

BALANCE



NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE

Volume 1, Issue 2

September - October 2004

CELEBRATING OUR 25TH YEAR

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On Saturday, October 9th, your NSO Board met in Minneapolis.

We were there to get some work done for the fellowship and to support the Minnesota celebration of COSA's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary. Many exciting things are happening:

The Convention Co-Chairs have been working hard to prepare for the New Orleans Convention in 2005. The name is "Masks Off". Each registered COSA group needs to elect a delegate to attend the annual Meeting which will be held on Friday, May 27, 2005.

Some groups have started keeping a special donation fund to help defray the expenses of the delegate they will elect to attend

the General Membership Meeting.

The Public Information Committee and Communications Committee are working together to streamline our website and provide more information to the public in various ways.

A literature Committee was formed with the ~~the~~ eventual positions of Balance Coordinator, Copyrights Coordinator, Development Coordinator and Production Coordinator.

The Finance Committee is working hard to set up a more accountable financial structure.

The New Meeting Coordinator and the Telephone Volunteer Coordinator are busy finding new ways to support the new (and existing) groups, and keep

the telephone volunteers functioning efficiently.

Our National Coordinator is working more and more hours to fill the orders on time, and get the newsletter out. The need is there and when we start getting sufficient funds, we will be able to work towards developing a national office.

As we celebrate during this 25th year of our existence, we need to remember all those who have served this fellowship to enable it to have grown this far.

We need many more trusted servants to help reach out to expand our services to all those who still suffer. Please consider contacting us to volunteer for some of the available posi-

Special points of interest:

- Message from the Chair page 1
- You Asked and We Heard page 2
- Boundaries page 3
- And a Good time was had by all page 4
- Tradition 5 page 6

tions. It is a way to give back.

Let's take good care of ourselves and let's plan to meet in New Orleans on May 27th!!!

Love in Recovery,

JoAn D.
NSO Chair

What does NSO need from the fellowship to help ?

**You
Spoke**

**We
listened**



NSO: The COSA Fellowship's Vision

At the delegate meeting in Dallas last May, the NSO Board asked for answers to the following questions: What can the board do to assist the fellowship? What can the board do to assist your COSA group? If your COSA group could have only one thing from NSO, what would it be?

In the last issue of the Balance we listed the responses to the first question. This month, I have grouped the responses to all the questions into themes that reflect the immediate needs of the fellowship as a whole. After describing each theme, I've addressed some ways the NSO is addressing these issues.

It was clear from the responses that the COSA fellowship wants the current **COSA Literature** updated and more COSA literature developed. You also requested a list of COSA approved books and resources. The fellowship

wants all literature available in pdf format on-line at no cost in addition to being mailed to each registered COSA group.

Fellowship Support (groups, individuals) was a topic strongly represented. This included a website that listed COSA and other 12-step resources, different types of meeting formats available for groups to try out, and a COSA group listing searchable by city and state. You also requested an 800 number available nationally for individuals who are still suffering to call for support and information, assistance in finding sponsors, and assistance in matching people with long-time recovery with groups that have only short-time recovery. Other issues that were represented included having more structured internet groups and teaching about the importance of service on all levels of the fellowship.

Communication on all levels was another area you identified as needing improvement. You requested clear, timely communication to the COSA groups about NSO and board activities, financial status, the annual convention, delegate information, and retreats or other opportunities for recovery around the country. You asked for this information to be available through the Balance newsletter and on the website.

To support all of the services described above, you asked for a **Central Office for NSO** that was a physical space dedicated to COSA. This central office would serve as an "information hub" staffing an 800 number, filling literature orders, updating the website, and generally serving as a resource for the fellowship. In addition, you requested paid individual(s) devoted to providing these, and other, services staff the office.

The NSO board has begun to address these issues. Here is a shortened list so you know we are working!

- 1 A new, improved website is under development and should be ready by the annual convention in New Orleans May 27-31, 2005.
- 2 The only employee paid by NSO, Judi, has increased her service to XX hours per week and taken on the position of editor of the Balance. She has made a commitment to publish in a timely manner – and is always looking for submissions from individuals world-wide!
- 3 We are in the process of placing a PayPal link on our website to be used to purchase literature, chips, tapes, or to make donations to COSA NSO.

Boundaries

By Linda R., COSA NSO Board Member from Texas

I used to think boundaries were commands I gave people, like “Don’t do that anymore,” and “If you do that again, I’m going to. . .” I saw boundaries as something to make my life easier because other people would stop doing things I didn’t like. But implementing boundaries under this definition was tough. For one thing, my life didn’t get more peaceful. I found it difficult to face the inevitable bristling that occurred when I set a boundary under my early definition of what boundaries were, especially when I was dealing with a family member.

Now, I’m not saying there isn’t a place for “don’t” or that I’m against consequences for inappropriate actions. But I learned pretty fast in recovery that boundaries are for me and about me. They’re internal to me, not commands I give others, although I may communicate my boundary to someone else. Early in recovery, I started by setting boundaries for myself. Let me give you a few examples.

One of my earliest boundaries had to do with the way I treated my addict. I was in a state of emotional disorder, well chaos, upon learning I was in relationship with a sex addict. I became a detective extraordinaire and I grilled my partner daily about what I’d found. I soon began to realize this wasn’t working. While I felt my behavior was justified, I could see I was tearing down the relationship even further. The more I grilled, the which I used to drive myself into a state of panic. I often found myself with physical symptoms as a result, such as sweaty palms, shaking, an inability to sleep and incessant cleaning. So I have a boundary about information and I work hard to make sure I don’t get information I can’t handle. Actually, I’ve expanded this tactic into other avenues, such as my work life. If I don’t know about the drama with a co-worker, I don’t have to deal with it, especially since it doesn’t involve me anyway.

One of my discoveries

about boundaries is they aren’t always “don’t.” At this point in my recovery, I set boundaries regarding my self-care. For example, I work to preserve my exercise routine, meaning I put my exercise first in my day rather than allowing the numerous, pressing activities I tend to obsess about override this significant activity. Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* says the activities that are important but not urgent are the ones we should focus on, because those activities will help keep us out of crisis mode. I have a number of activities I’ve added to my routine which fit this category. A friend told me when she couldn’t sleep, she got up and journaled until she could sleep, even if that was several times a night. I decided that would be a boundary I’d set for myself—putting my thoughts on the page in the middle of the night rather than obsessing or snooping. And I’ve found journaling does calm me so I can rest.

Another boundary I set was to call people. That was hard. But I set myself inside that I would get help dealing with my is-

ues, even if I was just uneasy. Notice that many of the things I’ve mentioned are recommended by the program. Journaling, the phone list, self-care all fall into boundary areas for me.

I learned to take responsibility for my feelings, saying what I wanted and how I felt. That was a tough boundary—what I wanted to do was point fingers and tell everyone around me how much they’d hurt me. But I’d tried that and it got me a different result than the one I wanted, which was better relationships. However, in order to talk about my feelings, I had to first look at why I felt embarrassed, ashamed or guilty about how I felt. That was hard work for me. It still is.

There are occasions where I tell someone I’m not willing to permit a certain type of behavior and here’s what I’m going to do about it if it continues. And, those situations can be uncomfortable. Sometimes they’re just downright scary. As I get stronger, I am better able to calmly and lovingly say what I want without blaming someone else for how I feel. Sometimes I express what I’ll do to change the situation if (con’t pg 5)

AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!

It was Saturday night in Minneapolis. The weather was balmy -- no bugs and no wind.

I looked around and here I was in Minnesota surrounded by beautifully dressed creatures, some with wings and other interesting accouterments.

Soon there stood before us a lovely lady with a "talking star stick". As this stick was handed to others, I heard stories of the beginnings of COSA.

I heard music and singing. Soon we smelled FOOD!! Delicious food. Then more music and more singing and DESERTS to die for. I found out that the first Chair of the NSO was there, and one other former NSO chair.

We heard about "Masks Off", the name of the COSA 2005 Convention in New Orleans. We saw a lap top displaying the COSA web site's proposed "New Look".

There were balloons, the largest of which were two silver numbers: a "2" and a "5". Sometimes they would get twisted around and read, "52", but we all knew that they were meant to say "25" for COSA's Anniversary.

And then the dancing started -- dancing like I have never seen. It was over too soon, but, miracle of miracles, I ended up with the "2" and the "5". I brought them home with me (minus the helium) and I will be bringing them to New Orleans. We may not be able to re-fill them with helium, but we will display them somehow.

We will be continuing COSA's Twenty Fifth Anniversary celebration on Memorial Day Week-End, 2005. Plan to come to Louisiana and have good times!!

*what happened
to the rest?*

Plea for Input

My vision as editor of the Balance is to have a folder overflowing with articles submitted from the membership from which I can form topics for upcoming issues. For this to happen, I invite every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that share your ESH (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles that share upcoming events in your area; such as re-

treats, workshops, speakers etc. Articles that give a voice to your story. As well as your ideas as to what you would like to see in future articles. The Balance is a newsletter for the membership, by the membership. Please send your articles to **Newsletter-COSA@aol.com** or by snail mail to the NSO-COSA PO Box listed below. Hope to hear from you soon...

NSO-COSA Central Archive

The NSO of COSA is in the process of creating an archive in a central location.

If you have served the NSO-COSA board in any capacity in the past, and have anything that you think would be relevant in our attempt to bring

all of the bits and pieces of our past together..

Please contact me at

MyInnerPeace@aol.com for instruction on where to ship it. Thanks for your assistance...

Judi K, NSO Coordinator

(con't from pg 3)
the other person is unwilling to change their behavior, and sometimes I don't. It depends. On big ticket items, I seek the counsel of friends I've grown to trust. I wait to make the decision until I have that firm inner resolve, a calm certainty, as a friend of mine put it. For me, it seems like being in the calm—certainty place inside is sometimes all it takes to change the situation. I own the decision, once it's made.

One thing I've learned is that resistance is always a force in boundary setting. Steven Pressfield writes about resistance in his book *The War of Art*. While this book is aimed at creative people, it's clear Pressfield has done some recovery work. His book confirmed for me that resistance is there for everyone—I can expect it and plan for it. Early on, I was sure everyone was going to be happy for me as I learned to take care of myself.

Not. That was something I had to learn to accept and be OK with. Since I'm struggling with approval addiction, it can be tough for me to see or hear disapproval, much less face it head on. Welcome to resistance.

So, let me conclude by saying my early definition of boundaries was faulty because it had to do with changing the behavior of others. I think the core of recovery, no matter what side of the fence you're on, is about setting boundaries for one's self. I've heard it said that nothing can change when you're comfortable. That's good news because I haven't been comfortable since I got into recovery. When I figured out boundaries were about changing my behavior, that I could expect resistance, and that I needed to be willing to be uncomfortable, my life started getting better....

Balance, the newsletter of the NSO-COSA, is published bi-monthly. The NSO-COSA holds the copyright to the newsletter.

*We apologize for the irregular schedule of the Balance over the past year. As an amends, we will extend the subscriptions by four months (two issues) for those subscriber of record since June 2003. We intend to resume a regular schedule with the next issue...
Editor and distribution ~ Judi
Assistant ~ Linda R.*

Contact the NSO of COSA

NSO COSA

P.O. Box 14537

Minneapolis, MN 55414

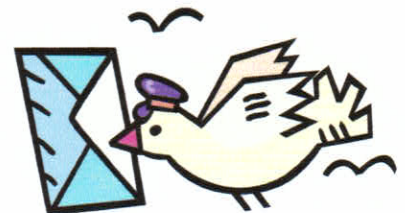
1-763-537-6904

info@cosa-recovery.org

<http://www.cosa-recovery.org>

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/COSA_12_STEP/

Email the editor: NewsletterCOSA@aol.com



Tradition Five “each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to those who still suffer.” by Beth S.

The COSA NSO Public Information Committee was formed at the National Convention in May 2004. Since then we have been hard at work defining our direction and prioritizing our tasks. Our small, but dedicated, committee is focused on Tradition Five and we have made great stride in preparing to further carry our message to those who still suffer.

We, along with our dedicated web servant, are working on a redesign and expansion of the Official COSA NSO website. The new website will have an updated, professional appearance with a newly organized and expanded sitemap; including sections for Men, Therapists and Media Professionals. The need of the existing fellowship have been taken into consideration, as well, as we are aware of the desire for current news and improved communications at the national level. We are working to have the new site available in the very near future.

The expansion and update of the website is our springboard for launching an outreach program which will be centered in New Orleans, the location of our 2005 National Convention, and then branch out across the country. The outreach begins by contacting therapists and treatment facilities within a two hour radius of New Orleans for the purpose of sharing

the COSA program with them. They will be directed to the new website for more information and asked to encourage those clients who identify with COSAs to see the special support and serenity that the COSA program offers. It is our hope to welcome many newcomers to the New Orleans Convention and into the program across the country as a result of this outreach.

We are also in the planning stages of creating a Public Service Radio Announcement. Again, the listeners who determine that COSA is for them will be directed to the new website for more information about our program and encouraged to find a local COSA meeting. Outreach to therapists and Public Service Announcements are in keeping with Tradition Eleven... “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion: we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.”

We are excited about the direction that the Public Information Committee is headed; but we cannot do it all alone. We need the support of the fellowship to carry the message. We are looking for individuals who are willing to write their stories for the website, those who are willing to help in our outreach efforts to therapists and treatment facilities across the country and those who have other ideas and talents who can help move the committee into the next phase of its service. If public outreach is not your passion, we will need willing individuals to help support the many newcomers who are attracted to our program through our PI efforts. This support can come in the form of long distance sponsorship, starting new meetings in your area and supporting the efforts of NSO in a financial way. Please contact me, Beth S. via email at buf-fiegirl@cox.net, if you are willing to serve the fellowship in any of these ways.

What's Happening

- **National Convention**
NSO-COSA
Masks Off

Friday May 27– 30, 2005

New Orleans, Louisiana