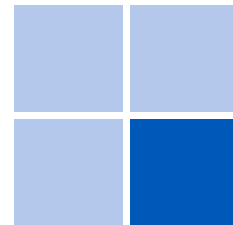


# Quarterly Report from G.S.O.



## Activities of the General Service Board Including A.A. World Services, Inc., AA Grapevine, Inc.

*This is a confidential bulletin, for use only within A.A.*

August 2020

### General Service Board Meeting

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. held its quarterly meeting via videoconference on Monday, August 3, 2020. Michele Grinberg, chair of the General Service Board, warmly welcomed all present.

All committees met during the weekend. Highlights of committee reports appear below:

### Archives

The committee reviewed the 2020 Conference Committee on Archives committee consideration regarding possible themes, content ideas and the time period that a book on A.A. history might cover with discussion to continue at subsequent meetings.

The committee approved a new draft policy for GSO Archives on the Co-Founders' Posthumous Anonymity.

### Conference

The committee discussed the planned format of the 71st GSC, virtual or in-person and made the following recommendation: *That the General Service Board begin planning for the likelihood of a virtual General Service Conference from April 18-24, 2021, and that planning involve the 71st General Service Conference delegate members, while acknowledging that if and when circumstances allow, an in-person Conference is always preferred.*

A subcommittee was appointed to consider finalizing the equitable distribution of Conference committee workload process.

### Cooperation with the Professional Community/ Treatment and Accessibilities

*Cooperation with the Professional Community:* The committee asked the secretary to work with the Publishing department on updating the style and language of "A.A. in Your Community." The committee discussed the LinkedIn page and ways to communicate with modern professionals on social media about Alcoholics Anonymous, noting that content on the LinkedIn Page is developed from A.A. materials that were either approved by the General Service Conference or are A.A. service materials comprised of shared experiences on a specific topic.

*Treatment and Accessibilities:* The committee asked the staff secretary to work with the Publishing department on

revisions to the pamphlet "Bridging the Gap" as well as updating the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic." The committee asked staff to explore placement of military audio interviews on other AAWS digital platforms and to partner with the Communication Services department on the creation of a Remote Communities Committee page on aa.org.

### Corrections

The committee has begun to consider a full review of the corrections literature with a focus on identifying appropriate language based on the audience the corrections literature is trying to reach. A request for shared experience is going out to the Fellowship on how the message is being carried behind the walls during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Corrections desk is in collaboration with Publishing to gather data from the Fellowship to provide effective communication in distributing digital literature via tablet, computer system and/or any other device to those incarcerated in the U.S. and Canada.

### Finance

*Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP):* The committee met twice in July in executive session via videoconference to discuss this program that includes an enhanced benefit, retiree medical insurance and a severance package to eligible employees. The committee recommended to the General Service Board that the VRIP be approved. The financial impact of the VRIP is part of the new budget/forecast for 2020.

*2019 Annual Financial Audit:* The 2019 audit of the three operating corporations was completed May 31, 2020. The independent auditor reported that all three corporations' financial statements received unmodified opinions and that there were no material weaknesses observed. The trustees' Audit Committee accepted the report.

*2020 International Convention Update:* Detailed reports on the refunds that have been administered to date and the insurance claim submitted after the cancellation of the 2020 International Convention were discussed. An advance of the insurance of \$970,000 is expected soon, which is a portion of the full claim. The total claim is between \$2.3 to \$2.5 million and it is anticipated to be accepted.

*Ad Hoc Committee Progress Report — Google Grants and the 7th Tradition:* On the recommendation of the independent auditor, in-kind donations will be reported as a footnote on the organization's 990 tax form. Another subcommittee has been formed to further discuss the findings of this report.

### **G.S.O. Financial Results**

The committee reviewed GSO financial results for the first six months of 2020. Gross Sales for the first six months of \$4,918,121 were \$2,623,651 lower than 2019. Gross Profit from literature was \$3,017,890 and represented a 75% Gross Profit Percentage.

Contributions for 2020 of \$4,358,338 were \$355,954 greater than 2019. The committee expressed its gratitude to the Fellowship for the continuing Seventh Tradition support.

Total Revenue (gross profit from literature plus contributions) was \$7,376,228 and \$1,559,485 less than 2019.

Total expenses for the six months of 2020 were \$7,645,180. This is \$1,908,167 less than 2019. The decrease in expenses compared to 2019 was in large part due to a reduction in travel caused by the cancellation of events because of COVID-19. This reduction in travel also reflects that the GSB, AAWS and AAGV board meetings are now held virtually. The Travel, Meals and Accommodations line is \$638,430 lower than this time last year. Professional fees are \$212,110 for the period ending June 30, 2020 compared to \$360,414 in 2019, a variance of \$128,304. Contracted Services were \$961,098 for the period ending June 30, 2020 which is \$208,623 less than this time last year.

The combination of the above revenues and expenses resulted in GSO reporting a loss of \$268,952 for the first six months of 2020. This loss compares to a loss of \$617,635 in 2019, a variance of \$348,682.

General Service Board support of the La Viña service activity was \$148,060 compared with a budgeted amount of \$158,512 and an actual of \$111,282 in 2019.

### **GSO 2020 Budget Reforecast**

For the year 2020, there is a reforecast of the budget due to COVID-19. This budget includes new sales revenue estimates, decreases in many expenses as well as estimated severance payments due to the VRIP offer. The trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee recommended that the revised GSO budget for the second half of 2020, titled "Reforecast 2.0," be amended to include an additional \$75K in Contracted Services to help the Finance department at GSO with NetSuite challenges, and that it be forwarded to the General Service Board.

### **Grapevine Financial Results**

For the first six months of 2020, average paid circulation of the Grapevine magazine was 67,635. This compared with a budget of 67,828 and 2019 actual of 66,765. Online and GV Subscription app circulation was 4,721 in 2020 versus a budget of 5,613 and actual of 5,157 in 2019.

Gross profit on the magazine of \$650,046 was \$45,223

more than budgeted. Gross profit on other content-related materials of \$215,848 was \$179,079 lower than budgeted and \$94,805 less than 2019.

Total gross profit for the six months was \$865,893 and \$133,856 lower than budgeted and \$136,837 less than the \$1,002,730 achieved in 2019.

Total costs and expenses of the magazine for the year were \$973,805, which were \$15,879 lower than budgeted and \$114,219 less than the \$1,088,024 in 2019.

After adding interest earned, there was a shortfall for the first six months of 2020 of \$92,911 compared with a net loss of \$70,294 in 2019 and a budgeted net profit of \$25,065 for 2020.

### **Grapevine 2020 Budget Reforecast**

Grapevine will have a 2020 budget reforecast for presentation at the October 2020 meeting.

### **La Viña Results**

For the six months ended June 30, 2020, average paid subscriptions for La Viña were 8,628 versus 10,100 budgeted and 10,360 for 2019. Income from magazine sales for the first six months of 2020 was \$46,945, compared with a budget of \$54,540. Other publishing income added \$10,222 to the revenue stream. After deducting the costs and expenses of \$165,741, a shortfall between revenue and expenses of \$148,060 resulted for this service activity. This compares with a budgeted shortfall of \$158,512 for 2020 and a shortfall of \$111,282 for 2019. The shortfall for the La Viña service activity is funded by a transfer from the General Fund of the GSB.

### **General Sharing Session**

Regional trustee Mark E. warmly welcomed everyone to the first ever "virtual" quarterly General Sharing Session. The topic was: "Leadership — Meeting the Challenges in Interesting Times." Regional trustee Cathy B. presented on the subtopic, "Leadership — The Trusted Servant," and Class A trustee Christine Carpenter spoke on the subtopic, "Leadership — Responsible and Principled."

Cathy began by saying that while some are born to be leaders, others need to grow into the role. She shared that she continues to grow, learning to accept that there will always be criticism, especially in a Fellowship that encourages sharing, even the uncomfortable kind. She shared that good leaders invite a diversity of opinions, because "when we are unwilling to discuss, we lose trust, and considering we are all 'trusted servants' — to lose trust is to lose our value." She shared that much like a snow globe, the pandemic has turned the world upside down and shaken it up. But, Cathy sees a silver lining to the pandemic, "that it has forced us to embrace technology as a means to communicate, as a way to do business and most importantly, as a way to carry on our Twelfth Step work."

Sharing next, Christine noted that in preparation for her talk, she read about leadership in the context of the corporate and political world around us, with its examples of bul-

lying, manipulation and impatience. “It was not fun reading.” She contrasted that with her recent experience as a member of the trustees’ Nominating Committee, participating in interviews with candidates for the position of chair of the General Service Board. “Consistently, we heard the words *empathy*, *consensus* and *compromise*. Be accessible, be both proactive and reactive, keep things moving, listen to all input, don’t be a LEADER, be a consensus builder.” She also looked at “vision” — a concept written about effectively by Bill W. — as key in this time when A.A.’s future is difficult to forecast. Christine concluded by saying that “the themes of unity and vision will keep us all responsible and principled leaders in the future.”

Mark thanked the presenters and invited attendees to raise their “virtual” hands to speak. A member from Publishing shared that leadership changes as needs change, but that the underlying principles, such as our Steps and Traditions, remain firm. A trustee shared that part of leadership is to make sure others feel heard, that their point of view is recognized.

A Class A trustee shared that sometimes the most unexpected people turn out to be the best leaders, those who may never have set out to become a leader but who lead with quiet dignity. Another Class A trustee discussed how leadership often means raising awareness of an issue that may not be popular, but that principled leaders sometimes have to take a stand.

One staff member expressed that leadership is dynamic. “Sometimes I’m asked to be a driver, sometimes a facilitator, sometimes just a good listener. My best, most profound lessons on leadership have begun with trust.”

A trustee remarked that, much like “surrender to win” the term “servant leader” is another paradox in A.A. She’s learned that leadership in A.A. is about raising others up and helping them to be better leaders. Another trustee learned that leadership doesn’t have to be a big deal, something we lose sleep over. It’s often as simple as just showing up, providing good information, being supportive and perhaps bringing a sense of humor.

A staff member was glad to be reminded of how our critics can be our benefactors and what we can learn from them if we are listening. A trustee noted that a benefit of challenging times is that they can spur us out of apathy, fire our imaginations and inspire us to change in ways we might not in normal times.

## International

The committee noted that two Class A trustees have collaborated on a draft letter to international GSO’s for linking GSB Class A trustee professionals (U.S./Canada) with non-AA professionals who serve on GSB’s in other countries. The committee recommended that the GSB propose to the 26th World Service Meeting that the U.S./Canada GSO coordinate a modified 26th WSM to be held in late 2020 via teleconferencing and that it be financed by WSM delegate fees and the WSM Fund.

## International Conventions/Regional Forums

*International Conventions:* The committee accepted a financial update indicating that refunds to registrants who paid with a credit card were 99% complete and that refunds to anyone who paid with a check or Money Order were being completed. Staff reported that as of July 30 the 2020 International Convention website had received over 82,000 unique visits and the committee agreed to extend the site until August 31, 2020. The committee also suggested that the site be archived and considered as a resource for other AAWS digital platforms or for use in A.A. service committee work.

*Regional Forums:* The committee reviewed a proposal recommending virtual options to Regional Forums for the years 2020-2021 and recommended the cancellation of in-person Regional Forums in 2021 with the 2021 Regional Forum schedule held on a virtual platform. The committee also agreed to the following: 1) two one-day U.S./Canada Forums — Eastern US/CAN and Western US/CAN — to be held either November or December 2020, with forum programming designed to encourage Fellowship engagement and participation; and 2) a return to in-person Regional Forums in the year 2022 with the addition of a virtual component to allow wider participation. Additionally, the final voiceover has been completed for the regional forum video project and it should be available soon.

## Literature

The committee noted continuing work on numerous items stemming from Advisory Actions in previous years and efforts to make current literature accessible in all possible formats. The committee formed two subcommittees, one to evaluate common solutions for agenda items submitted regarding plain language, simplified language, accessible translations and large print versions of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as well as workbooks to help study the program of Alcoholics Anonymous; a second to look into a meaningful process for updating the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black/African-American Alcoholic.”

## Nominating

The committee recommended changes to the language in the procedures for nominating corporate board directors, ACMs, regional and at-large trustees to clarify that General Service Conference delegates are not eligible for these positions until *one year after* their last Conference.

## Public Information

The committee discussed a number of issues related to Google AdWords/Grants and a 2020 General Service Conference floor action concerning halting the launch and requesting distribution of the “Ad Hoc Committee Progress Report — Google Grants and the 7th Tradition” from the trustees’ Finance Committee, dated March 30, 2020, to all members of the 70th General Service Conference. Further discussion was tabled pending receipt of the report from the trustees’ Finance and Budgetary Committee. The commit-

tee reviewed draft storyboards and scripts for the development of two new PSAs and noted that they are geared toward minorities, with the suggestion that all future PSAs should be developed with minorities in mind.

## **A.A. World Services**

Since its May 23, 2020 meetings following the virtual 70th General Service Conference, the A.A. World Services Corporate Board met three times. During this same period, the AAWS Finance, Publishing, Technology/Communication/Services and Internal Audit committees each met twice. The AAWS Nominating committee met once.

### **Administration**

The office has continued functioning on an entirely remote basis. Technical and HR support has been continuous, and plans and decisions have been implemented to maintain services and publishing functions, as well as other operational functions via a remote workforce.

The office has been looking ahead to the third and fourth quarters in compiling the next-step reforecast that will position GSO for the balance of this year and into 2021. Part of this refocusing is the Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP) that has been offered to eligible employees as of August 1.

Regarding a workforce return to the office, there is no firm return date as yet. Teleworking will continue with ongoing evaluation of options and continued input from employees, medical professionals and governmental regulations.

### **Administrative Services**

Remediation of the core NetSuite ERP system has been ongoing. Special focused efforts are underway in the areas of Finance, Services (My Portal) and Publishing (production, webstore, etc.) with strong input and support from vendors, consultants and select workgroups.

### **Archives**

From January through mid-July, Archives staff has responded to approximately 600 inquiries for information and research. Archives staff is also working on transcribing digitized, handwritten archival letters stored in our document management repository.

### **Human Resources**

Human Resources and the organization continue to support employees and their families impacted by COVID-19. To date, ten employees have reported that they or a family member have been impacted.

### **Technology Services**

The NetSuite Remediation project continues with four active workstreams: Core, Contributions, My Portal and the Webstore. Technology Services is also participating in the Return to Work Taskforce as there will be a need to supplement GSO's current equipment and/or transition equipment back into GSO at the appropriate time.

## **Services Summary**

*Conference:* The Conference assignment submitted a report for the trustees' General Service Conference Committee on the translation of Conference Background. The report details the work completed, expenses incurred and lessons learned in striving to provide Conference background materials in English, Spanish and French under a very tight deadline. The anonymity-protected online version of the 2020 GSC Final Report in English, French and Spanish was distributed via the Conference Dashboard and the print version is scheduled for publication and distribution in mid-August.

*Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment:* The Summer 2020 edition of *About A.A.* was distributed in May and the desk has prepared a proposal for management exploring potential adjustments to C.P.C. exhibits and other services.

*Corrections:* The summer issue of "Sharing from Behind the Walls" was distributed and a proposal to adjust the print run to address current circumstances has been sent to management.

*Group Services:* The desk is working with staff to develop standard responses to the many inquiries regarding listing meetings online. As a result of COVID-19, management approved an update to Meeting Guide that supported the display of online meetings for temporary closures and hybrid meetings (meetings still taking place online as well as in-person).

*International:* In early May, a communication was sent to all World Service Meeting delegates and International GSOs/GSBs informing them that the General Service Board U.S./Canada has withdrawn from hosting the 26th WSM onsite in October. The option of hosting a virtual meeting to be held before 2021 is currently being explored. This would require approval from the WSM.

*International Convention:* The 2020 IC digital site went live the week of June 29, 2020. As of July 6, over 80,000 individuals had visited the site.

*Literature:* The assignment is working on production of the newly Conference-approved video "Your General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure."

*Nominating:* There will be a number of 2021 vacancies on the General Service Board — two regional trustees, trustee-at-large/U.S., three Class A trustees, and the chair of the Board.

*Public Information:* A vendor has been selected for the development of two new PSAs. Diversity will be a key factor in the casting process.

*Regional Forums:* The assignment has continued to explore virtual alternatives to Regional Forums, as face-to-face Regional Forums for Western Canada and the Pacific Region have been cancelled. The Southeast Regional trustee and delegates notified GSO that they want to hold a virtual regional forum the first weekend in December. The fi-

nal voiceover has been completed for the regional forum video project, and the project will be completed by the end of summer.

Additionally, the Regional Forums coordinator provided a summary of staff discussions that have taken place over the last few months on the topic of race and privilege as it relates to the spirit of Tradition Three. Her full remarks have been made available to all board members.

### **Board Committees**

*Finance:* For details on AAWS Finance, see the report of the trustees' Finance Committee on page 1 of this report and the summary of unaudited financial results on the last page of this report for the six months ended June 30, 2020.

*Publishing:* Year to date, gross sales of print items of literature have seen a gradual uptick since a dramatic downturn in April 2020; however, overall sales year-to-date through June 2020 continue to lag behind sales during the same period of 2019.

The publishing webstore workgroup, tech services, Welman consultants and RSM consultants have continued making progress on updating the AAWS webstore. The project is on schedule for User Acceptance Testing.

In response to the decline in printed literature sales since April 2020, the Publishing director is actively engaged with management and key publishing team members to monitor inventory and assess priorities in planning or deferring production of new items of literature to 2021.

The committee continued discussion on emerging digital distribution channels for A.A. materials within the prison system (U.S. and Canada).

The revised publication date of the souvenir book, *A Visual History of Alcoholics Anonymous: An Archival Journey*, has been set for February 2021. All printing of this book will be billed in fiscal year 2021.

*Technology/Communication/Services (TCS):* The committee heard reports from Technology Services, Group Services and the Communication Services Department: the director of Technology Services noted the decision to defer the majority of website development activities until 2021; regarding the most recent conference call between GSO and the Intergroup/Central Office committee, the Group Services coordinator shared that a statement of purpose is under development to bring greater definition, focus and unity to the collaborative work of this quarterly meeting; the senior manager of the Communication Services department noted the ongoing growth of the department, discovering and filling gaps in staffing and experience while setting a realistic course for the future.

Over the past few months, work toward implementation of Google Ads has continued, including clarification of the AAWS privacy policy language. The 2020 Floor Action concerning halting the launch and requesting distribution of the "Ad Hoc Committee Progress Report -- Google Grants and the 7th Tradition" from the trustees' Finance

Committee was reviewed. Discussion by the TCS Committee separated out progress toward implementation of Google Analytics, which can be achieved by the office in response to an existing Advisory Action, while awaiting information relative to the discussion at the trustees' Public Information Committee of the Seventh Tradition questions relative to AdWords Grants.

*Internal Audit Committee (IAC):* The committee reviewed recommendations that remain from the 2018 Financial and IT Audit. One of the elements under consideration is the ongoing process of sunsetting the old Travers system software and database. The Emergency Response-Business Continuity Plan is still in development and will be reported on as progress moves forward. The Human Resources RACI Matrix review is ongoing as well.

*Nominating:* The Board recommended that Judith Ann Karam, Class A Trustee, serve for the balance of this panel year as director on the A.A. World Services, Inc. Board of Directors.

### **AA Grapevine**

The AA Grapevine Board of Directors met via teleconference five times since the General Service Conference: a new director's orientation on June 5, 2020; a board meeting on June 6, 2020; an executive session on July 14, 2020; an AA meeting and quarterly meeting on July 31, 2020.

### **Board Committees**

The following committees met via teleconference: Strategic Planning, July 9 and 23, to review the current strategic plan's goals and tactics; Finance and Budget, July 2, to review second quarter financials and updates on AAGV's move to Bill.com and Quickbooks; and Ad Hoc Licensing, July 9, to review the current licensing policy, past subcommittee reports and completed and pending licenses on record. It was also reported that the Nominating and Governance Committee has received 24 resumes for the current nontrustee director opening. The committee is currently narrowing down the list and candidate names will be forwarded to the trustees' Nominating Committee for review. Full board interviews with finalists will take place in late August.

### **Board Actions**

*June 6, 2020:* Approved the minutes of the March 14, 2020 board meeting. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer's report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer's report.

*July 31, 2020:* Approved the minutes of the May 18 and May 23, 2020 meetings. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer's report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer's report, and agreed to cancel the December 12, 2020 face-to-face board meeting.

### **New Director's Orientation**

The Grapevine Board met for a day of orientation on June 5, 2020. Presentations were made regarding an over-

view of AA Grapevine, Inc., editorial and publications, circulation, financial operations, bylaws and charter, fiduciary responsibilities, strategic planning, board committees, board composition and rotation, as well as roles and responsibilities of a nontrustee director. The meeting ended with a roundtable question/answer and sharing session.

### Current Challenges

The pandemic has brought many challenges, with Grapevine and La Viña employees working from home. With the many difficulties inherent in this circumstance, employees haven't missed a beat. Book sales for both GV and La Viña are down significantly, consistent however with sales and contributions being down across the board within the Fellowship. La Viña subscriptions are down significantly from January, which is primarily due to low renewal rates. Most subscriptions are repurchased at La Viña events and since most events have been cancelled this has not happened. In response, we are looking at where expenses can be reduced. Currently, expenses are down \$114,000 YTD from 2019 on GV and up \$30,000 YTD on La Viña.

### Circulation, Development and Outreach — Highlights

- Audio Project stories are now being used and uploaded to YouTube;
- The new 2020 versions of the GV Daily Quote book (with new cover, in all three languages) and the *Best of GV 1,2 and 3* bundle are available;
- Outreach to the Spanish speaking community continues;
- Spanish store and web content being reviewed;

- LOH French audio currently in progress;
- Communication on new product information to Central Offices/Intergroups and service members continues via eblasts;
- New sources for digital and print subscription are being developed, such as new database lists from circulation vendor to meaningfully increase subscriptions. New sources include 2020 IC registrants and book buyers;
- AAGV and La Viña Self-support flyers e-blasted to over 34,000 GSRs and over 2,000 DCMs in July.

### Editorial Advisory Board (EAB): Grapevine and La Viña

The Grapevine EAB met on June 18, 2020 and the La Viña EAB met on June 2, 2020.

### Editorial Report: Grapevine

Recent issues of the Grapevine have included: June (Annual Prison Issue); July (AA Around the World, AA's 85th Birthday, formerly the International Convention Issue); August (LGBTQ+ members).

### Editorial Report: La Viña

Recent issues of La Viña have included: July/August (AA Around the World/24th Anniversary of La Viña: Experience, Strength and Hope beyond our borders).

### Grapevine Web Report

Monthly web traffic in the 2nd quarter averaged 95,769 unique visitors and 243,034 page views.

### Staff Travel

None due to COVID-19 pandemic

**FINANCIAL DATA:** For the six months ended 6/30/2020 (All figures pending final C.P.A. audit)

	2020 Budget Reforecast 1.0*	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
<b>G.S.O.</b>			
Contributions from A.A. groups and members	\$ 4,133,700	\$ 4,358,338	\$ 4,002,384
Sales less cost of production and shipping	3,322,034	3,017,890	4,933,328
Interest Income	0	0	0
Total Income	7,455,734	7,376,228	8,935,712
Total G.S.O. expenses:	8,289,706	7,645,180	9,553,347
Net Operating Income (expense)	<u>(833,972)</u>	<u>(268,952)</u>	<u>(617,635)</u>
<b>A.A. GRAPEVINE, INC.</b>			
Sales less costs of products	\$ 999,749	\$ 865,894	\$ 974,662
Interest earned — Regular	—	—	—
— Reserve Fund	15,000	15,000	15,000
Total Income	1,014,749	880,894	989,662
Expenses	989,684	973,805	1,088,727
Income (loss) from operations	<u>25,065</u>	<u>(92,911)</u>	<u>(99,065)</u>
General Service Board Support of La Viña shortfall	<u>(158,512)</u>	<u>(148,060)</u>	<u>(84,100)</u>

\*This budget has been revised.

For comments or questions write to: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163