meeting in your area or even suggest a study of the Twelve Traditions in your own meeting.

3. "And the wisdom to know the difference." We have found that it is important to work the Twelve Steps of SAA in order to receive relief from our addictive sexual behavior, as well as find peace and serenity in our lives.

If you find yourself with conflicting thoughts about what you're hearing in a meeting, remember: Difficult situations in SAA are a time of reflec-

tion and inventory (Step Four). Seeking guidance from a Higher Power, sponsor and other members of the fellowship will give you the wisdom to know if this is something you can or cannot change.

Blessings in your recovery,

**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

Job Announcement: Temporary Part-Time Administrative Assistant Needed

The International Service Organization of Sex Addicts Anonymous, Inc. (ISO of SAA), a non-profit organization, seeks an Administrative Assistant. This person will help with normal day-to-day operations of answering the phone, responding to emails, and helping others in the office.

This person could telecommute from a location other than Houston, TX. This person must have unrestricted access to the internet. This person may be required to travel to Houston on a periodic basis. This position reports to the Associate Director.

For more information and information on how to apply, please email info@saa-recovery.org.



Spiritual Self-love and Self-Care: The cornerstone of recovery

BY JOHN G.

I was a sex addict before I learned that I have an inclination to self-destruct. It seemed that whenever I felt hopeless, I would reach for the panic button, and my go-to action was suicide. I have lost track of how many times I chose this path — so much so that the last time I was hospitalized, I was put into a ward where patients are addicted to self-harm. In my estimation it was a wake-up call.

In active sex addiction, I acted out day and night to the point of exhaustion. I poured all my energy and attention into getting the next hit, neglecting myself in the process. It hit me hard when I came crashing down in the pit of Hell. Suddenly, I was aware that if I didn't get out of my addiction, I would end up dead from disease, starvation, and self-harm so that the pain of my addiction would stop.

I've heard it said that, "You can't wait until life is not hard anymore before you decide to be happy." My life was hard enough without the issue of sex addiction, since I suffer from mental illness, fibromyalgia, and other physical illnesses. The use of drugs and alcohol made the suffering from fear, paranoia, and stress even more pronounced. Despite the hardship that I've gone through, I began to hang on to my hope that my Lord and Saviour, my Higher Power, had "plans to prosper me and not to harm me, plans to give me hope and future," according to the old Spiritual Scriptures. I decided that I no longer wanted to kill myself, since I really just wanted to live a quiet life. I made up my mind to live a happy, meaningful life, despite the fact that I am a sex addict.

The hardest part was putting day in and day out getting sober. I went through a hell of a withdrawal, but I took care of the little boy in me who just wanted to be loved and cared for. Knowing that God loves me unconditionally, I knew that he would not turn his back on me when I needed him. I needed help from my Higher Power; I also knew that God helps those who help themselves first.

As an act of helping myself, I decided that I would dedicate myself to self-care and self-love. Some of the things I do as self-care should be as automatic as breathing. My self-care includes regular routines with sleep, meals, personal hygiene, and recovery. Since I am aware of my disease's tendency to beat myself up, I practice being gentle and kind to myself to recover from this aspect of my addiction. My biggest challenge yet is overcoming being introverted, as I am a very shy and reserved person. I cannot be shy if I want to connect with my friends in recovery. I have to make a point of talking to somebody each day, including my sponsors. In SAA, people come and go. To be honest, making new friends in the program is kind of iffy ever since Covid, but I have made a few close friends and sponsors whom I can rely on at any time.

Forgiving myself is another challenge to my recovery. I owe myself amends for all the harm I've done to myself, and I can only be as forgiving of others as I am forgiving of myself. Being imperfect is allowed. When I harm someone, I immediately follow Step Ten, admit that I was wrong, and make amends to them. As someone who was raised in the complexity of a traditional Catholic Filipino family, my living amends for myself involve forgiving my family for their shortcomings, so I can let go of my resentments. I know that they mean well and that they just want the best for me.

I know how hard it is to break an addiction. I know how hard it can be to stop the pain. I know how hard it is to go through withdrawal, to not act out in the face of temptations – the cravings, the euphoric recall. I know that it's all a fantasy! I know how hard it is to struggle with sex addiction along with mental and physical illnesses. But, when I count the blessings in my sober life, I notice that I am calm, relaxed, and I am in the moment. I surrender early and I surrender often to my Higher Power, and I keep coming back for more blessings.

I'm sober today because my daily routine includes self-care and lots of self-love. When I practice this routine, that's when I know that God is helping me. How do I know that God loves me? Well, I heard once that I should assume that God loves me unless he says so otherwise. So far so good! My faith in my Higher Power simply means knowing that he will not let anything happen to me beyond my ability to handle. ©



BY GIF

The last night of my spiral several weeks before my first face-to-face SAA meeting, I decided that the best use of my time was to go meet an acting-out partner a few towns over. I went through all the familiar motions, but as I went through my pre-acting-out ritual something felt strange. Through it all I felt a nagging feeling to turn around, this gentle whisper that would bubble up. Yet, I persisted. I even at one point pulled over and connected a brake line that had become unplugged. Simultaneously, something deep inside cried out for me to change my mind and go home. But I was hooked and I needed my fix.

Later, I would recount all these moments as I broke down and found my bottom. Sitting at home in emotional, spiritual, and mental pain, with my head in my hands, I mustered the willingness to admit my life was unmanageable and it was all related to my relationship to sex. When I look back at that night, I see hope. I see my goddess lighting my path, giving me gentle nudges to make different choices. I used to rationalize that it was the will of my Higher Power that I act out. So it was a substantial step to enter recovery and consider that my goddess, who loves me unconditionally, didn't see my risky inner-circle behaviors as divine. This felt to me like the first step of unraveling the pervasive nature of my brain disease to rationalize my acting out.

I have learned to lean into the loving care of my Higher Power, as I understand her.

I was raised in an Abrahamic religious household. However, by the time I was a pre-teen I felt an affinity with my goddess and knew that I was one of her devotees. This belief system interrupted my process when I entered recovery, as I found myself extremely

defensive towards the prayers I saw in the Big Book. However, the men in the room who greeted me had something I wanted, and where I was not ready to concede my spiritual practices, I was willing to understand that perhaps there was something different I did not know.

When I finally decided somewhere around a year or so of regularly attending meetings that I needed to work my steps and find a sponsor, I turned to my Higher Power for clarity and I was pleased to find her leading me to a workshop being held at a neighboring meeting. I found a sponsor that day and in the bathroom – the only private space in the workshop – she insisted I say the First Step prayer with her. The whole experience felt so detached. I didn't mean those words; I was trapped in a paradigm of spiritual betrayal using words that were not aligned with me and the relationship with my goddess that I had, at this point, been cultivating for fifteen years.

Unfortunately, I chose this sponsor like I had chosen my romantic relationships, which is to say I found the first person who fit the rough idea of what I wanted and was willing to engage with me. It's no surprise that my relationship with my sponsor ended sourly. It gave me perspective, however. As time went on, I became more specific about what I sought, and, sure enough, Sponsor Number Two appeared. Once again, things fell by the wayside rather quickly. Then, on a night four years after that first face-to-face meeting, I was desperate. I attended a midnight queer meeting and cried uncontrollably that night at my frustrations and failures in recovery. My grand sponsor was on that

call, and he virtually introduced me to my current sponsor. This relationship was different, as it began with me asking my Higher Power to help me find the sponsor I needed, not the one I wanted.

And I did. From our initial conversation, I was clear about my struggles with sponsorship and recovery and I committed to be rigorously honest if she would help me. When it came time to pray, I wrote my own prayers. After reading the literature I would talk things out with my sponsor about what was important to include, and I built my own pagan rituals around my recovery journey. Since then, I found a new layer to my spiritual program in a meeting where I am exploring the use of my divinations with fellow sex addicts. I am learning that my spiritual condition and sobriety directly impact my energy flow and manifestations.

As a result, I feel closer than ever to my Higher Power. I feel supported and guided, and I have met many fellows in the rooms that have worked as beacons of my Higher Power's unwavering support to keep me growing along spiritual lines. Whether these signposts manifest as sponsee pep talks that help me as much as them, or a phone call when I am on the edge of imploding, my Higher Power, my fellows, and my tools have helped me weather these urges. When I feel the need to reconnect my brake lines to keep going toward oblivion, I give myself pause.

I will never have all the answers, nor will I recover perfectly. However, I have learned to lean into the loving care of my Higher Power as I understand her. ☺



The Expression of Spiritual Awakening

BY JIM L.

In the study of the twelve-step program in general and *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (the SAA Green Book) in particular, the importance of spiritual principles becomes very obvious. In fact, the word spiritual occurs more than 100 times in our basic text and reference to spiritual principles occurs more than forty times.

My capacity to receive and ability to apply spiritual principles in my everyday life grows out of the spiritual awakening referred to in Step Twelve: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and practice these principles in our lives.”

For this reason, it behooves me to give thought to the spiritual principles undergirding the twelve-step program and how they might be manifested in my life. In the Green Book we read, “Honesty, willingness, courage, humility, forgiveness, responsibility, gratitude, and faith are just some of the names we give to the spiritual principles that gradually come to guide us in our lives” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 61). The text reveals many more principles, but these offer a good starting point for consideration.

A quintessential principle is honesty. Without frank honesty, my recovery is handicapped from the very beginning. The Step Four inventory depends on honest reflection. The Step Eight list of persons we have harmed requires rigorous honesty. Honesty is a must.

Willingness is a spiritual principle that is necessary at every step of the program, even though the word willing appears only once in the Twelve Steps. Especially important in Step Three, the direction is to be willing to turn our own will over to the care of God. The spirit must be willing to undergo the thorough self-examination of Steps Four, Five, and Six, so that the intention of Step Seven is clear.

Without frank honesty, my recovery is handicapped from the very beginning.

The courage to ask for help appears at the onset of the program. It is found in an SAA room the first time, and again and again when it is pressed on in working the SAA program of recovery, even when it seems daunting. I am willing to take responsibility for my own actions, which alone requires honesty

and courage. In addition, I must forgive those who have offended me and accept my part in whatever happened.

I have found gratitude to be particularly important, and it seems to be one of the principles that takes practice, as it usually develops gradually. By consciously, intentionally, and deliberately practicing gratitude, I find that it changes my mindset from negative to positive, and it positions me in proper relationship with my Higher Power. It allows me to grow in faith, coming to trust that God has my best interests at heart.

In short, the spiritual principles of the twelve-step program are a combination of gifts I receive as I work the program and specific characteristics, such as gratefulness, that I gain as I actively practice program spiritual principles. The result is thankful contentment and concern for the wellbeing of others, validating the statement in the Green Book that “what we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 61). We learn a new way of living! ©



Monday Night Miracle

BY MARK D.

Editor's note: The names in this story have been anonymized in keeping with the Twelfth Tradition of SAA.

In a California prison near Sacramento, for ninety minutes each Monday evening, some thirty SAA members gather together, in-person, to talk about their addiction to destructive sexual behaviors. For some, this might not seem like a big deal, but for those of us who are currently incarcerated this is a near miracle.

The work to make these nights happen started in 2011, when a group of incarcerated people approached the administration at Mule Creek State Prison, in Ione, California, and asked permission to hold an official group. The refusal was quick and direct; the administration didn't want people with issues surrounding sexual behaviors to get together because they were of the opinion that we would spend our time in group trading stories like baseball cards.

With the availability of the Green Book, though, all of that changed. Incarcerated people pushing for space and time to address destructive sexual addiction now have a Twelve Step curriculum to rely on. This, combined with a different prison administration that actively supports rehabilitation and recovery, made a weekly group possible. According to Fred T.,

“Nothing like this program has been available before in my prison career. I am so thankful that this program exists.” David S. said, “I am not sure that I would be able to do the work necessary to deal with my issues if I couldn’t do it here.”

As you might imagine, meeting inside a prison to talk about addiction to sexual behaviors is scary. Those who attend these meetings inside could be considered living examples of the definition of brave.

“Can you relate to the warm, peaceful sensation that washes over you when you know you’re doing right and you have found the perfect place to sit? That’s exactly how I felt when I attended my first SAA group.” —Scott F.

Attending meetings inside prison walls is both sad and very, very fulfilling. On the yard, our SAA group is one of the most requested groups available, is consistently full, and has a waiting list of people wanting and needing to get in. We have also heard that our thirty members meeting each week makes up one of the largest in-person meetings on the West Coast – not just in a prison, but one of the largest SAA meetings, period. This gives cause to celebrate the large attendance of the meetings, while also mourning

the necessity for the meetings to happen in the first place.

On the first Monday of each month, we read the step for that month. Then we go around the room and share about how that step lives in each individual’s life – or not. The right to pass is always honored.

On the second Monday, the chairperson or a volunteer reads from the Green Book, *The Outer Circle*, or some other addiction-specific material, and each member is given a chance to share how that reading lives in their life.

On the third, fourth, and (when necessary) fifth Mondays, we listen to someone read their “First Step” or another selected reading, followed by each group member being given the opportunity to speak on how the subject for that meeting lives in their life.

In our meetings, we do our best to stay away from crosstalk or language and descriptions that can trigger either ourselves or others in the room.

The difference on the yard is palpable. For some who may have hidden large parts of themselves for years (if not decades), they now have an opportunity to open up

and actually deal with their addiction to dangerous and destructive sexual behavior. Participants have taken to stopping each other on the yard and giving appreciation for shares. Other incarcerated people, who may have carried deep-seated shame about the behaviors contained within their commitment offense for extensive periods of time, now have an opportunity to find, examine, and deal with some of the causes and consequences of their actions.

According to Cameron B., “We are only as sick as our secrets, and once I got over the fear of speaking about my issues, I found that I was more able to face my demons and wasn’t as sick as I thought I was.”

Additionally, there are a number of group members who have discovered through their work in a different Twelve Step group that they have some issues around their sexual behavior. With the advent of an SAA group on the yard, they now have the ability to more fully address those issues in a safe and nonjudgmental space.

And, maybe best of all, sponsorship is starting to happen – all because we have the Green Book, support from an organization

outside prison walls and an administration that believes in change.

On the yard, our SAA group is one of the most requested groups available, is consistently full, and has a waiting list of people wanting and needing to get in.

This building of fellowship, confidence, and compassion among group members is wonderful to experience. Being in a room filled with other sex addicts who are pursuing healing, witnessing fellow sex addicts overcome their fear, and opening up by telling their story while allowing themselves to be vulnerable – often done in front of people that they have lived with for years while hiding their addictions – is humbling and beyond amazing.

We call our group “Step Into Action,” in part to help with confidentiality for those group members who might be squeamish about attending a group designed for those living with addictions to harmful sexual behaviors. As you might imagine or have experienced, any acknowledgment of

damaging sexual behaviors in a person's past can expose and intensify deep feelings of shame around those behaviors, not to mention the anger, disgust and sometimes deep-seated resentments from those who may have been on the receiving side of someone sexually acting out. Often these resentments are extremely amplified in prison and work to keep those living with addictions to sexual behaviors silent and sick. In an effort to acknowledge and begin to deal with these often very strong emotions and resentments, we spend some time working with new members on how sacred and important "confidentiality" really is.

If you are on the outside and you would like to sponsor an incarcerated person, please contact the ISO office and do so. Many incarcerated people now have access to limited email which can make the whole process easier to engage with.

The immediate and long-term impact of outside sponsorship can be immeasurable in the life of someone behind prison walls. From the other side, the satisfaction that comes from helping another addict who is suffering through their recovery can be that one thing that makes it all worthwhile.

If you are currently living out in the world and would like to work with a group of incarcerated people inside, please contact a prison near you and find a way to volunteer. This process involves a background check and very specific authorization from the prison administration, and is possible even if you are formerly incarcerated.

The reward of facilitating change in the lives of others is beyond measure and can help any of us fulfill the Fourth, Ninth, Tenth, and Twelfth Steps. ©



DEAR WILL

Faith and SAA

BY WILL

*Despite our
well-intentioned
efforts, many
of us continued
to struggle and
felt isolated
from others and
disconnected
from our faith.*

Dear Will,

I am newer to SAA and am not quite sure if SAA is where I belong. I have been dealing with my porn addiction for a long time, on my own, in my marriage, and in a men's small group at my church where we discuss how to rely on our faith in God to address our problems and shortcomings. I grew up with a strong faith and pray out to God daily, but I continue to struggle with this burden. I am not looking to abandon my faith or leave my church and am unsure about attending meetings with people who do not share my faith. So, my question is: Since I am already a man of faith and am trying to address this issue at church, do I really need to attend SAA meetings and work the steps in order to get sober and recover?

Faithful Fellow

Dear Faithful,

Thanks for reaching out. You are not alone in this question. I have attended SAA meetings with people from a variety of faith backgrounds. It seems that many of us tried to address our addictive sexual behaviors through our traditional faith practices. Unfortunately, despite our well-intentioned efforts, many of us continued to struggle with our addiction and as a result felt even more isolated from others and disconnected from our faith.

If I can suggest, you may want to skip ahead in our book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, and read the Twelfth Step, specifically the first paragraph, as I feel it speaks directly to your question. "Through the process of the Twelve Steps, we let go of our ways of thinking and acting that are based on fear, shame, and isolation, and we learn to rely on the guidance and care of a Higher Power...But every step of the

program contributes to a fundamental change in our outlook, from self-obsession and control to surrender and acceptance. Our sexual sobriety goes hand in hand with our spiritual growth“ (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, 58-59).

Working the Twelve Steps of SAA can lead to a spiritual awakening for all: those who join our fellowship with no faith background, those with an established faith practice, those whose addiction may have caused them to step away from their faith, and everyone in between. Like you, I sought support from my faith and spiritual leaders to help me with my addiction. I tried, I really did try, but struggled to find sobriety through my church. Working the Twelve Steps through the SAA program

of recovery has helped me address the aspects of myself (dishonesty, self-loathing, and reliance to name a few) which blocked me from the “sunlight of the spirit.” As Step Twelve says, working these steps leads to a spiritual awakening. This awakening allows me to maintain my sobriety and continue my recovery so I can participate in my own faith at a much deeper level. This spiritual awakening, the result of these steps, has helped me to accept and embrace my faith in such a new and profound way, something I never was able to do in addiction, on my own, or before coming to SAA.

I hope you have the same experience.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.*



LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Wrong

BY JERRY Y

What I have discovered is how important self-respect and self-love—real self-love—are to recovery from sexual addiction.

Believing it is wrong, we embrace wrong.

When I discovered sex at 12 years old, through 1950's pornography, I was astounded by the feelings I got from it. The feelings I had were powerful, and I had been told that they were wrong, and I was wrong for having them. When I was told that my feelings—which felt strong and normal—were wrong, and I was wrong for having them, it didn't take long for me to believe it, and have a lower and lower feeling about myself. Deep down, I believed I was a lost soul.

I had no counseling from my parents, and when I 'confessed' to my priest for my wrongdoings, those feelings of inescapable sin were never far away. Eventually, I accepted them as part of being a bad or imperfect person. "And when I'm that bad," I thought, "I might as well run with it." And I did.

Throughout my life, I've been addicted to pornography, infidelity, anonymous sex—so many different things. I was also a bad drunk. I managed to stay alive long enough to find AA and sobriety and have been sober from alcohol for many years. That sobriety, however, didn't change my sexual addiction. It didn't even slow it down.

What I have discovered is how important self-respect and self-love—real self-love—are to recovery from sexual addiction. My recovery from alcohol was due to a relationship with a power greater than myself. My sexual addiction, however, with its power and longevity, needs my total participation for recovery, and without self-love and self-respect, I don't believe it's completely possible. But that is definitely where that power greater than myself comes in. There's something that already loves me

completely, and it's part of me—my soul, my Higher Power.

I may make mistakes, but I've learned that mistakes are the steps to learning. I'm not perfect, and I never will be. But I can learn, and I can believe. And I believe that I can do this, with the help of that part of me that I see when I look at a picture of me, at 2 years old: A beautiful little fellow, with no sin in his soul.

If you have five or more years of sobriety and would like to celebrate by writing a Living in Sobriety column, please contact toc@saa-recovery.org.

I Am Willing

Omaya M.

What will it take for me to realise I am worthy?

Of healing and recovery

Of being purged of my trauma

Of allowing space for me to be loved

Of restoring emotions that let me love

Of living without guilt and shame

Of clearing the wreckage of my dark mind

Of being an open and welcoming soul

Of cleansing the mirror of my heart

Of not being in a state to harm myself

Of emotional spiritual physical mental serenity

Of peace and sanity

Of being free from my lower soul

Of letting go of these desires that bind me to the world

Of loving myself

Of God's love?

All it takes are three words

"I am willing."

I am ready for the shackles to be broken that chain me to my lost soul.

STORIES OF SERVICE

Step Twelve: Awakening to Service

BY ANONYMOUS

*Step Twelve calls
me to carry the
message.*

“For some of us, this awakening may be a sudden and dramatic gain in awareness. For others, it may be slow and gradual, and we may not even realize we’ve had one until we reflect upon the changes that have occurred.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 59)

These two sentences cause me to reflect on my own spiritual awakening.

I have attended Sunday school and church my whole life and never doubted that there was a “Higher Power” at work in the universe. For that reason, I didn’t have a blinding light or lightning-bolt kind of spiritual awakening. My relationship with my Higher Power has constantly changed and grown over the years since I started recovery in SAA.

Actually, it has become a sort of game for me since I first heard Step Eleven – “...praying only for knowledge of God’s will for me and the power to carry that out.” What I used to think were mere coincidences, I now see as opportunities for growth that God places in my path. I must constantly be on the lookout for those opportunities, acknowledge where they came from, and decide what I am going to do with them.

Step Twelve calls me to carry the message of SAA to other sex addicts because of the spiritual awakening I received as **the** result of working the first eleven steps.

Twenty-four years ago, I came home from prison to an area of the state with no SAA meetings. Through a friend, I found a couple

other people who thought they might have a sex addiction problem. Three years later, we had started three meetings in three small towns.

Then I became active in our intergroup and started attending SAA conventions, gaining many new friends in recovery along the way. Later on, I became involved with the planning committees of several ISO conventions, and now serve on a Conference committee.

My “spiritual awakening” has been the slow and gradual variety, and service has been a big part of that process. Changes have occurred. Trying to determine what God’s will is for me has become a daily exercise.

Carrying the SAA message of recovery to other sex addicts is a way that service has played an important role in sustaining my spiritual awakening. The paradox of giving it away to keep it has held true for me!

If you are interested in learning more about service opportunities within the ISO, check out the International Service page on the service website. Username and password are available from the ISO office—email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4209.



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

FROM THE BOARD

Strategic Planning and Goal #4

BY A
BOARD MEMBER

*We value your
input. Email the
board at*

board@saa-recovery.org

Every five years the Board engages in long-term planning.

What is strategic planning?

Strategic goal planning is done in sessions where free thinking about the future of SAA is encouraged. Such planning helps provide directions for the future of SAA and guidance on how to apply the resources of SAA to make a difference. You can also describe long-term planning as setting strategic goals.

Why engage in strategic planning?

The many reasons for strategic planning include: assessing change, being renewed, funding requirements, forecasting finances, dealing with mandates, building consensus, improving staff and Board relations, developing ownership of projects, and building community support.

How is strategic planning conducted?

Many times, the genesis of a goal is just a phrase or thought. A full morning may be used to capture each Board member's thoughts. There are no right or wrong ideas.

A facilitator keeps the Board moving forward and on track. After the brainstorming session, the ideas are tallied and lumped together by a common thread and each goal is assigned a work group.

For example, Strategic Goal Four states:

To increase acceptance among ISO trusted servants that recovery from sex addiction is possible through the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

The phrase, “among ISO trusted servants,” came under scrutiny at a recent Fellowship Committee meeting. The discussion was about why trusted servants would be the target audience for this goal since they are the backbone of local meetings, committees, retreats, etc. That phrase was added at the previous work group meeting and team members were asked to solicit feedback. The Fellowship Committee was vocal about taking that phrase out so that the goal would focus on a wider audience or population base.

Once a goal is close to being finalized, the team works to come up with tactics and strategies to accomplish the goal, such as the following:

STRATEGY 1: Gain feedback from communicating internally and externally.

STRATEGY 2: Using the Green Book stories, make the reader aware of the role of environment and family for sex addicts.

STRATEGY 3 is to practice Tradition Three: Attract, don't promote.

STRATEGY 4: Look at the SAA website for opportunities to expand this goal.

STRATEGY 5: Work the SAA recovery program.

STRATEGY 6: Utilize all forms of communication that SAA must integrate with this goal.

Each of those existing strategies has a target date for completion. Some are as far out as 2026. As a tactic is implemented the team looks at the effectiveness of it.

The Board is responsible for the oversight of business side of SAA and works with the other parts of the ISO—including the office, Literature Committee, and Conference. Planning for growth and spreading the word about SAA can happen organically but is most effective when we all work together. The Board coordinates those activities.

Board Actions

June 2023

- Approved revised strategic goal #4

July 2023

- Approved contract for 2024 convention hotel
- Approved that the annual meeting of the ISO Conference and the SAA international convention schedule be changed to meet in tandem in the same city and same hotel as soon as financially and logistically feasible

ISO NEWS

PI/CPC Update

One important tool of recovery is SAA literature. It can be instructional, as we work the Twelve Steps, or it can be encouraging during times when we feel defeated, demoralized, or disconnected from our program of recovery.

The Public Information-Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI-CPC) Committee has contributed to our literature by writing several pamphlets which can be helpful in our Step Twelve work of carrying the message to other sex addicts. Several of these have already been approved by the ISO Literature Committee and are available to read online. Unlike other pamphlets, these pamphlets can be downloaded/printed or copies may be requested from the ISO office for free. Here is a preview of four of these pamphlets.

The first of these is “Introducing SAA to the Professional Community.” (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/introducing-saa-professional-community/>) It is primarily written for healthcare professionals, especially those dealing with mental or behavioral health issues who encounter sex addicts in the course of their work. Many of these professionals don’t know that SAA exists - even some that specialize in treating addiction. It is intended to be a “door opener” pamphlet designed to help the professional learn enough about SAA to feel comfortable talking to us about how we can cooperate with them and help their clients recover. It can also be helpful to legal and judicial professionals, leaders of faith communities, etc.

The next three pamphlets are intended for sex addicts not yet aware of the SAA program. “Are Your Sexual Behaviors Causing You Problems?” (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/sexual-behaviors-causing-problems-2/>), “What to Expect at Your First SAA Meeting”, (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/pi-cpc-series-what-to-expect-at-your-first-saa-meeting/>) and “Hope and Healing for Women” (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/pi-cpc-series-hope-healing-women/>) are designed to help sex addicts get past their denial and their fear, respectively. In addition to being passed along by professionals to their clients, the pamphlets can get to sex addicts directly by being placed in other Twelve-Step meeting locations, sober living homes, STI clinics, treatment centers, churches and community centers, halfway houses, and jails, to name just a few.

“Hope and Healing for Women” includes a series of short stories describing the various different ways sex addiction may manifest itself for women. It also contains several stories of what it was like to come into recovery and the hope that the SAA program offers women. In addition to the locations mentioned above, this pamphlet

could go into places that SAA members doing PI-CPC work might not normally think of, such as OB/GYN offices or family planning clinics.

With these new tools at our disposal, we will engage about the SAA program with professionals from a position of strength and sophistication. We believe that these pamphlets provide the information professionals need to help them take the next step of referring SAA to their clients, as well as the information sex addicts outside the rooms may need to consider giving SAA a try.

These PI-CPC pamphlets can be viewed and downloaded for free at: <https://saa-recovery.org/literature/> (scroll to bottom of the page).

A future issue will discuss pamphlets whose focus is on the practical aspects of how we can carry the message through doing PI-CPC work, and the spiritual importance of doing this work.

Do you have computer skills?

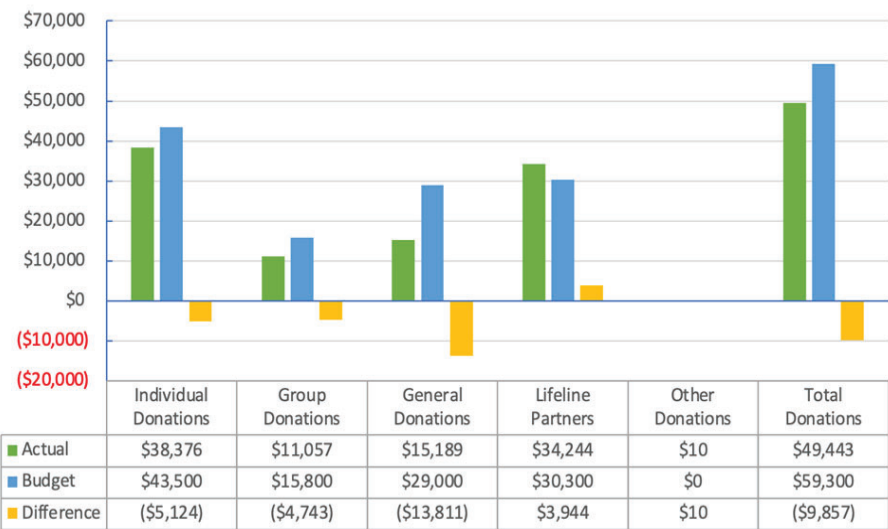
The Information Systems and Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom), a joint committee between the Literature Committee, Board, and the office, seeks volunteers who are able and willing to help with the ISO's technical computer needs. These include, but are not limited to, web design (especially JavaScript, CSS, and PHP), database management, and security. If you are skilled in these or similar areas and would like to use your skills to serve the fellowship, email info@saa-recovery.org.

Host cities still needed for future conventions!

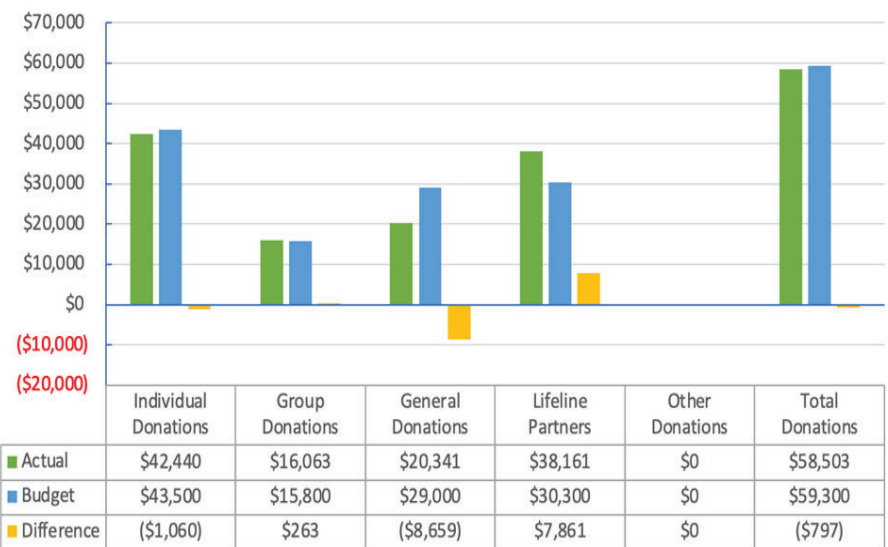
The ISO is still in need of host cities for future conventions. Local groups, intergroups, and areas are asked to step up and place a bid so we can continue this beloved recovery activity! To learn more or to place a bid, email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

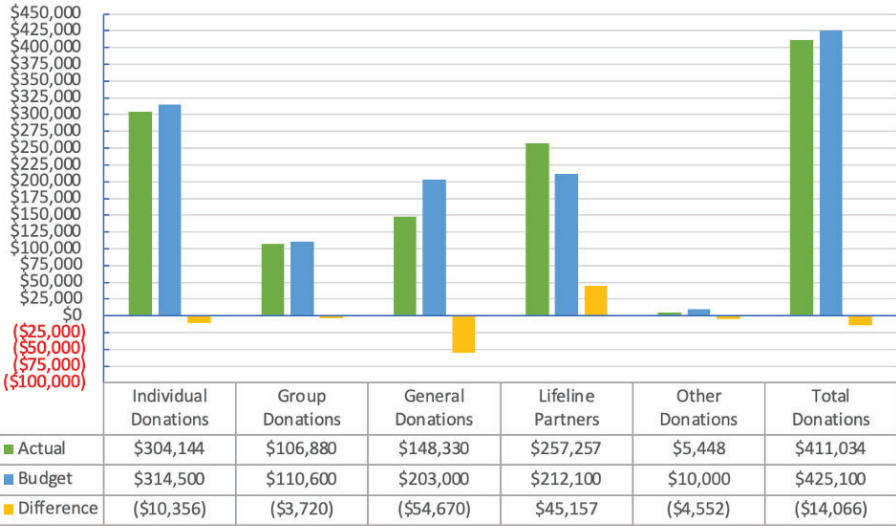
June 2023 Donations



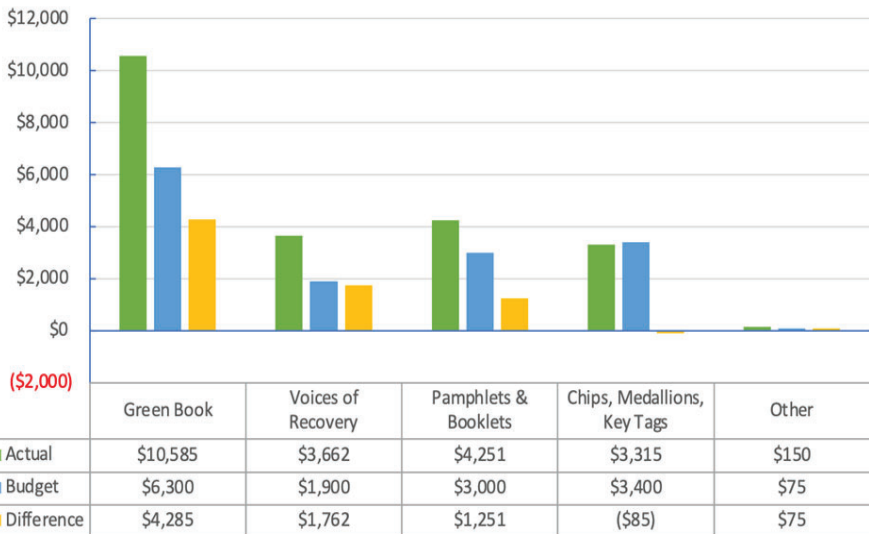
July 2023 Donations



2023 YTD Donations (to July)

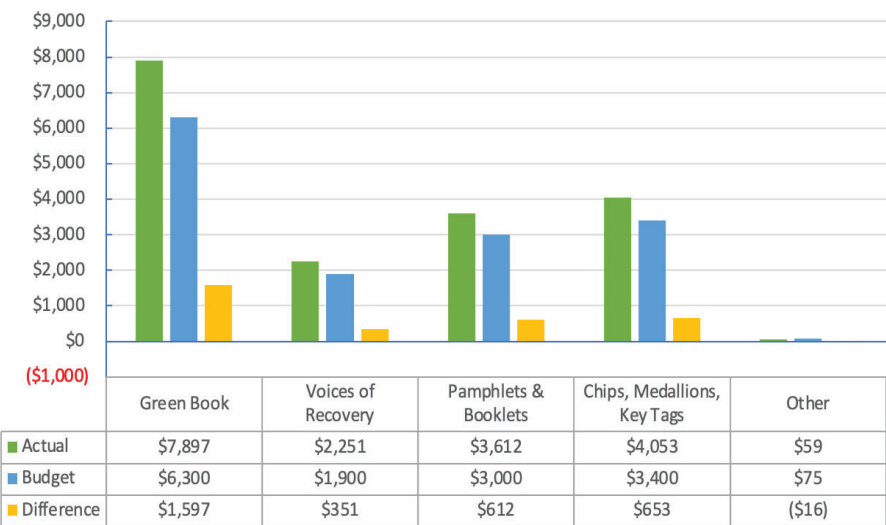


June 2023 Sales

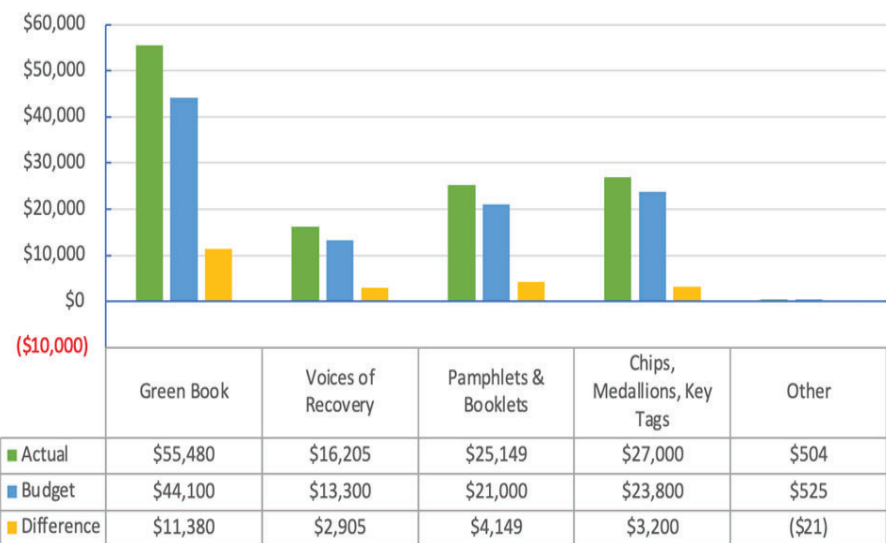


FINANCIAL SUMMARY

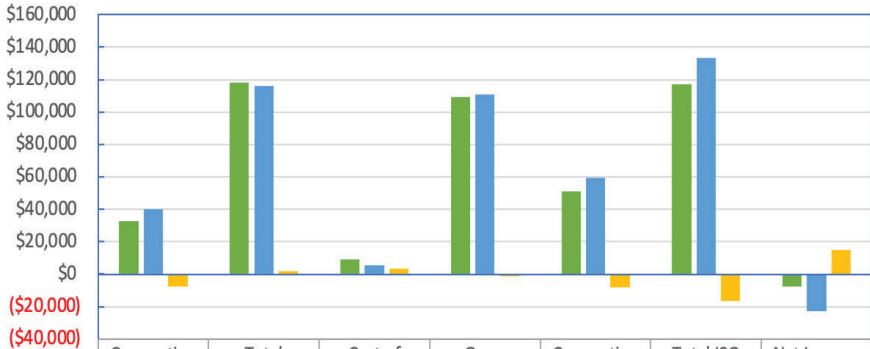
July 2023 Sales



2023 YTD Sales (to July)

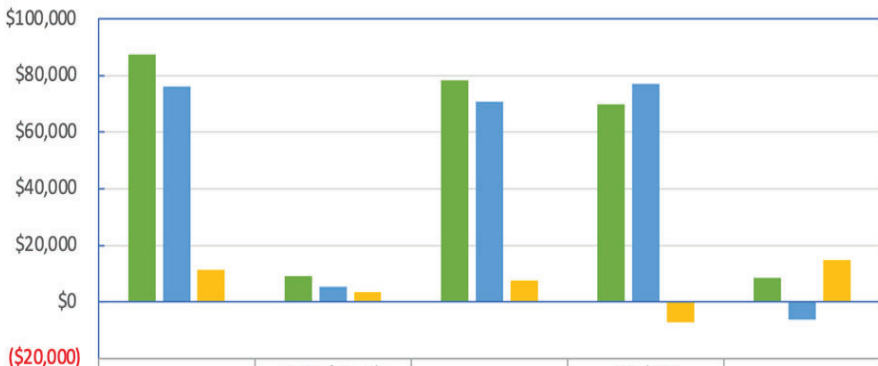


June 2023 Net Income



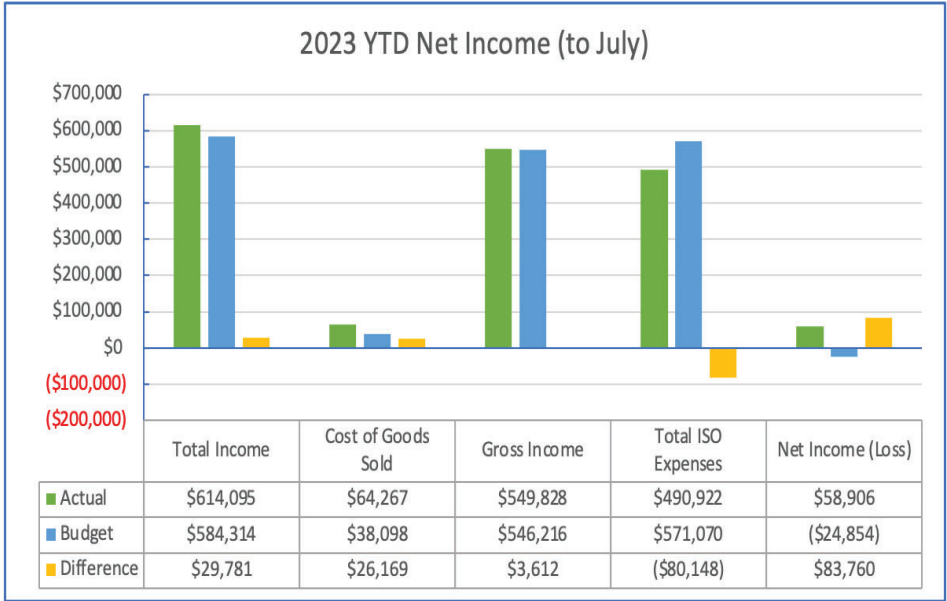
	Convention Income	Total Income	Cost of Goods Sold	Gross Income	Convention Expenses	Total ISO Expenses	Net Income (Loss)
Actual	\$32,605	\$118,233	\$8,886	\$109,347	\$51,269	\$117,134	(\$7,787)
Budget	\$40,000	\$116,330	\$5,442	\$110,888	\$59,300	\$133,598	(\$22,710)
Difference	(\$7,395)	\$1,903	\$3,444	(\$1,541)	(\$8,031)	(\$16,464)	\$14,923

July 2023 Net Income



	Total Income	Cost of Goods Sold	Gross Income	Total ISO Expenses	Net Income (Loss)
Actual	\$87,570	\$9,037	\$78,533	\$69,890	\$8,643
Budget	\$76,330	\$5,442	\$70,887	\$77,096	(\$6,209)
Difference	\$11,240	\$3,594	\$7,646	(\$7,206)	\$14,852

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



Although income for convention was negative, it was slightly 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. Total net income remains above budget.

Tracy R.
Executive Director

Conference Delegate Registration

Have you been elected by your area as a delegate or alternate to the ISO of SAA Conference? If so, registration is a two-step process.

First, to register as a delegate, visit www.saa-recovery.org/delegateform. This form allows us to update our database to reflect that you are now the delegate from your area.

Second, if you plan to attend the Conference meeting, either virtually or in person, you need to go to www.saa-conference.org. Call the office at 713-869-4902 or email info@saa-recovery.org for the password.

Finally, if you would like to attend the Conference meeting as a concerned member of the fellowship, you do not need to register as a delegate, but you do need to register for the meeting itself at www.saa-conference.org.

Service Opportunities at the International Level

The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) presents a slate of nominees at the annual Conference meeting in October to fill open positions on the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, Conference Area Coordinating Committee, and Conference Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees and you meet the guidelines for international service, we encourage you to fill out a service résumé!

For more information about the positions and for a copy of the Guidelines for International Service, please visit the service website saa-iso.org and click on the International Service tab. Contact the ISO office via phone, (713) 869-4902, or email, info@saa-recovery.org, for the username and password to access these documents.

Completed service résumés should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902
Fax: 713-692-0105

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

Editor: Alex B.

Office Staff

Executive Director: Tracy R:
director@saa-iso.net

Associate Director and Publications Manager: Cody S
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional
Community, and 7th Tradition Manager: Phillip B
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager:
Jonathan C

Information Technician: DJ B
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B
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.

