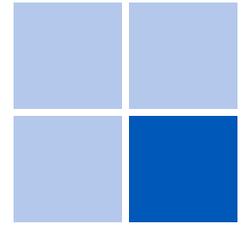


# Quarterly Report from G.S.O.



## 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.

July 2019

### General Service Board Meeting

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. held its quarterly meeting at the Crowne Plaza Times Square Hotel, New York, NY on Monday, July 29, 2019. Michele Grinberg, chair of the General Service Board, presided.

The chair warmly welcomed all present.

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

### Archives

The committee noted the 2019 Conference Committee on Archives request for discontinuance of gender specific language, when possible, in future printings of the Archives Workbook. The committee requested that the archivist work with the G.S.O. Publishing department to implement the change.

### Conference

The committee reviewed a draft of the 2020 General Service Conference-week schedule, noting the importance of ensuring time for discussing visioning, the strategic plans of the corporate boards and other substantial items related to the future of A.A.

The chair appointed subcommittees to consider the process for finalizing proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference committee and to consider any actionable items derived from the Conference sharing on equitable distribution of workload.

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

*Cooperation with the Professional Community:* The committee asked that the staff secretary work with G.S.O. resources to implement a static LinkedIn page as a touchpoint to getting professionals to the A.A. website. The committee also noted the continued value of C.P.C. exhibits in providing information about A.A. to professionals and looks forward to messaging being created to provide information about A.A. digital resources.

*Treatment and Accessibilities:* A subcommittee was appointed to undertake revision of the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic." The committee's ACM has been invited to share about A.A. at a joint conference on suicide prevention orga-

nized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

### Corrections

The committee reviewed and approved a draft letter to professionals in the parole and probation field to raise awareness about local prerelease and Bridging the Gap A.A. services and agreed to include the letter in the Corrections Kit as a resource for Corrections Committees.

### Finance

The committee heard and discussed a report on meetings of both the Defined Benefit Retirement Committee and the Employees' Postretirement Medical Benefits Committee. As of June 30, 2019, the market value of the Retirement Trust was \$37,240,252, which compares with the plan assets of \$33,059,041 as of December 31, 2018. Projected Benefit Obligation as of December 31, 2018 was \$35,238,092 (last actuarial valuation). As of June 30, 2019, the value of the Postretirement Medical Fund was \$6,319,730, which compares to the Postretirement Medical Liability of \$6,836,634 as of December 31, 2018.

### G.S.O. Financial Results

The committee reviewed G.S.O. financial results for the first six months of 2019. Gross Sales of \$7,483,984 were \$41,742 (.56%) more than budgeted and \$271,742 (3.8%) higher than 2018. Gross Profit from literature was \$4,933,328 and represented a 66.9% Gross Profit Percentage, compared with 67.4% for 2018. The budgeted Gross Profit percentage was 65.6%.

Contributions for 2019 of \$4,002,384 were \$185,912 (4.9%) greater than budgeted and \$185,912 (4.9%) greater than 2018. The committee expressed its gratitude to the Fellowship for the continuing Seventh Tradition support.

Total Revenue (gross profit from literature plus contributions) was \$8,935,712 or \$313,286 (3.6%) greater than budgeted and \$326,680 (3.8%) higher than 2018.

### Grapevine Financial Results

For the first six months of 2019, average paid circulation of the Grapevine magazine was 66,765. This compared with a budget of 67,685 and 2018 actual of 67,427. Online and GV Subscription app circulation was 5,606 in 2019 versus a budget of 7,155 and actual of 5,608 in 2018.

Gross profit on the magazine of \$663,895 was \$42,724

less than budgeted. Gross profit on other content-related materials of \$310,767 was \$5,438 greater than budgeted and \$62,819 more than 2018. The increase from last year was due to an additional gross profit of \$71,139 that came from the sales of three new books.

Total gross profit for the six months was \$974,662 which is \$37,286 lower than budgeted and \$50,248 more than the \$924,414 achieved in 2018.

### **La Viña Results**

For the six months ended June 30, 2019, average paid subscriptions for La Viña were 9,783 versus 9,362 budgeted and 9,643 for 2018. Income from magazine sales during 2019 was \$70,788, compared with a budget of \$63,030. Other publishing income added \$12,139 to the revenue stream. After deducting the costs and expenses of \$135,937, a shortfall between revenue and expenses of \$84,100 resulted for this service activity. This compares with a budgeted shortfall of \$82,919 for 2019 and a shortfall of \$68,230 for 2018. The shortfall for the La Viña service activity is funded by a transfer from the General Fund of the G.S.B.

### **Reserve Fund**

At June 30, 2019, the Reserve Fund had a balance of \$16,060,730. The Fund represents approximately 9.6 months of 2019 combined budgeted operating expenses of Grapevine and A.A.W.S.

### **2020 International Convention Update**

Diann Furfaro from Talley Management attended the A.A.W.S. Board meeting and gave a detailed report on the financials of the 2020 IC. While expenses are on track, she highlighted certain lines on the budget, including the contract reviews and the Travel line, which have gone over budget. The reason for these overages is the detailed legal review on large contracts and not receiving comp rooms on site visits as they have in previous conventions. Diann also spoke about the contingency budget line being greater than these overages. The A.A.W.S. Board has requested an additional column be added to the financials of percentage committed so that there is a clear understanding of any variances or overages. Talley will be doing monthly reporting for the International Convention starting in the November meeting.

### **Recommendations**

It was recommended and approved that:

- a draw-down up to \$1 million be made from the Reserve Fund for A.A.W.S. to be refunded by December 31, 2019;
- an amount not to exceed \$1 million for capital improvements (i.e. renovations and/or asbestos abatement at 475 Riverside Drive) be drawn down from the General Fund;
- the A.A. World Services, Inc. Board of Directors authorize the general manager to sign the lease for additional floor space at 475 Riverside Drive (effective September 1, 2019 through December 31, 2024, concurrent with the existing 11th floor lease).

## **General Sharing Session**

The topic of the quarterly General Sharing Session was “Self-Support — Keeping the Fellowship Aware.” Regional trustee and Grapevine director Mark E. presented on the subtopic, “What Does Self-Support Mean?” G.S.O. staff member, Diana L. presented on the subtopic, “Opportunities to Communicate the Use of Seventh Tradition Contributions to the Fellowship or Where Does the Money Go?”

Regional trustee Jan L. opened the session with a story about a member of her home group who used to ask “Why should we send money to New York?” But after G.S.O. helped him get A.A. literature to a country in Africa where he was working, he understood why.

Mark shared his experience with self-support from his early days in A.A. to the present. It wasn’t until he got involved in service that he saw all the things contributions support, from the district telephone answering service to Big Books for local jails. Over time it became apparent to him that every A.A. member is responsible for self-support.

Diana emphasized that two-way communication is vital to understanding where the money goes and why we contribute. She also brought up the challenges of financial reporting. “If too much information is shared then the roles of participating can get blurred. If too little is shared then the Fellowship loosens their grip of the spiritual handshake and participation fades.” Diana noted how different A.A. is from other nonprofits in that we don’t do fundraising or seek corporate sponsorships. “We’re the Addams family of nonprofits” she said.

Jan thanked both presenters and invited all in attendance to share on the theme.

A trustee talked about how it is incumbent on board members to be ambassadors to the Fellowship and share about the great things that are going on. An A.A.W.S. director prefers the term “giving in gratitude” to self-support. What inspires him is the feeling that giving is just one small thing he can do. A Grapevine director shared that we tend to think of practicing the Seventh Tradition as sending money to G.S.O. But another way we can participate in self-support is to help Grapevine be self-supporting, by purchasing Grapevine subscriptions and books.

A regional trustee thinks of the Seventh Tradition in terms of services the home group cannot provide. His favorite example is the translation of the Big Book into so many different languages. Another regional trustee explained that his home group has a spreadsheet where they list all the services from the district, area, G.S.O. and Grapevine that the group wants to support. They determine how much money they will need to support these services and then the individuals in the group collectively fulfill that responsibility. Another regional trustee shared that her group began including the local Spanish intergroup into their distributions (even though they are an English-speaking group). A general service trustee talked about reaching out to non-service events. When he did, and spoke about self-support, attendees were very interested.

An appointed committee member shared that communication about self-support can start with sponsorship and that we need good solid information for sponsors and groups to share on how self-support works. Lastly, a G.S.O. staff member shared that self-support is about more than money — it's about participating and what it means to be an A.A. member.

## International

The committee recommended that the General Service Board U.S./Canada be responsible for a maximum of \$10,000 (US) total for supporting delegates to attend the 21st REDELA, to be distributed in a prudent and informed manner after consultation with Mexico.

## International Convention/Regional Forums

*International Convention:* Planning for the 2020 International Convention is proceeding on schedule. Registration will open on September 9, 2019 at 10 a.m.

The committee viewed a one-minute draft video providing a glimpse of past international convention flag ceremonies and agreed to proceed with the project for the 2020 Convention. The purpose of the video is to share the enthusiasm and spirit of International Conventions. Once final edits are completed, the video will be made available for download on aa.org and other available platforms.

*Regional Forums:* The committee provided suggestions to increase regional forum participation including, but not limited to, posting the final agenda to aa.org and the A.A.W.S. Meeting Guide app and providing opportunities for interactive participation.

The committee reviewed a first draft of the Regional Forum video project.

## Literature

Following review as directed by the Conference, the committee forwarded to A.A.W.S. the proposed “Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other A.A. Materials” and requested a progress report from A.A.W.S. that will serve as background for discussion at the November 2019 meeting.

Progress continues on updates to “Twelve Traditions Illustrated,” “Twelve Steps Illustrated,” “Twelve Concepts Illustrated,” “Young People in A.A.” and “Too Young?” and to the video “Your General Service Office, Grapevine and the General Service Structure.” Progress also continues on two new pamphlets, one to include stories from Spanish-speaking women in A.A. and the other on the topic of A.A.’s Three Legacies. Additionally, the committee is discussing whether to consider development of a Fourth Edition of the Big Book in Spanish and whether to update the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black/African-American Alcoholic.”

## Nominating

The committee discussed requests that the trustees’ Committee on Nominating revise the procedures for a partial or complete reorganization of the General Service Board, the A.A.W.S. or AA Grapevine boards. The chair

appointed a subcommittee to address the suggested revisions and concerns.

## Public Information

The committee discussed and asked that the following be included for discussion in the Public Information (P.I.) Comprehensive Media Plan: development of a plan with focus on PSA messaging; possible online PSA video/audio distribution; a plan to produce video shorts based on current A.A. pamphlets that provide information about A.A. to the public.

## Trustees’ Planning and Sharing Session

The trustees met on Sunday, July 28, with reports and discussion that included the following items: beginning efforts to create a world-wide link among Class A trustees; the process for appointing consultants and ACMs; current processes and recommendations to clarify floor action protocols at the Conference; the combined G.S.O./AAGV/Trustees communications team; and the Board’s Strategic Plan.

## A.A. World Services

Since its March 2019 meeting, the A.A. World Services Corporate Board has met four times: May 23, May 25, June 28 and July 25. During this same period, the A.A.W.S. Finance, Publishing, Technology/Communication/Services and Internal Audit committees each met twice. Additionally, the A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine boards met in an informal joint session during Conference week in May 2019.

## Services

*Accessibilities/LIM:* The assignment is working to implement changes to Accessibilities service material to help Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing alcoholics participate in all Three Legacies.

*Communication Services:* Three major projects continue to be the focus of this assignment: website design; development of the A.A.W.S. app, which includes the Meeting Guide platform; and implementation of Google products.

*Conference:* An anonymity-protected electronic interim report on the 69th Conference was produced by the Publishing Department in English, French and Spanish and distributed to Conference members to support delegate reporting due to the lateness of this year’s Conference.

*Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment:* So far in 2019, 12 national exhibits have been coordinated, with 16 more to be completed.

*Corrections:* Following a positive response to a mailing to Corrections/Bridging the Gap/H&I Area Chairpersons noting the need for men to write to inmates through the CCS, there is no longer a waiting list.

*Group Services:* As liaison with Intergroup/Central Offices the staff member on this assignment attended a local forum whose theme was unity and how A.A. entities can work better together. The coordinator also participated in a conference call with representatives of the Intergroup/Central Office/A.A.W.S./AAGV Seminar.

*International:* G.S.O. Mexico has completed the Spanish

translation of the anonymity-protected digital version of the 25th WSM Final Report. It has been added to the A.A. website.

*International Convention:* Approximately 350,000 copies of the registration brochure will be mailed to over 65,000 A.A. members, groups and service entities around the world. Registration and housing will open on Monday, September 9, 2019 at 10 a.m. (EDT).

*Literature:* Vendor selection and production concepts to update the video “Your G.S.O., Grapevine and the General Service Structure” are proceeding. This project is being approached in tandem with an introduction to a Regional Forums video to allow for possible cross-purposing of source footage.

*Nominating:* Notifications have been sent to delegates and appropriate area committee officers in the West Central and Western Canada regions regarding the regional trustee vacancies that will occur following the April 2020 General Service Conference.

*Public Information:* Extensive updates have been made to the P.I. Workbook due to outdated content. The P.I. assignment has been working with the Publishing department to develop draft “postcard style” service pieces with brief excerpted content about A.A.

*Regional Forums:* The East Central Regional Forum was held in Detroit, Michigan July 12-14. Work continues for the upcoming forums in the West Central and Southwest regions.

Programming for Regional Forums continues to include G.S.O. employees who share A.A.-related information from the office while engaging personnel with the Fellowship and vice versa. Drawings for free AA Grapevine or La Viña subscriptions will be held for first-time attendees and the International Convention skit will be performed at every 2019/2020 forum leading up to the International Convention in July 2020.

## **Administration**

The ERP NetSuite transition is the highest operational priority of the organization at this time with the go live date of August 5th. There will be a learning curve both internally and within the Fellowship, with improved service expected across all office functions. Since the conclusion of the 69th General Service Conference, the office has been engaged in the implementation of Advisory Actions and appropriate follow-up. The first original book to be undertaken by A.A. World Services in nearly 30 years, *Our Great Responsibility*, has been published in English, French and Spanish. Work continues in the office on the strategic communications initiatives of the General Service Board and a rough draft of a three-year communications strategic plan has been circulated to board members, trustees and G.S.O. staff for discussion. Information gathering continues on the projected acquisition of an additional 5,000 square feet of office space on the 8th floor of 475 Riverside Drive.

## **Archives**

So far this year, Archives staff has responded to approximately 750 requests for information and accessioned 67 new

items, both paper and digital. From June through mid-July, over 4,000 pieces of paper have been scanned and uploaded to Laserfiche. These include Conference committee agendas, reports and background; Bill W.’s correspondence; and other significant papers.

## **Human Resources**

All employees have been assigned a compliance course on Sexual Harassment prevention through the online HR portal. Employee Recognition Day was held at Rye Playland and was followed by an Employee Recognition Ceremony. Two new G.S.O. staff members have been hired: Brenda B., formerly of the Memphis Intergroup, and Irene D., former editor of La Viña; both are slated to begin work in July. Lola Ibrahim returned to G.S.O. as a Senior Administrator of Executive Services. She will be the primary support for the A.A.W.S. Board and will be overseeing executive support.

## **Information Technology Services**

In addition to support of the ERP implementation, the IT Services team continues to improve the connectivity to our hosted servers as well as reducing the number of active servers needed. As a result of the IT Audit, computers and laptops are being upgraded to add hard drive encryption and additional memory as needed.

## **Board Committees**

*Finance:* For details on A.A.W.S. 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, 2019.

*Publishing:* The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is available in 71 languages, with 23 languages pending and 16 new translations in progress, along with 5 revisions/retranslations. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is available in 48 languages, with pending translation in Arabic and a revised Czech translation. *Daily Reflections* is available in 34 languages.

Work continues on the audio book versions of the Big Book, “Twelve and Twelve” and *Living Sober* in English, French and Spanish. The Big Book and “Twelve and Twelve” ASL videos with updated closed captioning are in review. English, French and Spanish versions of the Twelve Concepts for World Service Audio project are in post-production for placement on aa.org. The Young People’s Video is now titled “Young and Sober in A.A.: From Drinking to Recovery,” with subtitles in English, French and Spanish, and is in the final stages of production.

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

- that the 2020 International Convention Souvenir book be priced at \$12.00 per unit in English, French and Spanish;
- that the DVD videos of the American Sign Language (ASL) editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* be priced at \$10.00 each.

*Technology/Communication/Services (TCS):* The committee reviewed progress reports and updates on G.S.O.’s A.A. website analytics and visitor’s activity reports and heard

a report from the Communication Services coordinator summarizing website design and app progress over the last few months. The committee reviewed and discussed a YouTube progress report and a LegitScript/Google Ads progress report.

*Internal Audit Committee (IAC):* The committee reviewed 33 recommendations from the 2018 Audit conducted by Marks Paneth covering both Financial and IT issues and discussed vendor management topics, including PCI compliance, labor and insurance compliance, worker's compensation, data ownership, and content ownership.

The committee noted that our legal advisor is reviewing an overall privacy policy for A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and the General Service Board. Once the privacy policy is in place, the committee will focus on implementing an audit program focused on privacy.

### **Board Resolutions**

A.A.W.S. resolution to trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee (July 25, 2019): that A.A. World Services, Inc. request an amount not to exceed \$1 million for capital improvements (i.e., renovations and/or asbestos abatement at 475 Riverside Drive) to be drawn from either the Reserve Fund or the General Fund. *The resolution passed unanimously and was forwarded to the trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee.*

A.A.W.S. resolution regarding 8th floor lease: that the A.A. World Services, Inc. Board of Directors authorize the general manager to sign the lease for additional floor space at 475 Riverside Drive (effective September 1, 2019 through December 31, 2024, concurrent with the existing 11th floor lease) contingent upon approval by the General Service Board for the requested capital funds for renovation and/or asbestos abatement. *The resolution passed unanimously and was held, pending action by the General Service Board.*

### **AA Grapevine**

The AA Grapevine Board of Directors met three times since the General Service Conference: A new director's orientation on June 27, 2019, a board meeting on June 28, 2019, and a quarterly meeting on July 25, 2019.

### **Board Committees**

The Nominating and Governance committee chair reported the committee met on July 3 and July 21 and discussed priorities of activities to select new general service trustee, nontrustee director and regional trustee to serve on GV Board in 2020.

The Outreach committee chair reported the committee met on July 19 and reviewed the current Composition, Scope and Procedure; goals/strategies on sharing the Anniversary Toolkit explainer video; representation at the 2020 International Convention; strategies for using the audio stories and YouTube; and ways AA Grapevine, Inc. can better support area delegates in representing Grapevine and La Viña at the Area level and elsewhere.

The Finance and Budget committee chair reported that the committee met on July 19 and 23. The committee discussed AA Grapevine, Inc. financials under the review of the

A.A.W.S. chief financial officer.

The ad hoc Strategic Planning committee chair reported that the committee will meet prior to the September strategic planning meeting to discuss meeting format and review of the Strategic Plan tactics submitted by management.

### **Board Actions**

*June 28, 2019:* Approved the minutes of the March 9, 2019 board meeting. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer's report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer's report

*July 25, 2019:* Approved the minutes of the May 23 and May 25, 2019 board meetings. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer's report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer's report.

### **Financial**

For details on Grapevine 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 period ended June 30, 2019.

### **New Directors Orientation**

The Grapevine Board met for a day of orientation on June 27, 2019. The A.A.W.S. chief financial officer, web coordinator, outreach coordinator and executive/customer service assistant gave presentations. Directors made presentations on the bylaws and charter, fiduciary responsibilities, board best practices, committees, board composition and rotation, as well as roles and responsibilities.

### **Circulation, Development, Outreach Highlights**

- The Grapevine Board is currently implementing a 3-year Strategic Plan that will incorporate the Fellowship Feedback Project and work closely with the web vendor.
- The umbrella privacy policy with A.A.W.S. to facilitate list sharing and to comply with recent regulatory changes is nearing completion in time for the opening of the 2020 International Convention registration.
- Existing engagement efforts for the print magazines, Grapevine Online, Grapevine App and related products will continue, including the Carry the Message project that focuses on sponsoring subscriptions through subscription gift certificates and the 2019 outreach "Toolkit" effort celebrating GV's 75th anniversary.
- Requests continue for additional new sources for digital and print subscription development, such as new database lists to meaningfully increase subscriptions.
- aagv.org continues the Drupal 8 upgrade which will create a responsive and integrated platform.
- The web rebuild project team is coordinating internal meetings with individuals and/or departments to discuss the new web visual design and language proposed and determining the content, images, audios and documents needed for migration to the new sitemap.
- Grapevine is working on the first steps for qualifying for Google for Nonprofits.

- Auto renew has been added to all print and online subscriptions (excluding GV Complete and the App).
- Grapevine’s new and revised catalogue has been reviewed and edited to include metadata findings.

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

The Grapevine EAB met on July 18. A Canadian member has been added. The next La Viña EAB meeting will be determined.

### Editorial Report: Grapevine

Recent issues of the Grapevine have included: “*Big Book Turns 80*” (May); “*Letting Go of Resentments*” (June); and “*African American Members Stories*” (August).

### Editorial Report: La Viña

Upcoming issues of La Viña are *Welcoming Women in AA: Stories from the Spanish translation of One Big Tent* (Sept./Oct. 2019); and *Carrying the Message of AA during the Holidays* (Nov./Dec. 2019).

### Publishing Update: Grapevine and La Viña

Audio Project stories are undergoing editorial process; translation is underway for new 2020 Convention versions of the *Grapevine Daily Quote Book* with new cover in English, French and Spanish; the new Grapevine catalogue is completed and at the printer; Grapevine Workbook revisions are underway; *Emotional Sobriety* French translation is now available; La Viña EAB members are currently reviewing audio stories; Spanish language *One Big Tent* is being proofread; La Viña Story Archive is completed.

### Grapevine Web Report

Second quarter monthly web traffic averaged at 35,300 unique visitors and 130,929 page views.

### Staff Travel

East Central Regional Forum, Detroit, MI (July 12-14); 23rd La Viña Anniversary, Fresno, CA (July 26-28).

**FINANCIAL DATA:** For the six months ended 6/30/19 (All figures pending final C.P.A. audit)

G.S.O.	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2018 Actual
Contributions from A.A. groups and members	\$3,816,472	\$4,002,384	\$3,816,472
Sales less cost of production and shipping	4,805,954	4,933,328	4,792,560
Interest Income	0	0	0
Total Income	8,622,426	8,935,712	8,609,032
Total G.S.O. expenses	9,172,979	9,553,347	8,749,575
Net Operating Income (expense)	(550,553)	(617,635)	(140,543)
<b>AA GRAPEVINE, INC.</b>			
Sales less costs of products	\$1,011,948	\$ 974,662	\$ 924,414
Interest earned — Regular	—	—	—
— Reserve Fund	10,000	15,000	10,000
Total Income	1,021,948	989,662	934,414
Expenses	1,110,166	1,088,727	889,296
Income (loss) from operations	(88,219)	(99,065)	45,118
General Service Board Support of La Viña shortfall	(82,919)	(84,100)	(68,230)

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