

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

June 25, 2021

The A.A. World Services Board met via videoconference on Friday, June 25, 2021. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Jimmy D., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

## General Manager's Report

General Manager Bob W. provided the following report:

### Archives

Archives staff appraised approximately 15 cubic feet of materials from other offices received within the past few months. The associate archivist continues to listen to recordings of past General Service Conferences for the purpose of developing a comprehensive catalog in Archives database Re:Discovery.

Earlier in the year we developed a Laserfiche training manual that includes tips on how to search for information in Laserfiche and guidelines around use.

Last year we posed the idea of creating a poster to commemorate the virtual 2020 International Convention. For every convention, a panoramic image is captured, beginning with the first convention in 1950. We are happy to report that the poster was made available to groups and members in June; special thanks to the Publishing department for the help and support in seeing this through.

### Human Resources

Joshua Gonzalez (nonalcoholic) and Marissa Sblendorio (nonalcoholic) joined the GSO Staff Services department as staff assistants. Jonathan Lobo (nonalcoholic) joined the Finance department as accounting supervisor. Sharon Vasquez (nonalcoholic) joined Meetings, Events and Travel Services department (METS) as METS manager. Ronald Reyes (nonalcoholic) joined the Technology Services department as IT support technician. Angely Morillo (nonalcoholic) joined the Human Resources as HR assistant. Bob W. joined GSO as general manager.

### Operations

The internal Fellowship Connection (FC) working group conducted three sharing sessions with area registrars on May 6, May 11 and May 26. The goal of these sessions was to get input and feedback from area registrars to inform requirements and priorities for future releases of Fellowship Connection.

The new Member and Customer Service team is scheduled to launch June 28, 2021. Training commenced on April 26 and concluded on June 11. The team was trained on all

areas of records, order entry, order inquiry and the customer service portion of contributions.

### Technology Services

Technology Services continues to improve our cyber and data security. The team completed implementing Bitlocker (Windows OS) and File Vault (Mac) to encrypt the hard-drives of all laptops and remotely-deployed desktops. The department has also begun cybersecurity testing and training for the GSO via KnowBe4, executing a baseline phishing test and a first round of training that was completed by all employees.

### Staff Services

*Accessibilities/LIM/Remote Communities* – The staff secretary continues passing along the shared experience available on the Accessibilities Committees Service web page as well as in the assignment's digital files. The Remote Communities Service page will soon be available on the aa.org website. The page will include relevant literature and access to useful links for service work.

*Conference* – The separate annual two-hour Post-Conference Sharing Session and Implementation Meetings provided specific insight into what went well at the Conference and what areas have room for improvement as well as ensuring that all 71st G.S.C. advisory actions have been reviewed and that appropriate implementation is planned. The hope is for continued improvements and key changes to make things better.

*CPC/Treatment* – Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has not been participation in live or virtual exhibits. Looking forward to the reopening of the country, exhibit materials were requested for August 2021.

*Corrections* – In August 2020, the Corrections assignment embarked on overhauling the outdated C.C.S. database system. In collaboration with the Technical Services department and an outside consultant firm, the Corrections coordinator and the team assigned to the project meet weekly to discuss, brainstorm, strategize and iron out outstanding issues from the old database system to create a new state-of-the-art digital application, capable of using all data (old and new) to automatically match persons in custody with A.A. members on the outside with speed and accuracy. The system will enable personalized welcome letters to be sent to all participants with

information on their match along with instructions on how the system works. In addition, we will be able to pull reports of active and inactive participants, how many participants were matched, the total number of people waiting to be matched, and any missing information from user and participant records. After implementation of the new C.C.S. Matching App in August, it is anticipated that a phase two will revise functionality and fix or add features as needed.

*Group Services* – Three official Fellowship Connection sharing sessions via videoconference were conducted. The desk has received a high volume of communication regarding the 2021 advisory action pertaining to online groups. There are many concerns with the practicality of how listing will work both at the office and locally with registrars. Group Services is part of the G.S.O. working group recently formed to help implement the advisory action.

*International* – The pan-transcontinental North/South Connections Forum was held on May 15, 2021, with participation from members in the far southern regions of Argentina, Chile and the far northern regions of the U.S. and Canada. The theme was “Carrying the A.A. Message Despite Distances and Beyond Borders” with sharing on “What Was the Beginning of Your Remote Communities Group Like?” “Strengths-Weaknesses-Distances: How we Practice the Twelfth Step - Can the A.A. Service Structure Help?” and sharing about getting sober in a remote community. As one speaker shared, “It was a great demonstration of unity. Our flag is A.A.”

*Literature* – The Literature Desk has followed up 21 proposed agenda item submissions to share about the actions stemming from the 71st General Service Conference as well as following up with G.S.O. Publishing about the nine Advisory Actions and nine committee considerations which are pertinent to the Department and stem from the Conference Committee on Literature.

*Nominating* – Work has begun to fill the 2022 vacancies for Class A trustees, and this year, an announcement will post to the LinkedIn page. Other vacancy announcement letters were sent out within the Fellowship to fill the 2022 Class B trustee positions from the Eastern Canada and Pacific regions. Cooperation is in progress with the two corporate boards on filling vacancies for nontrustee director and/or general service trustee.

*Public Information* – In 2021 three press releases have been distributed by Cision PR Newswire. Tapping into Cision’s expertise, G.S.O. is contracted to do up to 6 press releases in 2021 with Cision and has the potential to build its own media lists from them. With each press release full visibility reports are received to gain a better understanding of reach, target audiences, and to learn more about public interest in A.A. and how we can be helpful.

*Regional Forums* – Immediately following the General Service Conference, the staff member on this assignment joined in planning the May 15 virtual North-South Connections Forum to gain experience in preparing for the virtual Special Forum in December 2021. Also coordinated was the first virtual Northeast Regional Forum held on June 4-6, 2021.

## Administration

*Return to the Workplace* – The General Service Office and Grapevine continue to operate in a limited voluntary return to the workplace period during which employees can come in to work at G.S.O. on a voluntary basis.

Planning for a full return to the workplace, with some work from home eligibility, is in progress. HR has collaborated with the senior leadership team to assess job roles for eligibility to work from home 1-3 days per week.

*Canadian Employment* – It was brought to the attention of the General Service Board chair during the general manager search process that a clear policy regarding the employment of Canadian citizens was needed. It was discussed that such a policy would have significance on both a practical level and on a spiritual level, acknowledging the important role of Canadian members in the U.S./Canada service structure. A motion was made and seconded that the G.S.B. affirms that all employment opportunities offered by A.A.W.S. or AAGV include Canadian citizens and will explore the best path forward to accommodate legal and/or other requirements.

## Finance

### *Revenue and Expense:*

Contributions year to date are \$4,309,644, which is 44% of the 2021 budget of \$9,725,000 and \$1,125,898 more than this time last year.

Contributions year to date are \$4,309,644 which is 44% of the 2021 budget of \$9,725,000 and \$1,125,898 more than 2020. Contributions are averaging \$861,929 per month. However, considering the January total of \$676,835 an outlier and excluding it, contributions are averaging \$908,202 per month. Continuation at this rate would receive \$10,667,059 for the year, exceeding last year’s record for contributions.

Gross literature sales year to date are \$4,754,209 which is 54% of the 2021 budget of

\$8,865,000 and \$515,732 more than last year. May gross sales were \$831,934. Gross sales in the first two weeks of June are about \$594,000, more than 70% of May sales.

Payroll and benefits year to date are \$3,804,463, which is 41% of the budget amount of \$9,225,438 and \$44,447 less than last year.

Total operating expense year to date is \$6,399,762 which is 44% of the budget amount of \$14,479,506 and \$156,320 more than last year. Operating expenses are running ahead of budget because the NYS unemployment insurance tax rate increased and the depreciation expense was budgeted as non-operating but is being charged as an operating expense.

Surplus for the first five months is \$1,262,770 compared to a budget surplus for the year of \$641,388. The surplus is driven by greater than budgeted contributions and literature sales. The reforecast budget will strive to maintain this surplus so that the reserve fund can be replenished.

### *Cash Position:*

As of May 3, operating cash was \$1,476,934, which represents 1.2 months of expenses.

As of June 11, operating cash is \$1,458,080, which represents 1.2 months of expenses.

As of May 31, the reserve fund balance net of Grapevine subscription liability is \$12,491,796, which represents 10.4 months of expenses. (Target is 9-12 months.)

*Ad hoc Self-Support Committee* – The chair shared discussions on the proposed 70th General Service Conference agenda item forwarded to the Self-Support Subcommittee requesting sharing from the Fellowship about using various “virtual” baskets – especially in terms of our Traditions, to ensure our Conference-approved literature and service pieces reflect our Fellowship’s experiences and principles.

The committee noted and agreed that there is great value in furthering the discussion throughout the Fellowship.

The board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Finance Committee:

- That A.A.W.S. request sharing from the Fellowship about using various “virtual” baskets, especially in terms of our Traditions; and forward a report to the trustees’ Finance and Budgetary Committee for further consideration on updating Conference-approved literature and service pieces with this shared experience.

## Publishing

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

*2021 A.A.W.S. Literature Special Offers and Test Pilots:*

1. Five-month Test Pilot on Reduced Shipping Charges, May 17 – October 18, 2021. The pilot was pre-announced to Intergroups and Central Offices April 7 and announced to all customers May 1.

2. “A.A. in Your Pocket,” July 1 – September 30, 2021. Focusing on Portable editions – buy any pocket editions and get \$1 off each.

3. “Dynamic Duo,” August 1 – September 30, 2021 buy the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, hardcover (in English, French or Spanish) and get \$1 off *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* in any language and any format.

The publishing director went over a preliminary timeline of release dates for revised, new and other items of A.A.W.S. literature – in accordance with the 71st General Service Conference. One item highlighted is a new design, fully revised and updated AA Service Manual 2021-2023. The anticipated release date is expected to be sometime in November.

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

- That the Publishing department reprint the book, *Experience, Strength, and Hope*, with a soft cover rather than a hard cover, and that the book be priced at \$5.00 per unit.

## Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The committee reviewed the minutes of G.S.O.’s Website Committee, along with progress reports and updates.

*Progress report on Website design* – Development of the site page templates is near completion. The CSD content team is entering the approved copy into the page templates. A.A. Staff, Archives and Publishing are reviewing the new pages and working with the CSD Content team to revise and finalize the pages. Finance and Grapevine also reviewed and approved

their specific pages. Implementation of the new A.A. Near You functionality is underway.

*Meeting Guide App* – The A.A.W.S. App team, working with Foster Made, launched the second major application upgrade since the application was handed off from the original application developer. This release was centered around the extension of Seventh Tradition contribution forms to include PayPal and Cash App. The next release is in testing phase and includes: new News visual indicator, sharing of Daily Quote or a News item via email or text message and inclusion of meeting information when contacting entities.

*Podcast* – Currently there are two Podcast sub-groups meeting regularly under the umbrella of the larger organizational Podcast Working group. The creative team is focused on the exploration of different themes, ideas and formats for the Podcast; the Equipment-Logistics team has been reviewing budget considerations, creating “risks/unknowns” lists and identifying mitigations.

*YouTube* – All ASL videos for the Big Book are public. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions videos (posted private as of February 28, 2020) were posted on 3/25. “A.A. Regional Forums Video” has been posted in English, Spanish and French with closed captions. “A New Freedom,” in 15- and 3-minute cuts, was posted public as of April 1, 2021. As of June 2021, we have over 5,800 subscribers.

*Google ads* – New keywords were added to the GetHelp and FindMtg campaigns. Recertification was approved by LegitScript.

*LinkedIn* – A plan was created to expand LinkedIn with a goal of having at least 1-2 posts per month of content relevant to professionals, including *About A.A.* releases, press releases, vacancy announcements (Nominating), and G.S.O. employment opportunities.

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

- That the March 29, 2021, Website committee meeting minutes, 2021 First Quarter website report, 2021 analytics loss report and Progress on Website Design report presented on June 25th be forwarded to the trustees’ committee on Public Information.

## Internal Audit

The board approved the following recommendations brought forward by the Internal Audit Committee:

- Modification to the Budget Policy and Procedure Statement for Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., in the section “Expenditures Not in the Ordinary Course of Business” to state:

- a. Set the amount for Management to make expenditures without prior notice or approval of the Board of Directors to \$50,000;

- b. Delete item b in the current policy, and;

- c. Set the amount of \$50,000 or more for Management to seek and obtain the approval of the Board of Directors prior to making the expenditure.

- That the Management RACI be submitted to the A.A.W.S. Board for review.