

A report from the FWS General Manager.

FWS Newsletter, January 2008`

As you probably know already, finances have been a problem for S.L.A.A./FWS. We are doing everything we can to run the FWS office as cheaply as we can and still provide the service you, the S.L.A.A. member, deserves. We have gone from three full time employees to one full-time and one part-time. We are also looking into other ways to conserve without greatly affecting our service. And we are creating new services without increasing our expenses.

Our new, Quickbooks accounting system is up and running. It was a difficult and time-consuming task to switch from one system to another, but we have completed this task and now have very accurate financial reporting. This allows us to quickly know how well, or poorly, we are doing at any given time. In the past, getting accurate financial reports was just short of impossible. Now it is a standard part of our day-to-day business.

The tape and CD inventory has been revamped, with many more tapes and CD's available, and now all tapes are priced the same and all CD's are priced the same. We have reduced the cost of the recorded S.L.A.A. Basic Text on both tapes and CD's. We are ordering our chips and medallions directly from the manufacturer, eliminating the middle-man, saving more for the Fellowship. We will soon have laminated 2' x 3' Steps and Traditions posters available.

The most exciting thing at FWS is the new web site and online store. The new web site has been up for several months, with many more changes and improvements on the way. In addition the new online store is now working. A very special thank you to Beth S. of the Board Public Relations Committee for her many hundreds of hours of volunteer work making the new site and store available to everyone. We really can't thank her enough.

Shipping has been updated. The online store will calculate shipping by weight, box size and zip code. International shipping will be calculated and eliminate double charges, first for the item and then for the shipping. This means that large orders will no longer pay huge shipping costs, and for small orders there will now be cheaper options to keep those orders affordable.

The new online store has a place to make one-time or recurring donations via credit/debit cards direct to FWS. We are very excited about the possibility for people to set up recurring contributions and hope that people will check out that option and consider doing it.

Over 650 orders and contributions were logged between October 1, and December 31, 2007. We are answering more than 25 emails and 10 phone inquiries per day.

We are doing everything possible to streamline our procedures and operate within our budget. Staffing has been cut from three positions to one full-time person (General Manager) and one part-time person. We are investigating ways of reducing our monthly rent. This Newsletter, as well as other communications from the FWS office, Board and Conference Committees, are using our website and email whenever possible.

We are using a free teleconference service for all teleconference board and committee meetings.

This is an exciting time, even if it is very challenging. We look forward to providing better service and greater operational efficiency. Let us know what you want from us and we'll do what we can with the resources you send us.

Linda Hamilton,
FWS General Manager.