

# BALANCE



NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Volume 1, Issue 5

APRIL—MAY 2005

## Join us in New Orleans for the 2005 COSA National Convention, Masks Off



### May 27-30, 2005 New Orleans:

This years' National Convention will take place at the New Orleans Marriott (555 Canal Street). The body of the Masks Off Convention will occur from Friday evening to Monday morning. The COSA Convention begins with Opening Ceremonies and a speaker on Friday evening, continues with workshops, panels, and COSA meetings all day Saturday and Sunday, and ends with a Closing brunch and speaker on Monday morning. Besides daily regular COSA meetings, there will be a RCA Meeting, a Yahoo COSA\_12\_Step meeting, and a men's only meeting. Workshop and panel subjects may include the following topics: boundary setting, men in COSA, tools of recovery, co-sponsorship, working the second step, getting started on your fourth step, making a recovery bracelet, forgiveness, and COSA sobriety. Many workshops sponsored by SAA will be available to COSAs and vice versa. Joint events with SAA include a Paddleboat cruise and dinner on Saturday night and a luncheon on Sunday with speakers from both fellowships. On Monday after-

noon, groups can gather for sightseeing around the French Quarter and the New Orleans metro area. Come be a part of the most recovery-packed COSA Annual Convention ever!! If you need a registration form, please contact Joey Z by one of the following methods:

Email:

[cosa\\_of\\_baton\\_rouge@hotmail.com](mailto:cosa_of_baton_rouge@hotmail.com)  
(underline\_between\_words)

Phone: 225-344-2070

Looking forward to seeing you in New Orleans!!

Joey Z and Dawn D, COSA Convention Co-chairs

### Delegate Meeting

Make sure your groups interests are represented by having your Delegate attend the Annual Delegate Meeting that will take place on Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>.

We will kick off the Annual meeting with a "meet and greet" social for all delegates and current board members on Thursday night, May 26<sup>th</sup>, from 8-9 pm. Delegates will have a chance to meet current board members, peruse displays on National Service Committees, and have an opportunity to preview some of the goals of the NSO-COSA board for the coming year. The current board hopes that having a time for social interaction and a pre-

view of some of the issues to be discussed at the Delegate meeting will help delegates feel more at ease and prepared for the Annual Delegate Meeting on Friday.

Our Annual Delegate Meeting will take place on Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup> all day. The Board is committed to working through the business in an efficient and thorough way.  
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## NSO-COSA Board ....

The NSO Board used consensus voting for about seven years. Consensus is when everyone agrees. But our Bylaws still identify Robert's Rules of Order as the NSO's way of conducting its decisions. That uses majority voting, not consensus. We saw a need to decide either to change our Bylaws to consensus, or to return to using Robert's Rules.

Our chair, JoAn D., thought of another option. She researched various meeting structures, and found a system that she recommended to us at last year's Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas. She told us about a revolutionary new book written by Alice Collier Cochran, called Roberta's Rules of Order - a guide for nonprofits and other teams. She explained that the ideas presented in Roberta's Rules of Order propose a structure we could customize for meetings, decision making, and governance that allows for freer discussion among members about the issues we must deal with.

Furthermore, she informed us that although Roberta's rules do not impose strong control, they do not eliminate structure. There are guidelines and special rules for meetings but they are short and easy to learn. Whenever there are rules where Roberta's Rules are in use, everyone would be more able to read them, remember them, and use them easily.

Roberta's rules advocates the use of consensus with the addition of a secondary level of agreement called Concordance, for use

when consensus is blocked.

After discussing and reading through the information JoAn provided the board, we decided that the ideas and methods used in Roberta's Rules seemed to be a better fit for our organization, and therefore we would operate under Roberta's Rules provisionally for the next year.

Here is an excerpt from the minutes of that board meeting:

### Roberta's Rules of Order:

Changes consensus to concordance (percentage of votes);

Adds the position of Meeting Facilitator; a person outside the Board who maintains fairness and due process, and does not vote;

Provides a working structure for business meetings, and is needed for coping with a growing number of Board members.

### Proposals:

1. Use Roberta's Rules for 1 year
- Consensus: Reached

**As trusted servants to the fellowship, we plan to present information about the use of Roberta's Rules of Order to you through a series of instruction cards in the next few issues of BALANCE. If you're interested in learning more, please join us as a delegate at our Annual Meeting this year in New Orleans!**

To get things started, we thought you might like to be informed about the BELIEFS on which Roberta's Rules of

Order are based.

*Roberta's Rules of Order are based on the following seven beliefs:*

1. People tend to support what they help to create or at least influence.
2. Starting with the problem is more logical than starting with the solution (a motion is a solution).
3. Solutions that allow most of the people involved to win something are worth striving for.
4. Consensus isn't always worth the struggle.
5. Productive interaction can arise out of mild chaos as well as out of controlled situations.
6. Everyone has something to offer and should express it -- once.
7. The wisdom of the group is discovered through reasonably structured, not random, conversations.

...Roberta's Rules of Order are intended to help the smaller decision-making groups that meet regularly use a less formal and more engaging approach.

(excerpt from Roberta's Rules of Order © 2004 by Alice Collier Cochran, page 4)

(CON'T FROM PAGE 1)

During this time we will nominate a new Board for next year. That new Board will convene early Sunday morning to elect officers and make initial plans.

## I Will Carry the Message

Today I read the article "Who Will Carry the Message" written by Ila D. from the Feb-Mar 2005 issue of Balance. It was exactly what I needed to hear. Don't you just love when that happens? Part of my trust in the process includes the confidence that I will get exactly the information that I need when the time is right. My job is to stay conscious and keep my eyes and ears open, and to not dismiss the message if it's something I don't want to hear. Well, today I heard.

By the time I read Ila's 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence, I was hooked. She was writing MY life, MY feelings. We have only one COSA group in our area and it has been suffering from low attendance with few being willing to take the responsibility of trusted servant. And the 2 or 3 people who are doing so are now feeling tired of keeping the ball rolling. As I read Ila's article, I realized that "...I had to quit looking at who wasn't doing what I wanted them to do in my group and get the focus back on me and continue to do what I needed to do for my recovery."

Sometimes I feel much removed from the message of the 12<sup>th</sup> step. Although I've seen it happen many times, where someone is attracted to our group because they want what we have, I tend to become distracted from the miracle of that. I'm busy running around in my life and I become detached from the basic messages. Well, today Ila reminded me about the miracles. And, she also reminded me that two people are a meeting/group, and that I can experience recovery by sharing with one other person. And, I can let go of trying to control others and put the focus back on me. I've become detached from these ideas because resentments have wormed their way in and replaced the gratitude. Resentments are sneaky little boogies, you know.

Today I remember that I do feel gratitude that those people, mostly women, who carried the message to me when I was a newcomer, hung in there when attendance was low and they each were doing 3 service jobs in order to keep things moving. Because, without them I would not be here in my recovery today. Part of my recovery, I can feel it inside my heart, is for me to be there in

that room on Friday night so I can stay connected to living my recovery, and in case someone else needs to hear the message of hope.

Thank you, Ila. From across the miles your words touched the resentments and helped me to replace them with gratitude – a reminder of where I've come from and what I choose to be doing. Because recovery is a lifestyle for me too, and one I want to live in all aspects of my life, not simply a few.

I, Eileen M. in California, make a pledge to myself to carry the COSA message to others no matter how much my group struggles with attendance or being trusted servants. I am willing to carry the torch for as long as it takes. Thank you, HP, for re-opening my eyes to this simple message and for re-filling my heart with gratitude.

Eileen M.

# Changing My Thinking to Change My Feelings

By Linda R.

How many times have I felt just awful? I can't begin to tell you. And my actions were often based on my feelings so I was constantly doing things to myself to cover up feelings I didn't want to feel. Lots of times my actions were "quick fix" knee jerk responses that had negative long-term effects, like losing my temper, yelling or eating sweets.

I used to believe if other people would change their thinking, then my life would get better. But not only is that unrealistic, it's something I have no control over. I do, however, have control over my feelings and can change them. One of the ways I've learned to make myself feel better, no matter what is going on around me, is to change my thinking.

One of the basic discoveries of psychology in the last 100 years is feelings are generated by thoughts. So if I'm having a feeling I don't want to have, I must be thinking something to generate that feeling. The work for me is to become aware of my feelings first and then aware of the thoughts generating those feelings.

Self-awareness was a challenge for me. I not only didn't know how I felt, I didn't know how to feel my feelings when they came up, much less how to be aware of the thinking behind my feelings. A big concern for me was being selfish. I believed being unaware of myself was unselfish. I spent my time "knowing" (or imagining I knew) how everyone else felt. So one of the most painful and difficult tasks for me was to focus on myself, feel my own feelings. Once I learned to do that, I discovered I felt crummy most of the time.

Knowing I was thinking something that resulted in the feelings I had, I started working on developing the ability to monitor the chatter in my head. I found my thoughts to be about as easy to catch at first as trying to catch birds with my hands. But after a while I developed the skill of becoming aware of what I was thinking. One of the tools that helped me was affirmations, but doing them in a special way. Instead of just writing the affirmation, like I am loved, I would write the affirmation and then record all the stuff that came up in my head afterward. At first,

it was slow going. I'd write an affirmation, something I knew to be true about myself, usually one sentence. Immediately I'd record the tirade that came up, usually a half a page of negative, demeaning assertions—things I couldn't imagine saying to anyone else. But those were the things I was saying to myself. For example, I'd write "I am a good writer" and the stuff that would come up would be things like "No you're not. Who told you that? What you write is stupid. No one will ever read it." And so on. No wonder I felt bad.

In the beginning I could only do three affirmations in a day and sometimes I couldn't bear to come back to the affirmations for a week. After a while I got so I could do them every day. But the most interesting part was, once I screwed up the courage to look at the negative stuff coming up. I realized many of the negative arguments were things other people had said to me that I, in turn, chose to repeat to myself. So I'd write down next to the negative stuff, who that sounded like, Mom, Dad, my sister, a mean kid in the neighborhood when I grew up. Just looking at these negative thoughts and acknowledging the source was usually enough to take out the energy and the sting.

However, I have another approach to help me. Once I have my thoughts identified, I measure them against a set of criteria, like is it true? Does this thought help me feel the way I want to feel? Is it in my best interest to be thinking this way? Is this thought in line with my values? I usually practice measuring my thoughts against these criteria after an event, because that's often when I have the most difficulty with my feelings and I usually don't have time to sit and write something down.

I've learned I tend to beat myself up, something I would never do to anyone else. Most of the time, I don't get past the first one on my list of criteria, because much of what I am tempted to tell myself is simply not true. Not if I'm

honest with myself.

For example, I recently found out someone I care about lied to me. I felt bad and found myself thinking I must be a terrible person if this person I respect and admire would lie to me. OK, is that true? No. Obviously, if someone chooses to lie, that is about them, and doesn't make me a terrible person. It means something is wrong in their thinking.

What I find interesting is the event doesn't necessarily have to be negative for me to have negative thoughts. It can be getting a compliment or making progress in an area that's important to me. I've decided not to judge myself for this, but to just look at my thinking and choose thoughts that help me enjoy the positive things in my life.

If none of these things work, I take another step. I ask myself what I'm getting out of talking to myself this way and feeling the way I feel. Almost always, in the case of a repeating feeling, I get some "pay-off" for the thoughts I'm thinking. I may feel I am relieved of responsibility for a situation if I feel the way I feel. Or maybe I'm blaming someone or something else for the problem instead of doing something about it. I may be afraid of a consequence of changing my thinking. Fear of change is a frequent pattern for me in new situations or when I'm starting to move out of old patterns and progress feels unfamiliar.

Can I do all this work myself? Nope. I need help. And it took time to find a network of people I trust and have developed relationships with. That's what having a sponsor and going to meetings is about. I can bounce my thoughts and feelings off others and get feedback. I can learn to share my feelings in a safe environment and come to the realization that it's not selfish to be self-aware.

I believe I've said this before, but none of this is comfortable. In order to change my feelings and my thoughts, I must be willing to accept some level of discomfort. But long term, it's worth it to feel better.

## 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 retreats, 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 **NewsletterCOSA@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](mailto:MyInnerPeace@aol.com) for instruction on where to ship it. Thanks for your assistance...

Judi K, NSO Coordinator

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

NSO COSA National Convention

**Masks Off**

Friday May 27– 30, 2005

New Orleans, Louisiana

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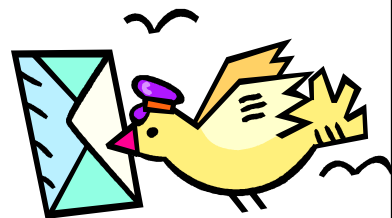
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# BALANCE

*Newsletter of the National Service Organization*

## Group Donations

<b>Sunday P.M. mtg</b>	
<b>Houston, TX</b>	<b>32.00</b>
<b>Saturday Morning</b>	
<b>St. Louis, MO</b>	<b>30.00</b>
<b>Rapid City, S.D.</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>Wednesday Night Mtg</b>	
<b>Indianapolis, IN</b>	<b>72.36</b>
<b>Wednesday Night</b>	
<b>Apple Valley, MN</b>	<b>30.00</b>
<b>Thurs. 5:45 Gratitude Grp</b>	
<b>St. Paul, MN</b>	<b>70.00</b>
<b>Flint COSA</b>	<b>40.00</b>
<b>Brevard Florida COSA</b>	<b>167.00</b>
<b>Kalamazoo COSA</b>	<b>20.00</b>
<b>East Side Monday Grp</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>St. Paul, MN</b>	<b>10.00</b>
<b>Sunday 6PM</b>	
<b>Minnetonka, MN</b>	<b>60.00</b>

## Individual Donations

<b>Morgantown, WV</b>	<b>3.15</b>
<b>Laguna Beach, CA</b>	<b>25.00</b>
<b>Kalispell, MT</b>	<b>4.05</b>
<b>Bloomington, MN</b>	<b>20.00</b>
<b>Oxford, MI</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>Searcy, AZ</b>	<b>3.75</b>
<b>Richfield, MN</b>	<b>3.85</b>
<b>Oxford, MI</b>	<b>50.00</b>

### Special Memorial Service at COSA Convention

This year at COSA's National Convention, Masks Off, there will be a special Memorial Service to recognize COSAs and SAAs that have passed on. This Memorial Service is not limited to those individuals that have passed since the last National Convention. The Memorial Service will take place during the combined COSA/SAA Luncheon on Sunday May 29<sup>th</sup>. If there is someone that you know that has made a difference to the COSA fellowship, please have them recognized. To submit an entry into the Memorial Service, send a photo, the persons first name and last initial and a couple of sentences that describe their contribution to the COSA fellowship to:  
[OOTS@bellsouth.net](mailto:OOTS@bellsouth.net)

### NOTICE

**We are moving to pdf. format soon. Please send the email address where your group would like it's free pdf version of the newsletter delivered to**  
**[NewsletterCosa@aol.com](mailto:NewsletterCosa@aol.com)**

Welcome  
New Group

AUSTRALIA  
BRISBANE QUEENSLAND