

Individual Contribution Month: What do you need from F.W.S. and what does F.W.S. need from you?

F.W.S. Newsletter, April 2008

Last fall we asked groups and Intergroups, "What is the one thing you need most from F.W.S.?" We got a lot of answers, and you can read all of them below, along with what we are doing to respond to them. One phrase sums up all of these needs: "To carry [the] message to the sex and love addict who still suffers." (Tradition 5).

We are committed to getting as much "carrying" done as we possibly can with the resources we have. But many of the things that you have told us you want from F.W.S. simply require more money. Our commitment is to spend your money responsibly to carry the message in the ways you've asked for. The more money you send us, the more message we can carry.

May is Individual Contribution Month at F.W.S. We are hoping you will consider making a contribution to F.W.S. during May or, even better, setting up an automatic, monthly contribution.

Here is the complete list of all the answers we got back from groups and Intergroups about what they need from Fellowship-Wide Services. There were one or two responses that were more like questions for the Board, which have been left out. And a few of the answers included extensive explanatory text, which has been left out. Other than that, these are your exact words. For each stated need or priority, we have offered some comments about what we are doing, or would like to be able to do to. You will see that there are roughly three categories here. (1) Things we've already done. (2) Things we are attempting to do with existing resources, which would be easier to do with more money. Things we flat-out cannot do without more money.

The point of all of this is to say, once again, that our commitment is to live within the resources you provide, and to use those resources responsibly, but that there are big chunks of "carrying the message" for which we simply don't have enough money or volunteer help.

Answers that have to do with office operations.

- Literature (books, pamphlets, chips, etc.)
- We ask for a lot of literature; we'd like these orders to be dealt with in a timely manner.
- Give good service with the books, coins, Journal, and pamphlets (which they are doing! Yay!!)

We are doing our best to ship orders promptly and accurately. Service is not perfect but it is usually good. We continue to look for opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness in the order fulfillment process.

- 17% literature shipping fee seems exorbitant. Is there a way to reduce that?

Yes, and we've done it. All shipping and handling fees are now based on the actual cost of shipping and handling for each order.

- Received *the Journal* in a timely manner
- Improve circulation services for *the Journal*

the Journal is in a period of transition. The Conference Journal Committee is wrestling actively with issues of timeliness and improved circulation. An ambitious plan is taking shape to breathe new life into *the Journal* so that it is a more powerful tool for recovery throughout the Fellowship.

- Ensure that F.W.S. is compliant with state and federal tax laws

We are working on IRS and state financial filings from the past two years. Beyond that, there are issues of compliance with Texas state law for which we would need professional legal help, which we cannot afford.

- Sponsorship List
- Speakers List

These are resources that many people would like F.W.S. to develop and maintain, but they require staff time that we currently cannot afford.

- Grateful for Phone contact and support

Thank you for your gratitude. However, we are currently able to answer the phone less than half the time and it is frequently difficult to keep up with email inquiries and phone message. To answer the phone and the email promptly each day we need more staff, which requires more money.

Answers that have to do with accountability to, and communication with, the Fellowship

- Please put lists of F.W.S. contributions back in newsletter
- Please itemize donations from groups/individuals in F.W.S. Newsletter

This has been done. We aren't going to list individual contributions, because many members feel that it is out of step with the 12th Tradition. But group and Intergroup contributions will be listed.

- We sent \$1000. to F.W.S. last year and received no acknowledgement, no receipt. We'd like to receive these.

We are now sending out acknowledgements of all online contributions, and acknowledgements of mail-in contributions whenever a receipt is requested. If you want acknowledgement for a mail-in contribution be sure to indicate on the contribution form that you would like a receipt. (The contribution form is available on the F.W.S. website under "Contributions.")

- Each time an acronym is used in an article, letter, etc., it needs to be stated what the acronym stands for.

We try to remember this. A lot of it has to do with having the time to carefully edit all submissions to this newsletter. Currently the newsletter is being produced entirely by the volunteer efforts of Board members. Here again, more money would mean more staff, which would mean a better

newsletter.

- Improve communication between groups.
- Connection between groups and Intergroups in the US and around the world.

We are doing our best to maintain communication between F.W.S. and the groups and Intergroups, through this newsletter, the F.W.S. website, and through direct phone and email contact with Intergroups. One extremely valuable service you can provide is to take this newsletter, and all other communications from F.W.S., to your meetings and actively encourage people to read them. As to communication among groups, this is primarily the responsibility of Intergroups. We hope to be able to support the development of new Intergroups and help strengthen the ones that exist.

- Restore trust in F.W.S.
- Financial accountability and balanced budget
- One group said they want more accountability and to know what is going on.
- People want to see if BOT is going to live up to its commitment.
- Make it plain.
- Communication.

Our budget is balanced, and so far in Fiscal Year 2008, we have had positive net income, which means we are living within our means. We are sending out quarterly financial statements via this newsletter. We are also continuing to seek more ways to reduce our expenses, and expect to cut two or three thousand dollars per month in the next few months without reducing services. Only you can judge whether we have restored your trust in F.W.S., and whether the Board of Trustees is going to live up to its commitment. We will continue to communicate openly with you about all that is going on at F.W.S., and hope that you will find ample reason for restored trust as time goes by.

- Provide suggested scripts, in pdf and Word formats, addressing the need for \$2 suggested donations. (It was mentioned that Al-Anon does this.)
- Support about Anonymity; several priests at meetings. Irish 'talk' makes anonymity difficult.
- Do a better job of promoting service as part of the Preamble.

These are all ideas that we have no current plans for. We will not ignore these suggestions, and will keep track of them as potential future priorities. But since we are on the topic, please give \$2 at meetings if you can, please don't repeat what you hear at meetings, and please do service. ☺

Answers having to do with new literature, translations, copyright, etc.

- Good literature - there was strong support for the *12 & 12* and any other practical working guides
- Step Study Guide
- Basic text - could it be available as a download/pdf either for free or for sale, depending on what it currently does in terms of generating needed revenue?
- More new pamphlets to keep up to date!
- French Literature/Translation support

- Assist foreign Intergroups to publish copyrighted materials.

F.W.S., largely through the Conference Steps & Traditions Committee, is currently working on a *12 Steps and 12 Traditions of S.L.A.A.* book. In addition, the Conference Member Retention Committee is working on a *Sponsorship Workbook*, which may serve some of the purposes of a step study guide. The Basic Text has been transformed into an electronic format, but we have not yet decided how to make it available. We are aware of at least two pamphlets that are underway at the Intergroup level. More translations and a clear policy on international copyright issues are things that we would very much like to accomplish, but they are virtually impossible without more money, both for translation services and for legal guidance. We are basically dead in the water on supporting international use of our literature, because we don't have a penny to spend on it. I am assured that sex and love addicts are champing at the bit throughout the Spanish and French speaking worlds because they simply cannot get our literature in their language. That's not good. We have tried getting literature translated by volunteers, and we are continuing to try, but it is a monumental task. And the legal issues involved in international copyright are simply beyond us without professional guidance.

Answers having to do with the website.

- Provide templates (such as website, guidelines for retreats) to assist with recovery and governance
- To my knowledge, there is no way to register a group or contact person for the group, or change any group information online. Such a facility might help F.W.S. maintain an accurate database.
- Support for people in far away places without meetings: long-distance sponsorship service
 - Perhaps an online mechanism could be used for matching sponsors to sponsees.
 - Encourage people with recovery to attend online meetings to make themselves available as sponsors.
 - Online meetings could be a place where sponsor lists are made available.
- Post annual report on website
- Meeting list from F.W.S. needs clear explanation of the process when going out of town
- Provide better branding. Develop a better logo than the one that is found on S.L.A.A. literature and on our website. Develop a logo that public relations officers of Intergroups, for example, could download that will make flyers and other local materials look more professional. Create a packaged web design for Intergroups.

All of the above are flat out excellent ideas which we would love to implement, and which, in many cases, we are trying to implement. Here is what you need to understand. Currently we have a volunteer webmaster who lives about 2000 miles from the F.W.S. office and has a full time job of her own. In addition, there are two or three others, Board and/or Conference members, who volunteer a small amount of their time to make improvements to the F.W.S. website. With those volunteer resources we have been able to

make amazing progress with our website, and particularly our online store, thanks largely to our amazing volunteer webmaster. But there is so much more to do, and this is where we can really carry the message to so many millions of addicts. But our hands are mostly tied because we can't afford even so much as a part-time staff person to design and maintain the website. We will continue to make slow progress using all-volunteer help to the best of our ability. If you are interested in participating it would be extremely helpful to have you on board.

- Redesign website to better support newly sober addicts and those starting new meetings.

This is one project in particular where we are doing our best with volunteers because we believe that we can potentially make a large impact on "carrying the message" without having buckets of money. It is very slow work because there are so few of us working on this and so much to do. Please join us if you are interested in developing new content for recovery and starting meetings. This may be our very best chance for carrying the message to places without meetings.

- Search engine placement

This refers to modifying our website so that it appears on the first page of Google or Yahoo searches for various search terms such as, "sex addiction," "love addictions," etc. This is extremely important. We've made some improvements using the volunteer web help that is currently available (basically two or three people working in their spare time) but to really get the job done right, so that we appear on the first page, where people can find us, we will need to pay a professional, whether that is a contractor or a hired webmaster.

- Is there an easier way to sign up for the newsletter?

It is hard to imagine an easier way to sign up for the newsletter. Simply enter your email address into the subscription box on the F.W.S. home page, www.slaafws.org.

Answers having to do with public information

- Support for local public information efforts.
- Reduce stigma regarding sex and love addiction and anorexia.
- Have a "national campaign" to increase awareness of sex and love addiction and anorexia.
- Formulate guidelines regarding (a) outreach to prisoners, (b) public service announcements, and (c) what we can and should be doing, and doing well.
- Present a "national message."

To speak bluntly, effective public information is simply out of our reach at the moment. To develop and execute a comprehensive strategy for public information, at the local, national, or international level is going to require staff support. If we had one or two full-time staff with PR experience we

could carry the message to addicts all over the world. But we don't. An extra \$100,000 per year would get the job done. If one person per meeting at each of the 1000 registered S.L.A.A. meetings worldwide signed up for a \$10/month credit-card contribution we'd have that money.

That is the full list of answers we got to the question, "What one thing does your group or Intergroup need most from Fellowship-Wide Services. It is a great list and we are implementing as much of it as we can with what we've got. If you would like to see more of this list accomplished, please consider making a contribution to F.W.S., and in particular, please consider setting up a monthly, automated contribution via your credit or debit card.