

# The Outer Circle

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

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## ISO Board Actions

**The following is a report of significant actions  
taken by the Board of Trustees  
at their annual face to face meetings.**

Approved: Gift and Plaque for Jerry B. to present a monetary gift from operating funds, a memory book and plaque to Jerry B. (TX) at the Saturday night banquet.

Approved: 2009 Convention Fundraising Raffle at the 2008 Convention. to authorize the 2009 Convention Committee "must be present to win" fundraising raffle which will conclude at the Monday Brunch.

Approved: Ticket Price for the 2008 Off-site Event. to charge a transportation fee of \$10 per person for COSA convention registrants who wish to go to the off-site event.

Approved: 2008 Banquet Fundraiser for the Meditation Book. to authorize a Seventh Tradition collection at the Saturday night banquet to raise funds for the meditation book.

Approved: Job Description for Director of Fellowship Services. to approve the short form of the job description for the position of Director of Fellowship Services as amended to replace the word "satisfaction" with "service" in the first line of Section V. Responsibilities, and to replace the sentence "Relocation to Houston, TX is required" with "Residence in the Houston, TX area is required."

Approved: Job Description for Director of Business Services. to approve the short form of the job description for the position of Director of Business Services as amended to replace the word "Manager" with "Director" in the job title, to replace the qualifications found in Section III. with the same qualifications found in the approved job description of the Director of Fellowship Services, and to replace the sentence "Relocation to Houston, TX is required" with "Residence in the Houston, TX area is required."

Approved: Application Form. that the Application Form be approved as amended to add a page break following the applicant's preferred email address, and adding spaces for the applicant to provide only their first name and last initial as identifying information at the top of page 2.

Approved: Internal Processing of Applications Received. to send all applications to the Board Chair and the Job Search Committee Chair who will remove Page 1 of each application and then send the remainder of each application and each resume to the members of the Job Search Committee.

Approved: 2009 Convention Rate Schedule. to increase the fees for 2009 convention registration according to the following schedule:

	Member	Guest
<b>3-Day Package</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Deadline	160.00	140.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> Deadline	170.00	150.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Deadline	190.00	160.00
<b>2-Day Package</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Deadline	140.00	115.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> Deadline	150.00	125.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Deadline	170.00	135.00
<b>1-Day Package</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Deadline	110.00	75.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> Deadline	120.00	85.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Deadline	140.00	105.00

Approved: 2009 Convention Committee Liaison. nomination of Tim E. as the 2009 Convention Committee Liaison.

Approved: Financial Report for April 2008. the report on the April 2008 financials which included a discussion of the audit report.

Approved: Board Face-to-Face Agendas. the Board Face-to-Face agenda template with the following amendments: (a) opening the meeting with the Serenity Prayer and the Code of Conduct; (b) removing the quotes from Phase III on page 2; (c) adding the Board liaison job description.

Approved: Delegate New Business Deadline that the deadline for New Business at the annual delegate meeting be set at 6:00 p.m. Central Time on the last business day of January.

Approved: Convention Committee Terms of Service. that each convention committee's term of service shall conclude at the end of the calendar year in which the convention occurs.

- Approved: Caller ID at the ISO Office. to endorse the action the ISO Office has taken to discontinue caller ID, and further, permanently prohibit the use of caller ID in the Office.
- Approved: Volume Discount on Single CD Titles. a 45% discount for orders of 100+ copies of single convention recording titles.
- Approved: Creation of the Online Presence Committee. that the Website Committee and Online Outreach Committees are dissolved and shall be replaced by a Committee of the Board named Online Presence which shall manage all online (Internet, World Wide Web, etc.) functions on behalf of the Board and which shall operate with protocols identical to those of the former Website Committee.
- Approved: Increased OOC Spending Limit. to increase the Office Oversight Committee (OOC) spending limit to \$500 by a simple majority, and to \$1,000 by unanimous vote.
- Approved: Staff Request. that the following language be added to the ISO Office Manual: "Any ISO staff member who believes they are being harassed or abused has the right to discontinue communication. Upon discontinuing communication, the employee will report the incident to a supervisor. In the case of Directors, the immediate supervisor is the OOC Chair."
- Failed: Disclosure Warning on ISO Voicemail Greeting. to insert the following into the ISO Office voicemail greeting: "Be advised that under Texas state law certain disclosures must be reported. Our staff can provide more information on reporting and disclosures." Following discussion, the motion failed by unanimous vote.
- Approved: Election of the Board Chair. to elect Tim as Chair.
- Approved: Election of the Board Secretary. to elect Eric M. as Board Secretary.
- Approved: Election of the Board Treasurer. to elect Don K. as Board Treasurer.
- Approved: Mileage Rate for Travel Expenses. to raise the reimbursement rate for travel expenses to 50.5 cents per mile.
- Approved: Online Presence Committee Liaison. nomination of Eric M. as the Board Liaison to the Online Presence Committee.

Approved: Second Voting Board Member of the Online Presence Committee. nomination of Doug C. as the second voting Board member of the Online Presence Committee.

Approved: International Development Committee Liaison. nomination of Gary C. was approved as the Board Liaison to the International Development Committee.

Approved: Prisoner Outreach Committee Liaison. nomination of Rick I. as the Board Liaison to the Prisoner Outreach Committee.

Approved: Intergroup Communications Committee Liaison. nomination of Wharton S. as the Board Liaison to the Intergroup Communications Committee.

Approved: General Outreach Committee Liaison. nomination of Staci S. as the Board Liaison to the General Outreach Committee.

Approved: Women's Outreach Committee Liaison. nomination of Michele F. as the Board Liaison to the Women's Outreach Committee.

Approved: Interfellowship Relations Committee Liaison. nomination of Francie F. as the Board Liaison to the Interfellowship Relations Committee.

Approved: Fundraising Committee Liaison. nomination of Don K. as the Board Liaison to the Fundraising Committee.

Approved: Disclosure Advisory Committee Liaison. nomination of Ted M. as the Board Liaison to the Disclosure Advisory Committee.

Approved: Literature Committee Liaison. nomination of Ken S. as the Board Liaison to the Literature Committee.

## ISO Delegate Meeting

**The following is a report of significant actions  
taken by the 2008 Delegates  
at the annual ISO of SAA, Inc. meeting.**

Approved: To accept the 2008 Annual Report

Approved: To accept the 2008-2009 Budget

Approved: Election of At-Large Board Member. nomination of Roy T. for a one-year term as an at-large member of the Board of Trustees.

Approved: Election of At-Large Literature Committee Member. Shira K. was nominated for election for a one-year term as an at-large member of the Literature Committee.

Approved: Election of At-Large Literature Committee Member. Jim M. was nominated for election for a one-year term as an at-large member of the Literature Committee.

Approved: Election of At-Large Literature Committee Member. Diane S. was nominated for election for a one-year term as an at-large member of the Literature Committee.

Failed: Sponsorship Education. Motion "to set up a committee to develop a format (suggestions) or guidelines to help those wanting to sponsor."

Approved: Bylaws Amendment: Name of the SAA Newsletter. motion to change the reference to the newsletter in Article V, Section 8 of the Bylaws from "the Plain Brown Rapper" to "The Outer Circle." [Please note that according to Article III, Section 4, this motion will need to be ratified by the delegates at the 2009 convention before it takes effect.]

Approved: Bylaws Amendment: Removal of Board Members. a motion that the first sentence of Article IV, Section 2 be changed to "Members of the Board of Trustees may be removed from the board not only by those who elected them, but also by a vote of at least a two-thirds majority of the Board for cause or for non-attendance." [Please note that according to Article III, Section 4, this motion will need to be ratified by the delegates at the 2009 convention before it takes effect.]



Approved: Bylaws Amendment: Conference Approved Literature. a motion to amend the By-laws of the ISO of SAA, Inc. by inserting the following language to Article V. under a new Section 9:

“SAA literature shall be designated as Conference Approved upon submission by the ISO Literature Committee and affirmative vote of two-thirds of the certified delegates at a regular annual meeting (international convention) of the Fellowship. Conference Approved literature may be revised and submitted for re-approval only by the ISO Literature Committee.”

[Please note that according to Article III, Section 4, this motion will need to be ratified by the delegates at the 2009 convention before it takes effect.]

Failed: Discontinue Use of a Raised Platform at Delegate Meetings. motion to discontinue the use of a raised platform at delegate meetings that seats more than four people.

Failed: Travel Expenses for Representatives Paid by Regions. motion that travel expenses for Board of Trustee and Literature Committee representatives shall be paid by each representative's SAA region. At-large members will continue to be paid through the international office.

Approved: Prioritization of All Delegate Business. motion “that all new business will be presented by 1:30 p.m. the day of the delegate meeting and will be Delphi-ed by the delegates business items.”



## ISO LitCom Actions March 30, 2008

**The Literature Committee of the ISO of SAA, Inc.  
met via teleconference on March 30, 2008.  
The following is a report of significant actions taken:**

Approved: That we publish a notice for volunteers for at-large positions on the LitCom in the next Outer Circle and the website and through the Intergroup Communications e-mail address.

## ISO LitCom Actions

**The following is a report of significant actions  
taken by the Literature Committee  
at their annual face to face meeting.**

Approved: the minutes of the March 30, 2008 meeting.

Approved: agenda with the proviso that we could move items around as necessary.

Approved: to put forth Shira K.'s name to serve as an at-large member for 2008-09.

Approved: that we ask the Board to hire a full-time publications coordinator with the following skill sets in descending order of importance: project management, editing, writing, desktop publishing, distribution, administrative.

Approved: to request approval of funds up to \$24,000 over a twelve-month period to be used for professional editing services.

Approved: to nominate Jim M as an at-large member of the LitCom.

Approved: to nominate Diane S as an at-large member of the LitCom.

Approved: to nominate Jim L. as LitCom Chair.

Approved: to nominate Thea D. as LitCom Second Chair.

Approved: to nominate John R. as LitCom Secretary.

## ISO Literature Committee Announces Re-organization and Plans for 2008-09

After a busy year and two days of productive meetings in Seattle, the ISO Literature Committee (LitCom), meeting by teleconference on June 22, 2008, adopted a re-organization plan designed to accommodate the significant increase in activity that has occurred over the past two years. The specific objectives of the new plan are to facilitate flow of work and enhance tracking and accountability, thereby, improving overall efficiency of the review and approve process.

### **Re-organization**

Administratively, the LitCom has been divided into five standing subcommittees – Operations and Policy, Major Works, In-reach, Outreach, and Periodicals. Within that structure, individual pieces of literature, projects, and activities will be assigned to work groups, which will develop and implement specific game plans and time lines for their areas of responsibility. The Subcommittees will coordinate and track activities of several work groups. Volunteers who are not members of the LitCom are invited to participate at all levels, where they will have the opportunity to learn more about service at the international level and to have direct input into the process of review and approval of literature by the LitCom. Subcommittees and work groups will be assigned group email addresses and will have access to teleconferencing as needed to carry out their assigned tasks.

### ***Sex Addicts Anonymous***

The LitCom has implemented a detailed plan for on-going critical review and revision of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in anticipation of achieving conference approval and publishing a third edition within the next few years. Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be mailed to the ISO office in Houston or emailed to [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org). Highly specific suggestions accompanied by the rationale behind the suggestion are particularly useful. The LitCom is also actively seeking additional personal stories to be considered for future editions of the book.

The Spanish edition of the basic text is currently available, and revisions are translated and implemented in parallel with those made in the English version. The pocket edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* is presently in the final stages of preparation and should be available later this year. In order to maintain the same pagination as the stan-

standard edition and to keep the size of the print readable, each page in the standard edition will be represented by two pages -- [a] and [b] -- in the pocket edition.

### **Meditation book**

The LitCom is actively soliciting meditations from members of the Fellowship for possible inclusion in the new SAA meditation book. Specific guidelines for submissions are published in *The Outer Circle* and will be available shortly on the SAA website. When a sufficient number of contributions are received to begin active work on the book, an editor will be recruited to move the project forward. Writing one or several meditations on a topic or topics that are particularly meaningful to you is another way to engage in service to the benefit of the whole Fellowship.

### **LitCom Handbook**

The LitCom Handbook is currently being revised to reflect the changes of responsibilities, duties, and organization that have occurred in the recent past. This document will explain the mission of the LitCom and spell out the processes and procedures used in the review and approval of literature for the ISO. It will also include the updated literary style sheet that is used in the evaluation and editing of all submissions by the LitCom.

### **Pamphlets**

A new pamphlet, *Writing to Prisoners*, developed by the Prison Outreach Committee was recently approved by the LitCom. It offers guidance for corresponding with prisoners who are struggling with sex addiction and who ask for information about SAA. The pamphlet is available from the ISO office, and the LitCom welcomes feedback from the Fellowship at large in anticipation of eventual conference approval. Comments and suggestions may be mailed to the ISO office or emailed to [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org).

The revision of the pamphlet entitled, *Sexual Sobriety and the Internet*, which was conference-approved in Minneapolis last year, will be published shortly. Other documents presently under active review by the LitCom include the Group Guide, Inter-fellowship relations guidelines, an Intergroup Guide, an SAA Fact File, and a proposed pamphlet extending a welcome to sex offenders who suffer from sex addiction. The LitCom is also actively involved in the development and approval of content for the new SAA website, where, among many other features, a dynamic list of LitCom projects and activities

will be maintained. In addition, the feasibility of producing an index for the basic text is being studied.

### **New projects**

New projects anticipated within the next few months include additional submissions from the General Outreach and Women's Outreach committees and re-design of existing SAA pamphlets to give them a more contemporary look. This latter effort will be combined with review and updating of pamphlet content where needed. In addition, a plan for review of existing audio recordings in the ISO library is being developed along with a plan for production of an audio version of the basic text. The LitCom also anticipates investigating the need and feasibility of a large print edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, as well as translation into additional languages.

### **Volunteers sought**

The LitCom desires your input. Interested members of SAA who are not on the LitCom are welcome and encouraged to volunteer to participate in any and all literature-related projects and activities. Opportunities for service abound. We encourage feedback on pieces that have been LitCom approved but are still under review by the Fellowship at large in anticipation of future conference approval. We also solicit volunteer participation in our subcommittees and work groups, as it broadens our base of input and enhances our ability to fulfill our responsibilities to the ISO and the Fellowship. You can contact the LitCom directly through the ISO office or through your regional representatives on the LitCom with a statement of interest. LitCom email addresses are readily available online and are published in every issue of *The Outer Circle*.

Respectfully submitted,

Your ISO Literature Committee

## Guidelines for Meditation Book Submissions to the Literature Committee

The Literature Committee welcomes submissions from the wider fellowship regarding the Meditation Book. Every submission needs to follow these guidelines to be considered for inclusion in the book.

The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, each entry representing a specific date of any calendar year, such as January 1, etc. Each entry will be one page and placed according to a specific date as decided upon by the Literature Committee. We are asking members to submit one or more complete entries for their consideration in the book.

When submitting, an entry needs to consist of the following elements:

- a) One Quotation. A quotation pulled from ISO-approved literature. Include the exact quote, the title of the literature used, and the page number. Following, in alphabetical order, are the pieces of ISO-approved literature: Abstinence, Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA, The Bubble, First Step to Recovery, From Shame to Grace, Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous, Group Guide, Sex Addicts Anonymous (also known as "The Green Book"), Sex Addicts Anonymous (the introductory pamphlet), Sexual Sobriety and the Internet, A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer, Three Circles, Tools of Recovery.
- b) Main body. The main body of the entry will consist of text expanding on the thought or principle expressed in the quotation, offering a perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery. The writer may touch on any aspect of recovery including the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, other common SAA tools, principles, and shared wisdom of our SAA program and the fellowship.
- c) Meditation / Affirmation. At the bottom of the page there will be a concise statement epitomizing the text of the page into a meditation, thought, or affirmation—i.e., a form customarily used by readers in a daily spiritual practice.
- d) Word total limitation. The total number of words per submission should be approximately 300 words or less, with roughly 3/4 of that total devoted to the main body and 1/4 of the total devoted to the quotation and the meditation/affirmation. These are not hard and fast word counts; rather they are approximate guidelines.

The writer will need to sign a release form that the meditation, if used, becomes the property of the ISO. By signing the release form, the submitter also grants the ISO the right to edit, alter or change the wording of the submission in any way necessary for inclusion in the text.



**Meditation Book Release Form**

I hereby give the ISO of SAA, Inc., as the publisher of the SAA meditation book, permission to copyright and publish my submission. I understand additions may be made to my written material and that it may be edited or changed. I further understand that every effort will be made to ensure my anonymity. I possess the full legal right to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO of SAA from any claim by myself or my successors.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: ISO, P.O. Box 70949 Houston, TX 77270

## Feedback on *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

The ISO Literature Committee reminds members that the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous* remains open for feedback from the SAA fellowship. We are deeply grateful for the time and effort members spend in providing feedback, and all feedback we receive from members and groups is given full and careful consideration.

Please note that, while we do acknowledge initial receipt of feedback, the ISO is not able to communicate beyond that about how or whether a member's feedback will be used for current or future revisions of the book. Any suggested new writing, regardless of length or content, that is sent to the ISO as feedback on ISO approved literature, becomes property of the ISO of SAA, Inc. and is subject to editing and revision.

Please send any feedback to:

E-mail address: [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)

Mailing address:

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA



## Stories Submissions Information

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept stories for consideration for future editions of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

The following are some general guidelines and information for personal story submissions (subject to modification):



## Content Guidelines for Personal Stories

Stories in our book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are the most personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers.

While there are no strict requirements for submitting a personal story, the ISO strongly recommends that the member's story describes:

- What it was like before entering SAA,
- What happened after entering SAA and using the tools of the twelve-step program,
- What it is like now with the on-going experience of SAA recovery.

It is also recommended that the story emphasize the qualities of a member's "experience, strength, and hope" in SAA recovery. Some members also disclose their length of abstinence in SAA recovery, a choice that is left up to each member who submits a story.

The Literature Committee handbook states, "Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We should avoid presenting unnecessarily triggering or provocative content in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (and other SAA literature). The stories should provide sobering details of unmanageability and offer the hope of recovery for the sex addict."

Stories may be sent to: [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) and addressed to the care of the ISO Literature Committee. The following is the ISO mailing address:

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA

Please read the following carefully before submitting a story to the ISO of SAA:

All story submissions are thoroughly considered by the ISO Literature Committee, which [is] deeply grateful to members for taking the time to submit personal stories for consideration for future editions of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

While every story is thoroughly considered for possible inclusion, the ISO Literature Committee does not guarantee that the story will appear in a future edition of the book. Once a member submits his or her story and signs the release form, the content of the story becomes the property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited and / or changed as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee. Please also note that, while the ISO acknowledges the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not further communicate with the individual about the story submission, regardless of whether or not the story is published in a future edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

## Community Outreach in Indy

By Richard S.

The Indiana Intergroup (IISAA) has participated in three local community events as a part of our Civic Outreach program in trying to "carry the message to the sex addict who still suffers."

IndyPride2007 was our first program at which we set up a table with information regarding SAA to include the SAA Pamphlet and the most recent Meeting Directory that is published quarterly by the IISAA. It was a wonderful day weather-wise for the event and by the host's count there were approximately 30,000 people who attended the event. The event included outreach or information booths for local healthcare programs, Twelve-Step Programs and vendors selling various products ranging from food and drinks to anything Gay Pride related.

The event kicked off with a parade including floats and a marching band. The marching band also provided music from the bandstand after the parade. Taking into account the weather, the ambience and mood of people attending the event it was a fantastic day.

Our table was set up on the perimeter of the cluster of booths that were essentially a city block wide and a city block long with angled sidewalks from the corners of the block to a fountain in the center. With the many mature trees in the area it was a great setting. Once we had our table set up that included a sign indicating who we were with the material on the top of the table we initially sat and watched the crowd pass by. It was interesting to watch as people walked by, looked at our sign and immediately diverted their eyes elsewhere.

Recognizing early on that just sitting back and waiting for the people to come to us was not going to work very well, we positioned ourselves between the table and the sidewalk and began to engage everyone as they passed by. With engaging smiles (at least we thought they were) and getting people's attention by greeting them (please be aware that there was an almost constant flow of people) we began to have people stop and ask about SAA and pass out literature to those that had an interest. Some people stated that it wasn't for them but for a friend.....whatever works. The end result was that we were able to pass out about 25 packets of information about the program.

In hindsight and for future planning purposes we are going to have some type of backdrop better identifying our program and a boom box. Nothing says "Let's have some fun" better than a boom box and disco music. Well, ok, we may have to have a variety of music. One example of a backdrop sign would be "Recovery is a Twelve-Step Program". I made it up and I like it but I am certain that we can come up with some other ideas, as well.

The Ft. Wayne Pride event was a bit less successful primarily because of the setup and a much lower attendance. Still we were able to pass out about twelve packets

of information. During AIDS Walk Indy, we passed out about another dozen packets of information with the attendance about the same as the Ft. Wayne event. The AIDS Walk event was more healthcare oriented, however, we had both healthcare professionals and participants walk up and ask questions. Again, I believe that with a backdrop sign and some entertaining music we can do better at drawing attention to our setup and helping people's awareness about our SAA Program.

## **Spotlight on Intergroup: The Puget Sound Intergroup**

By Andy B.

The Puget Sound is an arm of the Pacific Ocean, connected to the rest of the Pacific by the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. It is also the name of the SAA Intergroup organization in Seattle, Washington.

### Puget Sound Intergroup

There are twenty-seven registered meetings associated with the Puget Sound Intergroup. This Intergroup supports sex addicts in recovery, reaches out to those who are still suffering and provides a structure for activities affecting SAA membership as a whole.

The Puget Sound Intergroup meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 PM PST. Because of the geographic dispersal of the meetings, a member brings a speakerphone so that remote members can conference in. The Puget Sound Intergroup has extended an invitation to representatives of other Intergroups to attend virtually as well for info. Dial-in information is available by sending an e-mail to the Intergroup Chair, Patrick W., at [pssaigchair@gmail.com](mailto:pssaigchair@gmail.com).

### Special Intergroup Activities

The group has its own set of by-laws which Patrick can make available if other intergroups want to see them.

Some of the Puget Sound Intergroup committees are as follows:

A professional outreach committee which performs outreach to health care workers, law enforcement, STD clinics and mental health professionals.

A literature committee which stocks literature for meetings. Individual meetings buy literature from the Intergroup to save dollars, since the Intergroup buys in bulk from the ISO. Every new meeting in the area gets a starter kit whose cost is underwritten by the Puget Sound Intergroup.

### In Closing

The Puget Sound Intergroup is a dedicated group, and many members internationally are indebted to them for their outstanding support of the ISO conference this year. PSI looks forward to partnering with other Intergroups to keep the message of SAA strong and to support visitors to the Puget Sound area.

## Online Presence (OpCom)

Many in our Fellowship are familiar with the ISO's website at <http://saa-recovery.org>. This website has been one of SAA's most public faces to the world for over ten years. This valuable resource is managed by the Board's Online Presence Committee, or OPCom.

The OPCom is a new committee created by the Board by combining the former Website and Online Outreach Committees. This was done at the Board's annual meeting prior to the 2008 Seattle Delegate Conference. Merging these two committees was done to more effectively use talent and perspectives formerly spread over two very interrelated groups of people.

The OPCom's main mission is to provide the most effective presentation of the message of SAA through its online resources. A secondary mission is facilitating collaboration within the ISO service structure between individuals, committees, and the office.

The OPCom acts on behalf of the Board in all matters relating to the ISO's presence on the internet and, as such, is organized in an unusual way for an ISO committee: it is made up of both voting and non-voting members. Representation of voting members is required from three ISO entities: the Board, the Literature Committee, and the ISO office. There are two voting members from each. A quorum requires one representative from each entity to be present. All votes must be unanimous. This ensures that any action taken is considered prudent and necessary across the ISO.

The message on our website is managed through a process agreed upon by the Literature Committee and the OPCom. There are two types of information that appear on the website: the persistent message of SAA and informative notices. The Literature Committee has approval authority over the persistent message. More informational messages are handled routinely by the OPCom itself or, more often, the ISO's office staff. Most of the actual work done on the website is handled through one or more of the OPCom's five subcommittees.

The OPCom has a big service year lined up with a number of ambitious and challenging goals. Among them, the completed redesign of the outreach website and the creation of a collaborative working environment for all parts of the ISO.

Are you familiar with internet-related technologies, culture, or business? You can fill a critical role by lending your time, knowledge, skills, and perspectives to the work that goes into creating our Fellowship's online presence. If you are interested in helping to get the SAA message of recovery to as many people as possible all over the world, there is no better opportunity for service than joining the OPCom. Contact the ISO office for more information on the days and times of our meetings.

## Fundraising

As reported numerous times in these articles about finances and fundraising, the ISO depends on donations for about 60% of its income. Although there are other revenue streams like the annual convention, the Outreach Endowment Fund, and literature sales, gifts from individual SAA members and from SAA groups are the primary revenue source.

Special events like Giving Thanks in November and January provide infusions of money in November and January. LifeLine Partners give about \$4,000 a month. Combined, these contributors make up 55% of the general donations received. This means 45% of the donations needed for day-to-day operations must come from individuals and groups and are needed most during a six-month period comprised of the months of March, April, and May and July, August, and September. When general donations during these months are low, the ISO cannot carry out its service to the fellowship nor its outreach to the addict who still suffers without tapping into reserve funds.

In concrete, not being able to carry out service to the fellowship or outreach to the addict who still suffers means not having enough money to pay the wages of staff needed to process and fill literature orders, to respond to inmates asking for help, to answer the hundreds of monthly calls and e-mails from addicts seeking help, to coordinate Board and committee meetings, to publish literature and *The Outer Circle*, and to keep the ISO up to date administratively.

All of the foregoing are daily needs. None of them are frills.

Especially during the upcoming three months, the ISO needs individual SAA members who are not already committed to monthly giving to begin contributing, if not monthly then at least quarterly.

The ISO needs group secretaries and treasurers to insure that the monthly contributions earmarked for the ISO are being sent regularly and on time. For the groups that do not support the ISO – about two-thirds of all groups – now is the time for them to start.

Support for SAA at every level, including the international, is not an option. The Seventh Tradition mandates it.

## ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of May 31 , 2007

	March	Monthly Average	Year To Date
<b>NET OPERATING INCOME</b>			
<b>Net Sales</b>	<b>9,196</b>	<b>8,117</b>	<b>40,583</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>22,745</b>	<b>18,626</b>	<b>93,132</b>
General Donations	4,270	11,179	55,896
LifeLine Partners	14,352	6,488	32,439
Designated Donations	4,123	959	4,797
<b>Delegate Registrations</b>	<b>4,445</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>5,355</b>
<b>2008 Convention</b>	<b>28,757</b>	<b>12,951</b>	<b>64,756</b>
<b>Miscellaneous Income</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1,612</b>	<b>8,058</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>65,150</b>	<b>42,377</b>	<b>211,884</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
<b>Wages/Benefits/Taxes</b>	<b>15,895</b>	<b>15,463</b>	<b>77,315</b>
Program Related	11,228	10,249	51,244
Administration	1,961	2,024	10,118
Benefits	1,664	2,162	10,811
Payroll Taxes	1,042	1,028	5,142
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>2,100</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>875</b>
<b>Postage</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1,256</b>
<b>Website Related</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Occupancy</b>	<b>1,321</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>7,498</b>
<b>Office Expenses</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>4,301</b>
<b>Professional Fees/Contract Services</b>	<b>1,431</b>	<b>1,431</b>	<b>7,153</b>
<b>Financial</b>	<b>1,243</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>5,704</b>
<i>The Outer Circle</i>	2,348	1,357	6,783
<b>Board &amp; Committees</b>	<b>3,365</b>	<b>2,523</b>	<b>12,613</b>
<b>Translations/Major Literature Projects</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>608</b>
<b>Travel (To Date Total Estimated)</b>	<b>8,265</b>	<b>3,700</b>	<b>18,500</b>
<b>Delegate Meeting (To Date Total Estimated)</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>1,700</b>	<b>8,500</b>
<b>2008 Convention (To Date Total Estimated)</b>	<b>5,744</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>52,574</b>	<b>42,722</b>	<b>213,608</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>12,576</b>	<b>-345</b>	<b>-1,724</b>

Note: As the books were closed on May, not all bills related to travel, the Delegate Meeting, and the 2008 Convention had been received. To avoid presenting a financial report that does not reflect the true amounts of these significant expenses, the final year-to-date figures in these three areas have been estimated.

Given that not all bills had been received in time for closing the books on May, the surplus shown for the month does not provide an accurate picture of the ISO's finances as mid-year approaches. The year-to-date figures, which include close estimates of the final expenses for travel, the Delegate Meeting, and the 2008 Convention are more meaningful.

Overall, the ISO is \$1,724 short of breaking even. This is not encouraging, considering that June through September are historically low-income months. Sales are likely to remain flat through the summer and into early fall, when the first income from wholesale distribution of the Green Book will begin to arrive. How well the ISO survives until then will depend on the generosity of the fellowship. In the meantime, some observations about this month's report are in order.

How did the 2008 Convention do? Pretty well. The net surplus should be about \$14,500.

During the convention, a special Seventh Tradition offering was taken up to kick off funding for the Meditation Book project. Some of the credit card donations did not contain all of the information required for processing, so only \$4,026 of the total given could be booked before the end of May. Another \$2,790 was processed in June, making the final tally \$6,816. Although about \$50,000 - \$60,000 will be needed to complete the project, this was a great start.

The final estimate for convention related travel will be considerably higher this year, reflecting how much transportation costs have risen over the past twelve months and indicating that this expense will probably be even higher next year.

The miscellaneous expense of \$10,000 came as the result of a one-time gift to Jerry B., who retired this year after fifty-four years of service, fourteen as Director of Fellowship Services and one as Director of Business Services. The gift was offset by a one-time LifeLine Partners gift of \$10,000.



## Thank You Carol Ann

By Jonathan C.

If you are a long-time reader of *The Outer Circle*, formerly the *Plain Brown Rap- per*, you have probably seen my name listed under Design & Layout. This issue it is also listed under ISO News Editor.

For some time now we have known that Carol Ann R. would be stepping down from her post as Director of Fellowship Services for the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. Although her expected departure was September 1, 2008, Carol Ann found it necessary to leave earlier due to health reasons.

The fellowship owes Carol Ann a debt of gratitude for the work she has done these past two years as Director of Fellowship Services, the year as Administrative Assistant before that, and the years and countless hours as a volunteer at the ISO office prior to that. As Administrative Assistant, Carol Ann streamlined the registration process for our international convention. She also helped to set things in motion to help our committees communicate. This is a project that was dear to Carol Ann, and one she picked up with fervor once she was Director of Fellowship Services.

In the past we had what we called “focus groups” that met on various subjects at our conventions. These focus groups would notoriously stir up a lot of emotion and enthusiasm. Members would discuss ways in which the fellowship could be enriched. Then everyone would go home, life would creep in, and these dreams would be put on hold until the next year’s focus group, when the process would start all over again.

Carol Ann was instrumental in the move away from “focus groups” and towards standing board committees. She worked tirelessly to see that these committees had a way to continue to meet throughout the year. She organized a myriad of teleconferences and helped to establish the massive email forwarding system we use today, all to ensure the development of communication within the organization.

It is my belief that SAA is on the verge of a growth explosion. If this is true then the organization of our board committees is indeed timely. I believe we have been led by our collective Higher Power thus far as an organization. I believe we can trust our collective Higher Power to continue to lead as we move forward.

Our leaders are but trusted servants. Carol Ann, thank you for your service.



## Differing Perspectives

By Mike L., Literature Editor, *The Outer Circle*

As I write these words, this year's convention in Seattle is still in the future. By the time you read them, it will have come and gone. I always enjoy attending these conventions. I think back to my early days in the fellowship and how difficult it was for me to actually take that next big step and go to a convention. I even made plans one year to go with a friend in the fellowship and when he decided not to go, I backed out as well. It took me four years to decide that I was ready and, of course, once I finally took that step, I found it impossible to look back.

One of my favorite duties in SAA each year is having the opportunity to share my thoughts on the convention; the article I have written about "Waves of Change" appears elsewhere in this issue. So this month I will keep my editor's comments brief, although I find these remarks as important as anything I have offered here, perhaps more so.

In a way, every article that appears in *The Outer Circle* is a reflection of the author's relationship to the program. For some reason—and I believe that there are no coincidences—we received several articles within a brief time frame dealing more directly than normal with the program itself and how members relate to it, to the other members, and to twelve-step recovery in general. What struck me even more strongly is the divergent points of view that these articles take. You may find it interesting to consider them together as well as separately.

As I have mentioned previously, *The Outer Circle* is beginning to take a more active role in encouraging feedback from its readers. A recent article we published certainly evoked some responses within the fellowship, and we will be publishing a couple of those responses in the next issue. I'm especially grateful to know that we have members who not only care enough to closely read the articles in *The Outer Circle*, but who also take the time out of their busy schedules to write and let us know of their reactions. I'm very pleased with the dialogue that is being engendered.

So, along those lines, I'd like to remind you that if you read something in this current batch of articles that strikes a responsive chord, please feel free to let us know, either by way of a letter to the editor or by way of an article of your own. And of course, articles on original topics are also welcome. You can submit your articles to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org) or you can mail them to the ISO office at P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. It would also be helpful if you referred to "*The Outer Circle*" in either the subject line of your e-mail or on the front of the envelope.

Well, if I didn't see you at this year's convention or even if I did, I hope I will get a chance to see you next year. Meantime, keep those cards and letters coming!

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

## Another Great SAA Convention!

by Mike L., Literature Editor, The Outer Circle

I learned a long time ago never to say that this or that SAA convention was the "best" ever because each one in its own way is special or best. And this year's convention in Seattle was certainly no exception.

As always, I arrived in town a couple of days early in order to be able to attend the Literature Committee meetings that happen on the Wednesday and Thursday before the delegate meetings on Friday and the official start of the convention on Friday evening. Because the convention came earlier, date-wise, than usual, this year the dates almost collided with another trip I had planned immediately prior. So, with little time to unpack and repack, I left for the convention city later in the day than usual and arrived after a four-hour plane trip at roughly 8:00 pm local time. Fortunately, the hotel was near the airport, so it was a brief hop on the shuttle to the hotel. Having missed the traditional Tuesday night dinner with the Board of Trustees and the rest of the Literature Committee, I started to take some time to wander around the area. I forgot that I was basically in the Rockies so the ups and downs of walking around got to me rather quickly, although I did manage to get adjusted before much more time had passed.

The Literature Committee's workload increases from year to year and so our days were full, the first day in particular which lasted until 9:30 pm. The meetings were nevertheless very productive, both the LitCom's individual meetings and our standard Thursday afternoon meeting with the Board.

Thursday night I was fortunate to get a chance to go into town. I had a new friend in the guise of a man in another fellowship to which I belong who, despite the fact that our first-ever communication was that morning, came out on the bus to meet me and gave me a walking tour of some highlights of Seattle, capped by a truly wonderful dinner at a seafood restaurant on the waterfront. I took the bus back by myself, somehow managed to miss my stop, and so walked back about twelve blocks to the hotel. This land was a little more level; besides that I had just come from New York City where it seems all that I do is walk, so I just enjoyed the time out in the cool air. I wish I had had to walk a little farther because I still woke up in the middle of the night, being used to being in the central time zone and in this case having just come from the eastern time zone. Even though I have been to several conventions on the west coast, this was the first one where

I was not able to make the adjustment, maybe because I had just been one time zone further east than usual.

The delegate meeting was similar to many previous ones I have attended. Some motions flew right through the delegate body and others were more hotly contested. As always, I trusted the group conscience. Our regional caucus started making some exciting plans about which you will no doubt be hearing more in the future.

I was exhausted by Friday night and so missed the opening meeting and speaker. I rejoined the convention early Saturday morning, after visiting an extremely well-run hospitality room. The brief delegate meeting had its closest vote of the weekend with group conscience once again speaking. And even though I have always said that if and when I ever stepped down from being Prisoner Outreach Chair I would visit a different Board committee meeting, when push came to shove I found that I really would have felt like a fish out of water if I had gone somewhere else after all these many years of attending the prisoner outreach committee (formerly called "focus group") meeting.

Other than helping a bit with the planning of the Literature Committee workshop on Saturday afternoon, I took some time to chill Saturday afternoon. While I am not as much of a vegan as I would like to be, I do try to have vegan meals at the convention to the extent that I can and I can say that this was my first experience where the vegan meal served at the banquet looked to me at least as appetizing as the regular meal. I had a chance to hear a joint talk by two COSA speakers, followed by a very nice ceremony for Jerry B. who has recently retired from many years of full-time service to the fellowship, as Director of Fellowship Services and then Director of Business Services, and finally the SAA keynote speaker of the evening.

We had our final Literature Committee meeting of the weekend on Sunday morning and welcomed a number of new members and said good-bye to some beloved members who were stepping down. After lunch we had a very successful LitCom workshop, a highlight being some very animated discussion of different possible orderings of the articles in *The Outer Circle*.

Another highlight for me was the bus trip into town on Sunday afternoon. I had a chance to have dinner at the Space Needle which I remember from when it was built as part of the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. I had much more of an opportunity during dinner to enjoy the view than I would have had if I had just gone up to the observation deck and looked around a bit. Even from that vantage point and the relatively clear skies we had that night I did not see Mt. Rainier, something I managed to miss all weekend; I have been assured by several people that it really does exist and is not just a legend made up by the locals. I even made it back to the charter bus in time to get back to the hotel for the evening and, given how poorly my interior compass functions, this was no small feat.

I'm afraid that the Monday morning convention brunches are the one time that I fail completely at being a vegan. I got to hear a wonderful panel discussion from four women in the program with whom I found I identified much more than I would have thought possible.

After the convention was over I found I still wanted to do one more walk-around and learned that morning from talking to my partner that he had stayed in a hotel just down the street from where I had been. He could only remember that the first part of the hotel's name was "Red" and I was able to refresh his memory as to the rest of it. Another four-hour plane ride and I was back in hot, humid Houston. And I think my body finally got adjusted to Seattle time during the trip back, as my sleep schedule is still not back to normal.

The biggest lesson for me on this trip is that I want to be sure to attend the Friday night ceremonies next year. Those ceremonies set the tone for me for the entire weekend, and if I miss them it is that much more difficult for me to integrate myself into the convention activities for the rest of the time. So I have my game plan already laid out for me for next year.

Conventions are always a great experience for me. I have been to every one since 1995, with the exception of the 2005 convention when I had overriding work-related obligations. Next year's convention is in another exciting locale, and I am already looking forward to it.



## **Addiction: A Matter of the Heart** by Santi L.

“The most powerful agent of growth and transformation is something much more basic than any technique: A change of heart.”

John Welwood

The toughest journey we will ever endure is the eighteen inches from our heads to our hearts! In order for any permanent growth and change to take place in our lives, we **MUST**, of necessity, have a change of heart. Many addicts “decide” to recover but their intellect gets in the way soon after their work begins. Unfortunately they are under the misconception that self-knowledge will help. They may even attend step meetings to learn about the disease. You might see some at meetings...sometimes with pen in hand studying, taking notes, totally immersed in this intellectual exercise. They plan to do this thing called recovery perfectly. They are convinced that they can think their way out of their addiction. They can not get to the required level within themselves where they are able to deal with causes and conditions so therefore they are left to dealing only with symptoms.

And I will give them one heart [a new heart] and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony [unnaturally hardened] heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh [sensitive and responsive to the touch of their God].

~Ezekiel 11:19 (Amp)

Being around recovery programs since 1977 and having sponsored many men along the way, I believe that the addicts who have the toughest time making this program are those who have been “gifted” with superior intellect. Their mind is their biggest enemy. They often have much difficulty in reaching out for help to get a sponsor. Reluctantly after months of internal warfare and disastrous results they reluctantly get a sponsor. In choosing a mentor they will often gravitate to those like themselves, those who I describe as “head people,” folks who have not developed the essential bare necessity to access their feelings. Somehow through sheer will power and intellect they have managed to put some sober time together, but of true recovery they know little. They have not come to accept the reality that for all of us, our best thinking got us here!

Positive thinking techniques, repetitive “mantras,” or sheer will power might exact a temporary change, but ultimately we will always return to our former ways, unless there is a true change of heart. The very self-protective barriers that we create due to fear caused by previous hurts, failures, and pain, also serve to keep us from receiving the transformation of heart that we so desperately need and desire.

There is a great line in the Big Book of A.A. regarding temptation which states; “Self-knowledge will not help us in those mental blind spots but adherence to spiritual principles appears to be the answer.” There is no amount of knowledge and proper thinking that will heal a broken heart. Let us open our hearts, yielding to the Spirit of grace, and allow ourselves to experience the liberation which comes as a result.

Let me share with you a beautiful verse we should all embrace from the scriptures, as we journey together on this road to happy destiny:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right,  
persevering, and steadfast spirit within me.

~Psalm 51:10 (Amp)

## Painted Bliss

by Richard G.

Who am I? Ask anyone else this question and they can tell you more about me than I can. Ask me this simple question and you will stump me for a good while until I conjure a creative, half-truth answer that's just enough to satisfy the most curious appetite. Realistically, I wouldn't be able to tell you one way or the other. All my life I've wondered how I got here, what my motivations have been, who my influences are, what morals I accumulated over the years; and after thirty-two of them, you'd think: “This guy's gotta have it figured out by now”. No chance.

Ask someone. Ask anyone who's ever known me. Ask if I'm a nice guy. I'm not trying to butter my own biscuit, but I think they'd tell you that I am. You see, something eerie, yet so remarkable, has ventured its way into my life within the past year – something terrible – something wonderful. Dark demons don't meander into one's life without just cause, without purpose. They will convince you that their way is the truth, that it is the way of life. They will comfort one, nurture one, guide one into a life so persevering that it seems all too absurd to turn the other way. Honestly, who would turn down complete, no-strings-attached happiness?

The demon I mention is painted bliss. We paint walls, demons paint bliss. They cover our faces and bodies until we no longer sense pain or anguish. What a beautiful color! My wife and I painted our living room a lush green that welcomes every soul who enters. Many birthdays ago, demons painted my body extravagant bliss, and now that the multiple coats have dried, I anxiously await the first signs of cracking and peeling. For lack of a better metaphor, I am a wall with feelings and logic. This wall has long stood the test of time, and is quite ready to try a new color.

After painting our living room walls, my wife and I took a few steps back to ponder the new look. A year ago, she looked at the wall she's been married to for seven years and said, "I'm not certain that's your color anymore." Ouch. The most unsettling reality of it was that I've enjoyed this color all my life. Why change now?

Paint manufacturers used to produce paint containing lead. Did we care back then? Those vomit green and bile blue colors were so "in." Do you remember the sickly yellow that swallowed the kitchen and settled the soul? We were so oblivious to the dangers lurking beneath the intoxicating fumes of freshly painted walls that lead poisoning was as far back in our minds as finding meaning in episodes of The Three Stooges. I realize now that my veins have been poisoned for a long time. Unfortunately, Painted Bliss No. Five was manufactured well before lead paint. If I expose myself to it long enough, it's only a matter of time before it seizes everything completely. Unless...

I was fortunate enough to marry a very skilled and talented painter. Don't get me wrong, Painted Bliss can fool the keenest eye of the most prestigious interior decorator, and it did for a long time. But one day about a year ago, she helped me see that this color really isn't right for me. Eventually, a tiny crack in the topcoat will surface. When this joyous occasion arises, I will most definitely start scraping and peeling. I need pain. We need pain. How else will we know when we're injured? Too often I've made the mistake of touching up blemishes. Truly, the blemishes never vanish, but the demons provide an abundance of touch-up paint that is difficult to resist. They provide us with addictions, lies, temptations, moral injustices providing instant gratification without immediate consequences and yes, you guessed it... bliss. I have one last thing to mention to my interior decorating demons of the soul:

Nothing is forever except God's love, not even your precious paint. His love perseveres. Can you paint over that?

## **I'm Flabbergasted!!**

By Don G.

Hi, my name is Don, I'm a recovering sex and porn addict. I believe my addiction to pornography started when I was ten years old while visiting relatives with my family. While there I discovered a large stash of "men's magazines" hidden throughout the home. Those images are still stuck in my head thirty-eight years later.

My fascination with pornography continued through my teen years on into my first marriage. Porn was constantly available during that time. Later, after my marriage ended, my pornography use escalated. I was receiving men's magazines in the mail and I was renting and collecting adult movies. In fact, I found myself ritualistically going to the video rental store at the same time and place every week renting X-rated movies.

My addiction took a turn for the worse when the internet became easily accessible. I bought a computer and my addiction exploded. One of the first things I did when I got my computer was to search for porn. I found myself spending vast amounts of my free time looking at porn on my computer, four to twelve hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year.

I tried to quit over and over again, year after year, and failed each time. When I failed at quitting, my pornography use worsened. I hit a bottom. Because of the tremendous pain I experienced, I ended up going to a counselor. Through the counseling, I became aware that I had to do everything I could in order to overcome my addiction. One of those actions involved joining SAA.

My recovery began with recognizing and healing the shame and guilt I felt from my behavior. I continue my journey of recovery by practicing the Twelve Steps and helping others to recover from their sexual addictions.

I've just celebrated my one year anniversary of being free of my addictive behavior.

Besides formally working Steps One through Nine with a sponsor and daily practicing Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve, there were several other actions I took to overcome my addiction.

As mentioned earlier, I met with an excellent counselor once a week. We worked on developing several dozen affirmations designed to repro-



gram my thoughts and beliefs about sex, women, and myself. We also did guided meditations to help rebuild my self-esteem. Even though I am no longer seeing him on a regular basis, I still meet with him when stress moves me towards a point of potentially acting out.

The next thing I did was to literally remove all of the pornography from my home. This included the collections of movies, magazines, and collections of pictures and stories on my computer. I canceled my internet connection and took my computer out of my home.

The next action I took was to install a software program on my work computers which tracks my internet activity and then e-mails that activity to chosen accountability partners. The software program that I chose is very difficult to get around. My accountability partners were friends and family members including my mom, my fiancée, my brothers and sisters, my counselor, and my closest friends. When I made the commitment to be free of porn, I knew that I wasn't going to hide it from anybody, because I wanted their help.

In our small town, there were no SAA meetings, so I had to start one. I was willing to do whatever it took to be free even if I had to start my own SAA meetings. We have two meetings per week now, and I'm fanatical about attending those meetings. I don't allow myself any excuse for missing a meeting.

The next important step that I took was to find a sponsor. For me, I turned to someone I knew who had over twenty years of recovery in AA and a Twelve-Step sexual addiction group. Because there were no other persons with extended recovery, the person I turned to was my fiancée, who is now my wife. I wouldn't be where I am without her guidance and knowledge of the steps.

Formally working the Twelve Steps took me from the shame, the guilt, and the unmanageability of my addiction to a freedom, a clearness of mind, and a working relationship with God. The positive changes I've experienced in my life during this past year leave me flabbergasted!

The last, but certainly not least, is my daily prayers. The few moments I spend on my knees in the morning ensures that I continue on the path of recovery. My simple prayers consist of asking for God to be with me throughout the day and guidance to do His Will.

I'd like to express my gratitude for the SAA program and all of the people I've met who attend the meetings. I wish all of you who read this article God's Blessing and the best that life can bring you.

## Grief and Recovery

by Greg C.

Loss and grief have been powerful forces in my recovery. I came to the program because I could not continue to live the way I had been living. Friends and recovery tools helped me walk through my mother's funeral sober. Today, twenty years later, I am walking through loss experienced as grief once again. Today I have sexual sobriety and I have the program of SAA to thank for that. My relapse into my inner circle behaviors caused me to ruin a loving friendship. The fallout was the loss of him and a close family-of-choice. Through this pain came a gift to stop unhealthy sexual behaviors and to accept myself as a gay man.

Working the Steps has given me back my feelings in all their wonder. We don't often hear what to do with loss: how do I embrace my real feelings but not wallow in self-pity? The view of myself as victim is hard to separate from grief at times. Living the Steps means I will experience the loss of many things. First, I will lose the pseudo-friend of my sexual acting-out behaviors. I experienced sadness when I realized that this couldn't soothe me or quiet the storm of emotions raging inside me. Loss of a past partner, family, or friends is part of the natural progress of life. As time passes I will cycle back into the process of grief many times. Grief is not an event but a flowing river. I step in and out through time and on occasions I have fallen into the rapids. Today was such a day and so I thought to reflect on what works for me.

I need to remind myself that a Higher Power that I call God loves me. When I cannot make that connection directly I call another person and tell him or her what is happening. I need always remember, "more will be revealed." The God of my understanding talks to me through other people and so I need to reach out, and then listen. I write and journal. Sometimes I write a letter I plan never to send, or will burn as a ritual of letting go. I look at what I have and not just what is gone. Then I turn to see whom I can help with my experience. I have a life of abundance because I have a spiritual program today.



**How do I embrace my real feelings  
but not wallow in self-pity? The  
view of myself as victim is hard to  
separate from grief at times.**



**Literature Editor's Note:** The following article came in during the same time frame as the previous one. As do all of our articles, it reflects one member's experience, strength and hope around the topics discussed.

## Too Much Focus on the Problem

by Gene D.

My discontents with the program of SAA as it presently operates are legion. I hardly know where to start. But begin I must, so I will begin with a central error: the SAA program is all problem and no solution. This is of course hyperbole, but only slightly.

Our first question must be: what does our program promise? Read the Steps. Read the promises as they appear in the discussion of the Ninth Step in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous; those promises are the best description of the fruits of recovery that I know. Nowhere do those sources promise abstinence. They do not promise sobriety. What the Twelfth Step promises us is a spiritual awakening as a result of working the steps. Inferentially, the Eleventh Step promises us conscious contact with God as we understand Him, an indispensable component of that spiritual awakening.

What the promises describe is an entirely new way of living – and of seeing and dealing with the world. It is nothing that we work to get; it just happens. We just wake up one day and realize that we are living a wholly different kind of life, and, at the same time we also realize that this state is nothing that we have earned or deserve, it is simply the breathtaking and wholly unanticipated action of God's grace in our lives. Inexplicable. Magical. In a word: a miracle.

The Twelfth Step is explicit about what we are to do once we have our spiritual awakening: we are to "to carry this message to other sex addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives." And the Fifth Tradition tells us "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the addict who still suffers." And the message that we are to carry is that if one works the steps he or she will have a spiritual awakening that will alter every aspect of life.

But our conference-approved materials take a different tack. The suggested format materials state in the "Who We Are" section that "our primary purpose is to stop our sexual addictive behavior and to help others recover from sexual addiction." That is different from what we say in our Fifth Tradition, that our primary purpose is to carry the message to those who still suffer. Our website is of the same mind; it states that "Our common goals are to become sexually healthy and to help other sex addicts achieve freedom from compulsive sexual behavior," which

is language taken from our conference approved description of our program. The difference is not a trivial one.

This approach is the kiss of death. Once we have stated that our primary purpose is to stop acting out, then our program loses its spiritual focus and our meetings degenerate into a litany of woe, wailing and weeping about how to stop those behaviors. I have sat through more meetings than I care to remember – and walked out on a not inconsiderable number of them – where the topic was what our compulsive behaviors were, or how we could recognize our addictive behavior, or how difficult a time we were having not looking at internet pornography, or how to avoid masturbating, or some such other topic. That ain't solution. That's problem. That's what we have sponsors for; that's not what we have meetings for. The conference approved description of meetings includes in its list of possible formats the "check-in meeting." In my experience, check-in meetings are simply invitations to whine.

The classic description of appropriate sharing in a Twelve Step meeting is sharing our experience, strength and hope. A meeting with such a goal has no place for the kinds of topics I have listed above. But our materials that say that stopping our sex addiction is the focus of our program encourage those very topics. If I go to an AA meeting and find people talking about their problems in staying sober or digressing into drunkologues, I know I am in a sick meeting and I want to get out in a hurry. Our meetings should be no different. In the many meetings that I have attended – their number is presently somewhere in the thousands – the percentage of meetings where the topic is the Steps or a specific step is well under ten percent. And, up until I started a Step/Tradition meeting in March of this year, I had never attended an SAA meeting other than a group conscience meeting where the traditions were discussed. Pitiful! This is a ship without a rudder.

Our addiction is no more than our ticket for admission into the program. The Third Tradition tells us that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop compulsive sexual behavior. I doubt that there is anyone in our fellowship who needs to have this set out in any detail. I have heard hundreds of sex addicts' stories in SAA, and the basic topography is the same: at some point in our lives we discovered that we were seriously out of control, that we didn't have a sex life – it had us. Perhaps it was because of an arrest, perhaps it was because our spouse caught us, as it were, with our pants down, and maybe we just reached the point where we had exhausted our powers of denial. Nobody comes into our rooms on a lark. We are each of us there because we have no other place to go. We don't need to talk about how bad it is or was. If we didn't know how bad things were we wouldn't be in the meetings in the first place. At our meetings, we don't need to spend our time wallowing in our addiction or comparing techniques for white-knuckling. We need experience strength and hope; it ain't easy to find.

The conference-approved booklet, "Abstinence and Boundaries," is a flat horror show. It gives us the examples of a small group of newcomers who relate their problems and then tell what they do in order to avoid those problems. If we accept the definition of sex addiction embodied in the First Step, that we are enmeshed in compulsive sexual behavior over which we are powerless, this booklet is advocating pure insanity: that we try to control our addiction by setting up boundaries – that is, by making a list of things that we will not do. If we are in fact powerless, this is an approach that guarantees failure. This booklet manifests no spiritual program; it's a let's-control-our-self-will-run-riot-on-our-own program. There's no God in that booklet; it's just a guide to white-knuckling.

When a newcomer enters our meetings and hears what goes on, he will not, unless he has had some experience in a sound Twelve Step program, know any better and will join the group in wandering in the wilderness, every now and then kicking in his two-cents' worth about how tough it is to stay sober or whatever topic has raised its ugly head that day. His chances, to coin a phrase, are less than average. Not because he is incapable of honesty, but because he is involved in a program that is leading him away from the source of real recovery, involved in a program with no fruit but sour grapes. And he will probably drop out. I love the dozens of friends I have in SAA recovery. But I truly mourn the hundreds I have seen come into the meetings for a while, usually a matter of days or weeks, occasionally a matter of years, who have simply disappeared without a trace.

In my experience and observation, ours is not an uncommon addiction. The widely touted figures on the profits of the various sex industries, figures in the billions of dollars, confirm to me that there are plenty of us out there. Where are they? They aren't in our meetings. SAA is over thirty years old. When AA was ten years younger, it claimed roughly six thousand groups with over one hundred fifty thousand alcoholics in recovery. We aren't playing in that league. I don't want to hear that our number is scant because of the stigma attached to our addiction. The stigma attached to alcoholism was just as strong when AA began. It was AA's success that started to change public opinion. For my money, SAA's root problem is that we aren't really a Twelve Step program. In our heart of hearts we as a program simply do not believe that our God can restore us to sanity. I'm not quite sure what we are, but a genuine Twelve Step program is the one thing I'm sure we aren't.

We need to start cleaning up our program and our meetings, and to that end, there needs to be mature, focused guidance from the ISO.

**Literature Editor's Note:** Interestingly, the following article came in the same week as the previous one, with a different approach to some of the same questions. The Outer Circle welcomes and seeks to print responses to these articles or any of the articles we print.

## **Celebrate Sobriety to Carry the Message**

by Tom (sexually sober since 9/9/97)

When I came to my first meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous, there were people in the room that had been sober for years. These were addicts just like me, who used to act out the way I did, but they had found a way to stay sober. This, more than anything else I saw or heard that night, told me that the SAA program works, that sobriety is possible through the Twelve Steps. That is the reason, the only reason, that we take coins for continuous sobriety in my home group. We celebrate sobriety in order to carry the message that lasting sobriety is possible.

Okay, sure, we like to party and eat cake and cheer and all that, but celebrating sobriety isn't about making ourselves feel good. It really isn't about us at all. When I take a coin, it's not to say that I am so great, it's to say that this program is so great, that God is great.

Just like any other form of service work, if I get my ego wrapped around it, and it becomes all about me, I'm no longer a humble servant, and my usefulness to the newcomer is greatly diminished. Likewise, if I don't get a coin, and my ego is tied up in getting one, I could experience shame. But it is not the group's practice of celebrating the success of our program that causes shame. It is my own ego-driven approach to the practice that leaves me feeling less-than if I am not a "sobriety superstar."

While showing newcomers that we can and do stay sober is the most important service we provide by celebrating sobriety, members who come back to take a newcomer coin after a relapse also perform a valuable service to the group. First, they remind us that relapse is possible, even after extended periods of sobriety. I listen hard when someone shares about a relapse. I want to know what aspect of the program they neglected, or what new procedures they will put in place to stay sober this time. It is indeed humbling to relapse after a long period of abstinence, but when that experience is shared with the group, we all get a needed dose of that humility, that none of us might become complacent. Second, these members model for the rest of us, and especially for the newcomer, how to respond to a relapse. Do we keep it a secret and quietly go on with our meetings as though nothing had happened? Not if I want to stay sober I don't! The program tells me to admit my errors, put them right as quickly

as I can, and share about the experience so that others might benefit from it.

In all my years of meetings, I have NEVER seen a group heap shame or disapproval upon a member who comes to a meeting to share about a relapse. People who relapse are given love, support, and encouragement. We never give up on anybody, no matter how many times they relapse. They are always welcomed back with open arms just as soon as they express a desire to stop their addictive behavior, which is the ONLY requirement for membership.

I know of groups that give out coins for "time in program" instead of time sober. I think this is dangerously misguided and a serious disservice to the newcomer. What kind of message does it carry for someone to take a coin for years "in program," and then turn around and share about their latest acting-out debacle? Of course, some people do hang around meetings for years without experiencing the release from addiction and spiritual transformation that come as the result of taking these Twelve Steps, but is that something we want to celebrate? I do not believe that the message of our program is that if we just act out less often, our lives will get better. The Twelve Steps were founded on the certainty that the only way for an addict to recover is one hundred percent abstinence. That is one reason it was so crucial to admit that I was powerless over my addictive behavior. If I believe that I can act out every now and then and still manage my life, I am doomed to perpetuate the cycle of relapse. It is imperative that I do not kid myself about this. My goal is continuous sobriety, and the length of continuous sobriety is the most tangible evidence that the program is working. Yes, I can only get it done one day at a time, so I need to stay in the moment and just take care of today, but long-term, continuous sobriety is the key to my continued spiritual growth and to maximizing my usefulness to God and the people about me.

Long-term sobriety is possible. People really do get sober and stay sober in SAA. I have been to meetings where there was a grim resignation in the air, as though the collective conclusion of the group was that nobody ever really stays sober, that relapse is inevitable, that the best we can do is keep struggling and hope we don't act out quite so much as we used to. Poppycock! That's NOT my program, that's not how the Twelve Steps work, as I understand them. We can be free of our addictive behavior. I believe that any addict who is willing to take these simple Steps can stop acting out, lose the desire to act out, and have a happy and useful life. That is the message of our program, and that is why we celebrate sobriety. "It works – it really does."

## The Bubble

by Linn P.

“Okay...someone needs to get me out of the bubble—TODAY!” This was a serious demand from a character in a movie I once saw. She was floating over the car wash and unable to control her destiny because she was stuck inside a soap bubble.

That is how I felt when I walked into my first meeting. I needed relief, I needed support and I needed to be set free from myself and my addiction. I was a shell of a person encased in a prison of my own making. Denial kept me in the Bubble, caught in an endless cycle. I would act out, and then feel immense shame and remorse, bargaining with God because I didn't want to give up the life I knew, but knowing full well something had to change. To comfort myself, I would act out again and feel even deeper feelings of guilt and self hatred. I felt worthless unless I was being admired and/or used by a man. My sexuality became a commodity that I traded for the momentary high of attention, flattery and the intrigue of what “could be.” Ironically, I never ever wanted anything “to be” because I was terrified that would ruin the rush for me. As soon as anyone would show any sincere interest in me, I would find fault with him and become so difficult that he would leave. Another could only occupy the Bubble with me if he accepted the falseness of that reality.

To me, the Bubble represents facing denial straight on and moving towards the truth about myself. In my powerlessness, I found solace there. It protected me from facing myself, the real world and responsibility. It kept me perpetually enslaved in behavior that was killing me. I didn't know who I was, I didn't know right from wrong, and I clearly could not see the negative intentions of others. That created tremendous problems for me and non-stop crisis in my life. I was a gambler – gambling with my life and health on the hope that the next hand would be a winner. I withstood unthinkable physical and emotional abuse from people I trusted. I gave so much of myself that it was difficult to see where I left off and my addictive self began.

In the Bubble I did not hurt. Only by piercing a hole in it, breaking down the denial and daring to live in the real world, am I beginning to see a new life and future. In the honesty and pain of facing my addiction, I have hope. Before coming to SAA, I had two lives: My life in the Bubble ruled by harmful sexual behaviors that I was powerless to stop and the real world which was hell for me because it was so out of control and unmanageable. As I progress in recovery, I only have one life. That life only has room for honesty, humility and healthy thoughts and actions. The lure of the Bubble remains, but is becoming dimmer as I grow stronger through working the program.



Facing the truth about myself is painful. Step One is painful. Triggers stink and old thought patterns seem never to fade away. Withdrawal can be unbearable. The images and sensations of my past behaviors that were comfortable for decades are not as appealing as sobriety is now. I don't accept dishonesty anymore, from myself, from others or in my life. My friends in SAA have taught me to share the good, the bad, and the ugly because we all understand and support each other. Our connections are raw and honest and that beats the Bubble any day.

I have been shown how to live in the moment; not what was or what can be, but what is before me today. With the help of my Higher Power, I can be healthy, positive, and do the next best thing. What lies ahead I cannot anticipate nor do I care to. The solution for me is to surround myself with positive people and events. Meetings, self care, and boundaries keep me from desiring to reenter the womb-like security of the Bubble. Knowing that the Bubble will eventually burst and that I am fully surrounded by the love and care of my Higher Power helps me through the trials. That is how it works for me—outside of the Bubble.



## More Addictive Math

by Ed G.

In The March/April issue, the “Let’s Do the Math” article reminded me of something I came up with while serving as an Inmate Program Aide in the state’s sex offender program. It is akin to a mathematical formula:

Thoughts + Feelings + Behavior + Opportunity = Acting Out/Offending

Depending on how long one has developed obsessive sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the acting out can take days, weeks, months, even years, to happen – or it can happen in a matter of minutes once opportunity presents itself.

**Thoughts:** My mind was consumed with thinking of ways to meet my perceived sexual “needs” – or, in the words of my Sex Offender counselor, my “sexual wants.” I doubt a day went by when I didn’t think of with whom, where, and when, my perceived sexual needs/wants would be satisfied. I had no idea that I was treading in addictive waters. Me addicted? No way! Being in places where there were a lot of females provided me with a veritable smorgasbord of thoughts as well as feelings. They gave me the fodder for my fantasy sexual world. Consequently, dwelling on sexual matters is the essential first step to eventually acting out.

**Feelings:** We all have them – from feeling good to feeling sad and many others. But unchecked sexual feelings are Step Two in the “acting-out” formula. If our thoughts are often sexual in nature, they are bound to generate sexual feelings. The sexual feelings I had reduced my effectiveness, in my eyes at least, in both work and volunteer activities. Seeking and finding sexual gratification took a lot of my time and gave me a false sense that I was okay – that I was in charge of my life – “I’m the man.” I didn’t try to get in touch with my real feelings. I was, frankly, scared to look at them. I certainly knew what I was feeling was not right, but kept busy to avoid having to deal with them. Yet, at the same time, I stressed myself to the point that I mentally cried out for sexual relief, my “drug” of choice.

**Behavior:** As sex addicts, we obviously think sexual thoughts and develop sexual feelings all too frequently. The third part of the equation is usually considering ways to deal with them. Our behavior may be as “innocent” as viewing pornography either through books, magazines, or videos, or occasionally on the internet, for example, or it may go from “innocent” masturbation, for example, to the eventual violation of another human being, as I did. Use of many of the pornographic choices mentioned fueled my desire for live contact – or vigorous personal sexual expressions to the exclusion of work, family, and friends. For the purpose of simplification, I use the term “pornography” to include all forms of sexual display: movies, strip clubs, adult book stores, etc. When these three forces built up, and opportunity presented itself, I was ready to act out.

**Opportunity:** This is the phase where serious acting out can soon become a reality. We have thought sexual thoughts and experienced sexual feelings (and they are most powerful feelings) and perhaps some “innocent” sexual behavior.

In an effort to appease our overactive sexual being, we can even create our own opportunities. However, when we don't rein in our inappropriate sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, we put ourselves in a position to act on them – also often inappropriately. Yes, sometimes opportunity falls into our lap, but more often we are prone to make it happen.

**Acting Out/Offending:** In short, doing the “deed.” Yes, we may have demonstrated some acting-out behavior in the third part of the equation, but now we've gone critical. Whether it be excessive self fulfillment or involving others, it is a demonstration of our “powerlessness over addictive sexual behavior.” We have directly or indirectly affected others in our quest for sexual fulfillment as we see it.

So, how do we counteract the “acting-out” formula? One way, of course, is professional counseling. Self-education is another way. However, both of those have definite limitations.

Professional counselors are, for the most part, limited by probably not having experienced the unchecked, powerful draw that sexual thoughts and feelings can have on someone so addicted. And certainly, it is rare that one can self-educate him- or herself out of excessive sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. However, both methods may be useful. And this is where SAA comes in.

Meeting with like-minded addicted people, sharing stories, experiences, and solutions, working the Steps with a concerned and positive sponsor can do more to bring understanding and sexual sobriety to the addict than just counseling and/or self-education. And this leads to another formula:

Knowledge + Tools + Desire = Sexual Sobriety

- **Knowledge:** Knowing yourself and why your sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors play such a dominant role in your life – and how they can impact on others.
- **Tools:** Anger management, meditation, counseling, medication, to give a few examples, are helpful, but the understanding that comes from sharing with others in SAA is the proverbial “icing on the cake” of sexual sobriety.
- **Desire:** I can have all the knowledge and tools available at my disposal, but if I do not have the desire to change my sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, then sexual sobriety probably is not going to happen.
- **Sexual sobriety:** This does not necessarily mean abstinence, though for some it may be necessary. It is acting sexually responsible with yourself and others. To reach sexual sobriety is a journey – not a destination. If I take what I have learned from all sources and apply them to my daily life – especially the Twelve Steps – I will find the journey becoming easier and easier.

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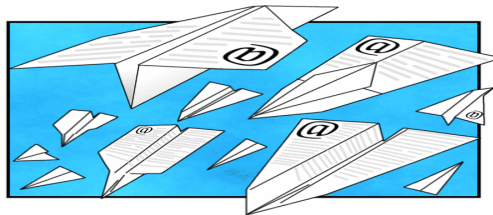
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**Second:** Send your article by e-mail to: [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)

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**Third:** Send the **Article Release Form** below. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

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

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