

A report from the Chair of the FWS Board of Trustees.

FWS Newsletter, January 2008

F.W.S. is like a boat that has survived a terrible storm. The rain and the wind have stopped, and the waves are no longer crashing over the boat and threatening to destroy it at any moment. But the boat is still full of water, and needs a whole lot of bailing and repair before it is fully sea-worthy. The crew has their hands full with pumping the water out of the boat, keeping it from turning over as the waves roll by, and trying to make the repairs necessary to get underway once more. The survival of this little boat is not guaranteed, but we have made a lot of progress in the right direction, and we have great hopes for what is to come. (To read the rest of the report, [click here.](#))

Since our last quarterly newsletter in October 2007 we now have an accounting system that is set up right and provides timely and accurate financial reports at the click of a mouse. Seems basic, but we operated for a long time without one. Also, three months have passed since we made a drastic reduction in our staff in order to save money. That has worked out well. Despite the reduction in staff we have been able to handle literature orders promptly. And although phone and email response has been less than perfect, we are now a lot closer to solvency, as our quarterly financial statements reveal.

So what about moving this little boat forward? Bill Wilson, cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, wrote that the purpose of the central office of a 12-Step Fellowship should be "to inaugurate and maintain all of those special services for A.A. as a whole that could not well be performed by single groups or areas." In other words, to paraphrase the AA Promises, the purpose of F.W.S. is "to do for groups and Intergrups what they cannot do for themselves." Thinking along these lines, a few months ago we decided to go to the groups and Intergrups of S.L.A.A. and ask a simple question: "What is the one thing that your group or Intergrup needs most from Fellowship-Wide Services." Needless to say, we got a lot more than "one thing" in answer to this question, and we hope we will hear many more responses yet, so please let us know your group's or Intergrup's answer to this question. Based on what we've heard so far, here is a summary of what might be thought of as a roadmap for F.W.S. priorities, based on feedback from the Fellowship:

1. More communication between F.W.S./BOT and the groups/Intergrups.
2. Timely fulfillment of literature orders and phone/email inquiries.
3. New literature and online tools that clearly convey the message of S.L.A.A.
4. Support for new groups and Intergrups.
5. A comprehensive strategy of Public Information and support for implementing that strategy at the local level.
6. Translations of S.L.A.A. literature into other languages.

Now, I don't want to pretend that the Board of Trustees has a comprehensive plan for how to fulfill all of these priorities perfectly, but I do want to let you know what F.W.S., the Board of Trustees, and the F.W.S. Conference are doing, or planning to do, or hoping to do, in each of these areas.

More communication and accountability between F.W.S./BOT and the groups/Intergrups. We are continuing with our online newsletter and the Board of Trustees Call Squad, which is a group of people who maintain direct contact with

every Intergroup on about a monthly basis. If your Intergroup doesn't have such a contact, please let us know right away. If there are things you want to see in the newsletter, let us know. In addition, we are working to undo what many people perceive as a history of the Board of Trustees taking unilateral action on major issues without consulting the Fellowship through the F.W.S. Conference. Last year at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) we consulted with the Conference about changes to what is now called our Prudent Reserve Fund. Based on the input we got from the Conference we made changes that we feel reflect a Fellowship-Wide group conscience. At this year's ABM we intend to discuss the issue of the maximum allowable contribution to F.W.S. In the past the Board has raised this maximum without consulting the Fellowship through the Conference, and this has upset many people. On this very important issue we want to make sure that we have a truly "Fellowship-Wide" group conscience so that we can put behind us any divisions that have arisen over this issue. If you would like to help with this project, please let us know.

Timely fulfillment of literature orders and phone/email inquiries. With limited staff resources it is very difficult to improve in this area. Literature orders are the number one priority of the F.W.S. staff. The Board of Trustees would like to increase the staff of the office so that the phone can be answered consistently and people can get email responses from the office in a timely manner. The simple fact of the matter is that we need more money if we are going to hire more staff. I can't say it any clearer than that. In the absence of funding for additional staff, the Board Public Relations Committee is working with the F.W.S. General Manager to improve upon the Frequently Asked Questions on our website to try to provide more thorough responses to common inquiries without additional staff resources. If you would like to help with this project please let us know.

New literature and online tools that clearly convey the message of S.L.A.A. One of the most exciting things currently happening in S.L.A.A. is that the Conference Steps and Traditions Committee is putting together a new book on the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of S.L.A.A. If you haven't heard about this project, please go to www.slaafws.org/submit1212 and check out the opportunity to contribute in writing to the development of this book. It will give addicts a strong new tool for sobriety and service. The book will take a long time, and in the meantime the Board Public Relations Committee is working on a major overhaul of the F.W.S. website so that the message of S.L.A.A. will be much more readily available online, and so that individuals who want to get sober, start new meetings, and start new Intergroups will find much more support through the website. Our vision for this project is that when an addict comes to our website they should find all of the resources they need to get sober, whether they have meetings in their area or not, and to start a new meeting if there are none where they live. If you would like to get involved in this project, please let us know.

Support for new groups and Intergroups. As mentioned above, we want our website to become a much more powerful tool for people who want to start new meetings, and for people who want to start new Intergroups. What to do and what to expect in the process of starting a new meeting or Intergroup will be carefully explained, based on successful experience of current members. In addition to that we are planning to create a pair of moderated online discussion forums, one for people who are starting new meetings, the other for people who are starting new Intergroups. These forums will allow members to ask questions and get feedback

from experienced members and from others who are wrestling with the same questions. These forums will be carefully moderated so that they are safe and anonymous places for people to get practical help. Our hope is that once they are set up, experienced S.L.A.A. members will participate in responding to and participating in the discussion on the forums. If you are interested in getting involved with any of these online projects, please let us know.

A comprehensive strategy of Public Information and support for implementing that strategy at the local level. This is an area where we are currently very much lacking. To help people start new meetings in places where there currently are no meetings it will be necessary to help them figure out how to get in touch with addicts in their area. Currently S.L.A.A. has no comprehensive strategy for how to do that, but we intend to learn from the successful experience of S.L.A.A. Intergroups and other 12-Step Fellowships and put together a comprehensive strategy for local Public Information to support the formation of new meetings. If you are interested in helping with this project, please let us know.

Translations of S.L.A.A. literature into other languages. The Board Finance & Operating Committee has identified Spanish as the language for which translations are most needed, primarily because there are S.L.A.A. meetings forming in a number of Spanish speaking countries but very little has been translated. A project to translate the S.L.A.A. Basic Text into Spanish is underway. In addition we have received requests for translations into French, and there are other languages that will require translations as S.L.A.A. grows. We currently have no comprehensive strategy for developing translations or for navigating the complicated rules of international copyrights. If you are interested in helping out with this difficult set of issues, and particularly if you have either legal skills or translation skills, please let us know.

There is more going on that I could tell you about, but eventually even the most indefatigably garrulous must admit that it is time to stop talking (or writing). I could tell you about how the Board Governance & Nominating Committee is exploring the possibility of S.L.A.A. adopting the AA 12-Concepts for World Service, or how that same committee is exploring the possibility of establishing a mid-year in-person meeting of the Board of Trustees so that the Trustees can work together more closely, or how the Board Public Relations Committee is working on a plan to establish a literature creation fund together with a new proposal for how literature can be created more effectively, or how the Board Finance & Operating Committee is working on a comprehensive set of controls for overseeing the office operations more effectively. All of this is underway, but I have dinner to cook, and you probably have a meeting to get to, so until another issue of the newsletter, please stay sober, please stay in touch with us here at F.W.S., and please let us know what you can do to support F.W.S. with your time, talent, and treasure. The success of the S.L.A.A. program depends on you.

In service,
Dan A.
Chairperson, F.W.S. Board of Trustees.