General Service Board Meeting

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. held its quarterly meeting at the Hilton Westchester Hotel, Rye Brook, NY on Monday, November 4, 2019. 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 discussed a proposal to produce a book containing all discontinued A.A. pamphlets and took no action, noting that copies of retired pamphlets are available directly from the Archives Department, upon request. It was also noted that there is no widely expressed need for this material.

Conference

The committee agreed that the Conference coordinator will update the 69th G.S.C. Advisory Action list to include the Advisory Action resulting from a 2018 poll between the annual meeting vote to move the dates of the 2019 G.S.C. The updated list will be communicated to all Conference members via the G.S.C. Dashboard and be included in the 2020 Conference Final Report.

The committee reviewed the delegate sharing received from the survey based on the G.S.B. Strategic Plan item to identify underrepresented sectors of the A.A. population. The sharing will be forwarded to the G.S.B. Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee.

Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities

Cooperation with the Professional Community: The committee noted the A.A.WS. Board recommendation that the implementation of a LinkedIn page be approved and that the implementation plan includes the items from the 2019 C.P.C. Conference Committee Consideration and 2018 Advisory Action on a LinkedIn page, along with other sharing. The committee reviewed and discussed ways to improve the effectiveness of A.A. exhibits at national conferences for professionals.

Treatment and Accessibilities: The trustees’ committee asked the staff secretary to send an additional request for sharing on cooperation with the elder community activities to accessibility committees and include regional trustees in the distribution list. The committee received a verbal update from the appointed committee member on efforts to communicate with senior personnel in the military, including possible interviews at a U.S. Army Nation Radio station and a podcast for veterans.

Corrections

The committee asked the staff secretary to request sharing from local corrections committees on language alternatives to the terms currently used in corrections literature to refer to incarcerated individuals (e.g., inmate).

The committee heard a report on digital literature distribution, noting that research and outreach to providers in prisons is ongoing with continual changes expected between vendors and platforms.

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 September 30, 2019, the market value of the Retirement Trust was $37,415,262 which compares with the plan assets of $37,240,252 as of June 30, 2019. Projected Benefit Obligation as of December 31, 2018 is $35,238,092 (last actuarial valuation). As of September 30, 2019, the value of the Postretirement Medical fund was $6,420,281, 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 nine months of 2019. Gross Sales for the first nine months of 2019 of $11,085,228 were $192,258 (1.70%) less than budgeted and $291,832 (2.70%) higher than 2018. Gross Profit from literature was $7,291,987 and represented a 66.7% Gross Profit Percentage, compared with 67.4% for 2018. The budgeted Gross Profit percentage was 63.8%.

Contributions for 2019 of $6,197,296 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 $13,489,284 or $341,067 (2.59%) greater than budgeted and $488,994 (3.76%) higher than 2018.
General Service Board support of the La Viña service activity was $110,860 compared with a budgeted amount of $124,379 and an actual of $96,852 in 2018.

**Grapevine Financial Results**

For the first nine months of 2019, average paid circulation of the Grapevine magazine was 66,618. This compared with a budget of 68,480 and 2018 actual of 67,510. Online and GV Subscription app circulation was 5,075 in 2019 versus a budget of 7,044 and actual of 5,479 in 2018.

Gross profit on the magazine of $979,499 was $80,429 less than budgeted. Gross profit on other content-related materials of $434,912 was $42,810 less than budgeted and $39,273 less than 2018.

Total gross profit for the nine months was $1,414,411 and $123,239 lower than budgeted and $4,881 more than the $1,409,550 achieved in 2018.

**La Viña Results**

For the nine months ended September 30, 2019, average paid subscriptions for La Viña were 10,177 versus 9,548 budgeted and 9,649 for 2018. Income from magazine sales during 2019 was $106,249 compared with a budget of $94,545. Other publishing income added $16,867 to the revenue stream. After deducting the costs and expenses of $188,478 a shortfall between revenue and expenses of $110,860 resulted for this service activity. This compares with a budgeted shortfall of $124,379 for 2019 and a shortfall of $96,852 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 on Friday, November 1, and gave a detailed report on the financials of the 2020 IC. Since registration opened on September 9, 2019, we have a little less than 50% of the total projected attendees registered resulting in revenues of $2,387,262. While expenses are on track, she is keeping track of a few over budget items. There are no more anticipated changes to the budget, and she does foresee us staying on budget.

**General Sharing Session**


Brenda shared that since she got sober in 1992 there’s an increasingly diverse population to reach, across a varied landscape of communication platforms. Brenda reviewed the new and updated literature and variety of formats which help address that diversity. She also recounted efforts by local committees to reach the Deaf community and others. However, Brenda said that rather than pat ourselves on the back we should continue to explore new literature, facilitate new translations, produce podcasts and more. At the end of the day we should use Tradition 5 and the Responsibility Declaration as our guide.

In speaking about communication up and down the triangle, Carole related that we do a great job of pushing communication out to people through forums and assemblies but need to listen more. “Real listening is a willingness to let the other person change you” she said, quoting a favorite author. She queried whether talking to people from a podium is allowing others to change us and asked what can we do to listen more? On a personal level, she observed “It is my job to challenge my assumptions and my job to ask you questions so that I can understand your assumptions. This is real listening. I, however, like to stand my ground on my beliefs and not be challenged. If you would just do things my way, all would be well!”

Carole suggested we make more of an effort to invite the quiet voices in the room to be heard. She reminded us that A.A.’s foundation is one alcoholic talking with another, and that technology offers us more platforms than ever for communicating. She also talked about fear and ego, sharing that “my experience in many facets of my life has been that when I show up to serve others, things work out very well. When I’m trying to manage things (ego), I struggle on many fronts in my life.”

Regional trustee Jan L. invited all in attendance to share on the theme. A staff member shared about how important listening and feeling heard is to fostering identification and the feeling of “I belong here.” She added how important it is having literature in different languages and interpreters when needed at meetings. A regional trustee shared that he tries to remember what worked for him when he was new, and that he considers nothing more important than listening when it comes to interactions with newcomers. In his service work he tries to “listen like I don’t have an opinion.”

A trustee and Grapevine director recounted that she tries to stay open to new ways of carrying the message. She also remarked that too often we jump to why we can’t do something instead of considering how we might do something. A member from Publishing connected with an image in Carole’s presentation of being at the bottom of the triangle and strain- ing to push information up the triangle and how perhaps we’re trying to do that with too much information so that it’s not really being received by the Fellowship. He cautioned that if it’s not being received, we’re not really communicating.

A regional trustee remarked that while he pays attention to what people say he pays more attention to what they do. A staff member talked about sharing his enthusiasm for A.A. when he was new and talking all the time. He was glad that no one told him to stop sharing as it was helping keep him sober. However, over time he found it was important for him to stop “telling” and to sit down and start listening.

**International**

The committee accepted reports on the 21st A.A. zonal meeting of the Americas (REDELA), Poland’s 45th A.A.
Consider implementing electronic voting for trustee elections.

**Recommendations**

It was recommended and approved that:

- Commencing with the July 2020 General Service Board Weekend, Allison C. of Goleta, CA be appointed for an additional one-year term to serve as an appointed committee member on the trustees’ Committee on Public Information; Shari M. of Fort Lauderdale, FL be appointed for an additional one-year term to serve as an appointed committee member on the trustees’ Committee on Public Information; Katie H. of Fair Oaks, CA and Amalia C. of Newington, CT be appointed for additional one-year terms to serve as appointed committee members on the trustees’ Committee on Literature.

- Following the April 2020 General Service Conference, Cindy F. serve as nontrustee director on the AA Grapevine Corporate Board; John W. serve as nontrustee director on the A.A. World Services Corporate Board; and Josh E. serve as a General Service Trustee and trustee director on the AA Grapevine Corporate Board.

- Following the April 2020 General Service Conference, Jimmy D. serve as trustee director for two years on the A.A. World Services Corporate Board; and Francis G. serve as trustee director for two years on the AA Grapevine Corporate Board.

**Public Information**

The committee discussed a report from the chair of the Comprehensive Media Plan subcommittee, noting ongoing efforts to revise the current strategy and architecture of the CMP plan and develop services to carry the A.A. message to the public. The committee reviewed and found the current video and audio/radio PSAs to be relevant and useful. The committee asked that editorial changes be made to the “Contact A.A....” tag lines of the audio PSAs to reflect the current platforms in which people search for A.A.

**Trustees’ Planning and Sharing Session**

The trustees met on Sunday, November 2, with reports and discussion focusing on planning and policy direction. The Board worked in small groups discussing the General Service Board Strategic Plan Goals. Additionally, there was sharing from several trustees regarding their activities to ensure that the hand of A.A. is present around the world.

**A.A. World Services**

Since its July 2019 meeting, the A.A. World Services Corporate Board met on September 13 for a Strategic Planning Session, September 14 for nontrustee director interviews and November 1 for a quarterly corporate meeting. During this same period, the A.A.W.S. Finance, Publishing, Technology/Communication/Services and Internal Audit committees each met once.

**Administration**

The highest organization-wide priority is the operation and maintenance of the new NetSuite enterprise system, which went live Monday, August 5. Overall the system is...
functioning, but there are gaps and shortcomings along the way. The 2020 International Convention is also a top G.S.O. priority, with registration and housing underway, as of Monday, September 9. The new Communication Services Department will be implemented on Monday, November 11, as the current Staff assignment known as Communication Services transitions to a department as the next step in the fulfillment of the strategic communications initiatives of the General Service Board.

**Archives**

Archives staff has continued digitizing background materials, correspondence and other related items from activities of the Conference and Trustees’ Committees that exist largely in paper format. Between July and August, staff completed scanning materials for 2009 through 2017, covering approximately 3,500 digitized documents.

**Human Resources**

Five new temporary contributions clerks have been hired to assist with the backlog in contributions processing and assist with the transition to the new system. These temporary employees are expected to continue through January. Michael Mungua and Jasmine De La Rosa (nonalcoholic) have been appointed to lead an inter-departmental team to focus on ERP implementation from the user perspective. The team will assist with the evaluation and review of practices, procedures and processes as it relates to the ERP.

**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.

**Services**

**Accessibilities/LLM:** The assignment is currently collecting stories submitted by the Fellowship to update the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic”; developing audio interviews with the military in A.A.; and coordinating announcement of the new American Sign Language (ASL) translation of the Big Book with the Public Information desk and the Publishing Department.

**Communication Services:** These 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; the YouTube channel; and implementation of Google products.

**Conference:** The Conference Final Report was distributed in August 2019 in English, French and Spanish, in both printed and digital (anonymity-protected) versions. Processing of Proposed 2020 Agenda Items is ongoing prior to the December 15 deadline.

**Corrections with the Professional Community/Treatment:** The service piece “Memo on Participation of A.A. Members in Research and other Non A.A. Surveys” is being updated.

**Corrections:** New service material, “The Role of Prerelease and Bridging the Gap (BTG) Temporary Contact Volunteers” and “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for new Corrections Committee Chairperson,” were sent via E-Blast to 1,096 Corrections trusted servants across the U.S. and Canada.

**Group Services:** The staff member on this assignment attended the 34th Annual Central Office/Intergroup/AAWS/AAGV Seminar. During the course of the Seminar frustration was expressed over A.A.W.S. pricing which offers non-A.A. entities the same discounts as Intergroup/Central Offices, some of whom fear they may have to close their doors. Concerns were also raised about the impact on Intergroup/Central Offices of meeting-finder capability on aa.org. The Seminar elected new representatives for their Communication Committee and that group will be making a proposal about quarterly calls with A.A.W.S. in the future.

**International:** Trustees-at-large Trish L. and Newton P. participated as delegates representing the U.S. and Canada at the 21st REDELA (Zonal Meeting of the Americas), September 28-October 3 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

**International Convention:** As of October 7, 2019, over 21,000 people have registered for the Convention. This is slightly below Atlanta but ahead of San Antonio in the same period in 2014 and 2009 respectively.

**Literature:** Production for the update of the video “Your G.S.O., Grapevine and General Service Structure” is ongoing, including content and script development, scheduling for space, talent and actual filming at G.S.O. and Grapevine, some of which took place over the last month.

**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:** At the request of the trustees’ committee on Public Information a survey professional from Duke University has been hired to review the current A.A. Membership Survey methodology. The P.I. assignment has facilitated distribution of a press release to media and other professionals about the new ASL DVD of the Big Book. A version of the press release in ASL is embedded so that members and the public who may be Deaf can access it as well.

**Regional Forums:** The Southwest Regional Forum took place October 11-13 in Houston, Texas, marking the final forum for 2019. Work continues on the 2020 and 2021 Regional Forums including, but not limited to, overhaul of PowerPoint presentations and development of workshops. Additionally, the Regional Forum Video project is in final production.

**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 nine months ended September 30, 2019.

**Publishing:** The American Sign Language Big Book DVD was released on November 4, accompanied by a press release to pertinent media outlets. The “Twelve and Twelve” is scheduled for a similar release in early 2020. The Lesotho
translation of Alcoholics Anonymous is in a final review stage by the Lesotho fellowship prior to licensing them to print and distribute. Members of Zimbabwe A.A. formed a translation committee and Shona translation of the Big Book is underway there. Paraguay plans to form a translation committee to begin new translations and approve existing translations for submission in the Guarani language. Other recent activity is taking place in Hungary, Ukraine, India and Czech Republic.

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.

The Board approved recommendations brought forward by the TCS Committee to post the Meeting Guide app Frequently Asked Questions and implement a LinkedIn page.

Internal Audit Committee (IAC): The committee received and reviewed management’s response to a number of recommendations made by Marks Paneth from the 2018 Financial and IT Audit. The committee also discussed a method for committee review and action on audit recommendations in the future. The committee also reviewed the overall privacy policy for A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and the General Service Board that has gone through legal review and will be implemented by G.S.O.

Additional Activities

Pricing, Discounts and Distribution Committee (DELTA Project): The committee has met three times over the last few months, considering development of a grid of past recommendations coming from the committee, pending implementation, that will be reviewed and brought back to the boards for consideration and possible vote.

Joint Shopping Cart (A.A.W.S./AA Grapevine): Both boards came together for a presentation by Rob Weisstuch, Welman Digital, regarding the possibilities of developing an online store that would include materials for both corporations under one system. No decisions were expected but the presentation provided both boards with an ongoing framework for such a proposition that will be more fully discussed both individually and collectively as the new aa.org website moves toward completion.

AA Grapevine

The AA Grapevine Board of Directors met three times since the July 30, 2019 quarterly board meeting: a strategic planning meeting on September 13, 2019; a board meeting on September 14, 2019; and a quarterly meeting on November 1, 2019.

Board Committees

The Nominating and Governance committee met on September 26 and discussed General Service trustee and nontrustee director nominations to be forwarded to Trustees’ Nominating for consideration. The committee is also finalizing edits to the new Director’s Handbook.

The Outreach committee has not met since August 22. The committee was asked to review director’s event presentations to establish consistency in messaging to the Fellowship.

The Finance and Budget committee met on October 29 and discussed September 2019 financials as well as pending translation requests.

The ad hoc Strategic Planning committee met on August 13, September 4 and October 25. The committee discussed the minutes and actionable items from the September 13, 2019 Strategic Planning session.

The ad hoc AA Magazine committee met on October 22 and discussed the all-encompassing AA magazine idea and its possible components. The committee will continue to meet to develop a plan for further discussion at the December board meeting.

Board Actions

September 14, 2019: Approved the minutes of the June 28, 2019 board meeting. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer’s report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer’s report. Additionally:

• Approved the revised Outreach Committee Composition, Scope, Goals and Procedure.
• Rescinded request to Trustees’ Literature Committee regarding review of inclusive language in the Preamble.
• Created Alcoholics Anonymous Magazine ad hoc committee.

November 1, 2019: Approved the minutes of the July 25, 2019 board meeting. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer’s report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer’s report. Additionally:

• Approved Marks, Paneth as AAGV, Inc.’s 2020 auditors.
• Agreed to change the cover name on Grapevine magazine back to AA Grapevine and La Viña to AA La Viña, including the line International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.
• Approved moving forward with the American Prison Data Systems agreement.

Strategic Planning Meeting

The board along with the senior management team discussed the updated 2018-2020 strategic plan focusing on revised tactics to achieve the goals of the plan. The Grapevine Board is engaged in a 3-year Strategic Plan incorporating the Fellowship Feedback Project and working closely with GV’s web vendor.

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 September 30, 2019.

Circulation, Development, Outreach Highlights

• The GSB, AAWS and AAGV umbrella privacy policy was completed in time for 2020 International Convention online registrations.
• The AA Grapevine website continues with an upgrade that will create a responsive and integrated platform and
resolve existing notification issues.

- The tagging process for 2006-2015 Grapevine stories and audio Archive continues in order to improve the search process while the new Archive page is under construction.
- AAGV is working on qualifying for Google for Nonprofits that will offer access to Google products and tools to metric traffic more efficiently.
- Spanish translation of One Big Tent was added to GV/LV store pages in September.
- The GSO Accessibilities/LIM desk purchased 500 copies of the October 2019 GV Accessibilities issue.
- An operational review of contracts (vendors, freelancers) for updating and compliance status is ongoing.
- GV is working with legal firm on GV intellectual property trademark filings.
- Customer service satisfaction reports are being generated monthly and follow-up calls are made by internal customer service assistant to resolve any issues.

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

The Grapevine EAB met on October 24 and the La Viña EAB met on October 16, 2019. Both boards will meet again in December.

**Editorial Report: Grapevine**

Recent issues of the Grapevine have included: “Young & Sober” (September); “Accessibilities” (October); “2018 Subscription Challenge Winners & Spotlight on Grapevine Story Archive” (November); and “Holiday Stories, Remote Communities” (December).

**Editorial Report: La Viña**

Upcoming issues of La Viña are “Carrying the Message of AA during the Holidays” (November/December 2019); “Character Defects” (January/February 2020); and “Newcomer Issue” (March/April 2020).

**Publishing Update: Grapevine and La Viña**

The new 2020 International Convention versions of Grapevine’s Daily Quote Book have been translated into French and Spanish for release in Detroit in 2020. Work on new covers has begun. AAGV, Inc. now offers 33 eBooks (26 in English, 5 in Spanish and 3 in French). La Viña Audio Project: there are 203 submissions to date, of which 43 have been submitted through the new phone service.

**Grapevine Web Report**

Monthly web traffic is averaging 38,000 unique visitors and 143,242-page views.

**Staff Travel**

- **August**: ACA 149th Congress, Boston, MA; West Central Regional Forum, Grand Forks, ND; ICYPAA, Boston, MA.
- **September**: Nat’l AA Technology Workshop, Bowling Green, KY; GV Writing Workshop, Sea Cliff, NY; Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, Mesa, AZ.
- **October**: Area 45 Grapefest, Manahawkin, NJ; Southwest Regional Forum, Houston, TX; GV Writing Workshop, New York, NY.

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<th>FINANCIAL DATA: For the nine months ended 9/30/19 (All figures pending final C.P.A. audit)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>G.S.O.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions from A.A. groups and members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales less cost of production and shipping</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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<td>Total Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total G.S.O. expenses:</td>
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<td>Net Operating Income (expense)</td>
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| **A.A. GRAPEVINE, INC.**                                    |
| Sales less costs of products                                 | $1,537,650  | $1,414,411  | $1,409,530  |
| Interest earned — Regular                                    | –           | –           | –           |
| — Reserve Fund                                               | 15,000      | 23,418      | 15,000      |
| Total Income                                                 | 1,552,650   | 1,437,829   | 1,424,530   |
| Expenses                                                     | 1,665,249   | 1,583,891   | 1,378,643   |
| Income (loss) from operations                                | (112,599)   | (146,062)   | 45,887      |
| General Service Board Support of La Viña shortfall            | (124,379)   | (110,860)   | (96,852)    |

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

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