

# Highlights From A.A.W.S.

March 10, 2017

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, March 10, 2017, at the General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Bill N., welcomed all in attendance, thanked G.S.O. staff for their hard work, especially in relation to the ongoing transitions in the Finance department, and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

General manager Greg T., reported on the following:

*Information Technology* – A new database coordinator started at the end of February. His main task is to improve and consolidate our databases and dashboards allowing us to rely less on outside consultants and hosted companies.

*Administrative Services* – Preliminary work has begun on forming a new department, drawing primarily from current employees, to oversee meetings, events and travel for the office and the boards in a centralized and professionalized fashion. Also, we are implementing a new contract management system which will provide electronic tracking and storage of all A.A.W.S. contracts in all phases of drafting, negotiation and final document.

*Archives* – The company-wide records management project, budgeted and initiated in March 2016, has been completed. An effective records management plan helps protect the legal and financial rights of the company, supports the principles of transparency and accountability of better documenting our actions and decisions, and preserves institutional memory so that informed decisions are possible. It also reduces unneeded or obsolete data and ensures that our operations are in compliance with regulations imposed by New York State or Federal regulations.

*Human Resources* – The 2017 salary review process has been completed and merit increases have been implemented, effective March 1. Two new G.S.O. staff members have been offered positions. Diana L. is scheduled to start on March 13, and Patrick C. on April 3. Ongoing recruitment for the position of assistant director of finance is in progress. Internally, the group of directors, managers and supervisors (18 in number) have met for three training and work sessions to develop skills and cohesion as leadership within our organization. This is part of the 2017 G.S.O. focus on training, education and process improvement.

### February, March Travel:

*February 3-6, 2017:* SE Delegates Get-together, Atlanta, GA.

*February 24-26, 2017:* NERAASA, Framingham, MA.

*March 3-6, 2017:* PRAASA, Sacramento, CA.

## STAFF REPORT

In 2016, G.S.O. staff members responded to a total of 99,216 communications received by email, fax, mail or phone call. Staff strive to respond as soon as possible, in the order received and within ten business days. On the Conference assignment, the list of agenda items in three languages, and the background for Conference agenda items was posted to the Conference dashboard. Conference

committees have a combined total of 92 items on their agendas this year, the highest number ever. The International assignment continues its correspondence from around the world as well as with members from the U.S. and Canada who have questions about A.A. in other countries. On the Literature assignment, the spring issue of *Box 4-5-9* included a feature article, "Carrying the A.A. Message Through Literature — From Twi to Konkani," about our international translations, and how the "hand of A.A. is reaching folks all around the world." The P.I. assignment continues responding to requests from local P.I. committees to send audio P.S.A.s to local radio stations and handling inquiries from A.A. members and the general media regarding anonymity. The pre-registration form and Forum brochures for all four 2017 Regional Forums have been uploaded to aa.org.

## TECHNOLOGY / COMMUNICATION / SERVICES

The committee reviewed a report on G.S.O.'s A.A. website analytics from November 2016-January 2017 and viewed a presentation of the new interim homepage of the aa.org website. The board **approved** the committee recommendations that two items be posted on the website: an anonymity-protected version of the Quarterly Report from G.S.O.; and, following some revision to the descriptive text about the A.A program, the letter to the Mental Health Professional written by a former Class A trustee.

The committee also received a verbal report regarding subcommittee research into the development of an A.A.W.S. app that could link in numerous ways with the website and be an effective means of instant communications with members.

## PUBLISHING

The committee reviewed a list of domain names currently owned by A.A.W.S., and an attorney's memorandum regarding a domain owned by an outside entity. After thoughtful discussion, the committee asked the IP administrator to continue discussions with the owner of the domain name regarding settlement (as opposed to arbitration). The committee also requested IT to redirect domain names that resemble A.A. to the aa.org website.

The committee heard from the publishing director that an internal ad-hoc committee has been formed to address critical errors in French-language materials. An independent translation review of French-language materials has been undertaken and internal quality control measures have been established to address and resolve the problem going forward. The committee discussed the matter at length and determined that a letter of apology should be immediately written by the general manager and presented to the Eastern Canada regional trustee on behalf of all French-language members affected by these materials.

The board **approved** the committee recommendation that the Publishing Department move forward with a plan seeking Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from French translation services.

*Gross sales:* January gross sales are above budget with actual gross sales at \$1,366,565, which is a \$202,662 or 17.41% positive variance against budget of \$1,163,903.

*Web sales:* Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for January 2017 stand at \$860,364, which accounts for about 64% of total sales for the company. Bulk sales to Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders for January are \$616,333 and sales to individual customers stand at \$244,030.

*Digital books:* Total eBook gross sales for January 2017 stand at \$22,169 with 5,676 units distributed.

*A.A. History Shelf – Holiday Gift Set (four-volumes) offer:* As of end of January 2017, the conclusion of this special offer, a total of 1,762 sets were ordered (English: 1,554; French: 102; and Spanish: 106), with \$52,860 total net sales and 7,048 total individual books distributed.

*International licensing and translation:* Thai and Hebrew re-translations of *Alcoholics Anonymous* have been completed and approved.

*Editorial projects:* The World Service Meeting *Final Report* has been printed, with a digital, anonymity-protected version ready to be posted on the WSM dashboard; the 2017 literature catalog has been printed and will be mailed with the Spring 2017 edition of *Box 4-5-9*.

## FINANCE

The committee received a presentation from the Talley Management Group (TMG) about improvements available for reporting and budgeting for the 2020 International Convention, with TMG taking on additional functions. TMG presented templates for financial reporting that compare previous International Convention budgets to projected budgets of the 2020 International Convention. It was also stated by TMG that any changes or additional information can be provided upon request.

The G.S.O. January unaudited financial report, revealed that net sales were \$190,610 over budget. Contributions were \$227,289 over budget and expenses were \$58,641 less than budgeted. This results in a profit for the month of \$387,371 compared with a one-month budgeted loss of \$122,799.

Preliminary results through February showed net sales approximately \$210,000 greater than budgeted, and contributions \$290,000 more than budget. Total expenses were on budget and a preliminary net profit of approximately \$643,000 was reported compared with a budgeted net profit of \$4,610 for the two months, which is \$499,400 higher than the same period last.

The board **approved** the committee recommendations that a transfer be made to the General Service Board General Fund in the amount of \$2,306,920 to cover the GSB deficit as follows:

GSB General Fund loss ...	\$1,971,669
La Viña funding .....	152,082
Cap Projects transfer .....	<u>183,169</u>
Donation required .... ..	<u>\$2,306,920</u>

and that A.A.W.S. transfer \$1.2 million of excess cash to the G.S.B. Reserve Fund, with a strong recommendation to move \$1 million to the Pension Plan in July 2017.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

The board discussed the development of a letter clarifying the pending period for new groups and **approved** that such a letter be included in the A.A.W.S. Directors' report at the 2017 Conference. A copy will be handed out during the report. Internally, staff will determine where else it may be appropriate to include this information.

Regarding the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup, the legal matter has been resolved, and the board **approved** that A.A.W.S., Inc. shall not remove any data-base directory listings of the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup, based on the recent communication of their group conscience, which states that they are not and never have been a religious organization.

On February 4, 2017, the office received a check for \$100,000 representing additional recovery of expenses for the defense in the California litigation that concluded in 2016. Management engaged counsel to assist in this recovery for a flat fee of \$2,500.

Negotiations with the two primary hotels hosting General Service Board events are ongoing: with the Crowne Plaza for two General Service Conferences in 2018 and 2019 and two Board Weekends each of those years; and with the Rye Hilton for October 2018 Board Weekend and potentially October 2019 Board Weekend and 2020 General Service Conference. The aim is, in part, to negotiate the most advantageous rates and concessions to mitigate the \$106,000 penalty paid to the Hilton in 2016 – and to take a hard look at the basic Conference cost base in both properties. A Request for Information (RFI) will be issued to major hotel companies in the United States and Canada for future General Service Conferences, Board Weekends and other organization-wide events such as Regional Forums.

###