

Final Report
24th Annual Central Office/Intergroup
AAWS/AA Grapevine Seminar
Rochester, NY
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Submitted by:

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I. Introduction

Jeremy M., a trusted servant, in gratitude and in the spirit of AA's Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, respectfully submit this, the final report, from time spent at the 24th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar.

It is necessary to outline first what the seminar is, its intended purpose, and why it is imperative that Sioux Falls Area Intergroup officers continue to attend this function.

The annual conference meets in a city which is voted on two years in advance. The seminar consists of a three days of conferences. In AA's usual fashion, there are no true leaders within the seminar, instead the workshops are chaired by past attendees who facilitate the discussion. There are three workshops per time frame, and it is up to the individual attendees as to which workshop they attend. Each workshop is one and one-half hours long. There are also business meetings to determine the location of future seminars, in addition to a Friday and Saturday night session where members of both GSO and AA's 'Grapevine' staff meet the attendees and answer questions.

Each workshop is designed simply to share information and best practices. Just as in a meeting of AA we share our experience, strength, and hope, so it is with the workshops. Members from all over the country share best practices, ideas, and information in hopes that someone else will benefit from their experience and capitalize on it in their own affairs.

An Intergroup, or Central Office, will send three members in order to maximize attendance at the workshops. In our case, it is not economically feasible always to do this when air travel is involved, which results in the attendee (this year myself,) having to determine which workshop would be most beneficial to provide information to bring back. This is not always an easy task, as all workshops have some inherent value for both central offices and intergroups.

II. Workshops

I. Websites (1:00 pm-2:30 pm Friday, October 2, 2009)

I was happy to find that we are definitely at the top of our game with our website. While our city may be small in comparison to some of the seminar's attendees, we are certainly keeping up with larger cities.

Some added ideas that SF Intergroup could consider:

- A spot for contributions/orders via Credit Card
- An on-line order form for our literature inventory
- Placing a link on our site to AA's '20 Questions'
- A link for 12th stepping via e-mail
- Placing a form for institutional commitments on our website in PDF

Conclusion: In comparison to other Intergroups, our website holds up to the test. There are certainly some suggestions that could enhance our website and our 12th Step effectiveness, but all in all we are doing a great job of carrying the message online.

II. Literature (2:45pm-4:15pm Friday, October 2, 2009)

I chose the Literature workshop due to SF Intergroup's relatively new attempt at providing literature to the SF Area groups. So far, our strategy seems to be somewhat in line with other Intergroups who have been dealing in literature for awhile.

Some suggestions:

- If any outside entities (i.e. treatment centers, jails, etc.) request literature it is recommended that we mark the price up by \$.50
- Literature should still be distributed at no cost where there is a need
- All larger cities buy in bulk and sell at single copy prices. (It's okay to turn a small profit.)

-SF Intergroup should try and deal only in conference approved literature, unless there is an expressed need from our area, and a group conscience (quorum) vote.

Conclusion: Currently, we have the right idea as far as literature is concerned. It would be helpful to educate the SF Area groups as to how purchasing their literature from us is both beneficial to them, and Intergroup as far as raising funds, and the convenience factor to the groups. (No waiting for the order to come.)

III. Open Forum/Seminar Web Report (9:30 am-10:15 am Saturday, October 3, 2009)

This meeting was led by Jim K. from Palm Desert, CA, and was a rundown of last year's Seminar Website Committee meeting. The Central Office/Intergroup seminar is looking at starting their own website which will make reports like this more accessible to all parties concerned. This was a rundown of last years events, and our own Ryan H. from Sioux Falls participated, he will have further information.

IV. Traditions (10:30am-12:00pm Saturday, October 3, 2009)

The Tradition's workshop seemed to be the be the smart choice for me to attend as we have had dealings (especially on our website,) with other twelve-step groups as well as outside agencies. Our Intergroup already has a fairly good understanding of what is, and what is not AA, however I felt it would be beneficial to see what other Central Office/Intergroups were doing.

Suggestions:

-Continue to promote only AA events in the newsletter and on the website.
(Most all groups promote this.)

-Intergroup should, at some point, hold our own traditions workshop to keep our reps, and the general AA population of Sioux Falls, up to date.

-Ultimately Intergroup's authority is derived from the respective groups, so if there is an issue that we can't decide on, it should be sent back to the groups.

-Current guidelines, should we have any questions, can be found under Regional Forums at www.aa.org

Conclusion: As an example of all of Sioux Falls AA, it is imperative that SF Area Intergroup continues to uphold the Traditions. We have done an outstanding job in the last few years, and it is important that we continue to differentiate the AA from the non-AA related events. There should probably be a clause written into our new by-laws about this, and it would definitely be helpful for us to get out and educate SF AA about traditions via workshops.

V. Never Be Organized (By-Laws Etc.) (1:30pm-3:30 pm Saturday, October 3, 2009)

This workshop seemed most beneficial as we are currently in the process of rewriting our won by-laws. It was evident from other groups that we need to continue to create standing committees when necessary. (i.e. By-laws, Helpline, Dance, etc.) and allow these committees to exist for as long as necessary. Some other suggestions listed below.

-Create list of each Intergroup Job Function with a definition and clarity as to what said function is.

-A budget was just requested from Intergroup, and this is good practice, we should print annually a budget report. (Semi-annually or quarterly would be fine too.)

-A detailed description of our meeting process would also be beneficial for incoming reps and officers.

Conclusion: We are lacking in a lot of areas of organization. We need to continue to write our by-laws. Come up with our own meeting format. Begin to submit an annual budget, and clarify each of our job functions. While we may currently lack these things, we are doing a great job of working towards it.

VI. Business Meeting (Policy and Site.) (3:15pm-4:45pm Saturday, October 3, 2009)

This was a long discussion of continued policies at the Central Office/Intergroup seminar. Being only a second time attendee, I was mainly a spectator for this event. Current policies were discussed, most of the current operating procedures were upheld. There was a vote on the location for the Seminar in two years, and it will be held in Tucson, AZ. (2010 location is St. Louis, MO.)

III. Friday/Saturday Night Sessions With GSO/Grapevine

Friday Night: This meeting is attended by the AAWS Chairman of the Board; the AAWS Publications director; The Publications Ordering Manager; and the GSO Intergroup Liaison. Any and all attendees are welcome to ask questions related to the jobs these individuals perform.

Some Highlights:

- Intergroups will soon have access to online book orders
- Service manuals have not yet been printed, they will be out in November.

While there was a wealth of information to be presented at this session, the majority of attendees focused on Andrea Brennan (non-alcoholic,) Ordering Manager with questions about online orders for books. That appeared to be the focus of the meeting.

Saturday Night: This meeting is attended by the GSO General Manager, and AA Grapevine's Executive Editor and Grapevine Controller. The same format as Friday is used, with an ask-it format..

Some Highlights:

- Grapevine went stapleless
- Economy down, cost is up a bit
- Contribution to GSO are down, but still operational

IV. Conclusion

As initially stated, this seminar is an excellent opportunity for individual Central Office/Intergroups to come together and share best practices.

I made it my priority to attend the seminars that dealt with issues currently affecting SF Area Intergroup. While there was much new information provided, I was pleased to find that a lot of what we are doing matches what a lot of other groups are doing. It seemed to me that they'd just had more time to perfect it.

Next year (2010) the conference will be held in St. Louis, MO. This is a driveable distance, and I would encourage the Intergroup to, at that time, pay for funding for gasoline for one car to get three or more individuals there in order to maximize the seminars effectiveness.

On a more personal note, this will be the last report I write, and the last seminar that I will attend as an officer of Sioux Falls Area Intergroup. Rotating leadership is best, and my term as your Chairman will expire in July of 2010. It has been my unique privilege to serve on Intergroup in some capacity for almost the entire length of my sobriety. (4 years and 4 months as I write this.) It is a bittersweet moment knowing that my time is winding down. On one hand I'm excited to hand the reigns over to see what the next group of individuals will do with our Intergroup. On the other, I'm sad to walk away from something that I've dedicated four years of my life too.

In any event, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve you all.

"I salute you, and I thank you for my life." –Bill Wilson

This final report was submitted at SF Intergroups monthly meeting, January 3, 2010.

