

THE OUTER CIRCLE



The Area Formation Issue
How different groups are forming areas — and what it's teaching them about their recovery



PLUS

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fear

Changes Coming to SAA

When Meetings are 'Too Far'





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *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 at <https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter/>.

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

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

Why Area Formation is Good for Recovery

BY GARY T.

Forming areas takes no small amount of service work. And in my experience, service is one of the key ingredients in sobriety.

It's not hyperbole to say that SAA is currently going through one of the biggest transformations in its history, though most members are unaware such an event is even happening.

The event in question is the move from a regional structure in which each group is allowed a delegate at the international conference to an area structure in which each area will be allowed a delegate at the conference. In effect, this change will result in a much smaller voting body that will determine the future course of the fellowship. But just as importantly, the area structure has the potential to drive more conversation and collaboration among groups within certain geographic regions.

Many groups have already gotten together and gone through the process of area formation. Some have even had their first area meetings. But more than twenty major areas — including some of the biggest metros — have yet to submit proposals.

That's why I decided to devote this issue to the area formation process with four different stories about members forming areas — and what they learned in the process. Initially, I thought these stories would simply provide a road map for other groups to follow in their area formation process. And while these stories do that, they also do something even more important: They show how the area formation process helps the recovery process.

Why? Forming areas takes no small amount of service work. And in my experience, service is one of the key ingredients in establishing and maintaining sobriety. So if you're wondering about whether to get involved in area formation, you might ask yourself a variation on what JFK asked the country: What it can do for you, rather than what you can do for it.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Changes are a Comin'

BY PAUL M.

Many projects that have been in the works for years are starting to come to fruition.

It is spring and time for renewal and change. Many projects that have been in the works for years are starting to come to fruition.

The area concept was started by the ISO Structure Committee; the Area Coordinating Committee will bring the final plan to this year's conference. The area concept will hopefully allow a larger part of the local group conscience to be heard at the international level. We continue to grow (1865 meetings as of March 28) and hearing the effective voice of the fellowship is as important as ever.

SAA Connect (formerly known as SAA TV) is starting to see some action. The Board approved the basic concept and we have hired a new project manager to help get us rolling. This will be a web-based system for access to convention podcasts, videos of people possibly telling their recovery stories, connections with others about sponsoring and step work, an electronic Service Manual, and many more tools. We also need to develop a phone application since seventy-six percent of the users coming to our site are on mobile devices now.

Our Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) work is expanding. We have hired a new administrative assistant to help our PI & CPC manager with supporting the local fellowships in attending many more professional conferences so we can reach those providers and help get the word out about SAA. The professional community is one of the most important friends we have in reaching the addict that still suffers.

We are working on upgrading our store and more will be revealed soon. It has been by the graces of your donations that we have been able to fill these two new positions for the ISO office. Please keep donating.

DEAR GRACE

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Fears

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

How do we learn
to heed internal
warnings that
protect our
safety, but also
courageously
take appropriate
healthy risks?

Dear Grace,

Is fear a character defect? I thought fear was a natural emotion.

Signed,

Uncertain

Dear Uncertain,

That is a great question. Since “there is no one correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 21), there are differing viewpoints on the subject.

On page 34, *Sex Addicts Anonymous* defines character defects as, “flaws in our moral nature that prevent us from aligning ourselves with God’s will; they are expressions of our willfulness.” Whether or not a person chooses to label them as “defects,” a fundamental principle of SAA is examining “all the beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and actions that have shaped our lives.” (page 32) Then, with the help of a sponsor or others in the program, we highlight which “aspects of temperament ... hold back our spiritual growth and keep us locked in self-defeating habits, attitudes, and beliefs” (pages 38-39).

Fear — in and of itself — is not bad or wrong. In fact, it’s good! Fear is an instinctive emotion which indicates a situation might potentially be dangerous, painful, or harmful to us. It’s a natural emotion which keeps us alive and safe. However, in our addiction many of us “risked our lives, health, careers, or relationships, while denying that we were in danger” (page 35). So, ignoring healthy fear is obviously harmful.

On the other hand, fear can also obscure reason,

intensify emotions, and paralyze us in our recovery if not acknowledged and worked through. In our Fourth Step inventory, many of us describe how fear “motivated actions that we later regretted, how it prevented us from achieving the things we desired, or how the fear of intimacy and commitment contributed to our loneliness. Many of us have found that fear was a pervasive influence throughout our lives, profoundly affecting our beliefs, our relationships, and our self-worth” (page 35). It’s easy to see why some view fear as one of the “defects that have isolated us from God and our fellows” (page 45).

Perhaps instead of, “Is fear a defect?” we could ask ourselves, “How do we learn to heed internal warnings that protect our safety, but also courageously take appropriate healthy risks?” The twelve steps can help us. For example, after recognizing our powerlessness over fear in our lives (Step One), we come to believe that our Higher Power can help us find equilibrium (Step Two). The Steps help us identify and surrender debilitating fear to our Higher Power, repair damages caused by fear-based choices, and seek help in discerning whether we need to turn away from



danger (and call a sponsor or program friend for support) or bravely step outside our comfort zone.

If we respond to fear in a self-defeating way, that response becomes a character defect. The response or behavior is the defect, not the original emotion of fear. With the help of the Steps, our sponsor, and support team, we can learn healthy responses to face and handle fear.

In service,

Grace

*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.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

'Keep Coming Back' Paid Off

BY STEVE B.

For years and years, it was a mystery why I could not get sober.

I have been in the program for a long, long time. I live in Portland, Oregon, and attended the first meeting organized in town. I believe it was in the mid-1990's. I was so thankful for meetings and support from other addicts, but I could not stay sexually sober. It was perplexing to me for so long. I would add elements to my recovery: therapy, celibacy, more meetings, working with a sponsor.... But for years and years, it was a mystery why I could not get sober.

Now with more than six-and-a-half years of sobriety, I can do a little Monday morning quarter-backing. For so long, I felt awful after acting out. I would say that my life was unmanageable and that I was powerless. Yet, in reality, my actions didn't show it. I went to work the next day and paid my rent just fine. That continued for many years. Until I couldn't anymore.

My disease was progressing even as I was in the program but not staying sober. As I got older, my attractiveness was fading and it was scaring me. Acting-out was more and more a harsh experience, and I still couldn't stop.

Being an addict, I upped the ante and began doing hard drugs. This blew my addiction and my life up completely. I was now on a rocket ship pointed to my bottom. Unthinkable consequences began to happen pretty suddenly. I lost my job of nineteen years. Within another year, I got arrested. And then I lost my home of fourteen years. My disease still had me thinking that I could not get sober.

And in what seemed like just another horrible act out, I had an epiphany: if I did exactly what someone in the program who has long term

sobriety did, I *could* stay sober. No more adding and subtracting pieces to my recovery myself. For once I would follow the exact instructions of my sponsor.

Two others pieces that supported that formula.

1. No acting out or using *no matter what*.
2. Digging into the steps in the most personal way possible.

My sponsor agreed to work with me until I stopped following those exact instructions. (He is still with me today. Thank God for him!)

As I began the Steps, my feelings got hurt. People didn't see the internal change, and for awhile I would get upset. But the agreement had been set and the Steps helped me work through the internal and external changes happening.

Something amazing happened pretty quickly that had never happened in all my years: the obsession to act-out and use lifted to the point where I no longer wanted to act-out and use. That was such a gift; I was inspired to keep going.

At Step Five, the biggest change happened. I realized that it was me creating my pain! Talk about freedom.

Working the rest of the Steps ce-

mented this change. And then, the Traditions became such an important factor in my life. They show me over and over how to be in my life. In meetings for sure, but in my relationships, at work. Working them and applying them has given me freedom I could have never imagined.

The age I am today was what I was so afraid of. What good would a sex addict my age be? Turns out I was so very wrong there. Turns out this is the best time of my life.

And I never lose gratitude. I am grateful today. How do I stay grateful? I connect with other addicts daily and dig into those traditions and steps. I avoid isolation at all costs and share what I can to members who seem discouraged. And I offer the best words any addict can share. When a person who has relapsed and says, "How can I start over still again?" I just say "I'll tell you what I did..."

Thank God for SAA, other addicts, and especially my sponsor for a life I could have never imagined. I am willing today.

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



Piecing It Together

How different groups are forming areas — and what it's teaching them about recovery

BY THE AREA COORDINATING COMMITTEE

In this issue of *The Outer Circle* there are four stories from area advocates about their experiences in getting the area formation process started. In all of them we see transformation as people begin to grasp the tremendous potential for bringing the ISO and affairs that affect SAA as a whole to their areas. The awareness that the ISO is coming to the fellowship rather than the fellowship coming to the ISO is exciting and contagious.

The stories also talk about the challenges and difficulties encountered in that process. Challenges included apathy or even outright opposition to some parts of the process as well as logistics and what the mission of the area assembly should be. Meeting these challenges also contributed to growth in recovery for the area advocates, as well as for those who joined them to help launch areas in their locales. Service keeps us sober, but not because it's easy!

We hope you will read these stories and be inspired to get involved in setting up an area where you are (or with your electronic meeting group) if there isn't already a proposal in. Even if one has been submitted, the areas all need motivated volunteers to get involved to make them realize their potential.

Let's all help SAA move to the next stage of development: areas. 2020 — the date

conference delegates have set for officially moving to the area structure — will be here sooner than it seems!

And much can come of area formation beyond just creating an area. For example, in San Diego, the local fellowship is forming an intergroup as well as an area. While these two actions may seem confusing, this process might be a good way for a local fellowship that doesn't have an intergroup to get one started.

The point is, there's no limitation on areas that would prevent this or other approaches, and area formation is an opportunity to look at new organization structures that might be more effective than those already in place.

Typically, intergroups are smaller in geographic scope than areas and have a broader scope of activities. As a “minimalist mission,” areas will hold assemblies to discuss the business motions submitted for the annual meeting of the Conference then sending a delegate to that meeting. There is no limit to the scope, but this is the minimum.

Intergroups, on the other hand, often will host websites, have phone lines set up to answer questions from prospective members, host retreats, and perform outreach activities, among other possible things. They do not, as a general rule, debate issues that affect SAA as a whole, but rather focus on supporting the addict in their vicinity.

As we move closer to the annual meeting of the conference in 2019, the Area Coordinating Committee is continuing to reach out to people all over the world, encouraging them to engage in the area formation process by submitting area proposal forms.

Currently there are twenty-five areas that have submitted proposals. We still need area proposal forms from Orange County (CA), Los Angeles, the Central Coast (CA), San Francisco Bay Area, Illinois, Kansas/Missouri, Michigan, Kentucky, Virginia, Gulf Coast (Louisiana + Mississippi), Southern Florida, Tennessee/Western NC, New England & Canadian Maritime provinces, UK, New York City, the electronic meetings, Alberta/Saskatchewan/Manitoba, Ontario/Quebec, Spanish language meetings, and most other areas outside of the US.

If you are in one of these areas, please consider becoming an area advocate and moving the process forward. Never underestimate the power of one person to make a difference in their world!

We would also love to hear from those who have started the area process themselves, or if anyone has any questions about the process or the next steps. Please send them to acc.feedback@saa-iso.org. We are considering the possibility of setting up conference call forums to talk about the process, challenges, things that worked or didn't, etc. If this would be of value to you, please let us know!

The I-40 Desert Area Evolved Over Time

In early 2016, a few of the members in Arizona who were supportive of and engaged in the process to move to an area-based structure got together and discussed possibilities for local area formation.

The initial approach was to form a statewide Arizona area. After talking with members from the southern Arizona intergroup and another local group with a large number of meetings, this core group of four members opted to focus on groups in the central and northern part of the state, excluding the twenty or so meetings at one location southeast of Phoenix.

These four groups announced their intent to hold an area assembly to the central and northern Arizona intergroup and invited other interested groups to participate.

At the same time, they sought the support of their home groups and were elected through group conscience to act as Group Service Representatives (GSRs). One member volunteered to act as area advocate, and the first area assembly for the central and northern Arizona area was organized and held at a member's home in May of 2016.



At that first area assembly, after electing a chair, second chair, treasurer, and secretary, the four members decided to focus their efforts on: (1) Getting the word out about electing and registering GSRs to groups not yet participating, and (2) defining the geographic boundaries of the area and completing the proposed area registration form (completed that same month).

The group decided to hold quarterly area assemblies scheduled directly after and at the same location as local intergroup meetings.

Participation has slowly but steadily grown with most recently twelve registered GSRs and interested members attending or calling in. As a result of a request from the Albuquerque intergroup in 2018, the geographic boundaries of the area were expanded to include the northern half of New Mexico. As a result, the area name was changed to the I-40 Desert Area.

In addition to the growth in participation over the last three years, the area has been able to raise more than

\$800 toward the goal of funding an area delegate to the annual meeting of the conference in 2020. Among the several challenges the area faces, getting GSRs registered is high on the list.

While a number of members have shown interest in the process and have even attended area assemblies, getting formally elected by their home groups and registering as a new GSR frequently falls through the cracks! The area is currently considering adding a “registrar” trusted servant position to work with members to get registered and keep track of the area GSR registrant list. Drafting area bylaws is also in the works.

What an exciting time to be involved in international service! Participation in the area formation process, like all service opportunities, seems to be contributing to at least one sex addict staying sober.

— *Brian S.*

Area Formation Led to a New Intergroup

I have been involved in recovery in SAA since July of 2000. When I started, there were three meetings a week in San Diego County. The average attendance was about seven. About thirteen

What an exciting time to be involved in international service! Participation in the area formation process seems to be contributing to at least one sex addict staying sober.

years ago, a few of us decided to create an outreach committee to meet once a month and send out flyers to local clergy and mental health care providers, letting them know about SAA and local meetings as a resource for their clients.

At the time, it seemed like the most direct route to serve the primary purpose of the Fifth Tradition “... to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.” A wonderful byproduct of our outreach meeting was to learn how to bring together the local SAA community to coordinate our resources to be of service to others. Today we have fifteen SAA meetings each week. The meetings that I attend now have between fifteen and forty members in attendance.

In December of 2017, we were contacted by a representative of the ISO Area Coordinating Committee. He described the goal of “coming up with a proposed set of areas.” The vision was to have each geographic area be compact, comprised of twenty to

thirty-five meetings if possible.

In order to achieve this goal, he suggested that the “San Diego Area” could include meetings in Temecula and Palm Springs, areas that were outside of San Diego County. He said, “The hard part is simply getting a group conscience of the groups in a proposed area.”

The San Diego County fellowships already had a strong affiliation with each other through outreach. Likewise, we were familiar with more than a couple of our fellows from Temecula. But we did not know anyone in the fellowship in Palm Springs.

So in early January of 2018 we sent an email out to a distribution of folks from the San Diego and Temecula fellowships to invite representatives to a meeting to describe to each meeting’s fellowship what an area is and why they are being formed.

Also, we wanted to inform the San Diego fellowship that we would like to form an intergroup to represent and perform service in the interest of the San Diego area fellowship. We requested that each meeting elect a representative to send to a formation meeting to be held in two months and to be prepared to vote on whether to form a San Diego County area and whether to form a San Diego County intergroup.

We had a good turnout and participation from most of the meetings



in San Diego County and Temecula. We also communicated with contacts from Palm Springs who agreed to deliver the message to the fellowship there with the goal of getting consensus. We agreed to meet again in two months to hear the response from our fellowship. The answer was unanimous that we should proceed with both plans.

We have continued to meet every other month at a member’s home since our first meeting. We made conference calls available for those who have not been able to attend in person. We elected temporary trusted servants (chairperson and secretary). We appropriated a copy of the Austin fellowship’s bylaws to adapt as our own. Two of our fellows volunteered to draft the document that they hoped would work for all of us.

Over four subsequent meetings we reviewed, rewrote, and sent a draft out to all of our fellowships for their group conscience. In January of this year, we voted to approve our bylaws for the San Diego Area Intergroup.

In March of this year, we elected trusted servants for a term of two

years. We are discussing moving the meeting around the county to encourage more attendance. We are also encouraging a few trusted servants to attend some of the fellowship meetings in Palm Springs to introduce themselves, answer questions and concerns and encourage participation.

Gratefully, we have not felt that we had to deal with a challenging deadline to accomplish this. The first area conference is in 2020, so there is still plenty of time to create an area without taking on the added pressure of an impending deadline.

If I am completely honest, I came into this process kicking and screaming. I did not want to be part of the bureaucracy of our fellowship. I enjoy serving locally, dealing more directly with the addict that is still suffering. I had been encouraged and mildly cajoled to help start an intergroup.

It wasn't until I received the email from the ACC member that I was moved to be of service in this capacity. It was gratifying and humbling to be a part of the experience that created something that will facilitate bringing more resources to the addict still suffering in and out of our home area. I even threw my name into the hat for a trusted service position on our intergroup.

—Cliff N.

It was gratifying and humbling to be a part of the experience that created something that will facilitate bringing more resources to the addict still suffering in and out of our home area.

Answering the Question: 'Why Areas?'

I was not too keen on the idea of a representative government replacing a town meeting format when I first heard about it. The current format seemed to be democracy in action.

But I went with the group conscience. I tried unsuccessfully to hold an area assembly (no one showed); scheduled two teleconference area assemblies plus a third meeting at the annual SAA retreat. Only four people showed up on the teleconference, including our board rep, two local interested members, and me. I suggested several options for selecting an area based on which meetings I thought had common interests. The group voted instead to propose a



different area, but then voted not to send in an area registration form. So, frustrated after two tele-assemblies, I gave up and didn't attend on the retreat assembly I had called. Not exactly a great start to area formation!

However, I didn't give up.

The question that kept coming up, and which I couldn't answer, that defeated all my attempts locally to raise awareness and interest was: "Why should we fill out area registration forms to form an area? The ISO would do whatever they want anyway."

My next idea was to put forming an area on the agenda for the local intergroup meeting and the intergroup voted to propose a completely different alignment of meetings for areas. People committed to signing the area registration forms. We did the background work of getting all the meeting detail information from the ISO office, filling in all that detail for all the meetings and rounding up

signatures. Then we sent them in to ISO office. (Note from the Area Coordinating Committee — now you can ask the ACC for that information, at acc_feedback@saa-iso.org.)

When I recently read the ACC article on area formation from the March-April TOC, I finally heard the answer to the "Why should I care?" question:

Choosing an area and area assembly well gives us an on-going voice in the fellowship! The ISO is not some bunch of old men meeting somewhere else and doing whatever they choose. It is the membership, including you and me. With areas properly selected so that everyone can be a part, we can observe one small part of the ISO Conference business meetings in our annual area assembly. We will therein discuss, vote, and arrive at a group conscience for the same issues as the other areas. We can observe *and be* the ISO in action!

Now it is important to us to properly

select an area for maximum local participation, with diversity and inclusion, including those without financial resources to travel, and those new to the fellowship. Now I am excited about area formation and taking part in the ISO mission, right in my home community!

—*Anonymous*

Understanding the Benefit of Area Formation

I first got involved in the area formation process when I returned from the 2016 convention/conference, but ran out of energy. I turned in my service resume and got approached by the Nominating Committee in 2017 to be on the Area Coordinating Committee. I didn't know much about area formation, but based on the relatively low number of people I saw at the conference (one-hundred-twenty-five or so in 2017), I didn't think it was really needed. Once on the committee, I quickly realized that I had misunderstood the great benefit of area formation — the ISO is coming to the local fellowships, rather than the other way around!

As far as I could tell, no one in eastern NC was particularly interested in area formation, so being newly motivated, I decided to try to get us moving. I was also embarrassed that eastern NC hadn't

Choosing an area and an area assembly well gives us an ongoing voice in the fellowship! The ISO is not some bunch of old men meeting somewhere else and doing whatever they choose.

put in an area proposal, even though I was on the ACC! Even recovery actions taken for questionable reasons can result in good things in my recovery.

I initially thought the area and the intergroup could be the same, but the intergroup representatives didn't like that idea.

So the area had to be independent. I proposed that eastern NC might make a reasonable area, and soon found out that Charlotte had put in a proposal. Based on that, I talked with some people in the Triangle Area Intergroup about possible geographic boundaries for an area. I then reached out to the non-local meetings, and after discussions and consensus with them and the intergroup, I put together the actual proposal in December 2017.

Since I had a list of the meetings in the proposed area in a spreadsheet available from the ACC, the paperwork was easy. It took all of about an hour, which



Seeing excitement and commitment grow has been the most gratifying aspect of this process for me. To see others who also get involved in the new direction is deeply satisfying.

included drawing lines on a map — the hardest part. For that I used Microsoft Paint and Google Maps.

Once this was submitted, the next step was to put together an area assembly. The target was September of 2018, so the area could come to a group conscience to carry to the annual meeting of the Conference. I started talking about it at meetings and intergroup meetings in March or April, and several members “caught the bug” and got excited about what it meant and the prospects.

I discussed where a good venue would be with some of the interested members, set a date for the first area assembly, and started contacting meetings in the prospective area. I had some help from local members with this.

One thing I didn’t want to happen was for the assembly to convene and have no one volunteer to serve as trusted servants. So I asked around

in advance and recruited people who would be willing to serve as chair and treasurer. That was all I could get, but I think that was a crucial part of making the startup a success.

The week before the assembly, a hurricane hit the coast and parked there for days. We had to reschedule and picked a Saturday in November. So the business motions from the conference ended up being moot points that I just reported on.

I made an agenda, and had the new service structure, a highly-abridged version of Robert’s Rules, the business motions for the conference, a proposed purpose for the meeting, and a few other documents to hand out. The local intergroup agreed to support the assembly by buying lunch for any of the attendees who wanted it.

We held the assembly, the candidates I had recruited were enthusiastically elected, and we filled the other trusted

servant positions. Twelve members came, roughly a third of the maximum number. The group decided not to work on bylaws until the scope of the area's activities could be decided. Almost everyone came to lunch, it was a great time of fellowship.

Since then, we have had a second assembly, where we worked on the mission and vision statements for the area. We are starting to raise money to send a delegate to the 2020 annual meeting of the Conference. In February, there were fourteen in attendance. I hope this will increase.

We are examining ways to increase participation, particularly from the outlying groups. Proposals being considered include reimbursing outlying group representatives for mileage and mixed face-to-face and electronic meetings. To mass-register the GSRs, I sent the list of GSRs we have from contacting the groups into the ISO. I wanted to keep it simple!

Seeing excitement and commitment grow has been the most gratifying aspect of this process for me. I care deeply about this fellowship, and to see others who also get involved in the new direction is deeply satisfying. I look forward to seeing where the eastern NC area goes and how the new structure of the ISO works out.

—*Mike K*

A Call to Arms

By **Amy M.**

Years ago, when I was introduced to the outdoors, my dad told me, "Leave the campsite cleaner than when you found it." We are currently in a position where we can do that for our fellowship.

For many of us, SAA has been vital to our continued recovery. We haven't had to worry much about the week-to-week function of it. How it was designed, the materials that have been provided, and the structure of the group were all established long ago.

It is time to funnel some of our gratitude into action.

Now, we have a chance to ensure this opportunity for sobriety remains strong and available to people like us who may be discovering SAA for the first time. Further, through our regional input, we make SAA relevant and revitalized in our communities.

I'm aware of all the challenges involvement may represent to everyone, but I'm asking you all to please consider making this a priority. The more support we have going forward, the easier the job will be for all. ●

DEAR WILL

What to Do When Meetings Are 'Too Far'

BY WILL

If you feel like meetings are too far away, ask yourself: How far did you travel to act out?

Dear Will,

I am looking at the meeting schedule for my area, and it looks like none of the meetings are less than ten miles from me. It's going to be difficult for me to get to meetings that far away. Do you have any suggestions?

Transportationally Challenged

Dear TC,

If you hang around long enough, you will hear somebody answer your question or a similar one from someone else by saying, "Well, how far did you travel to act out?" So I would say that the first question to ask yourself is, "Can I really not travel that far to go to a meeting or do I just not want to be bothered with it?" I'm hoping that your answer is the latter and that you can find a way to get to some meetings.

I was actually in the same situation as you when I was new to SAA. There were no meetings close to me, although I had no problem with driving to the meetings. Most of my acting-out involved driving anyway, so it was just a question of pointing my car in a different direction.

I found being at the meetings to be a real blessing. The very first time I walked into a meeting, I had the sense that I had "permission" not to act out any more. That one sensation I had was enough for me to recommend attendance at meetings to all who think they have a problem but are hesitating about going. And then there were the other things, such as being able to hang around after the meetings for some one-on-one conversation with others. And this could be done in the

context of going out for a meal or coffee with the others, which I often did.

While my area now has a lot of meetings, this was not always the case. And so I would drive around town each night to get to a different meeting, since I was doing a ninety-in-ninety, and I would see the same faces at each meeting. A lot of us were new to the program, and we were just hungry for recovery. It was a real opportunity for us to get to know each other, since we saw each other night after night.

However, there are some alternatives to going to face-to-face meetings. The biggest one is the many phone meetings. You can find a list of phone meetings on the SAA website. Just as I hope you will discover with the face-to-face meetings, each phone meeting is a little bit different, so you may want to experiment with different meetings and see which ones are the best fit for you.

Of course, the phone meetings do not give the opportunity to go out for coffee afterwards. However, there is something after the phone meetings which some call the “parking lot.” As you may have guessed, the “parking lot” is the time after the formal meeting when some folks just hang around and chat. This is an opportunity to ask



questions, exchange phone numbers, and so forth.

There are also other meeting types which do not require your leaving home in order to participate in them, such as Skype meetings. You can also find these on the SAA website.

Anyway, TC, these are some suggestions. Or you could do a mixture of face-to-face meetings and phone and Skype meetings. The important thing is that you do get to some meetings. This is the best way I know of to get to know some other people in the fellowship, find a sponsor, start working the steps, and get started on the road to recovery.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
men4saa@saa-recovery.org.*

STORIES OF SERVICE

A Little Bit Goes a Long Way

BY MOLLY M.

The little bit of service that I did early in recovery, and continue to do, has kept me sober.

I wouldn't consider myself the first person to jump at the chance to serve on any committee, do extra work, or really do anything above and beyond. Sometimes even a monthly business meeting can seem too much.

So, why am I writing about service? Well, partly because one of my character defects is people pleasing, and the other, more important reason, is that the little bit of service that I did do early in recovery, and continue to do, has kept me sober.

My first meeting at my home group in Portland, OR, I got to early, as I am always early everywhere I go, and I helped set up the chairs. The next meeting I was the first one there again, so I set up the whole meeting and greeted a newcomer. It became, in my mind, my job to be the early one to set up the chairs, or nobody would be able to sit down, a story I told myself to keep coming back every week. I knew, obviously, that the meeting would go on without me, but setting up those chairs and greeting people, especially the newcomer, that I was just weeks, then months, before became so important to me that I would do my best to be there no matter what.

They say "service keeps you sober" and for me that is true, mainly in that service kept me coming back, especially in those early days when it was so crucial. Now whatever meeting I go to, I try to be early to help set up. I might just meet a newcomer like I was several years ago.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Who's Ready to Host a Future SAA Convention?

BY MIKE L., AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBER

I'm looking to you to think about hosting an SAA convention in 2022 or later. I encourage you to talk to your local groups about it.

By the time you receive this issue of The Outer Circle, the 2019 convention will be upon us. As always, the convention will take place in the spring in a different city each year. Nowadays, the convention is a four-day affair lasting from Friday evening until Monday noon. The business work of the preceding two days, as well as some of the work that used to take place concurrent with the convention itself, has now been moved to the conference which takes place every fall and does not change cities.

The Board and the office try to line up the conventions a few years in advance, partly so we know what we have coming up, and partly because it normally takes a couple of years to put the convention together. The initial steps include choosing a hotel and picking a logo, while prominent among the latter steps are gathering and reviewing workshop applications and coming up with attractive options for the Sunday afternoon outing.

At the conference last year, the Board awarded bids for the 2020 and 2021 conventions to committees from two cities who have never hosted an SAA convention before. I'm very excited about both since I have spent little or no time in the cities in question.

You probably can guess what is coming: I'm looking to you to think about hosting an SAA convention in 2022 or later. I encourage you to talk to your local groups about it.

The process of making a bid is not complicated.

Once a committee has come together with the idea of hosting an SAA convention, it's only a question of putting a bid together. The office has a list of suggested questions to answer as part of the bid. The presentations take place during the Board meetings during the conference.

Nowadays, most groups put together very impressive PowerPoints extolling the virtues of their home city. However, a PowerPoint presentation is not strictly necessary.

The process of actually putting the convention together has changed a great deal since the early years. I was on the planning committee for the 1997 convention, and essentially the convention committee did it all, including signing the contract with the hotel. By the time of the 2001 convention, the office was beginning to get involved in the planning, and now the office plays at least as large a role in planning the event as does the committee.

Another aspect that has changed is the make-up of the committee. Back in those early days, it was mostly the locals who made up the committee. In 2001 we had somebody who drove in from a neighboring state for our

meetings. Today, members can participate by phone or internet. This is helpful in the case of cities with small numbers of SAA groups, as members of the committee may reside a distance from the site of the convention.

The process of planning a convention is an opportunity for committee members to grow closer. I can speak as a veteran of several conventions as to what a rewarding experience it is to watch the convention take shape and, after the planning period, emerge as a wonderful entity.

You can find information about putting a convention together on the SAA service website, www.saa-iso.org. The website is password-protected, and you can get the login and password information by contacting the office at 713/869-4902 or 800/477-8191.

Hosting an SAA convention is a wonderful experience; my convention experiences have stayed with me throughout my life. Please see if the folks in your area have any interest in hosting a convention. If so, put together a bid and present it to the Board this fall. I look forward to spending time in your home city attending your convention!

ISO NEWS

Opportunities to Participate in International Service Abound

Are you looking to bump your service work up a notch? Have you considered service at the international level? Many members of SAA have found that serving at the international level has been a significant addition to their personal recovery programs.

Many opportunities are available to participate in the ISO mission—to help member groups worldwide carry the SAA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Volunteers are needed on the ISO Board of Trustees, ISO Literature Committee, ISO Conference Area Coordinating Committee, and the eight focus committees to support the work of the ISO.

In preparation for the 2019 annual meeting of the ISO Conference, the Nominating Committee is specifically seeking qualified members who might be interested in serving on the ISO Board of Trustees, the ISO Literature Committee, and the ISO Conference Area Coordinating Committee.

If you are interested, submit a service resume today! All resumes submitted this service year will be entered into a raffle, and the winner will receive free registration at the 2020 international convention.

Instructions along with suggested qualifications for international service and the service resume form may be found on the ISO service website (www.saa-iso.org) under International Service in the left-hand menu.

Please note that the information requested in the service resume is confidential and is not shared outside of the Nominating Committee. Also, note that submitting a service resume is simply an indication of interest and does not obligate anyone to a service position.

Questions about the nominating process may be sent to info@saa-recovery.org.



ISO NEWS

Twelve Concepts Group Seeks Fellowship Feedback

SAA, like most other twelve-step fellowships, will soon have its own proposed set of concepts. We on the concepts subcommittee are looking to you to review the concepts we have written in order to let us know what you think of them: if they are clear, whether they are an accurate description of the way SAA does service work, and so forth.

You can access the proposed concepts by contacting the ISO. And you can give the concepts subcommittee feedback by sending an e-mail to *TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org* or sending a letter to ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

We hope you will get involved in this very important project, which will be ongoing until the delegates approve the concepts. Thank you.

Area Coordinating Committee Provides Appeal Form

The Area Coordinating Committee (ACC) has provided a form to file an appeal to an ACC decision about an area or a group. The new form is available on the ISO service website:

<https://saa-iso.org/>. Contact the ISO office for login information.

Groups may appeal their membership in an area, and member groups in an area may decide that they want to appeal the boundaries of their area. The appeal process was laid out in Business Motion 2016-D003, and this has been used to set up the procedure within the ACC.

The ACC supports the concept that the area formation process should involve and be agreeable to local groups whenever possible, while recognizing that conflicts may arise.

CSC Offers Delegate Responsibility Suggestions for 2019-20 Service Year

The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) received a ton of feedback during the 2018 Conference, both in person as well as during our structured feedback sessions. One main question heard a lot from both the delegates and the CSC was, “How can I do ISO and delegate work throughout the year?”

The following list, agreed upon by the CSC, are suggested guidelines for service between the conferences for you as a “spiritual leader.” As we grow and move toward area formation, the efforts of delegates will be more valuable as the eyes and ears of the fellowship. We hope that this suggested responsibility list clarifies what you can do to keep the SAA fellowship vibrant throughout the year.

Suggested delegate responsibilities for the 2018-19 service year:

1. Serve as an example for your group by living in recovery, practicing the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA, communicating to all the experience, strength, and hope gained from the SAA program of recovery.
2. Report on the 2018 annual meeting of the Conference to the group(s) you represent.
3. Make a diligent effort to follow ongoing conference activities through the ISO website (saa-recovery.org), the ISO service website (saa-iso.org), *The Outer Circle*, as well as through the minutes of Conference Steering Committee and other committees. The ISO Annual Report is a good resource of activities in support of the ISO mission to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to the still-suffering sex addict.
4. Note that sharing information about the activities of the ISO with other members of the fellowship might increase awareness and participation.
5. Consider participating in an area assembly as a Group Service Representative (GSR). If you are unclear about the formation of your area, contact the Area Coordinating Committee (ACC.Feedback@iso.org).
6. Funnel any feedback received from members of the fellowship to the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) at csc.feedback@saa-iso.org. Note that any member of the fellowship can email the CSC at that address to request info or to make suggestions.

ISO NEWS

7. Consider writing an article for *The Outer Circle*.
8. Consider submitting one or more motions for possible deliberation at the 2019 annual meeting of the Conference. Motions may be submitted by anyone in the fellowship. It is advisable to review potential motions with your sponsor, home group, intergroup, area, and region before submitting to the Conference.
9. Encourage the group you represent to be healthy — sharing about the solution to our problem and the benefits of recovery and sobriety. You might find the group inventory to be helpful for self-evaluation and discovery of areas for improvement.
10. Review the draft of the Twelve Concepts for SAA and submit feedback to TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org. Note that the committee is currently working on Concept Twelve and will be working on Concept Eight. If interested in participating on that subcommittee, email the above address. The meetings are scheduled for the third Saturday of each month at 12 p.m. CDT.
11. Remember that as a delegate you are committed to serve throughout the year. If possible, plan to come to the 2019 annual conference to learn about other service opportunities. Fellowship members may attend calls of ISO committees and subcommittees, and current delegates can vote in CSC sub-committees.
12. Be especially sensitive to the fears and concerns of newcomers in order to better understand how to be of service to the still-suffering sex addict, since this is our primary purpose.

Board Approves 2020 Convention Plans, SAA-Connect

The ISO Board of Directors took a number of actions in March including:

- » Approved the 2020 convention logo and theme.
- » Authorized the ISO office to work with a third-party vendor to create an infographic for Seventh Tradition fundraising for SAA Connect and other PI & CPC projects, not to exceed \$10,000.
- » Approved that non-board members of the fellowship may be appointed by the chair of the Board to serve as advisory, non-voting, members of Internal Standing Committees (“ISC”) of the Board and that such members may participate fully in committee discussions. Further, such advisory members may serve on ISC work-groups or ad-hoc committees with voting privileges on such work-groups of ad-hoc committees.
- » Approved SAA-Connect project business plan and time line.

Event's Low Donation Rate Leads to February Budget Deficit

In the month of February we had a income deficit of \$15,279.93. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$9,386.00. The decrease in our income was due to a low donation rate at the Houston Giving Thanks event which resulted in a deficit of \$4,600 under our budget. As of March 5, the total income from the Houston Giving Thanks was \$7,666, \$2,333 under budget.

- » Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$138.58 in February. For the year we are at 98.2 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our new book *Voices in Recovery* sales for February were \$7,411.95. For the year we are way over our estimated sales but expects sales to even out for the remainder of the year.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$977.14 in February. For the year we are at 117.64 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales exceeded our estimate by \$741.75 in February. For the year we are at 141.21 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$100.00 in February. For the year we are at 96.43 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for February exceeded our estimate by \$7,924.67 in February. For the year we are at 141.23 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from *Voices of Recovery*.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$7,424.78 in February. For the year we are at 77.88 percent of our estimated individual donations. This was mainly from the low income from the Houston Giving Thanks and Lifeline income being below budget.

Group donations were below our estimate by \$1,984.73 in February. For the year we are at 83.93 percent of our estimated group donations. This is mainly from group general donations being lower than expected.

Our product inventory is valued at \$77,465.49. Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$2,286.32 in February. For the year we are at 103.29 percent of our estimated expenses. Our operational reserve is \$186,536.00 will be increased by \$13,485 to fully fund this account for 2019.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service, Paul M., Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

Want to connect with the International Service Organization website, staff, Board of Trustees, trusted servants, or special workers? Here's the contact info you need:

Office

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

Phone: 713-869-4902 -or- 800-477-8191
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: Gary T.: toc@saa-recovery.org

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

Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Vacant

North Central

Board: Dawn S.; Alternate: Thea L.

Northeast

LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G.

Southeast

LitCom: Garrett I. (Chair);

Office Staff

Executive Director: Paul M.: director@saa-iso.net
Associate Director: Chris F.
Publications Manager: Cody S.
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition Manager: Phillip B.
Project Manager: Tracy R.
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager: Jonathan C.
Information Technician: DJ B.
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B.
Administrative Assistant: Evan E.
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.

At Large

Board: Lisa S.; Bob L. (Chair); Mike L.; Stephen N.; Carl D.; Les J.; Mike S.; Richard N.; Wayne B.

LitCom: Doug S.; Mike B.; Robbie H.; David M.; Steven P.; Bruce Mc.; Byard B.; Carol R.; Charlie K.; Deb W.; Gary T. (*The Outer Circle* editor)

Board: board@saa-recovery.org

CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Calendar - All times are CST. To attend a meeting email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO

First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.
Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.
LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

First Wednesday of the month

Prisoner Outreach: 7:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.
Second Saturday of the month
Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.
Women's Outreach: 10 a.m.

Second Sunday of the month

Conference Committee Structure: 2:00 p.m.

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Second Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: 4:00 p.m.
CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.

Third Sunday of the month

ISOP Committee: 2:00 p.m.

Fourth Saturday of the month

Area Handbook Workgroup: 11 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Deadlines for Submission and Topics		
Jan/Feb:	“Taking Action”	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	“Healthier Sexuality”	Jan 5
May/June:	“First Three Steps”	Mar 5
July/Aug:	“Prayer, Meditation”	May 5
Sept/Oct:	“Steps Six and Seven”	July 5
Nov/Dec:	“Giving Back”	Sept 5

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Living in Sobriety: For those with five-plus years of sobriety. 750-900 words on how you got sober and what you're doing to stay sober.

Stories of Service: 300-500 words on why you do service and how it helps your recovery.

Feature articles: 650-1,200 words on any of the topics listed above. It may be helpful to think of your submission as a written form of a share you'd give in a meeting — something that's working for you or that you're struggling with in recovery as it relates to the steps or traditions.

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

- 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.

