

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

October 27, 2017

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, October 27, 2017, at the Hilton Westchester in Rye, NY. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Richard P., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

General Manager's Report

General Manager Greg T. provided the following report:

Administration – A research project concerning General Service Board and A.A. World Services, Inc. intellectual property (i.e., copyright and trademark) policies, practices, history and past litigation is underway to provide background for discussions by the Board and as part of a planned presentation/discussion session at the General Service Conference in April 2018.

A review of key vendor billing, customer service and contracts for some of our largest vendors has been undertaken to assure best practices and the most effective service.

The Independent Auditor Selection Committee has met with several accounting firms, per the directive of the General Service Board, to interview for engagement beginning in 2018 as independent auditor of the General Service Board, A.A. World Services and AA Grapevine.

The organization-wide Communications Inventory is underway, as requested by the General Service Board in their strategic plan.

Administrative Services – Cross training continues for staff assistants to expand experience and facilitate teamwork. The Records department is preparing for the annual influx of new area and district updates, beginning in early December as election assemblies take place across the U.S. and Canada.

Additional security is being added to the entrance and exits that border G.S.O.'s reception area. Card swipe access has been installed at the main entrance door, server room and to one additional door off the reception area. The doors will remain locked and the receptionist will be able to buzz visitors into the main lobby area.

Archives – Following a two-week renovation project, the General Service Office Archives library and exhibit area were reopened to visitors and tours on Friday, October 13. However, the renovation created a backlog of inquiries to be answered, boxes to unpack and other tasks. The department will notify those making inquiries that response time will necessarily be longer than usual, until the backlog can be addressed.

Staff subject files weeding and scanning project that we commenced earlier this year is almost completed. Approximately 42,000 pages of the paper records have been digitized and are now available as a valuable resource to both Archives and G.S.O. Staff.

Human Resources – The new employee policy handbook is currently in draft stage; it has been reviewed by a group of G.S.O. managers and is now being edited for final review.

Information Technology – A contract with the consulting company that will advise us regarding our new enterprise resource program (ERP) and Fellowship New Vision (FNV) systems, was executed. A representative from the firm met with employees for three days to discuss their requirements and review current processes. A request for information (RFI) was sent to potential vendors.

The security for FNV has been redone and implemented, with a training manual sent to all Area registrars. The IT Services team is now focusing on implementing the backend of the Online Bookstore applications, as well as reviewing and possibly rewriting various Access databases.

September – October Travel:

October 20-23: Attended Southwest Regional Forum, San Antonio, TX.

Staff Report

Communications Services— staff continues to support the daily operations of our current website and the development of a new website design for aa.org. The TCS subcommittee on Channels of Communications with the Fellowship continues to explore options for an A.A. app; the A.A.W.S. YouTube channel is in the final stages of implementation.

Conference – Work continues in preparation for the 68th General Service Conference. To date, 27 proposed agenda items have been received. The G.S.O. team responsible for translating all 2018 Conference background material into French and Spanish continues developing plans and procedures to facilitate the Advisory Action of the 2017 Conference.

C.P.C. – Staff attended the quarterly meeting of the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The calendar of national professional conferences where A.A. could have an exhibit for 2018 is still in the planning stages.

Corrections – For the purpose of the Corrections Correspondence Service in Canada, the Corrections assignment submitted a request to the USPS for a permit to have international business reply (postage paid) envelopes for Canada. This will help inmates in Canadian correctional facilities to request CCS. The Fall 2017 issue of “Sharing from Behind the Walls” was redesigned in collaboration with the

Publishing Department. The size was doubled, from two pages to four, allowing for additional inmate sharing, and the type size and style were adjusted to enhance readability.

Group Services / Loners Internationalists Meeting (LIM) – The 32nd Annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A.W.S./AAGV Seminar was held in Northern Virginia in early October. Two issues of the LIM bulletin have been published, sharing correspondence from more than 50 Loners, Homers, Internationalists, Loner Sponsors or Port Contacts.

International – The International assignment has recently attended two zonal meetings, the REDELA (Meeting of the Americas) in San Jose, Costa Rica and the European Service Meeting in York, England. Additionally, the assignment has recently heard from a member in Tashkent, Uzbekistan who has started the first known A.A. group there.

Literature – The fall issue of Box 4-5-9 featured an article on Central Offices/Intergroups and the Holiday issue will focus on how some groups and committees are utilizing technology as they carry the message.

Nominating – The assignment has requested information from all trustees' committees regarding their ongoing needs for ACMs and the scope of their work.

Public Information – As of the end of September, the video P.S.A. "I Have Hope" has been aired 62,000 times with 596 million audience impressions in North America, inclusive of airings in English, French and Spanish. The PI. coordinator has continued to be G.S.O.'s point person for communications regarding the 1939 Printer's Copy manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Regional Forums – The West Central Regional Forum was held in Area 63 South Dakota in September with 281 participants, including 127 first-time attendees. The Southwest Regional Forum was held in Area 68 Southwest Texas from October 20-22 and the East Central Regional Forum will be held in Area 21 Illinois from November 17-19. A number of e-blasts were sent to trusted servants and pre-registrants for three of the 2017 Regional Forums and generated significant interest, with over 1,000 of the recipients clicking on links to view details about upcoming Forums.

Treatment and Accessibilities – An in-house video version in ASL of the request for shared experience on the possible need for a pamphlet for A.A. members who are Deaf was recently created by G.S.O. staff and has been distributed to the Fellowship.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The TCS Committee reviewed progress reports and updates on G.S.O.'s A.A. website software and analytics. Now that the discrepancy between former and current data systems has been resolved, more reliable analytics can be utilized throughout G.S.O. and the various service assignments.

Oral reports were given by the director of IT Services and the Group Services assignment. The IT department report focused on security features now in place, the new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and the decommissioning of some of our servers. The report from Group Services noted participation at the Intergroup/Central Office/AAWS/GV

Seminar, the need to add information about our website's unique page links in hard copy service kits, and some concerns that have been expressed from members regarding the Safety Card. It was noted that the card has recently been revised to focus on its optional nature and G.S.O. will look into additional ways of informing the Fellowship that the card is service material and not required, perhaps including the Service Piece on Safety along with the card to provide important context.

A progress report was presented on the Google for Nonprofits account. The application and enrollment is complete and three P.S.A.s have been uploaded in English, French and Spanish. The Board will continue oversight and implementation discussions as more material is selected for inclusion and the project nears a launch date.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the TCS Committee:

- That the 2017 Third Quarter Report on G.S.O.'s A.A. Website Activities along with the Analytics Plan memo be approved and forwarded to the trustees' Committee on Public Information.

Publishing

The committee accepted the Publishing Department report, highlighting the following information:

Gross sales: September gross sales are under budget with actual gross sales at \$1,023,808, which is a \$190,615 (or 15.7%) negative variance against budget of \$1,214,423. For 2017 through the month of September, gross sales are above estimate: \$10,663,995 actual sales vs. estimate of \$10,439,376, which is a \$224,619 (or 2.9%) positive variance.

Web sales: Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for September 2017 stand at \$709,992, which accounts for about 70.5% of total sales for the company. (Note: Total online orders for September stand at 1,356, which is 68.6% of total orders.) Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for September are \$506,963, and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$203,028.

Digital books: Total ebook gross sales January - September 2017 stand at \$161,043, with 41,390 units distributed.

International licensing and translation: A revised translation of the Croatian Big Book has been approved and printed; a revised translation of the Slovakian Big Book has been approved; Ukraine has been issued a license to reproduce and distribute the Big Book in Ukrainian.

Catalog redesign: A full redesign is underway and on track to print and mail by the end of the year.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Publishing Committee:

- That A.A.W.S. proceed with the audio recording of the Twelve Concepts for World Service in English, French and Spanish to be streamed on the aa.org website.

Finance

Unaudited financial results: Noting some of the ongoing variances between 2017 budget and year-to-date actual results in

areas such as salaries, professional fees, contracted services and travel, meals and accommodations, it was reported that both sales and contributions were running ahead of budget through the first nine months of 2017.

Gross sales were \$10,665,448 (or 2.17%) ahead of budget, contributions were \$5,881,983 (or 11.22%) ahead of budget and total operating expenses were \$11,847,697 (or .46%) less than budget. Net profit for the nine months was \$1,302,486 compared with a budgeted profit of \$85,993.

The increasing percentage of online contributions and an uptick in non-A.A. literature sales were noted. Preliminary 2018 budget numbers were reviewed and discussions will continue as the budget is refined.

A report on pamphlet pricing was presented, noting that English-language pamphlets continue to make a profit but, because our print runs are lower which makes our accompanying unit costs higher, French and Spanish pamphlets do not make a profit. A more detailed policy discussion regarding pamphlet pricing strategies will be continued at the next A.A.W.S. meeting in December.

Nominating

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Nominating Committee:

- That Carolyn W. be put forward as the nominee for the position of A.A.W.S. nontrustee director following the 2018 General Service Conference.

Internal Audit Committee

The committee continued discussion on the development

of its Composition, Scope and Procedures, and met further in Executive Session.

Additional Topics

2020 International Convention: Gregg Talley of Talley Management provided a quarterly International Convention update, reporting on the selection of vendors and convention issues such as transportation, security, technology, accessibility and housing.

Application Interval and Reach (AIR) Ad Hoc Committee: The minutes of the committee's two meetings were reviewed and discussion followed regarding the question of "open enrollment" or the practice of accepting applications in the absence of a specific call for candidates. The committee chair will report a summary of the committee's conclusions to the trustees' Nominating Committee for any further action.

Trademarks: It was determined that a proposed agenda item regarding the use of the "Blue People" as a trademark of A.A. not be forwarded to the trustees' Committee on the Conference but that a response be provided by G.S.O. to the submitter outlining our trademark history and the scope of the presentation/discussion topic on intellectual property requested for the 2018 Conference.

Intergroup/Central Office/AAWS/GV Seminar: Some questions raised at the seminar including literature pricing, discounts, e-books, handling charges and the possibility of developing gift cards similar to Grapevine were reported by G.S.O. staff who attended the seminar and were discussed by the Board. The Board requested that the Publishing and Finance Departments look into these questions and bring more information back to the meeting in December.