



Volume 6, Issue 10

Fall Issue

Nov/Dec 2010

Summer Without a Shell: How the ISO Central Office Found Its New Home

Hermit crabs are funny little creatures that live in the shallow waters of the Gulf Coast. From time to time, they become too big for their shells and must venture out in search of the next bigger place to live. During this time they are extremely vulnerable, but it is a necessary process if they are to grow and thrive.

In many respects, the ISO Central Office has been living the life of a hermit crab. For the last several years, our Central Office thrived in the home of our former staffer, Paula N. Under her care, the office grew and grew until it occupied, in her words, every room in her house except the bathroom! With the help of her college-age son, Jason, Paula maintained the office for five months beyond her resignation. Her work has earned her much gratitude and respect within the ISO service family. The office needed a new home, but there were no new “shells” in the Desert Southwest.

This spring, the Board became very intentional about moving the office to a city with many local meetings, candidates for staff positions and volunteer support. They put out a call to the intergroups in three large cities: the Twin Cities of Minnesota, the Bay Area of San Francisco and Houston. They asked for information on the number and diversity of local groups, the cost of office space and the availability of local volunteers. Each intergroup responded with a thoughtful, detailed proposal. At their meeting at the Albuquerque convention, the Board considered the advantages of all three proposals, and announced their decision to move the Central Office to Houston. The deciding factor was the affordability of office space and other business services in Texas. Once the choice of a city was made, the real work of moving the office could begin!

The move consisted of three concurrent processes: finding suitable office space, finding a new Central Office Manager, and transporting all the materials, furniture and equipment of the office from New Mexico to Texas. Without being able to predict how long each process might take, the members of the *ad hoc* Board committee responsible for coordinating the move launched into their work and kept in close touch by phone and email daily.

First, the committee developed a list of prospective office spaces that matched the budgetary and space requirements set during Board discussion, and in July, the Board Chair traveled to Houston to view each site. The list of properties was then

Continued on page 3

In this Issue:

Summer Without a Shell **1,3,5**
By Carol Ann R..

New Literature on the Way **4**

Goal Committee Reports **4-5**

Step Eleven Share **6, 8**
By Nancy P.

Eleven and Twelfth Step Writing Exercises **9-10**

Step Twelve Share **8-9**
By Sarah

In Every Issue:

Seventh Tradition **2**

Literature Order form **11-12**

COSA Telemeeting Reminders **3, 7, 8**

Sober & Sustainable Teleconference **5**

2011 Convention **7**



**Every COSA
group ought
to be fully
self-
supporting,
declining
outside
contributions.**

Balance, the newsletter of the International Service Organization of **COSA** is published six times a year. The ISO holds the copyright to this newsletter

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Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

GROUPS

CA-09 -	\$61.00
KY-02 -	\$75.00
IA-01 -	\$25.00
MN-04 -	\$25.00
MO-04 -	\$100.00
TX-05 -	\$70.08
Group total -	\$356.08

RECURRING

September 1st—October 15th, 2010

Recurring donations - 19 Donations totaling \$340.00

INDIVIDUAL

Individual - 1 person - \$12.00

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. 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.

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com or by snail mail to the

Guidelines for Submitting Literature:

<http://www.cosa-recovery.org/literature.html> (scroll down, then click on pdf link)

**COSA ISO,
P.O. BOX 79908
Houston, TX 77279-9908**

Summer Without a Shell –Continued from page 1

narrowed from ten to three, and a detailed report on each site was sent to all Board members for review. The final selection was made at the Board Face-to-Face retreat in August for a lease beginning on September 1st.

Next, the full Board revamped the job description for the Central Office Manager. The resulting description was circulated to all local COSA groups using a new communications tool known as a “Board Blurb.” Board Blurbs are colorful, eye-catching messages that are sent from the Board directly to the COSA fellowship via email highlighting important issues of interest to local groups. This tool was essential in getting a detailed message out to as many COSA members as possible in a very short time. While waiting for applications to arrive, the *ad hoc* Board committee developed interview questions for prospective candidates. Three well-qualified applicants responded to the Board’s call. Each was interviewed, and soon the Board had made a selection!

Tatum C., our new Central Office Manager, was raised in East Texas, and now lives with her 3-year old son in Southeast Houston. She is a bright, creative worker who has been a member of COSA for about a year. Tatum brings excellent computer skills to the job of running the ISO Central Office, and looks forward to growing along with the office in years to come. She was offered the job just as the office equipment rolled into town.

Throughout the summer, various plans were devised to get as many boxes of ISO literature and files, furniture and equipment as possible moved from Albuquerque to Houston. There were plans to box up only the files and literature and ship them. There were plans for one person to drive the files and equipment as far as Amarillo and then transfer it to another person who would drive it all to Houston. Finally, two – then one – Board member agreed to fly to Albuquerque over Labor Day weekend, and, with the help of Paula and Jason, packed every single item owned by the ISO into a 16-foot box truck and drove it from the desert to the coast.

Many on the Board held their breath as the truck made its way across eastern New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle, down to Dallas/Fort Worth and south towards Houston. It was a risky, yet promising trip. When the truck arrived, Tatum and a COSA brother helped move its contents up the elevator into the ISO’s new office space. The Central Office had come a long way, but in some respects, a new journey was just beginning.

At the Board Face-to-Face retreat in August, the Board not only decided where its new home would be, but what new services it might provide. An initiative called “Service at the Front End” was laid out as a plan to provide better service to groups first, and trust that increased contributions from the fellowship would naturally flow from the gratitude of the fellowship. It is a solution-oriented, abundance-centered approach. To that end, the Board voted to provide a raft of materials and services free of charge to all ISO registered groups to help them carry the COSA message further.

In the five weeks since the opening of the new office, the Board (with the help of the previous Board Chair) has updated and simpli-



COSA Telemeetings

www.cosacall.com

NEW Phone Number:
1-218-862-6420

Passcode: 679461

Tuesdays,
7:00pm (PT)
(8 MT, 9 CT, 10 ET)

Wednesdays,
4:00pm (PT)
(5 MT, 6 CT, 7 ET)

Thursdays,
6:00pm (PT)
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Men’s Only COSA Mtg.
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new Europe call on
Tuesdays as well as a
COSA Parents
Telemeeting on
Wednesdays.

Continued on page 5



Goal 1 Report—Increase Service Volunteers

August 18, 2010

1. The group reviewed the previous action items and the ideas brainstormed during the F2F Board meeting.
2. The action item on quarterly telemeetings for the CCC's (Cosa Connection Coordinators) was transferred to the ComCom (Communication Committee).
3. A draft on the "Meeting Formats" will be researched and written.
4. The group agreed that materials on Intergroups will be gathered and compiled with a view of creating a Guide for Intergroups.
5. Plans, features and ideas for a website on COSA sponsorship were discussed. The first step is writing a Business Plan and getting Board approval for the project.

Respectfully submitted,
Mila T., Goal 1 Committee Chair

Goal Two: Increasing Financial Revenues & Responsibility

The Goal Two Committee met in early October.

We discussed:

- rewording of the “blurb” for the back of all COSA literature regarding donations to ISO of COSA.
- and developed a structure to include volunteers in refining the new mission statement.
- timing of the next annual fund drive campaign.
- a “virtual online basket” for online meetings and telemeetings (COSAcall)

Thanks,
Goal Two Committee

New Literature on the way

The Literature Committee is working on offering you two new pieces of literature very shortly. Step Five will be published soon, and we are working on new Step Booklets as well. The second piece is based on a very popular workshop presented at the 2009 COSA convention in Oakland, California. This booklet is titled Using the Twelve Steps to Work Through Any Conflict.

Goal 3: COSA Book Development

Hello Fellow COSAs!

The COSA Book Development Committee (BookCom) is excited to be moving towards creating COSA's basic text.

One of our objectives this year is to put together an outline for the book. In order to do that, we need to know what you want us to include. So we are calling for all COSAs to share with us any COSA recovery:

- Topics
- Titles or
- Cover Art

Please understand that this is not a call for authors, personal stories or chapters. And, while we will do our best to include as many topics as possible within our outline, there can only be one title and one cover. When the time is right, we will select the title and cover art from those sent to us by the COSA fellowship.

All COSAs are invited to send any ideas as soon as possible to the COSA Book Development Committee at BookCom@cosa-recovery.org. The BookCom will put together a first draft of the outline at the end of March 2011.

We look forward to hearing from all of you!

Sincerely,

JoAn D., BookCom Chair

Summer Without a Shell —Continued from page 3

Soon the office will send each group a packet explaining our new registration form – which can now be submitted by email. All ISO-registered groups will then receive a free electronic subscription to the *Balance*, Board Blurbs, annual convention information, free listing on the ISO webpage, meeting formats (including a business meeting format), a new pamphlet entitled, "You are Part of the Whole," and information on Sober and Sustainable Teleconferences and COSA 12-Step membership. Many of these gifts have been in existence for some time, but were underutilized because local groups did not realize they were available; some gifts, like the electronic version of the *Balance*, are new.

At the end of the day, however, none of the gifts or plans dreamed up by the Board can be made real without a place to type and file and fold and send – and hands to put it into action.

In some ways, our new office is like a bright, polished shell that one would find in a sunny beachside shop. It feels a little unnatural and unfamiliar- and yet very special. It has tremendous potential. What protected our fragile workplace at each stage is the same thing that protects the hermit crab: a Power greater than we are.

Carol Ann R., Houston, TX

Next

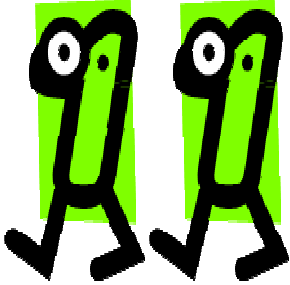
Next
Sober

Sober
&
Sustainable
Teleconference

Thursday
November 4th

Is your COSA meeting struggling to attract service volunteers? Are you thinking of starting a new COSA Meeting? Concerned about how to attract and retain COSA newcomers or old timers? Bring your questions and/or your Experience, Strength and Hope about starting and sustaining Sober COSA Meetings on the Teleconference scheduled for:

Thursday, November 4th, 6pm Pacific Time, 7pm Mountain Time, 8pm Central and 9pm Eastern. The Teleconference # is **218-862-1000** and the **Access Code is 1051791#**.



**Sought
through
prayer and
meditation
to improve
our
conscious
contact with
God
as we
understood
God,
praying only
for
knowledge
of God's will
for us and
the power to
carry that
out.**

Step Eleven

Over the past years, I have had the good fortune to work through the Twelve Steps of COSA with a very loving sponsor who holds me accountable. I chose to use a Step Guide. I was encouraged to take my time, be thorough and most of all be loving with myself. For most of us, this journey can be painful, but also very healing and rewarding. It is so important to work through each step before moving onto the next one. When stuck, I learned I can go back and rework the previous step or steps.

My sponsor kept talking about how excited she was about me working my Eleventh Step. In the step guide I chose, a spiritual quest is proposed. It is suggested to keep a dream journal and to log all dreams remembered. As I recorded these dreams and shared them, I could see how I was healing so tremendously from my diseased past of deep co-dependency and co-sex addiction. I have been deeply affected by others' compulsive sexual behavior in all areas of my life as well as my own compulsive sexual behavior.

I prayed about where I wanted to go on my quest and one day it came to me. I chose the ocean, a place that I had never spent time with my former partner. I LOVE THE SEA, THE WATER AND ITS HEALING POWERS. This experience was to be a spiritual journey and also an expression of the new me.

I prepared for my trip by making sure my car was in good working order. I ordered a service card for my car and got maps, as this was something I had let go of in my relationship. These were all good self-care measures.

My sponsor suggested I just notice and write about the day.

Heading down to the ocean was peaceful. I had no real agenda. I stopped for a coffee and enjoyed. Upon arriving I savored a delicious meal at a local restaurant with one of my favorite salads. I purchased some wonderful lavender bubble bath at a shop.

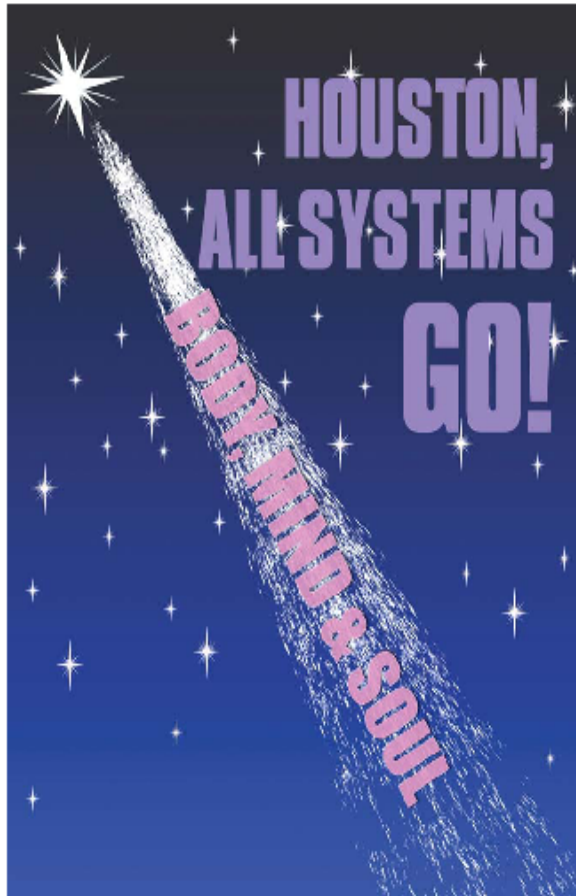
Next I headed for the beach. All the while, I was thinking, "Wow, this is a very uneventful day." But I was also thinking, "Stay very close to my HP in my thoughts and actions."

I saw the crashing waves on the beach and headed down. The weather had been stormy, and the waves were really large. There were other people already on the beach, so it seemed safe. I headed south, walking until there was no more beach but just rocks to scramble over. The tide was coming in. I thought to myself, "This feels a bit precarious." I continued walking south

Continued on page 8

SAVE THE DATE

ISO of COSA International Convention and Annual Meeting



May 27-30, 2011

Houston Marriott Westchase
2900 Briarpark Dr.
Houston, Texas 77042

If you are interested in helping with the event, please contact Lynda B. at lynda@broussard-ad.com

www.cosa-recovery.org/houston2011

Login: systems Password: houston2011



COSA Telemeetings

www.cosacall.com

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1-218-862-6420

Passcode: 679461

Tuesdays,
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Wednesdays,
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Men's Only COSA Mtg.
Sunday
10:00am (PT)
(11am MT, 12noon CT,
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Step Eleven—Continued from Page 6

south since I saw steps up ahead that led back up to the street.

As I got closer to the steps, I saw that they were broken and old. I tried to access the higher steps by walking along a ledge and soon realized that I needed to go back north and retrace my tracks. The tide was indeed coming in, and I was feeling panicky. I kept repeating the Eleventh Step in my head and thinking about my Higher Power and how this “uneventful” day had turned into something completely different. I just kept breathing and praying and heading north, not in a panicky run but steady and strong. As I was back on the rocks and water was spraying, I looked up and realized I could scramble up the ice plant to the street. This felt like my HP reaching out her hand yet one more time. I am grateful that my body is strong, and God got me back to the street safely!

As I then continued to walk southward along the street, I saw signs by the broken steps that said, “BEACH CLOSED, HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS.”

I felt as though my Higher Power had really protected me from a very dangerous situation. She let me think straight and also not be hard on myself. Those signs had not been posted north where I had originally entered the beach.

I was once again overcome with gratitude for my connection to my Higher Power, COSA, our Twelve Steps and my incredibly abundant life.

Thank you for allowing me to share my Eleventh Step story.
Nancy P.

Step Twelve

My first couple times working Step Twelve, I focused mainly on carrying the message of COSA by becoming a sponsor and taking on service positions at the international level. These were scary stretching points for me in many respects. I had learned about self-care and boundaries in COSA and feared over-extending myself. I have not done any of my service perfectly, but have grown at every turn and have no regrets. I learned how to stay focused on the Steps as a sponsor and have gotten more back from that experience than I could ever give. I learned new computer and communication skills as the Media Chair for two conventions and then got to experience letting go,

and giving others a chance to be of service. It also meant moving through a fear from my childhood that if I didn't do it, nobody would. Of course, that was NOT the case.

This time around on my Step Twelve, I focused on carrying the message by *practicing these principles in all my affairs... by attraction rather than promotion*. I had begun meditating up to 10 hours per week in Step 11 and something shifted. I learned how to slow down and be present in each moment. With that presence of mind I have choices about which tools to use. I am getting feedback from all over that I seem so happy, peaceful and connected to spirit.

To give you a sense of the power of practicing the principles and staying present, I asked for a divorce (an objectively stressful and painful thing to do). I was in a marriage that was not healthy for me and got clarity that my Higher Power wanted me to give up the "drug." After letting go of the relationship, I kept waiting for the depression and the despair, but it never came. Through working the Steps daily I am spending more quality time with myself and loving the company. Every day is better than the last. When things get sticky, I seem to know which tool to pick up to help me move through the pain, discomfort or confusion quite quickly. As a result, people are seeing great things in me and this is motivating them to work their programs more diligently and with more gentleness. If that isn't Step Twelve in action, I don't know what is. Thank you for the opportunity to share my profound peace and joy in recovery.

Sarah B.
Oakland

Step Eleven Questions:

1. How have I experienced 'conscious contact' with a God of my understanding.
2. What is my understanding of prayer and meditation? Am I increasing my use of them, and if so, how?
3. Have I or do I find it difficult to spend time in prayer and meditation? Why?
4. What are some ways that my practice of prayer and meditation can improve my conscious contact with a God of my understanding?
5. What can I do if I am struggling with developing a practice of prayer and meditation? What or who might be able to help?

Continued on page 10



12

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.



**The
International
Service
Office

(ISO)

of COSA**

**Contact us at the
NEW Houston
Location!:**

**COSA ISO
P.O. BOX 79908
Houston, TX
77279-9908**

**Phone:
763-537-6904**

**E-mail:
info@cosa-recovery.org**

Step Eleven Questions—continued

5. What can I do if I am struggling with developing a practice of prayer and meditation? What or who might be able to help?
6. What am I learning about 'God's will for me?' How can I tell the difference between God's will and mine?
7. What purpose do I see in this Step's instruction for me to pray only for knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry it out?
8. Has the directive in Step Eleven limited my prayer in any way? If so, has this limitation helped me expand my spiritual experience?

Step Twelve Questions

1. Have I been able to identify any spiritual awakening as a result of my step work?
2. What are some of the simple ways I can start to serve and "carry the message"?
3. How can the principle of "carrying the message" be done without violating our tradition of "attraction, not promotion?" Have I ever found myself "promoting" while trying to do the Twelfth Step?
4. Early in my program, did I try to carry the message before I had a message to carry?
5. When I tried to carry the message and practice these principles in this state of spiritual sleep, what were the results?
6. List some ways I can apply my recovery to other areas of my life
7. In light of the Twelve-Step statement, "If it's not practical, it's not spiritual," how do I understand the relationship between Step Twelve and service?