

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

October 29, 2021

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, October 29, 2021, at the Sheraton Times Square Hotel in New York, NY, with a videoconference hybrid. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Jimmy D., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

## General Manager's Report

General Manager Bob W. provided the following report:

The General Service Office employees are back at 475 Riverside Drive. On average, about 32 employees are working from the office each day during the workweek. Due to individual circumstances, some employees continue to work from home during the transition period to a full return to the workplace with hybrid schedules.

The general manager attended his first A.A.W.S. Strategic Planning Session September 20, bringing forth goals to carry out office-wide. The central theme of the goals is rooted in the development of "Service Standards" that will address how services are delivered. Emphasis will be placed on prompt response times, answering and routing calls and emails and in-depth training of employees on all aspects of service to the Fellowship. One goal is to continue expanding the native functions offered by NetSuite. Another is to address ongoing issues of translation. These issues are not solely focused on the growing translation needs surrounding the General Service Conference but the number of translation requests throughout the office as well. A working group will begin to look at possible solutions for the strain this puts on our resources.

### Archives

The Archives staff is currently aiding two International A.A. entities with their research inquiries. Italy has reached out to us for information about the start of A.A. in Milan and Japan has contacted us for materials on the history of A.A. in that country for their archives. These are extensive and time-consuming projects.

Approximately 20 cubic feet of unprocessed materials from past International Conventions were brought into the archives for future processing. From January through October 2021, about 233 new items (mostly A.A. printed materials such as service pieces, pamphlets, books, etc.) were accessioned and filed into the repository.

The archivist participated at the 65th Ohio State Convention, held on August 20 – 22, 2021. The theme of the Convention was "Our Great Responsibility," which was the topic of the Archives presentation.

### Human Resources

Nay Williams (nonalcoholic) formerly Conference staff as-

sistant, was promoted to staff services manager. Grace Ralbovsky (nonalcoholic) joined the Staff Services team as staff services assistant on the Regional Forums assignment. Camilo Florez (nonalcoholic) joined the Operations team as a Member Services associate. Samantha Nieto (nonalcoholic), formerly Communications administrative assistant, was promoted to Communications project coordinator.

At the end of September, the entire workforce celebrated the retirement of Clement C., senior manager of Communication Services effective October 1, 2021. Applicants are being sought for a director of Communication Services.

Full compensation review is underway with our new compensation consultant, SmithPilot. It is anticipated that some employees may need market adjustment to make sure everyone is compensated in line with our compensation philosophy.

### Operations

The Fellowship Connection Release 3.0 launched on October 14, 2021. The following enhancements requested by the end-users during sharing sessions were included in the FC 3.0 release: new, user-friendly Dashboard, ability to automatically provide end dates to outgoing position holders, the ability for area registrars to see when the service kits were ordered, ability to choose to receive digital or physical kits or to opt out of receiving any kits.

The Member Service Department launched June 28, 2021 (memberservices@aa.org). As of October 20, the department had received and responded to 9,850 emails. As of September 30, the team had received about 1,000 phone calls. Since the launch of Fellowship Connection on December 14, 2020, area registrars made 13,375 updates directly into the portal; the Member Services associates made 8,490 Area and Group updates in NetSuite.

### Technology Services

Technology Services continues to play a significant role in the aa.org website development project, including identifying the new vendor (Perficient), leading negotiations and contracting, and facilitating Perficient's Assessment of the previous vendor's work. The TS team continues to project manage the internal work to ready the content for the new site and guide the development efforts.

The team began drafting an Incident Response Plan to mitigate cybersecurity risks and identified an approach to as-

sess and refine current cybersecurity practices and policies for 2022. The director of Technology Services and the network administrator attended a seminar on disinformation campaigns. They are working on the recommendation to prepare a proactive communication/press release in response to potential attack, should one occur in the future.

## Staff Services

*Conference* – The design, planning and implementation of the Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW) process has overwhelmed the Conference assignment. Helpful guidance, dedicated service, innovative approaches, and a lot of hard work are resulting in many short-term successes along the way while numerous related and additional aspects of the assignment's support of the Conference are impacted. By September 15, the Conference desk received 178 proposed agenda items forms, some on the same items, which were all processed and forwarded to the appropriate committee/board for the fourth quarter General Service Board weekend.

*Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment* – With the opening of events in the coming year, the C.P.C. coordinator put together a list including past events where we have exhibited and outlining upcoming opportunities to determine where we can be a presence in carrying information about A.A. to professionals. This list was reviewed by the trustees' C.P.C. Committee at their meeting October 31. The C.P.C. coordinator looks forward to working with local area C.P.C. committee chairs to volunteer for these events.

*Corrections* – The new Corrections Correspondence System (C.C.S.) launched September 28, 2021. The new C.C.S. provides an expedient process whereby we can match volunteers and persons in custody automatically, obtain statistics and reports, and generate personalized letters that can be sent via email to outside A.A. members and via postal mail to persons in custody. Since the launch, 267 were paired that for a myriad of reasons had been sitting in the old system. Phase Two will focus on added features and increased functionality.

*Group Services* – On October 14, the Group Services coordinator and International coordinator held their final (?) meeting with the Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. The vision moving forward is continued support with each other in making Twelfth Step work possible. Out of these meetings the Group Services linked the current OIAA chair and OIAA members with the ICOAA seminar. The ICOAA seminar itself had useful workshops to attend such as "Changing Times," "Compensation and Concept XI," "Self-Support" and panel presentations done by G.S.O., A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and La Viña. There were some tough conversations and challenges but there was also some connection and healing.

*International* – Since August the International desk has attended four zonal meetings including our home zone, the REDELA (Meeting of the Americas). All zonal meetings have taken place online, apart from the REDELA which was a hybrid event. Noting that G.S.O. has not resumed international travel we embarked on arranging our first ever hybrid attendance. While G.S.O. U.S./CAN was responsible for arranging

its own hybrid participation, G.S.O. employees were most grateful for the opportunity to have delegates also unable to travel from Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Panama attend virtually as well, as they Zoomed (with the help of Tech 12) into the in-person event in Guatemala October 3-7.

*Literature* – Services available through G.S.O.'s Literature desk including providing resources to local A.A. committees, regional correspondence (Southeast), and secretary support to committees, continue to achieve success. This is the time of year when new panels of trusted servants are elected and G.S.O. service desks, including Literature, welcome new chairs and provide service material to support their local efforts.

*Nominating* – To improve processes related to the assignment, the following have been developed and implemented: the search process to fill the two Class A trustee vacancies now includes the option for candidates to utilize fillable PDF forms when applying. The creation of a RACI matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consult, Inform), that includes procedural language, provides the Trustees' Nominating Committee with the ability to perform a redrafting and simplification of procedures in a coherent and consistent manner, in alignment with board by-laws and approved recommendations.

*Public Information* – As of October 2021, a draft podcast pilot episode has been recorded and is being edited within our Communication Services Department. This will ultimately be reviewed by an internal Working Group as well as the AAWS corporate board and the trustees' Public Information Committee at their October 2021 meetings.

*Regional Forums* – This assignment is in the final planning stages for the virtual East Central Regional Forum which will be held November 19-21, 2021. This will be the fourth and final virtual Regional Forum for 2021. Forums in 2022 will return to in-person settings and may include a virtual/hybrid component. In addition, planning for a virtual Special Forum focused on remote communities is underway with our international AA partners from Argentina and Chile. It should be noted that the tremendous work of this assignment was accomplished with both the Staff member and Staff assistant hired, onboarded, and trained virtually!

The staff coordinator asked the board to keep in mind the department is understaffed with 12 assignments being covered by 10 staff members, 9 staff assistants working through 180 proposed Conference agenda items. The director is handling the Corrections desk and International Conventions assignment. The staff member on the Literature desk has 60 proposed agenda items and is currently the only staff member handling Spanish correspondence.

The board expressed its gratitude and assurance to GSO that in its prudence regarding the budget, the goal is to provide sufficient resources for the work of the Fellowship to be done. The interview process in search of a new G.S.O. staff member is scheduled for November.

## Finance

*Revenue and Expense as of September 30:*

Contributions year to date are \$7,416,647, which is 74% of the 2021 budget of \$10,000,000 and \$293,439 more than

this time last year. (75% of the year has elapsed.)

Contributions are averaging over \$824,072 per month compared to a budget of \$833,333 per month. The CFO expressed concern that the monthly contributions have declined from \$940,632 in July to \$762,965 in August to \$736,734 in September. In order to meet the budget, it is hoped that monthly contributions might average \$861,118 over the last three months of the year.

Gross literature sales are \$8,613,803 which is 76% of the 2021 budget of \$11,400,000 and \$1,477,745 more than last year. Gross literature sales are averaging \$746,519 per month so far this year. September gross sales were \$746,519, and for the first time since June did not exceed \$1 million. Concern was expressed about an increase in cost of goods sold from 37% to 40% of gross sales due to supply chain disruptions.

Payroll and benefits are \$6,978,975, which is 73% of the budget amount of \$9,518,557 and \$567,919 less than last year. Total operating expense is \$11,543,559 which is 73% of the budget amount of \$15,887,354 and \$512,887 less than last year. 2021 includes depreciation while 2020 does not. If depreciation is added to 2020, total operating expense in 2021 is \$652,671 less than last year.

Surplus for the first nine months of 2021 is \$1,448,089 compared to a budget surplus for the year of \$747,312 and a deficit of \$612,104 at this time last year. Adjusted to include depreciation, the 2020 deficit was \$751,888. The surplus is attributable primarily to greater than budgeted literature sales.

#### *Cash Position:*

As of September 30, operating cash was \$1,687,249 which represents 1.3 months of operating expenses. As of October 15, operating cash is \$1,551,246, which represents 1.2 months of operating expenses.

As of September 30, the reserve fund balance net of Grapevine subscription liability is

\$12,806,277, which represents 8.48 months of G.S.O. and Grapevine expenses. (Target is 9-12 months.)

In keeping with the goal of transparency, all trustees and nontrustee directors began receiving a monthly finance report three months ago.

## Publishing

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

*The 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.

Preliminary Analysis: Five-month Test Pilot on Reduced Shipping Charges, began May 17 – concluding October 18, 2021.

Small Orders" (under \$25) total gross sales are \$85,744. Compared throughout years 2019-2021 small orders during the same timeframe from 2019-2020 was a 94% increase (\$35,319) in gross sales, 2020-2021 was an 18% increase (\$12,820) in gross sales. Small orders increased during the shipping pilot.

Orders placed by Intergroups and Central Offices, total gross sales are \$ 1,997,247. Compared throughout years 2019-2021 IGCOs' orders during the same timeframe from 2019-2020 there was a 14% decrease (\$203,478) in gross sales, 2020-2021 there was a 65% increase (\$784,731) in gross sales. IGC0 orders increased during the shipping pilot.

The Publishing department noticed the increase in Big Book orders compared to the same timeframe. Combined sales for hardcover and soft cover Big Books 2019 – 2021 in English, French and Spanish. There has been a total decrease of 18% during 2019 – 2020, and an increase of 27% from 2020 – 2021.

*Update Supply chain, paper, print and delivery disruptions 2021 – 2022:* Members and IGC0s were notified the disruptions and delays are expected to continue. This is an industry-wide, world-wide issue. Our Production and Member Services teams are actively addressing in myriad ways. Contact Member Services for help in ordering by emailing member-services@aa.org or calling 212-870-3023.

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

- That the eBook Our Great Responsibility in English, French and Spanish be sold at a list price of \$9.99.

- That the reduced shipping test pilot be implemented as policy for the Publishing Department and requested that appropriate advanced announcement be sent to Central Offices and Intergroups by G.S.O. management.

## Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The committee reviewed the minutes of GSO's Website Committee, along with progress reports and updates.

*Progress report on Website activities* – Development of the site page templates is nearing completion. The CSD content team is entering the approved copy into the page templates. A.A. Staff, Archives and Publishing are reviewing the new pages and working with the CSD Content team to revise and finalize the pages. Finance and Grapevine have also reviewed and approved. Plans are being finalized for the transition from the staging site to the production site. The staging environment was moved to the new Acquia platform and the team has been getting familiar with navigating and using the new Acquia cloud site.

*Progress report on Website Design:* Development of the final dynamic pages is almost complete. The A.A. Content team has completed Drupal implementation (inserting approved copy, formatting, layout) of the delivered static pages and any ready dynamic pages. Data migration from the existing site is complete. Website and related services successfully moved to

the Acquia platform. The team transitioned to working with a new vendor (Perficient) which involved a variety of activities such as code repository setup and backup, bug and outstanding issue compilation, and startup meetings with the new vendor team.

*Progress report on Meeting Guide App:* The App team launched the third major application upgrade since App development was handed over to FosterMade. The App team has received positive feedback regarding this latest release, which included features requested by our users and entities, as well as code updates.

*Meeting Guide App:* The A.A.W.S. App team, working with Foster Made, started work on a subsequent release, which will include the ability to adjust the radius used when listing meetings and an attendance option to allow the user to filter by in-person, virtual or all. A survey was sent out to connected entities to gather information on the barriers to connecting online meetings. The team believes the new feature will assist with the barriers conveyed.

A customer outreach initiative to improve the accuracy of meeting listings was carried out. The upgrade, App v.3.8.21, includes:

- New features: a new news visual indicator, sharing of daily Quote or News item via email or text message, inclusion of meeting information when contacting entities.
- Inclusion of the relevant meeting name into emails that are sent to entities from a meeting detail contact screen (this was requested from our entities).
- Code update to address sporadic Location issues caused by an update to Google Play Store.
- Google Analytics code added – this will provide App usage statistics.

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

- That the 2021 Third Quarter website analytics summary, 2021 Third Quarter Meeting Guide App Report, 2021 Podcast Third Quarter Report, 2021 Second and Third Quarter YouTube reports and 2021 Third Quarter Google Ads report presented on October 29th be forwarded to trustees' committee on Public Information.

- To continue to review and vote on reports at the TCS committee meetings, while continuing to forward reports to trustees in advance of TCS meetings.

## Internal Audit

The board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Internal Audit Committee:

- That the Human Resources RACI Matrix be submitted to the Board.

## Additional Activities

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

1. The A.A.W.S. Board to create an Intergroup-Central Office Committee (IGCO) manned by a non-rotating staff member.

- The submission was tabled for discussion during A.A.W.S. Executive Session.

2. That the General Service Conference consider a proposed agenda Item to produce the Service Manual, including the 12 Concepts, in a compact disc (CD), audio format, as has been done for the “12 and 12” and the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

- The A.A.W.S. board took no action to forward this to the General Service Conference. Format changes are within the purview of the A.A.W.S. board. Therefore, the request and background will be sent to Publishing department for consideration. It was noted that we are consistently keeping front of mind the necessity of making available all A.A. literature in print, audio, and visual formats whenever possible.

3. 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

- The submission was tabled for discussion during A.A.W.S. Executive Session.