

Special Convention Issue

Balance

Newsletter of the National Service Organization of COSA

June-July 2003

A Vision for COSA

Hi, my name is JoAn. I am a recovering codependent.

I have the privilege and honor of serving the COSA fellowship as this year's chair of the NSO Board. Being a member of this fellowship has provided me with the opportunity to work on improving my life and healing my woundedness. I cannot imagine what my life would be like had I not found COSA fourteen years ago. My heart goes out to those who are searching for relief and have not yet found this fellowship.

There is a need for more outreach, more meetings, more groups, more help for those who still suffer. Of course, our traditions require attraction, not promotion. In addition, the nature of our disease requires discernment between harmful caretaking which comes from a place of emotional insecurity and healthy support and concern which come from a place of emotional maturity and strength. As we reach out to help others, we must ever be mindful of our tendency to be unaware of our own needs and to be overly controlling in our desire to help.

Our fellowship is growing and exciting things are happening. The need is there, the opportunity for healing and personal growth through service is there. We now have groups in other countries, and we have more requests for help and long distance sponsorship than we have volunteers to fill those positions. ⇒

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It is an exciting time to participate in this fellowship. I challenge each one to reach one. I believe it is possible to double our membership in the next year.

As we come together in our meetings, at our retreats and in our newly founded on-line support group, we will get and give the help we need. COSA also will be there for those reaching out to get relief from their suffering.

Do what you can, and if the only service work you can do is to go to meetings, remember that going to meetings may just be the most important service work of all. I offer my love and respect to each of you and my everlasting gratitude to this COSA fellowship for helping me discover my higher power and find my real self.

Let's take good care of ourselves. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

— JoAn D.
NSO Chair

Why a Special Convention Issue?

Because of the incredible level of energy and enthusiasm which was created at the COSA Convention in Portland this year, we decided to produce a special convention newsletter to share some of that experience.

Incredibly, I especially enjoyed the Annual Membership Meeting which was held all day Friday. Since my first such meeting in 1997, I've been to most of them and to most Board meetings; I do not always (or even usually) look forward to them. In my disease I'm a people-pleasing control freak. When you get a bunch of us people-pleasing control freaks together trying to accomplish something, it can get pretty weird. And tense. It's been a great recovery challenge for me, to experience my own character defects from the outside, with other people's faces on them.

This year our Annual Meeting was exhilarating. The energy level was high and positive. People who had spoken up little in the past found their voices. Creativity flowed freely. Discarded egos seemed to lie limply on the floor like shed snake skins. Empowerment was in the air. I don't know why. Maybe it was the superb facilities. Maybe we are finally experiencing mature recovery as an organization. Maybe it was a miracle. It felt wonderful.

— Burnet O.

How to Contact Us (NSO COSA)

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1-763-537-6904

info@cosa-recovery.org
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Balance, the newsletter of NSO COSA, is published every other month. The authors hold the copyright to their work; NSO-COSA holds the copyright to the newsletter.

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Tradition Seven

"Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions"

Tucson AZ \$100.00
St Paul MN Thurs PM Group \$50.00
Long Beach CA Tues Group \$8.65
Northville MI \$45.00
Dayton OH \$0.80
Grand Blanc MI \$25.00
Santa Rosa CA \$10.00
St. Paul MN \$50.00
Minnetonka MN Group \$60.00
Houston TX Thurs Noon Group \$33.00
Des Moines IA Thurs PM Group \$25.15
Indianapolis IN Wed PM Group \$15.00
Washingtonville NY \$4.60
Houston TX Sun PM Group \$40.00
St. Paul MN Thurs 5:45 Group \$22.00
Louisville KY Tuesday Group \$30.00
Sinking Spring PA Love & Respect Group
\$5.80
St Paul MN Thurs 5:45 Group \$31.00
MN Intergroup \$200.00
Bloomington MN \$20.00
Bloomington MN Group \$20.00
Minnetonka MN Sun PM Group \$30.00
High Point NC Group \$20.00
High Point NC \$10.00
Tucson AZ Freedom to Fly Group \$25.00
Houston TX Tues Noon Group \$25.00

Bank Balance on 5/31/2003: \$10,690.51



WELCOME NEW GROUPS

Cary NC
Sinking Spring PA
San Francisco Wednesday Serenity Group
San Francisco Bay Area Intergroup

Remember that each time one of us takes a step forward, we pull the entire community forward. We will keep each of you in our thoughts and prayers.

2003/04 Board Members

JoAn D., Tacoma WA, chair
 Gayle J., Houston TX, vice chair
 Mavis H., Reading PA, secretary
 Burnet O., Houston TX, treasurer
 Christi G., Apple Valley MN
 Bonnie C., Ann Arbor MI
 Jennie E., Cincinnati, OH
 Sally B., Houston TX
 Ila D., Birch Run MI
 Stacey H., San Francisco CA
 Britt E., Seattle WA

2003/04 NSO-COSA Budget

Income	
Donations	\$5,000
Literature Sales	4,400
Newsletter Subscriptions	600
Total	<u>\$10,000</u>
Expenses	
National Coordinator	\$4,000
Literature	3,200
Newsletter	1,800
Administration/Communication	1,000
Total	<u>\$10,000</u>

eBalance Available for Groups

Each registered COSA Group currently receives a free Balance subscription. Please consider receiving your Group's Balance via email, as a PDF file, rather than via snail mail. If a group decides that it is willing to help us out in this way, then please send email from the email account where you wish the Balance to be sent saying "Yes, email our Balance," or something to that effect. Send this email to info@cosa-recovery.org, clearly identify your group and include a telephone number to call if there are questions.

PDF files can be opened using a free program called Adobe Acrobat Reader which can be downloaded from www.adobe.com.

New COSA Online Discussion Group

There's an exciting new way for any COSA with a computer and Internet hook-up to connect with the National Service Organization of COSA, and other COSA members!

At this year's National Convention in Portland, OR, one thing that was discussed during the annual membership meeting was that we wanted to find a way for all COSA groups and individuals to feel (and stay) connected to COSA as a whole. We have had an email list, called the "COSA BIZ" list, that was sent out to COSA members around the country, who wanted to keep in touch with the National Service Organization of COSA, and other COSA members. That email list has been inactive for a while, so we discussed how we were going to handle this.

The idea came then, about an online discussion group, and we decided to give it a try. What we didn't know was that this online discussion group would hold the potential of providing so much more to our fellowship than an emailed "BIZ" list alone could!

Here's what we're planning for this new way for us all to connect:

1. We can use it to send out a Newsletter, informing groups and individuals about COSA business, regional retreats, National Conventions, etc.
2. Of course, as it is a *discussion* group, we will be able to make postings about questions, comments, concerns, etc. about COSA. It will be a way for us to share our ESH (Experience, Strength, and Hope) with each other. For instance, we may have postings about how we've worked a particular step, or how people have been able to start a new meeting – and we all will be able to share our ESH on that particular topic. We will also be able to go back into the archives of the discussion group to look up a topic, and see what (if any) postings have been made relating to it. ⇒

3. As the discussion group will be listed on Yahoo's search engine, this will be yet another way for us to connect with newcomers. The database on the discussion group's site will have the same listing of COSA meetings that is listed on the COSA web-site, as well as a link to our web-site, so any newcomer who finds the online discussion group will be able to make a connection with COSA. I'm hoping that this will also be a way of "streamlining" our connections with newcomers, as we will be able to direct any newcomer directly to the COSA Connections Coordinator for their region. Be sure to read the article about CCC volunteers, in this edition of the Balance!)

4. For anyone without a meeting in their geographical area, this discussion group also has a "chat" function, where online COSA meetings could take place. That part has not started up yet, as we will need to provide moderators for the meetings that take place on a COSA sponsored discussion group. Anyone willing to become a moderator/trusted servant for an online meeting, please contact me! ⇒

How do I join, you may be asking? It's pretty easy. Just send an email to:

COSA_12_STEP-Subscribe@Yahogroups.com
If you've already got a Yahoo ID, you're ready to go. The moderator should approve your membership within a day or two. If not, Yahoo will ask you to register for a (free) Yahoo! ID, then you can send your request in to the moderator for approval. If you'd rather not create a Yahoo! ID, you can still subscribe to the group's mailing list, but you will not have access to all the group's Web tools such as Message Archives, Polls, Files, and the "chat" function, which is where the online COSA meeting is planned to take place.

I hope we will have representation from every group, so please pass the word at your meetings! This is a great way for us all to be connected, and to remember that COSA is much bigger than just our meeting, our hometown, or even our state – this is a "global" disease, and we now have a way for any COSA member, from anywhere in the world, to find and maintain a connection to the fellowship.

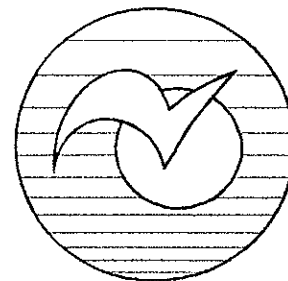
-Christi G.

Christilee_G@Yahoo.com

A God-time

The COSA convention in Portland was a most memorable event in my life. It was held in a beautiful city, crystal clear air and sky and friendly citizens. The spirit of the people who attended was especially endearing to me. I went to the convention spiritually bankrupt and came home with a lot of deposits of nurture, recovery, friendships and connection. That was definitely a "God-time" for me. The closing ceremony was especially significant to me; I cherish the stone that I keep in my possession at all time to remind me of the connection and spirit of the experience. I would definitely recommend the experience to all and hope to see many more at the next convention.

— Paula R.
Houston TX



Literature Process Review

I'm writing to report on the literature process review at our Annual NSO Board Meeting at this year's fabulous convention. It was agreed by consensus of all board members and delegates that all COSA literature must be copyrighted by COSA only, in order to conform with traditions 6, 11 and 12. We have had a piece of literature under consideration, previously known as "The COSA Resource Guide," whose⇒

authors have decided to retain ownership and rewrite it in order to publish it as their own piece. While, to date, COSA-NSO supports local groups in using non-conference approved literature in their local meetings as they so decide, the piece in its old form, and in its being labeled with the COSA name, now will be obsolete. The new version, once published, will be independent from COSA. I am sure all of you will join me in welcoming it when it is complete.

The board and delegates also agreed by consensus to provide non-COSA literature for sale via the National Service Organization at appropriate fees as a service to its members. It was agreed that including a disclaimer with each purchase allows us to do so without violating our tradition of non-endorsements. This means that we will soon be offering an expanded reading list for sale, including literature authored by some of our own members!

I am also excited to announce that we have received three other NEW! literature submissions. They are two pamphlets and a special meeting format. (Personal comment: They are ALL FABULOUS!!!) As Literature Liaison, one of my duties is to review all literature under consideration for copyright infringement. I regret that all three pieces have included passages from other literature such as Alanon meeting formats or other sources such as 12-step workbooks without permission or acknowledgment. I will work with the authors to correct these problems and, hopefully, will announce their readiness for fellowship-wide consideration at the time of the next Balance publication. I neglected to get email addresses from the authors. I can be reached at chakramedicine@yahoo.com.

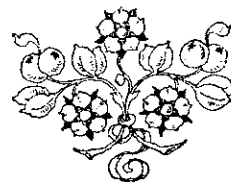
I also want to echo a special acknowledgment to Burnet from the Board for her introduction of the process of consensus decision-making to the COSA-NSO Board.

— Mavis H.

Prayer before Making Love

Dear God, bless our union, our relationship, our marriage and our lovemaking. Help us to remember that this is a time for intimacy, a time to express our love and affection to one another. Help us to release any barriers to intimacy – any fear, shame or resentment. We want to be guided by our spiritual connection with You. Thy will be done. Amen.

— Gregson & Liz P.
Portland OR



What Is Cosex Addiction?

This is a question I grapple with periodically, and I may for the duration of my journey. Up until the Portland convention, the best definition I'd heard was exclaimed by someone during her sharing at a local meeting, "I'm addicted to sex addicts!" However, the convention speakers gave me a whole new level of clarity. Victoria H. said it perfectly, I'm addicted to "controlling male sexual energy."

I've learned from my recovery work that sex means safety to me; I discovered that when I was not being sexual with a man then I walked around expecting to be annihilated at any moment. It makes perfect sense given my background, my childhood (yet all those pre-recovery years I thought I was having sex just because I enjoyed it).

— Burnet O.

COSA Connections Coordinators – Who are they? What do they do?

History of the CCC Role:

In 1999, at a midwinter board meeting in Houston, we took our discussion off-agenda to brainstorm about the frustration those of us who worked the National Phone Line experienced when we handled calls from areas without meetings. At that time all we had to offer were a sympathetic ear and an offer to mail out a pamphlet and a literature list.

We came up with two possible solutions, and we implemented both of them: the long-distance sponsorship program and something we called the CCC or "COSA Connection Coordinator." The first CCC was one person who was charged with starting new meetings by connecting people who called (or wrote or emailed) from the same geographic area. It's grown since then, and I think it's one of the best things we've come up with to reach out to those who still suffer. Below, Christi tells us about where it stands today.

—Burnet O.

My name is Christi, and I'm one of the COSA Connections Coordinators (CCC) for NSO-COSA. It's my job to help find connections for newcomers to the COSA fellowship who are from the western part of the US.

Up until the COSA National Convention in Portland this past May, there were only four CCCs covering the US and abroad. What that has meant for the CCC part of our program, is that each CCC covered at least 8 states each, and one CCC covered "the rest of the world." What that meant for me, was that my CCC work was at times overwhelming, and frustrating most of the time. I felt "spread too thin" and I'm sure other CCCs would agree. I'm saddened to say that this also meant that there were newcomers who I was never able to help make a connection with COSA.

One of the biggest things that has made my work seem overwhelming has been the lack of Temporary/Long Distance Sponsors. I found that I really had to work my recovery and keep reminding myself that I couldn't help every newcomer who came into my files. I did take on several of these newcomers myself, as a Long Distance Sponsor. I put the rest on a waiting list. Unfortunately, by the time I got a Sponsor for them, many either weren't "in need" anymore, had slipped back into denial, or I no longer could reach them through the contact info they'd given. I felt (and still feel) that too many slipped through the cracks. Please, read the article in this issue of the Balance about the need for Temporary/Long Distance Sponsors.

Sometimes, my CCC work has been frustrating, because although I could find "clusters" of newcomers in the same geographical area, time and again I was unable to encourage them to make a connection with each other. It's been difficult, knowing that there is a group of people, in the same area as each other, but no one is willing or able to take steps towards starting a new meeting. Not that I blame any of them – I don't know if I would have been strong enough when I was new to reach out to a total stranger, let alone trust the process of starting a new meeting with them – "the blind leading the blind."

Then, something *Powerful* happened, which reminded me of the mysterious way HP works. Last year, preparing for the COSA convention in San Francisco, I realized I had a wonderful opportunity to help facilitate the connection of one of those clusters of newcomers I had. The result was ⇒

that a group of about 30 of us met during that convention, mostly people from the Bay area, but also people from the COSA community who were willing to help support the start of a new COSA meeting there. I'm very happy and proud to say that there are now THREE meetings in the Bay area!

This year, the "magic" started in San Francisco has blossomed. One of the co-founders of the San Francisco meeting(s) agreed to take on the state of CA for me. I can't tell you what a relief that was for me! I could see that having a person who lives in the state they are trying to connect newcomers within has several benefits. First, someone living in that state would have a better geographical knowledge, and therefore be better able to notice those "clusters" of newcomers. Second, and related, a CCC living in the same state as the newcomers they serve would be in a better position to help facilitate the meeting of groups of newcomers (as I saw in my trip to SFO last year), by giving them support and encouragement to start a new meeting -perhaps even in person. Third, they will be able to draw on volunteers from their home area meetings, and create a pool of Temporary/Long Distance Sponsors who will, in turn, be of support to people in their own state. Last, but not least, the CCC who works with just one state will be less likely to get overwhelmed, as they will be able to focus their energy on just one state.

After that one person from California was brave enough to agree to be a CCC for her state, the enthusiasm grew, and I suddenly also had a volunteer for the state of Washington, then another, from the state of Oregon. I began to form a beautiful dream, where each state had a COSA Connections Coordinator, and newcomers no longer fell through the cracks.

Are you ready to give back in a big way? This dream can become a reality! I'm calling on each of you to look within yourself and find the courage to take your recovery to the next level, by giving of yourself in this important way. ⇒

This service position has so much to offer – I have gotten back at least as much as I have given. Not only do I get to flex my "recovery muscles" by remembering that I don't have to take care of everyone; I also get to remember what brought me here to COSA each time I reach out to a newcomer. Each time I find one of those clusters of newcomers in the same area, and I try to connect them with each other so they can start giving support to each other and start a meeting, I become so grateful for my home meeting. What I gift I was given, having a meeting I could connect with and begin attending the same week I found the strength and courage to reach out. And each time I'm able to connect a newcomer with a Sponsor, I'm reminded how valuable the wisdom of those who were here before me has been – and I'm grateful again. Please, consider becoming a CCC for your state, and you, too, can challenge, and grow in, your recovery. To volunteer for a CCC position in your state, contact NSO-COSA (see the box on page 2, How to Contact Us) and ask to be put in touch with the CCC in your area.

-Christi G.
CCC, Western Region



What I Learned from My Workshop

At the convention I presented a workshop for the first time. The topic was Food Addiction. From it I learned that my coaddiction is always ready to ambush me when I least expect it. I planned and worked on my topic for weeks. Feeling empowered with my own recovery from food addiction, I wanted to share what I had learned. The abstinence from sugar has freed me physiologically from the desire and compulsion to eat more. It was not just my weak will compelling me to eat three cookies instead of one. It was my body craving more sugar. Once I quit all sugar I no longer had to fight the obsessive thought of sugar/food. ⇒

The freedom from the shame of my "weakness" is exhilarating. My mind has never been so clear. The energy I have is allowing me to do more than I have in years. I felt ready to share this with others. Actually, I felt a desire to share my discovery with others. Never did the thought enter my mind that my coaddiction would be waiting for me when I did this. Yet, when I saw only about fifteen people in attendance, I felt a rush of shame! My mind clouded and I felt immediately defensive and angry. This was very subtle, of course. Thoughts raced through my mind of things I had failed to do, causing such a low turnout. I didn't put out large, clear signs, for example. The power of shame never fails to amaze me. Later when I was going over the workshop I found fault with what I had said and how I said it. I thought "I shouldn't have been trying to do this."

When I finally realized what had happened, I felt angry: my shame had jumped in to sabotage my good feelings. My coaddiction does not survive and grow when I feel empowered and strong. At such times I must be wary of "shame attacks".

This recovery of mine is a process. I will always be learning. The convention was healing, nurturing and greatly strengthened my recovery. I felt regret when it was time to pack and leave the convention. There were so many powerful, healing COSA women, and men, I had met. I look forward to the next convention and hope even more of our Houston community will be able to participate.

— Gayle J.

Seventh Step Prayer

Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray now that you remove my character defects that stand in the way of my usefulness to You. Grant me strength and courage to be open to Your will.

Amen

Sponsors Needed for Those with no Meeting!

Many of you may have seen the pleas for Temporary Long Distance Sponsors. This is a part of COSA service work that I think most of us assume is "getting done" by "someone." It is, but by far too few. There simply are more newcomers looking for support than there are volunteers for this valuable form of service. We are in DESPERATE need of people willing to give in this way.

I decided to become a Temporary Long Distance Sponsor because I felt I wanted to give back some of the gifts I have been given – not the least of which were the three simple ideas I received at my first meeting. I'm not alone. I'm not crazy. I'm codependent. What would my life have been like, had I not found that first meeting, and gotten those three comforting, simple messages? I was willing to give that back, and found that in reaching out to newcomers and becoming their Long Distance Sponsor, I have been able to receive as much as I have given. I also found that it wasn't as difficult, or energy-consuming as I had thought it would be. Most newcomers I have sponsored have gotten some pretty basic support, and "moved on," so my involvement with them hasn't been nearly as draining as I feared it might be.

Please, consider becoming a Temporary/Long Distance Sponsor. You can receive support from other Long Distance Sponsors who have done this before – there's even a new online discussion group, set up specifically for these valuable volunteers, so that you can get support, while you give it.

If you'd like to help support those without a meeting in their area by becoming a Temporary Long Distance Sponsor, contact NSO-COSA (see the box on page 2) and ask to be connected to the COSA Connections Coordinator (CCC) in your area.

— Christi G.