



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Convention Issue

May ~ June '08

Convention Committee shares their Experience, Strength, and Hope
Looking Forward to **Chart Your Course...Step by Step**



Seattle WA
May 23-May 26, 2008

I have been looking forward to this year's convention, well, since I sat in the Hospitality Suite at last year's convention and listened to the voices of COSAs describe how COSA's annual conventions have been a critical component in their recovery. I knew this to be true for myself, but it helped to learn how true it was for others. At the spontaneous invitation for COSAs to come participate in an informal dialogue about whether COSA's convention should be divorced from SAA's convention (again), the room was packed, with COSAs doubled up on chairs, sofas and three deep on the floor. Old timers and newcomers alike offered a resounding unanimity in the belief that our convention is critical to reach those who still suffer and nurture those who are healing. Our small and growing fellowship can face financial challenges to support a convention.

I marveled at the way our Traditions, 'principles not personalities' and grass roots open participation in matters that effect the fellowship as a whole, supported and drove the hour-long conversation. Calling the question and asking for help and trusting in our collective higher powers were the driving forces I experienced in the room that day. You mean it really is okay to talk about our weaknesses and not be shunned or yelled at for our individual fears, beliefs and perspectives? Yes, it is okay and it was okay that day! I felt a power greater than myself as we went deeper and addressed a core challenge that I, as a codependent, struggle with every day: how to be of service in our fellowship without losing myself and my sobriety (again). I was afraid to step forward for fear of standing alone and feeling the full weight of the many.

The idea of being on a convention planning committee scared me, triggered several middle circle fears I have. My codependency in group efforts has led to very un-sober behavior for me in the past (i.e. feeling I am responsible for everything that happens between the sunrise and sunset of a project and desperately trying to control everything on my own, assuming others will fail me). I didn't sign up to help on the 2008 convention that day, I needed time to pray about what I had heard, test it out with my cosponsor and feedback group (to check my moti-

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CDs AVAILABLE!



7th Traditions Individuals

California \$125



THANK YOU

7th Traditions Groups

Oakland, CA	\$ 82
San Luis Obispo, CA	\$ 25
Walnut Creek, CA	\$ 20
Boulder, CO	\$ 30
Richmond, IN	\$ 54
Houston, TX	\$ 40

By the Fellowship, For the Fellowship

We encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that **share your ESH** (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles and announcements that **share upcoming COSA events** in your area; such as retreats, workshops, speakers etc. Articles that give a voice to your story. We also would love to hear your ideas for **what you would like to see** in future articles. The Balance is a newsletter for the membership, by the membership.

WE NEED SUBMISSIONS!!!

Please send your articles to: **COSACopy@yahoo.com**
or by snail mail to the COSA ISO PO Box listed on the envelope below.
Hope to hear from you soon...

Tuesday & Thursday Telemeeting's

Telephone number: 1-906-481-2100 Passcode: 679461

Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific Time (8 Mountain, 9 Central, 10 Eastern)
Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time (7 Mountain, 8 Central, 9 Eastern)

Join us in Seattle

Saturday, May 24, 2008

Open COSA Telemeeting Face-to-Face Meeting



Give your COSA friends
Balance Gift
subscriptions to celebrate COSA
Anniversaries,
Birthdays, or other
special occasions! It will be sure to
bring the '**sunshine**' of recovery to
their life the whole year through!!

Contact the ISO of COSA

*Balance, the newsletter of the
International Service Organization of
COSA,
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The ISO holds the
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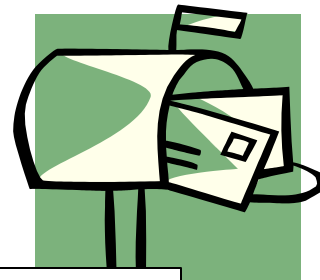
Phone: 1-763-537-6904

Email: info@cosa-recovery.org

On the web: www.cosa-recovery.org

Email the Editing Team

@ COSACopy@yahoo.com



ISO of COSA
P.O. BOX 14537
Minneapolis MN



Convention Experience, Strength, and Hope COSA VOICES FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

ventions, which can be very sneaky), and listen for my HP's guidance. A few weeks later I got the clarity I needed: I could be on the committee, just not as a designated leader this year. I realized it was the title that triggered my fear that I would act out when given responsibility. So I signed up to be on the Program Committee as I felt that was what I most wanted to be involved in.

Now, many months later, as we near this year's convention, I am so grateful I made the choice to practice my recovery by being of service. I have learned something that is truly a gift: I came to believe I could have fun and be of service, instead of feeling service was a burden (that fed the martyr in me), and took responsibility to set my own boundaries to make fun service possible through my actions. I've also learned that I don't have to wait to begin to have fun and feel excited about what I'm doing, I'm doing it one day at a time :) And I'm happy to report that it has been such a joy to be a part of the convention planning this year that I will keep coming back to my recovery by discovering what my HP has planned for me on the 2009 convention planning committee. I am already excited to discover who I will get to have fun with and know in this next year of Convention Service and I am grateful to see the Progress I am making as I move away from my home town called Perfection.

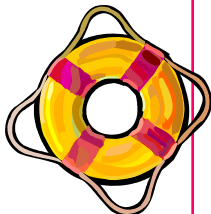
A Grateful, Recovering Codependent Sex Addict, Kerry M.

Last year's convention was groundbreaking for me. It was an opportunity to get to know other COSAs with a great deal more sobriety than the COSAs in my local area. I also felt the sudden motivation to give back at the International level. Now I am the Media Chair for the upcoming Convention. I have learned new skills, met new people, and feel a part of the fellowship more than ever. I am proud to be a COSA. For this year's convention, I am looking forward to meeting even more people, getting to know a new city, and deepening my recovery with the help of those in the fellowship who have tools I do not.

~ Sarah B. Oakland, CA

Seattle will be my third convention. I absolutely cannot wait! The energy and enthusiasm that exists when COSAs get together cannot be underestimated! I have been inspired by speakers and workshops alike. The meals shared and just friendly conversation is my favorite, though. I'm looking forward to reconnecting with old friends from all over the country. See you there! In ESH, Margie S.

To me the Annual COSA Convention means so many things: Time to see old friends, make new friends, discover new recovery tools and recharge my recovery. This has been true for me every Convention. Before I started going to COSA Conventions, I used to think how can I afford the Convention. Since I started going 5 years ago, I now say, how can I afford not to go. This amazing COSA Convention week-end means that much to my recovery.
~Joey Z



The excitement on the Convention Committee about our Memorial Day Weekend Joint Convention is pulsating at this point. If you have been thinking maybe - GO FOR IT!! - do this for yourself because its your job to take care of you. I committed my service work to this convention because past conventions have transformed my recovery in COSA. I didn't really "get it" until experiencing recovery at past conventions which though national felt very safe and intimate. Please add your light to this phenomenal recovery experience. Thanks for being there. ~ Lura Lisa

My anticipation of the 2008 Convention:

I joined COSA in September of 1998. I soon learned about an upcoming national conference (COSA/SAA) happening in May of 1989. I did NOT attend. That sounded like too many sex addicts for me. I was afraid. During the year of 1989, I learned that real and honest recovery happened at that national convention. 1990 found me at my first Convention. Today, I believe I owe my life, my recovery, and my sobriety to Conventions. What do I anticipate at this year's convention, 2008? More healing, more growth, deeper understanding of who I am. I am especially looking forward to healing with my daughter as we share our amends process. I can only remember good coming from conventions. Even when I found myself in the deep pain of processing some new revelation of me, I survived that pain to enjoy and appreciate a new level of healing within me. ~ Ila.



COSA VOICES *STEP FIVE* Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

I had 3 cosponsors when I gave my 5th step in COSA. I was the first in our group to give a 5th step and I believe we were all nervous. None of us had any prior 12 step experience and we relied primarily on four books to guide our step work. It was hard enough thinking about sharing my 5th step with one human being and my higher power, but the idea of three people made me feel naked. One of the things I was confused about was whether it was appropriate to share the resentments I had listed in my 4th step towards my cosponsors (yes, I had them). Given our fellowship's traditions of anonymity and 'principles before personalities' I couldn't figure out how to follow the guidance in the books (for a full and complete 5th step share, including names) while being true to the traditions. I was scared that my cosponsors would be mad at me and/or that they might feel shame hearing what I had to say about them in front of others. What to do?

The Big Book says we don't have to share our 5th step with our sponsor (or cosponsors), it can be a person of our choosing. So I considered not sharing my 5th step with my cosponsors. But I don't belong to a church or temple, so I had no spiritual teacher to turn to. I thought about sharing it with my therapist, but knew the work of my inventory was many pages long and would take hours of important therapy time. I couldn't turn to old friends or family members (they were all in my inventory too). Perhaps I needed a complete stranger?

Very confused and knowing that the date for giving my 5th step was fast approaching (I followed the guidance to set the 5th step date for a month after I began my 4th step), I finally stopped trying to figure things out by myself (its probably not a big surprise that one of my character defects is not asking for help) and turned to friends in another fellowship for help and the experience, strength and hope I received from reaching out of my isolation helped me to find clarity.

Here's what I heard when I asked for help: pray about it, ask my HP for guidance (in my early recovery days I tended to forget this every other minute or so); revisit the 'my part' column for my resentments in general and my cosponsors in particular, and check to see that I was really clear about what my part was and how it revealed my own character defect (this was extraordinarily helpful

and wound up being a major key to breaking my log jam); a reminder that the 5th step is not an indictment of others' behaviors, nor of my own; a reminder of how much support my cosponsors would be able to give me in subsequent steps if they heard my 5th step; to have faith and trust in the understanding and compassion my cosponsors desired to give me; and remember that my cosponsors might have resentments towards me when they would share their 5th steps (we are all human, there is no shame in having resentments, but it sure is harmful to hold onto them) and to think about how I would feel in their shoes.

In the end, after I reworked the 'my part' on my resentments, I got really clear about what to do. I decided I really wanted to share my 5th step with all three of my cosponsors because it was best for my recovery. I decided to make amends with them individually (even though I wasn't on the 9th step, I didn't have to wait to make amends for current stuff) and ask how they would like me to handle sharing the specifics of what I had in my 4th step about them. What an amazing process. It was really the first time I got to practice what would come later in my 9th step, about letting go of expectations that people would apologize to me for 'their

part.' I think there was only one request to not share something in front of the group which was fine, after all I had in fact followed the step as it was intended (God and another human being) and what better person to do it with than the person I had harmed (turns out I was judging them - hmmm, another character defect). It was still very challenging to share my 5th step with my cosponsors, but I never regretted the decision and I believe it was an important part of my recovery to go through the process of not asking for help and then asking for help at that critical time. Just as an addendum, as I grew in my recovery and understanding of how the 5th step helps me to be a better person, I ultimately shared quite a bit of my 5th step with my partner (that was a very unexpected surprise) and I shared a condensed version of my 5th step with my therapist. I continue to be amazed how people can better support me by knowing the dark as well as the light parts of me and even more awed that it seems to draw people closer to me. Who would have guessed?

A Grateful Recovering Codependent Sex Addict,
Kerry M., Oakland Ca



COSA VOICES *STEP SIX*: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.



I started Step 6 beside a bay watching loons, gulls and coots float by, pelicans dive-bombing into the water and emerging, yellow pouches bulging. I took out a clean sheet of paper and my Step 4 inventories. I began to

make a list of character defects— shortcomings I was willing to turn over— from the “My Part” column on each inventory. Next to each defect, I wrote the quality I wanted to work toward. For example, I wanted to replace ‘judgmentalism’ with compassion, and controlling with accepting. Since this was not easy work, I paused often to witness the scene outside: birds fishing, kayakers paddling, an occasional seal swimming by and staring at me. The page began to fill up. I started

and filled a second page. I paused again to read affirmations and wrote one myself. I filled two sheets with 26 defects and the qualities I wanted to work toward. Clearly, I had a lot of work in front of me.

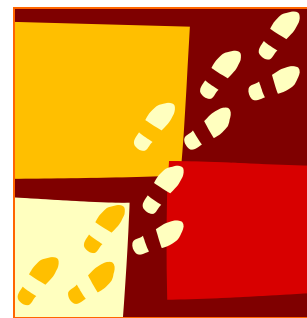
To complete the step, I used several books and sought the guidance of COSAs who had done Step 6. I spent a good deal of time reflecting on each of the defects I had listed that day on the bay. I journaled on questions about my attachments to my character defects and the rewards I got from them. I spent weeks answering the question “What’s stopping you from removing these defects now?” I prayed a lot during this time, even more than I had during Steps 2, 3 and 4. Gradually, I found that I was ready for change. I moved on to Step 7.

~ Eleanor S., Oakland CA

STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~ FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Step Five Questions

1. Can I talk to my Higher Power, in a way that builds trust between myself and my Higher Power?
2. In preparing to admit to another human being, am I ready to admit to myself the exact nature of my wrongs?
3. At an appropriate time, am I able to share with my co-sponsor, or sponsor, the exact nature of my wrongs (my 4th Step)?
4. After writing out my 4th Step, if there feels like more I need to do in order to be able to be exact in my admissions, I can ask myself for help to be honest, ask HP for that help, and ask my listener for that help as well.
5. What are the ways that I might tend to avoid being exact? With myself? With HP? With others?
6. As I share my 5th step, I can check periodically with myself to see if I am avoiding being exact.



Step Six Questions:

1. What benefits are there of keeping some of my defects of character?
2. Am I willing to have God remove ALL my defects of character? If I woke up tomorrow and God had removed all my defects of character, how would I know? Would others know?
3. Do I know what to do for my part in this— to become entirely ready?
4. Having listed my character defects, for each of them I can get help from a sponsor or other recovery support to write out my recovery plan of replacing behavior patterns.
5. As part of becoming “entirely ready,” I can ask my supports to act as accountability partners as I practice my new behaviors.
6. Am I willing to have God remove all my defects of character in God’s own time even if I do my part?

Ask The Board

A new series of questions received from our members via the COSA website, responded to by members of COSA's International Service Organization.

Question: When speaking of COSA groups and the reading of Literature at a meeting, are there any guidelines/ recommendations for online group meetings?

Answer:

The current COSA online Chat meetings all follow a pre-approved meeting format, with slight variations, that was prepared over time by members and service workers in 2003-2004. It is available for the service workers and in the files section of the COSA_12_STEP message board.

There are no active message-board-based online COSA groups at this time, and no one suggested format. Regular COSA members can step forward to start online COSA groups as they are willing or able, and COSA members in international service positions are available for consultation on possible meeting formats and group structures.

Each group would need to select such characteristics as, Is it a closed or open group? Can members cross-talk, offer feedback or only post to the group as a whole? Will the group have topics or be open-format? Will the group screen their messages or not? Will the group provide a strict meeting format only, or will it also provide fellowship time? How will the group handle business decisions? All these decisions will determine the group's structure and the formats.

The ISO operates a listserv for COSA members, "COSA_12_STEP@yahoogroups.com."

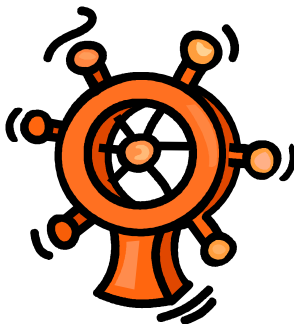
The listserv accomplishes several things:

It serves as a central access point and registration system for new members with no meetings in their area to be networked via our COSA Connections Coordinators (CCCs) regional-development system. With this system, all new members are invited to register for this networking system. Coordinators in each region reply to contacts and network

them to each other to find meetings, to find support, and to start new COSA meetings.

It serves as a central access point for all COSA members and newcomers and members in isolation to receive COSA announcements and recovery-oriented postings.

It allows its members to email each other individually if they want to network, and to access its message archives to seek out recovery readings posted by members.



It provides a files section for storage and retrieval of COSA documents such as suggested meeting formats, old issues of the COSA newsletter the *Balance*, guidelines for safe communication, etc.

We realize that there is room for many online COSA groups, but that it does not work to have one combined with the international delivery system (CCCs) that networks all of COSA. The COSA_12_STEP listserv used to serve also as an open discussion board, and there was substantial confusion in the ISO and among its membership about whether it could itself become a registered COSA group. Over time, as the membership grew, two things became clear-- that creating one COSA group with thousands of members would create an entity that was not on par with any local presence, and that we were attempting to have the listserv serve too many functions.

We look forward to COSA members stepping forward to create message-board-based online COSA groups and finding the formats that work best for them.

Respectfully,
COSA Board



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Upcoming COSA Retreats

Summer Women's Retreat:
Step Study Retreat
June 20-22, 2008
Round Top, Texas
Contact Jackie at
281-217-1656 or
jfrank77379@yahoo.com

What Retreats do you
know about?
List them here!
Send your information
to
cosacopy@yahoo.com

Thank You



Marriott Sea-Tac Airport
3201 South 176th St
Seattle, WA 98188
Join us in Seattle
206-241-2000
1-800-314-0925

Sea-Tac Airport hotel adjacent to Seattle Tacoma International
Airport with complimentary shuttle.

Sea-Tac Airport hotel has a magnificent indoor atrium with pool
and 24-hour fitness center.

10 Things To See & Do in Seattle...

1. The COSA Convention
2. The Space Needle
3. Pike Place Market
4. Ferries
5. Seattle Aquarium
6. The Seattle Waterfront
7. Woodland Park Zoo
8. Bill Speidel's Underground Tour
9. Tillicum Village
10. Ride the Ducks of Seattle



Register online or more info:
www.cosa-recovery.org/convention
User Name: seattle
Password: wash2008

Help
Wanted

COSA_12_STEP ONLINE MESSAGE BOARD

CCC Distributor

Distribute the contact requests from new COSA members to their regional CCCs. Answer correspondence from new members about basic information.

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Online Listings Liaison

Assist us to correct and update our information on others' websites so that people who try to locate us can always find us. Many listings are outdated or incorrect.

Help contact various websites that list our description, our fellowship services and contact information. Provide them with our correct, updated information.

ISO COMMUNICATION'S COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON

Be the email liaison providing announcements to the ISO Communications Service Coordinators, including our regional CCC's, the national phone line coordinator, telemeeting coordinators, web-mail and snail mail coordinators, and online coordinator.

Work with the ISO Board and the ISO Coordinator to learn how to keep these divisions updated on COSA news, meeting contacts and basic info.

Work to develop the vision for growth and strengthening of communications inside COSA. This is a volunteer position.

EMAIL: ISO@COSA-RECOVERY.ORG

If you have any of the following tapes and are willing to let ISO borrow them to convert them to CD, please contact Paula at iso@cosa-recovery.org. In exchange for your help, we'll send you the same recording on CD.

We are still missing these 11 tapes:

- 95-2 Reclaiming Our Senses
- 96-4 Couple's Communication
- 96-5 Recovery and the Internet
- 96-9 Finding Support Where No Group Meets
- 97-2 Deep in the Heart
- 98-9 Steps 11 & 12
- 99-1 1999 COSA Gathering Personal Story
- 03-1 Addiction & Codependency
- 03-5 Food Issues & COSA Recovery
- 04-3 What Are your Inner Circles— COSA Bottom Lines
- 05-8 IDING & Taking Off My Masks

THANKS for HELPING US RESTORE OUR LIBRARY!



**Part Three of a Special Three-Part Article about
Tradition Seven: Every COSA group should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**

IDENTIFYING THE SOLUTION

When the 7th Tradition states that “Every COSA group is fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions,” it is with the understanding that each group is to do its share and not let its share be covered by some other group, and that all the members of the group are to pitch in. It implies a mathematical balance sheet between the group and the rest of the COSA fellowship, as well as among the group members themselves.

Service belongs as a part of every stage of recovery. A newcomer is asked to pass out the readings at the beginning of the meeting or to read one of them aloud. In this way, the newcomer is invited to participate in being a part of the solution. They are offered the opportunity to become involved and “supporting” of recovery, and they carry their own weight. They are not expected to care-take the group but they are asked to contribute an appropriate task.

When a group itself is in its infancy, often only newcomers belong to the meeting, and then they indeed must do everything that gets done. In every area of the world, similar pioneers are being made as they start their own new meetings, first out of the excruciating grief and isolation of co-addiction/codependency, and second, out of hope and a willingness to try.

While a handful of meetings have been started by a group that is already established, or by the ISO, almost every COSA meeting in existence has formed in this way—by a brave and ready newcomer who was “sick and tired of being sick and tired” and was determined to create a place for recovery. In most cases having no direct experience with 12 step formats and no local guidance, in more recent years they wrote ISO to ask for help. ISO has been there, and ISO has had literature to pass on. COSA has painstakingly developed its literature. COSA first literature represents the wisdom of COSA’s pioneers reaching out to find each other and to collectively share and write down what they each came up with, and to start COSA’s International Service Organization (ISO).

When every member gets actively involved in small ways, it makes the heaviest jobs simpler for those with experience to maintain. Experienced members can be encouraged to keep breaking the jobs down into smaller and more manageable tasks in order to find something for everyone to do. If the least qualified members can cover all the group-level jobs, the more experienced members can flow into regional and international service without the group feeling abandoned. The service responsibilities of each group may still become taxing at times but the overall balance can usually be maintained in this way when all are willing. When the 12th Step



teaches us to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives, it is with the understanding that we have now been practicing them within the safety of our meetings and fellowship gatherings for quite some time.

After a few times attending, we may take on a small ongoing commitment, such as setting up the meeting room, or taking notes at business meetings. Within the first few months, as we become acclimated to 12-step customs and the concept of service, we learn to serve as speaker on a topic or to chair our first meetings.

Gradually, we take on more consistent service commitments. When a member is more familiar with service and recovery than others, that member needs to pass on the service tasks as quickly as possible, and to refrain from taking care of everything for everyone. “Passing it on” is a favorite 12-step way of doing things. Group inventories can be helpful tools for introspection and connection as a group and can allow group members to experience mutual accountability without finger pointing. A Willingness to

contribute and an Openmindedness to service is needed from everyone, along with Honesty about practical limits and shortcomings along the way.

Practiced well, service work is a perfect antidote for our codependency. It takes our focus off of our obsession and allows us to experience the difference between doing something spiritually useful and banging our heads

against the wall. Service helps us practice new behaviors in a supportive and encouraging environment.

It allows us to learn and apply new practical skills, such as editing a piece of new literature, hosting a workshop or a retreat, networking to a professional who requests information, or crafting a new website.

Service encourages us to speak up if we are struggling in it or if it is feeling overwhelming. It teaches us how to see many different points of view on an issue and work together towards win-win solutions, and to see those solutions created from the power that is greater than the group by itself, sometimes seemingly out of thin air. It challenges us to observe limits and boundaries, to practice respectful containment and expression and respectful communication even when emotions run high, and it allows us the satisfaction of seeing the growth of our fellowship and the strengthening of our support system as the result of our work.

Service teaches us practical applications and understanding of the traditions. And beyond all this, it allows us to practice the tools of our spiritual discipline and apply them in a practical way to areas of development greater than our individual need.

~ Mavis B., Love & Hope NYC