

31st Annual Intergroup/Central Office AAWS/AAGV Seminar, Kansas City, Mo.

I wish to thank the Intergroup for allowing me to attend this seminar. It's such a wonderful opportunity for me to be with other special workers, who encounter all the same joys and sorrows of working for the alcoholics we serve. These 6 workshops were attended on Friday and Saturday. Friday's evening session was the AAWS Presentation, and Saturday's was the AAGV Presentation.

Workshop 1 – GETTING GROUPS INVOLVED

- Ideas given that sounded interesting were handing out an IG rep packet with every sale containing a flier w/bullet points as to what one does as an IG rep.
- Email sent every week to the IG reps w/ link to events page – brought up sales & participation
- Email IG minutes to the reps with a manager's report as to what CO might need at that time
- Central Office present at workshops & events
- CO put on its own workshop, w/ a steering committee member as a chair (archives of CO as an example)
- Open house for CO with raffles, and/or door prizes & snacks for 4 – 5 hours

Make a list of dark groups & at SC mtg. hand out assignments for visitation to 2 or 3 of these groups. During announcements, say who you are and what CO does for the groups (condensed).

Workshop 2 – SPECIAL NEEDS

- This idea has actually been passed around by members of our own steering committee, and is actually happening in the Ft. Lauderdale area. An AA member, who is an ASL interpreter, interprets at the meetings that member attends. The deaf person needing a meeting can then attend that meeting, and no one group, person, district, or Central Office need pay for

that expense. Perhaps this could be a way to solve at least part of the problem of providing ASL meetings.

- I thought that this question was, in my opinion, pertinent to the singleness of purpose: Is AA obligated to providing ASL for the deaf, language interpreters for those who speak a language other than English, or to providing rides to those who don't drive? Are we in the business of finding a solution to every 'Special Need' problem, or to alcoholism?
- Most of the rest of the discussion was about how ASL meetings were funded, listing Spanish-speaking meetings and Spanish Central Offices, and how/if we listed Handicapped Accessible meetings. Also, meetings taken into physical rehabs, hospital patients without their Home Group phone list, and the physically handicapped/blind persons needing rides to meetings – how these were all addressed.

Workshop 3 – Addicts in AA

This workshop I chaired, and the time allowed per workshop is 1 hour. This one ran long, almost 1 ½ hrs., as so many wanted to speak. It was a very interesting workshop!

- The main focus of this workshop ended up being on the Singleness of Purpose, and what it meant, and who to include. There was much discussion over being a 'pure' alcoholic, or one with outside issues as well. The general consensus was, as long as one's main problem was drinking, there was no issue, as long as one stated they were alcoholic *only*, not an alcoholic and 'a _____'.
- When answering the phone for a person looking for information about those "classes", the question 'are you an alcoholic?' needs to be asked, so that they can: 1) be directed to the appropriate 12 Step meeting, and 2) informed about our Primary Purpose.
- Do we give out phone numbers for other 12 Step programs, and is this affiliation? Yes, as we are to be of service in all our affairs, and no, because we are just disseminating information. We are careful to say that we have no affiliation with other 12 Step programs.

- Step up getting our Primary Purpose statement to judges, treatment centers and parole officers, who tend to group all substance abusers into the same category – Alcoholics Anonymous. This is a great service opportunity!

Workshop 4 – P.I.T.A.'S (Pain in the A___'s)

This was a fun workshop, as some of the stories told were pretty hilarious. In all fairness, though, our job is to help carry the message, and to be the frontline of AA.

- Those late night repeat callers fit into this quite well. Some offices block the calls when they become too much, others refer them crisis counseling so that they can talk all they want, and others are asked not to call again. Each situation is so very different.
- What about the ones who 'hang' around in the office? Put them to work, either stocking, cleaning, doing something other than taking up space. Sometimes it's appreciated, and sometimes it makes them go elsewhere. Those who genuinely need a space to stay sober are always welcome!
- The last thing discussed was who our favorite p.i.t.a. was. This is where the sometimes hilarious story came in. But it was also good to know that we all had our fair share of p.i.t.a.'s.

Workshop 5 – Concepts & CO/Intergroup

I must say here that I'm not as well versed on the Concepts as I could be, which is why I chose this workshop. After reading up on the Concepts mentioned here, I believe that our Central Office and the Intergroup Representative meeting do adhere to the Concepts, both in action and in our By-laws.

- Do the rights of participation, decision and appeal apply to CO? Concepts 3, 4, & 5. Yes, I believe they do, to both the steering committee and the Intergroup rep meeting.

- Who has the final say – office managers or elected board? Depends upon the situation. Financial is both, whereas everyday managing falls to the managers
- Concept 12 – Does it apply? The 5 Warranties of Concept 12 absolutely apply. We have them in our CO By-laws as a guide to our operation of the office. It is on my plate to educate myself, along with the Steering Committee, about the Concepts and how they apply to us.
- Read the Concept of the month at the intergroup meeting. Allow the IG reps more time to take voting motions back to the groups (1 or 2 months?)

Workshop 6 – Dealing with Boards, Steering Committees, and Trustees

Here we practice Love and Tolerance, service first, and sharing of experiences.

- Patience – don't give up just because of a couple of stubborn members. They rotate out eventually! Remember, it's not always principles before personalities.
- Take your own inventory, and realize that there is always going to be someone who wants it done differently.
- Recruit people, especially the ones who you think will make that difference. Recruit for both the steering committee and volunteers.
- Make sure that the Treasurer's position is well defined in the by-laws, so that it is clear that this is a *service* office, not a business!

Friday Evening – AAWS Workshop

AAWS Board Chair and Trustee Director Joe W. (?) started us off with a bit of his history in Alcoholics Anonymous. He was followed by Greg T., General Manager of GSO, who presented a slide show on the construction of combining AAWS and AAGV onto one floor (11th) so that communication is greater between the 2 Boards. The web site sees approximately 35K hits per day, or just over 1 million per month. AAWS Archives presented the 35th millionth copy of the Big Book to the religious order that Sister Ignacia belonged to. They absolutely revere her!

David A. is the new AAWS publishing director, being hired into that position in July 2016. Before that, he was the licensing manager. David keeps track of all literature for all languages printed by AA. Right now, accessibility is a priority by eliminating the barriers of access to low vision readers by printing more large print material, including books. They are in the process of re-recording audio books to conform to the best standards in the business. There is a terrific (his words) new DVD – “A New Freedom” that is soon to be released, and also in the process of choosing ASL interpreters for the revamp of the BB and 12x12. The interpreters are all being chosen by the deaf community, and are also all members, so this is an ‘in program’ project.

The catalogue! David can’t find stuff in his own catalogue, so that is being revamped for easier use (there was a sound round of applause at this). The “Blue People” graphic on the AA.org website is now trademarked and copyrighted, and may not be used by the groups, but is reserved for the AAWS/AAGV/GSO boards of the U.S. and Canada, and by GSO of Canada and the U.S.

The Big Book is now available in 70 languages – 69 translations and in English. AA literature is available via online stores and International service structures in 99 languages. The BB and 12x12 are coming soon in Hindi, Punjabi, and Tamil in the near future.

There has been a 176% increase over 2015 in licenses to reproduce translated, copyrighted literature.

Melini, Publishing Operations Manager – She is in charge of AAWS inventory, customer service, and order entry. There are 1350 items in inventory. In 2015, online sales accounted for 62% of all sales. There are 89,000 incoming, and 56,000 outgoing pieces of mail, handled by 4 people annually. WOW!

Big Book (PB), As Bill Sees It (PB), and Daily Reflections wear issues have been noted, and will be addressed within 3 months. All book manufacturers have been instructed to use reinforced binding techniques.

More customer service reps are to be hired, and cross training will be done with those already employed for better customer service.

Racy, GSO Liaison between IG/CO. She talked about the history of the building that GSO is in, also an explanation of GSO employees who are Tradition 8 workers and their duties. In the spirit of the traditions, they rotate every 2 years to a new position in GSO, i.e. PI, CPC, Corrections, etc.

Saturday Evening – AAGV Workshop

Linda, AAGV Trustee Board Director was the starting speaker. She is from Quebec, and has served on the board for the last 3 years. The biggest challenge for the last 3 years is keeping the GV afloat. Every yearly budget is made in the red, because they publish a book yearly, and don't know if that book is going to sell. Even if they did not publish a book, the budget would still be made in the red, because the support for the Grapevine is not what it used to be. If everyone with a subscription would renew, the situation would become much better. One of the suggestions that the GV is sending out to DCM's is to buy your Delegate a subscription gift, so that he can pass that along to the Corrections Committee of the Area.

When a recent search for a Non-Alcoholic Trustee Director began, they looked specifically for a person involved with the Spanish community who also spoke Spanish. This was done specifically in support of La Vina, which is paid for by GSO but perhaps this could help it become a little more self-supporting.

Linda stressed that you search the Grapevine website, listen to the audio stories, look up articles in the Archives, which go back to the beginning of the Grapevine, and learn what it take to be a GV rep. Record your own audio share for up to 7 minutes, or write an article of your experience in AA, or how you got here.

John, Senior Editor of the Grapevine then spoke. He talked a bit about his history, and how he got to be Editor. He also talked about the website, and to use the

search box on the screen using keyword to search the last 10 years of archives. They are currently working on updating the search engine for the archives.

Currently, the Grapevine is looking for stories. Diversity, dating in sobriety, prison (both in, out, and taking meetings), being young and sober, AA in the military, and how you use the GV are some of the subjects that are being sought for upcoming editions. They are always in search of original cartoons, photos, jokes and illustrations.

An idea given was to make a purple basket to collect Grapevines at the office, or to take to the IG rep meeting to distribute to prisons. Put this idea into your local newsletter if you have one.

On the exit list: “Home Group: Heartbeat of AA” is now out of print, and “Best of Bill”, “Into Action”, and “Thanks for Sharing” are being ‘sunsetting’.

Sunday Morning – Recap of the weekend by attendees

This session was small, as many had early departure times. I made a point of talking to Sherry, who helped in making this Seminar happen as to what it takes to be a host. She has years of experience in booking motels and conference space, but the main requirement was a core group of volunteers, willing to do what it takes. I must say that Kansas City set a high bar when the Districts rallied and supplies ALL the meals in the Hospitality Room, from Thursday evening to early Sunday morning breakfast, starting at 5:30 a.m., for those with early flights.

Gratefully,

Debra K.