

August 13, 2011

2011 NIA SUMMER AREA COMMITTEE MEETING **DELEGATE'S REPORT**

Since returning from the General Service Conference, I have been invited to provide post-GSC reports in a number of venues. In addition to the Spring Area Committee meeting and Summer Assembly, I have given my report to a dozen districts. These have varied in length from 20 minutes to 3 hours. In the last month, I also participated in the East Central Regional Conference (held in conjunction with the Indiana State Conference), the Illinois State Conference and a fantastic YPAA service workshop offered by the Hope Factory (District 11) and Young and Restless Groups (District 22).

SELF-SUPPORT

Total AAWS revenue was \$7,084,347 for the first six months, against expenses of \$6,659,635. The result was a net profit of \$424,712. This figure is about \$85,000 ahead of budget for the full year, primarily as a result of a pickup in literature sales. Gross profit from the sale of literature was \$4,098,700 for 6 months, \$127,000 greater than budgeted. As of June 30, 2011, the Reserve Fund had a balance of \$14,426,891 which represents about 11.3 months of combined operating costs.

Contributions: Overall contributions in 2010 were 1.8% greater than the prior year, reversing a downward trend of the prior two years. For the first 6 months of 2011, contributions were \$2,985,250. This was \$20,850 more (1.00%) than the same period in 2010 but about \$21,500 less than budgeted.

AA GRAPEVINE

Circulation of the AA Grapevine continues to decline. Attempting to confront the reality of the publication's declining and aging readership, the AAGrapevine Board and Executive Editor Ami Brophy are moving to embrace emerging new technology to produce a digital edition of the AAGrapevine. That said, the reality is one of continuing financial difficulties.

Circulation and Sales: At the July Board weekend, the AAGrapevine Board reported:

Subscription sales will fall off in 2011 going forward due to engagement measures that were to be implemented that remain in discussion or on hold. AAGV is experiencing a drop in book sales of about 25% from 2010 levels. This fall off is expected to continue due to new technologies such as eBooks. AAGV expects that when this drop in sales occurs, it will need to draw down money from the Reserve Fund to meet operating expenses.

Paid circulation is down 3,100 copies from the end of last year. This is a drop of 3.3%, a rate that is ahead of the anticipated 5% annual drop for 2011.

Revenue and Oversight: For the 6 months ended June 30, the AAGrapevine lost \$22,563, a significant improvement over the \$286,223 loss for the same period in 2010. (LaVina lost \$34,137 through June 30.) However, given the continuing drop in circulation and in book sales, the AAGrapevine's financial difficulties continue.

At the 2010 Winter Assembly, I reported that an ad hoc subcommittee of the Finance Committee of the General Service Board had been appointed to oversee the development of a cash flow statement from AAGrapevine with projections month-by-month for 3 years in order to monitor projected cash balances, oversee remedial activities, and bring an end to negative cash balances and consequent Reserve Fund drawdowns as soon as possible. At the recent July Board weekend, this Grapevine Oversight Subcommittee received a 3-year cash flow projection from the AAGV Board stating that AAGrapevine would need to draw an additional \$1.5 million from the Reserve Fund through 2013 unless basic changes are made to its business model. This projection prompted a recommendation from the Finance Committee to the General Service Board that the AAGV Board begin immediately to reduce expenses by one-third. The General Service Board reached a compromise in which the AAGrapevine Board was asked to develop a plan for a balanced budget and its impact, and bring a report to the Fall General Service Board meeting for review. This plan will include ongoing monitoring.

The General Service Board approved a recommendation from the AAWS Board of a one-time "rent abatement" of \$50,000 for AAGV for the year 2011. This means that AAWS will absorb about half of the rent of the AAGrapevine for this year.

PURCHASING & SUBSCRIBING FROM AAWS & GRAPEVINE

A new edition of the catalogue for the purchase of Conference-approved literature will be available in mid-August. For the first time, it will include AAGrapevine materials as well as those books, pamphlets and other materials purchased from AAWS.

The first AAWS eBooks will be available for purchase through the "AA Online Store" on the AA website later this year. The target date for the first two eBooks, the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, is November 15th. An *AA Mobile App* for use on handheld mobile devices to allow purchased copies of AAWS eBooks to be downloaded and read will be made available at no cost. A version for Apple devices (iPhone, iPod and iPad) will be available first, followed by most Android powered devices. The price for the first two eBooks has not yet been determined.

Work progresses with respect to consideration of online ordering of print literature from AAWS. AA website (www.aa.org) redesign is scheduled to be completed next year. The addition of a "shopping cart" and heightened security will be necessary to move to such a "retail" mode of distribution of AAWS materials. Delivery of small orders ("1-2-3s") will be handled directly from the GSO offices.

AAGrapevine's website (www.aagrapevine.org) has been redesigned and allows for the purchase of print and online subscriptions and other materials. PayPal as a payment

option will be available in August 2011. At its July Board meeting, the AAGrapevine Board placed on hold the issue of the posting of social networks icons on the website pending further consideration and communication with the Fellowship.

GSO STAFF HIRE

The General Service Office has hired Tracey O. to fill its open staff position. Tracey will start work on August 15th on the Corrections Desk. Professionally, Tracey has a journalism background. Active in Area 49, Southeast New York, Tracey's A.A. involvement includes serving as the Area newsletter editor and chairing the Agenda Committee.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Every five years or so, Alcoholics Anonymous takes a random, anonymous survey of its membership. We conduct this survey to keep our members informed on current trends in membership characteristics. The survey also provides statistical information about AA to the professional community and the general public in support of our primary purpose to carry our message to those who still suffer from alcoholism. This past May, I and the other members of the 61st General Service Conference unanimously voted to conduct the 15th such membership survey this year.

Fifteen groups in Northern Illinois (14 English and 1 Spanish speaking) have been randomly selected to participate in this survey. I have forwarded the survey materials to the Primary Contact for these groups. The survey forms are to be completed on one date between August 1st and August 14th only and returned to me no later than August 27th, so that I can forward them on to the GSO. The results will be published in the pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous: 2011 Membership Survey."

SERVICE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

The real work of the General Service Conference does not take place over a single week in New York, but rather throughout the entire year on our behalf by the Trustees and the GSO and AAGrapevine staffs. At the recent July Board weekend, most of the work involves reviewing Advisory Actions and Additional Considerations and appointing Trustee subcommittees to address those items.

Many Trustee subcommittees have revisions of pamphlets or new pamphlets in the works and those subcommittees will come back in October with progress reports or the finished project. Examples of this work include "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell," "Living Sober" and "AA and the Armed Forces."

Archives: AA Archivist Michelle Mirza has requested Area Archivists and Archives Committee Chairs to share their experience about the successes in local archives' collection to update the "Archives Committee Activities – Shared Experiences" section of the workbook. Michelle is developing an informational piece on basic archival preservation procedures intended to offer guidance to local archivists responsible for maintaining the physical and intellectual integrity of the collection. The latter will be reviewed at the Fall Board meeting.

CPC: The Trustee committee agreed that the workbook include a list of goals and project suggestions for local CPC committees, as well as a summary of shared experience from those committees and professionals. The committee also approved the draft service piece regarding the use of the AAGV and LaVina in CPC endeavors and agreed to include it in the kit.

Corrections: The Corrections Desk will collect shared experience concerning challenges and solutions in 12-Step work in correctional facilities. Changes in the workbook were forwarded to the Publications Department for inclusion in the next printing. The Trustee committee agreed to forward a request that "A Message to Corrections Professionals" be revised to include information concerning AA recovery during and after incarceration.

Literature: The revised pamphlet "Medications and Other Drugs" will be released shortly. Over 200 stories have now been submitted for the "spirituality" pamphlet, which is to reflect the wide range of spiritual experience including stories from atheists and agnostics sober in AA. The Trustee committee took no action on a request to add a "sponsorship" Appendix to the Big Book.

Public Information: The revised pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" will be available in August 2011. A Trustee subcommittee has been formed to review bid submissions for the 2011 culturally sensitive Spanish-language Public Service Announcement. A second subcommittee has been formed to develop a comprehensive media plan per the suggestion of the 61st GSC.

Special Needs: The new recovery pamphlet entitled "AA for the Alcoholic with Special Challenges" (P-83) will be available shortly at a price of 40 cents. Local sharing from Area 20 entitled "Brief Accessibility Checklist for Meetings: Is your Meeting Really Handicapped Accessible?" has recently been distributed to Delegate areas throughout the United States and Canada.

Treatment: The name change from "Treatment Facilities" to "Treatment" is being made in the workbook and kit, as well as in a variety of pamphlets and service material as they come up for individual reprinting.

Respectfully submitted

Ray M.
Delegate
Panel 60/Area 20
(Northern Illinois)