

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

October 30, 2020

The A.A. World Services Board met via videoconference on Friday, October 30, 2020.
Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Beau B., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

General Manager's Report

General Manager Greg T. provided the following report:

Administration – The office has continued functioning at a very high level on an entirely remote basis. Technical and HR support has been continuous. Contributions have begun to rebound, thanks to a strong commitment of the groups to support the work of the office and a number of communications regarding self-support have been initiated regularly with the Fellowship in the U.S. and Canada.

A recently instituted finance advisory team, led by CFO Paul Konigstein (nonalcoholic), will begin meeting on a regular basis to share information and feedback and to facilitate ongoing communication and transparency about finances.

Information is being gathered on the defined benefit pension plan, with the intention of bringing forward a proposal to the General Service Board, with discussion to continue through the fourth quarter and into 2021.

A recommendation will be forthcoming from the general manager that the General Service Board embark on a General Service Office relocation study to be initiated in 2021. Based on past practice of engaging in such a study every 10 years or so, and relative to the expiration of GSO's current lease agreement, the study will help to determine the best location for the General Service Office from both a financial and a spiritual perspective.

Administrative Services – Regarding a workforce return to the office, there is no firm return date as yet, with ongoing evaluation of options and continued input from employees, medical professionals and governmental regulations. Any return will be voluntary and will not take place at least until January 1, 2021.

The Records team has updated all change requests received through October 12, 2020. A My Portal survey was sent to delegates and Area Registrars on September 18, with strong survey participation and excellent feedback from Area Registrars. Work continues with the vendor to prioritize the key requirements that can be delivered in My Portal 2.0. The My Portal Task force will be expanded to include representation from each region and regional trustees have been contacted to assist with this endeavor.

Archives – The department continues responding to inquiries from the Fellowship on a myriad of topics on A.A. history, as well as sharing collected experience and providing resources to local A.A. archivists. Archives staff participated in a number of virtual service events both nationally (National A.A. Archives Workshop), in Canada (Area 79 Archives Committee event) and locally (SENY Archives Committee Workshop).

Human Resources – Paul Konigstein (nonalcoholic) has joined the organization as CFO. Paul has extensive CFO background with a focus on nonprofit organizations and is responsible for all finance, accounting, control, auditing, budgeting and financial analysis functions. Sandra W. has been promoted to the position of the Director of Staff Services and will supervise and provide leadership to the GSO Staff and Staff Assistants, collaborating across the organization with other department leaders particularly on matters involving the A.A. Fellowship. Malini Singh (nonalcoholic) has been promoted to the position of the Director of Operations. In her new role, Malini will provide leadership and oversight to the administrative teams providing member and customer services; mail and shipping, warehouse and fulfillment; ensuring these areas are performing efficiently and effectively.

Information Technology Services – The Technology Services Department continues to support an entirely-remote GSO and the technical complexities associated with that. The ERP project launched two new websites (Contributions and the Webstore) in September. The Technology Services team continues to play a key role in the My Portal Release 2.0 Workstream, supporting project planning efforts and the survey distributed to the area registrars.

Staff Report

Accessibilities/LIM – Accessibilities Staff and the Communications Services Department have created a working draft of the Remote Communities Service page on aa.org. The page will include relevant literature and the A.A. Guidelines on Remote Communities for Remote Communities Committees. The desk is also working with the Publishing and Communications Services Departments on a military audio project.

Conference – The Conference coordinator has been addressing early preparations for the 71st General Service Conference as well wrap-up of the 70th, including a focus on delegate chair orientation and fall election assemblies for the Panel 71 rotation.

CPC/Treatment – The CPC desk has been focused on updates to the pamphlet “A.A. in Your Community” and the Conference suggestion to explore formats that modern professionals use. The CPC desk is working with the Communication Services Department to record low-cost, 15-minute audio samples of nonalcoholic trustees describing the pamphlet’s contents for modern professional settings. The Treatment desk is receiving sharing on Bridging the Gap activities from the Fellowship; many committees are impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and have had limited access to share about this service.

Corrections – The summer and fall 2020 issues of Sharing From Behind the Walls are available on aa.org. As many committees are not going into facilities during the pandemic, committee members have developed lists of inmates and have been writing to those inmates in their local area.

Group Services – The coordinator is serving on the My Portal Task Force, helping prepare the survey to area registrars, reviewing it with the past registrars on the Task Force, and analyzing the results. Working with the Operations and Technology Services Departments a list of goals for My Portal has been developed and reviewed carefully to guide in the different phases of the My Portal development process.

International – The assignment is involved in preparations for the 26th World Service Meeting, to be held virtually November 28-30.

Literature – Subtitled versions in Spanish and French of the updated video, “Your General Service Office, Grapevine Office and the General Service Structure,” are completed, with distribution efforts ongoing. Event submissions for Box 4-5-9 have decreased, reflecting fewer events due to the pandemic. In cooperation with Publishing, event notices and listing practices have been adapted so events in virtual platforms may be considered for listing in the newsletter.

Public Information – The Public Information assignment regularly logs local media examples of cooperation with local press, such as local PI. work for a radio station in Wisconsin featuring a story titled, “A.A. Meetings Go Virtual During the Pandemic.” The assignment has also been in touch with other national media outlets directly to provide helpful information about A.A.

Finance

Revenue and Expense:

Individual/group contributions revenue as of 9/30 is \$7,169,609. With 75% of the year elapsed, 73% of the expected amount has been received. Since contributions tend to peak in October and December, contributions appear to be on track to meet or exceed the reforecast.

Gross literature sales revenue as of 9/30 is \$7,156,475. With 75% of the year elapsed, 73% of the expected amount

has been generated. Since literature sales tend to peak in December, sales appear to be on track to meet or exceed the reforecast.

The revenue split between gross profit on publications and contributions is about 38% publications / 62% contributions this year, whereas in 2018 it was 58% publications / 42% contributions.

Total expenses as of 9/30 are \$11,882,137. With 75% of the year elapsed, 71% of the expected amount has been spent, so there is a slightly favorable variance in expenses pending reclassification of balance sheet items.

As of 9/30, there is a surplus of \$795,000. However, this is not a reliable number because the continuing reclassification of balance sheet and undeposited funds affects the bottom line and which will change as account cleanup continues.

Reclassifying balance sheet items lowers the surplus and reclassifying undeposited funds increases it. The reforecast anticipates a deficit of \$337,000 for 2020.

Cash Flow:

Cash on hand as of September 30 was \$1,026,923. The department has caught up on AAWS cash account bank reconciliations, but is not yet caught up on GSB cash account bank reconciliations, so this number is not exact.

The bank balance at the close of business October 23 was \$1,359,825, which represents about one month of expenses. Since converting to Bill.com, there are very few outstanding checks, so the bank balance should be up to date as far as capturing disbursements. However, since a lockbox has not yet been implemented, there is a lag in depositing cash receipts, so the true balance is likely higher.

2020 International Convention: Consultants from Talley Management provided a detailed report on the refunds that have been processed to date after the cancellation of the 2020 International Convention and the submission of AAWS’s insurance claim. The financials reported are very close to expected final numbers after unwinding the Convention.

Publishing

Print sales: September gross sales are at \$883,549.

Web sales: Total web sales (AAWS Online Bookstores) for September stand at \$533,080 which accounts for about 61.53% of total sales for the company. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for September are \$248,407, and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$284,673.

Box 4-5-9: The Fall *Box 4-5-9* issue was printed and mailed on a limited basis for paid subscribers and posted online. A special online-only supplement highlighting office employees and GSO/GV retirements was completed and posted aa.org.

International Licensing and Translations Activity: India – Oriya translation of the Big Book has been favorably reviewed, with final approval pending for issuing a License to print and distribute in India. Russia (RSO) – Tatar translation of the Big Book has been submitted for final review. Ukraine – Finished printed books of the newly re-translated Ukrainian edition of the Big Book, printed in Ukraine have been received.

Audiobook recording updates: First set of five pamphlets in professional narration and production: “Access to A.A.,” “Frequently Asked Questions about A.A.,” “A Newcomer Asks,” “A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues – and their sponsors” and “Young People and A.A.” English and Spanish recordings are edited and completed. French versions are in final review stages with completion estimated in mid-November.

A Visual History of Alcoholics Anonymous: An Archival Journey: The International Convention souvenir book will be announced for pre-order on December 1, with the publication date set for February 14, 2021. This book includes an updated opening introduction by General Service Board Chair Michele Grinberg; a special focus on Detroit in A.A.’s history; updated coverage of digital innovations in A.A. group life; a highlight on the Virtual 2020 International Convention.

Holiday Special Offers: The following special offers are designed to help our literature distribution efforts and spur revenue during the holiday gift-giving season:

1. *A Visual History of Alcoholics Anonymous: An Archival Journey* – Pre-order December 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021 at the special offer pre-publication early bird price of \$11. (\$1. off the list price of \$12, thereafter.) Note: Intergroups will have copies they pre-order via this offer drop-shipped from the printer.

2. For each copy of *Our Great Responsibility* (B-70) purchased, receive a free copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous facsimile first printing of the first edition* (B-O).

3. Spend a minimum total of \$100 or more and receive a 15% overall discount.

All offers are NetSuite compatible, and will be offered to all customers. Intergroups and Central Offices will be provided fillable, adaptable PDFs, similar to what was provided for our Big Book Special Summer Offer, with 40 days prior notice.

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

- That the book, *Our Great Responsibility*, be converted and distributed as an eBook in English, French and Spanish at an estimated conversion cost of \$7,500.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

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

In verbal reports the director of Technology Services described progress on the implementation of My Portal, noting feedback from area registrars; the Group Services coordinator shared a summary of the 35th annual GSO/AAGV/AAWS ICOAA Seminar, highlighting its focus on unity and common purpose; and 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.

Progress report on Website design and Meeting Guide app: A team of GSO Staff members will review content for the website as it is created, and the Publishing Department will serve as a resource for content review and copyediting. The goal is to prepare for the launch of the website development after the first of the year.

Version 3.5.4 of Meeting Guide launched on September 23 for iOS and Android users. Among several new and improved features, the most significant is the support for approximate locations.

YouTube channel: There are 113 AAWS videos posted to YouTube (some in English only, others in English, Spanish and French) and as of October 2020, the channel has over 5,100 subscribers.

Google Ads: The AAWS Google Ads have been live for 29 days, with the total spent for this period of \$1,001. Within the account are two ad groups: “Find a Meeting” and “Get Help.” The “Find a Meeting” option is getting more engagement than “Get Help.” In terms of demographic data, there is higher engagement in Canada, at the moment. This potentially correlates with the uptick in Canadian engagement in Meeting Guide and on aa.org. This medium is reaching a wide range of ages and genders. Men between 25-34 are currently the top group interacting with the ads.

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

- That the 2020 Third Quarter reports on A.A.’s website activities and analytics be forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information as presented.

Internal Audit

The committee reviewed recommendations outstanding from the 2018/2019 External Audits, with management responses, noting that a lot of the outstanding 2018 matters pertain to things that have since been addressed through the technology plan of the Technology Services director.