

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

December 3, 2021

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, December 3, 2021, at the General Service Office in New York, NY, with a videoconference/in-person hybrid meeting. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Jimmy D., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with words of appreciation and gratitude to GSO employees and a moment of silence.

## General Manager's Report

The general manager noted the recent Employee Recognition virtual event and the milestone anniversaries of employees celebrated for 5, 10, 15, 20 years of employment at GSO, remarking that their dedication to the mission of Alcoholics Anonymous is unparalleled.

The ongoing efforts to infuse A.A. principles into the daily life and operations of our office continue. The first in-house GSO 1728 meeting will be held on Friday, December 10. It will be held virtually and continue on the second Friday of every month.

Many of the employees at GSO are nonalcoholic friends of A.A. In recent workplace surveys a number have expressed a desire to know more about A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. The virtual format is intended to encourage wide participation from all employees of AAWS and AAGV as well as trustees, nontrustee directors and appointed committee members, providing the opportunity to learn and understand more about the boards and our various roles and responsibilities.

The format will consist of the number of the month to decide which Concept, Tradition, and Step will be the focus. For example, the first meeting will be in December; therefore, the focus will be Concept Twelve, Tradition Twelve, and Step Twelve. The meeting will begin with two informal talks, prepared in advance, on the Concept, Tradition or Step of that month and how A.A.'s principles may offer guidance and perspective on current projects at the office, actions by the board, and ideas bubbling up in the Fellowship. The brief talks are meant to inspire sharing from the floor and an opportunity for any questions. The goal is not only to expand the understanding of the principles but also to experience how they are part of the work done every day.

### Archives

The digitizing of Bill W.'s personal correspondence has resumed after pausing the project in March 2020 when the office closed due to the pandemic. The original records are maintained off site and recalled as needed. The senior archivist is also testing the acidity levels of the archival folders and boxes, and implementing preservation measures where necessary. The department will continue to report on the progress

of this long-term scanning project.

The assistant archivist is helping the archivist to update and write new sections for the Oral History Kit. The section on "Interview Equipment" was rewritten to include more modern media and virtual meeting software recording. Also, a new section is being written for the kit that will focus on conducting and recording interviews in American Sign Language (ASL).

### Human Resources

Nathan Kaufman and Eleonora Catalan (nonalcoholics) joined the Operations department as member service associates. Jomary Sabino (nonalcoholic) joined the Operations department as receptionist. Interviews for GSO Staff and Communication Services director are well underway.

On November 30, fifteen employees were certified in Mental Health First Aid after attending a virtual training. Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training provides the skills to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

### Operations

Work on Release 3.0 continues, providing area registrars the ability to bulk upload information to Fellowship Connection. Forty-two area registrars attended the sharing session on November 3. At this session, the Technology Services director provided a demonstration of RSM's work so far on bulk uploads and noted the complexities involved with some requirements. Volunteers (from areas that would be using bulk upload) were asked to be a part of this feature's development, test and implementation. Three area registrars volunteered to be on the test group. "Training on-demand" is still available on Fellowship Connection.

### Technology Services

The Technology Services department plays a significant role in the aa.org development project, including Perficient vendor management and coordinating technical/infrastructure decisions, e.g., coordinating Imperva (Content Distribution Network and Web Application Firewall) design/implementation discussions with Perficient. The TS team also

continues to project manage the internal work to ready the content for the new site and guide the team toward a soft launch; and will be assisting with user acceptance testing.

The TS team supports the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) project, including Welman vendor management, design decisions, identifying enhancements and supporting user acceptance testing of post launch enhancements. The TS team continues to help with data clean-up and issue resolution.

## Staff Services

*Conference* – The first Conference planning meeting was held November 10, led by the Conference coordinator, along with the manager of staff services and the staff assistant on the Conference assignment. The meeting included a helpful walk through of the 2022 Guidebook, an update on the EDW process, discussion of background preparation and translation, and a thorough review of the wording of agenda items.

*Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment* – The CPC coordinator is putting together an auspicious panel for the focus group which will discuss future communications to mental health professionals.

*Corrections* – In the continued efforts of expanding awareness and participation of the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) in Canada, a team was assembled consisting of the director of Staff Services (temporarily handling the Corrections assignment), AA Grapevine employees, several trustees (Class A and B), and a past delegate. The team is working with representatives from Correctional Service Canada who are excited about offering this opportunity to their confined members.

*Group Services* – Group Services is working with management to finalize the plan for the 2021 Virtual Day of Sharing with at least ten other Twelve Step organizations.

*International and Public Information* – The PI and the International coordinators worked with the Communication Services department on prelaunch refinements for several pages for the new website. They also assisted in matching existing videos with staff assignment pages.

*Literature* – The Winter edition of *Box 4-5-9* was circulated through staff by the Literature coordinator, who continues coordinating the numerous complex projects on that assignment. The Literature coordinator is a part of a new working group created to address the increasing demand for translations and limited resources to best serve our Spanish- and French-speaking members.

*Nominating* – The Nominating assignment coordinated the work of many groups on revisions to current Nominating procedures and on scheduling interviews with new Class A candidates.

*Regional Forums, International Conventions and Accessibilities* – The East Central Regional Forum, held November 19-21, marked the completion of four successful virtual regional forums this year. The RF, International, and Accessibilities coordinators are working along with the trustees-at-large in the planning of the North/South Connection Special Forum scheduled for July 2022.

*Staff Coordinator* – The last three staff meetings were devoted to interviewing candidates for the open staff member position. Interviews were conducted by a new process which was developed in collaboration with the HR department and senior management. It began with an online A.A. meeting where the candidate told their story for 15-20 minutes. After brief sharing from the floor, the meeting ended and the panel interview began.

Each staff member prepared the same question for each of the three candidates in keeping with HR best practices. The candidate was then invited to ask any questions, which led to an easy and open dialog that made for a rich and informative interview experience.

The next step will be a sharing session with the general manager and the director of Staff Services, where staff will convey their impressions of each candidate. The GM and the director of Staff Services will then interview one or more of the candidates, with the GM's hiring decision to be made.

## Finance

### *Revenue and Expense as of October 31:*

Contributions year to date are \$8,371,498, which is 84% of the 2021 budget of \$10,000,000 and \$368,450 more than this time last year. (83% of the year has elapsed.)

Contributions are averaging \$837,150 per month compared to a budget of \$833,333 per month. The monthly contributions reversed a three month decline and increased from \$736,734 in September to \$954,851 in October, the largest monthly total since March. In order to meet the budget, monthly contributions need to average \$814,251 over the last two months of the year.

Gross literature sales year to date are \$9,676,364 which is 85% of the 2021 budget of \$11,400,000 and \$1,913,211 more than last year. October gross literature sales were \$1,062,561, making the fourth \$1 million month this year. Gross sales are averaging \$967,636 per month compared to a budget of \$950,000 per month. Cost of goods sold year to date is \$3,934,238, which is 93% of the 2021 budget of \$4,218,000 and \$1,735,883 more than last year due to Covid-related materials price increases and supply chain disruptions.

Payroll and benefits expenses are \$7,685,303, which is 81% of the budget amount of \$9,518,557 and \$1,315,741 less than last year. Excluding severance from 2020 and 2021, 2021 payroll and benefits are \$429,773 less than last year. Total operating expense is \$12,875,229 which is 81% of the budget amount of \$15,887,354 and \$1,142,054 less than last year. 2021 includes depreciation while 2020 does not. If depreciation is added to 2020, total operating expense in 2021 is \$1,237,839 less than last year.

Surplus for the first ten months of 2021 is \$1,921,554 compared to a budget surplus for the year of \$747,312 and a deficit of \$1,457,324 at this time last year. The surplus is attributable primarily to greater than budgeted literature sales and lower than budgeted professional fees.

### *Cash Position:*

As of October 31, operating cash was \$1,489,377 which represents 1.1 months of operating expenses. As of November

15, operating cash is \$1,721,860, which represents 1.3 months of operating expenses.

As of October 31, the reserve fund balance net of Grapevine subscription liability is \$12,841,100, which represents 8.50 months of GSO and Grapevine expenses. (Target is 9-12 months.) The balance includes the \$250,000 the GSB voted in July to transfer to the reserve fund.

## Publishing

The board accepted the Publishing department report, highlighting the following information:

*A.A.W.S. 2021 Holiday Special Offers line-up: ‘A Trio of Holiday Special Offers!’*

November 1, 2021 – January 15, 2022

1. Big Book Special Winter Offer!

10% off all Big Books, all formats, all languages! (Reprise of our successful 2020 Big Book Special Summer Offer)

2. Get 15% off all orders over \$100! (Reprise of our successful 2020 Holiday Offer)

3. Focus on A.A. items on spirituality

10% off the following items: B-6, FB-6, SB-6, P-84, FP-84, SP-84, P-86, FP-86, SP-86.)

All Holiday Special Offers and discounts are combinable.

*Mixed-Title Volume Discount Test Pilot* – A six-month test pilot will run: March 15 - September 15, 2022. Orders will receive a quantity discount based on the quantity ordered for all titles combined, as opposed to purchasing a quantity of one specific title.

*Implementation of “permanent” Reduced Shipping Charges* – The schedule of shipping charges for items of A.A.W.S. literature that tested favorably across the Fellowship’s distribution channels during its five-month test pilot will be implemented February 1, 2022.

*Plain and simple language Big Book update* – The candidate pool of 18 responses to the RFI for plain language interpreter-writers have been reviewed by the trustees’ Literature TABB subcommittee. Six candidates were selected and assigned sample material on a work-for-hire basis. All candidates have a deadline of January 3 to submit samples for the complete chapter of “How it Works,” excerpts from “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “There is a Solution,” “We Agnostics,” and “To Wives.”

*Off Press* – The newly revised, redesigned and updated *A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service*, 2021-2023 Edition is now in print and online in English, French and Spanish.

## Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The senior digital communications analyst gave an update stressing that the completion of aa.org remains the Communication Services department’s top priority. The digital production manager gave a demonstration of the new aa.org website scheduled to launch on December 20. Continued

work will follow the soft launch, including ability to listen to books on the site and download PSAs along with refining search, accessibility and reporting capabilities.

The Group Services coordinator shared the newly completed New Group Form, which is being translated. New features include the option to list a meeting as in-person or virtual per the advisory action, “The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group’s preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group’s primary contact.” Other additions included hyperlinks: a free subscription to *Box 4-5-9*, a digital group handbook, lists of area registrars, and area websites. Next to be updated is the Alcoholics Anonymous Group Information Change Form.

## Internal Audit

The committee reviewed the list of requests from the committee to GSO management. An update from HR regarding pending requests will be reported during the January 27 Board meeting. The general manager gave a verbal update on the AAWS Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Plan, noting since September a representative of Marks Paneth, leading the project, has met with key stakeholders. The DR/BCP is expected to be completed for the committee’s review in February 2022.

## Additional Activities

The A.A.W.S. Board reviewed General Service Conference proposed agenda item submissions from the Fellowship for consideration:

*For the General Service Conference, thus the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, to discuss the most equitable and fair pricing model for both A.A.W.S. and Central Office/Intergroups.*

After a thorough discussion, the board took no action to forward this to the General Service Conference. The board expressed concern that this item would potentially create distractions of money, property and prestige based on who could or could not qualify for a different pricing model and that it would be difficult to identify eligibility for a “special” pricing structure. Volume pricing and shipping discounts equate to a cost savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars per year gratefully extended to A.A.’s local service hubs. As part of our collaborative efforts with IGCOs, the mixed-title discount will be implemented for a trial period at the request of IGCOs in Spring 2022, its focus being to extend existing quantity discounts across mixed-title orders. Moreover, our enhanced levels of communication and cooperation between GSO/AAWS and our local IGCO service offices have uncovered other ways to work together to support A.A.’s primary purpose of carrying the message. There are existing opportunities for ongoing communications through Member Services, the Group Services assignment at GSO, and the IGCO quarterly meetings and annual seminars.