



Newsletter of the New Jersey Region

January 2004

Treasury Guidelines Approved

The long-awaited, oft-postponed Regional Treasury Guidelines were approved at the November region, ensuring that for at least a couple of months our written policy will match our actual practice.

Follow the Money

The November meeting approved \$250 in funding for the annual Regional H&I Learning Day. \$85 was approved to fund a third participant to the December CAR workshop in Maine. Up to \$100 was approved to reimburse the Regional Delegate for making copies of the CAR for workshops and the GSR Assembly. A motion to contribute \$2500 above the mandated \$200 to NA World Services failed after discussion with the treasurer on the state of our balance. (The working capital balance, which is the money available above the \$5,500 prudent reserve, was \$6750.55, and the shiny new guidelines state that we "should" target a working capital balance of \$9000. So we now effectively have a prudent reserve plus an *extra-prudent* reserve.)

Motion to End Convention

The following motion was made at the November meeting: *After the 2004 NJ Regional Convention, to dissolve the Convention Committee. 1) Recent losses of funds at the last convention. 2) Over the past years the dwindling support and funds of the Convention. 3) The Convention Committee has had a one person committee. Intent: To have the NJRSC members give a vote of lack of confidence.* (How what appear to be arguments for the motion were allowed into the motion itself is anybody's guess.)

Before readers leap to the ramparts on one side or another of whatever they perceive the issue to be, we should note that the motion was tabled until the July regional meeting. This provides us with some time to consider the state of the convention, and potential solutions, if any, before moving to consideration of a measure as extreme as the above.

Putting the motion out there has already stimulated some thought, though whether the right questions are being asked is a matter of opinion. As will be seen on pages two and three, one long-time member was moved to send a lengthy letter on the subject, and it also became the main topic of a workshop at the last GSR Assembly.

Hopefully it will prove possible to have open and frank discussion of the wide range of issues relating to the convention without falling into a false dichotomy of blanket support or opposition for their own sake, and we will be able to make a start at addressing the issues of what we want from a Regional Convention, and how it might deliver those things.

The Regional Service Conference is the body ultimately responsible for providing guidance and oversight to the Convention BOT and Planning Committee when necessary, and this is precisely what has not been happening for years. (Largely because exercising that responsibility involves work, but to some extent because the Convention bodies have often been highly resistant to input from the Region.) When things are going well, it may be pardonable to leave subcommittees to handle everything at their own discretion, but to continue to do that in the face of several years of ongoing controversy and problems would simply be irresponsible.

Positions Open

Three positions are open for election at the January meeting: These are Statewide Helpline Chair, Meeting List Chair and Website Representative. The clean time requirement is three years for each of these positions.

The CAR Season is Upon Us

The runup to this year's World Service Conference is well underway. We have already dispatched our Regional Delegation to the early CAR workshop in Maine, and the annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference (MARLCNA), will be held in Lancaster February 13-15. Numerous regional and area trusted servants from Jersey will be in attendance for the ~~entertainment~~, er, we mean issue discussion.

The potential for fireworks has increased somewhat, as the World Board has chosen to deal with the various Resolution A implementation proposals by arguing that there is no need to implement the resolution at all, rather than addressing the proposals themselves. (the possibility of submitting a motion to rescind Resolution A in new business seems to provoke the most heat.)

As many readers are already aware, this is one of the regions that determines its vote on CAR motions by group tally. Which means that every home group has a vote and therefore, to some, a responsibility to exercise it.

Convention Issues—I.

(The following is a letter composed by a Member of in NA in N.J. in response to the tabled convention motion reported on page 1—ed.)

Dear Sanity,

A little less than 19 years ago, through a series of events and a loving and caring Higher Power, a miracle took place. That miracle was called "Unity Weekend", which ultimately became our 1st Regional Convention here in New Jersey. It started from a napkin being passed around at an East Coast Convention of NA, which has not been in existence in many years. The napkin that was passed became a symbol of unity, love and willingness of NA members within N.J. as they wrote their names and telephone numbers down. Through the same Loving God mentioned above, this group of willing members became the 1st Regional Convention Committee here in New Jersey, many of them including myself are still alive and clean today serving our fellowship. From that first committee came the symbol know as Jersey Unity, that we've all seen on the front of our Regional Meeting Directory for many years.

This first "Unity Weekend" which was held in Asbury Park N.J. on May 9,10 & 11,1986 was announced as going to be a weekend of love, fellowship, caring and sharing and true gratitude for being clean and being in recovery as a member of NA here in N.J.

It is important to know that this first convention was not funded from 7th Tradition funds from a basket in a Home Group whose sole purpose is used to Carry the Message to the Addict who still suffers here in N.J. and around the world. Instead, and to the contrary, it came together through hard work and fundraising activities that were well supported by NA members throughout our Region, at a time when there were no Area or Regional Conventions here in N.J., NA members who enjoyed attending conventions were willing to drive 100s of miles and bring as many newer members as they could to get involved, support and share in this beautiful, selfless experience.

Our conventions exact history came from what was stated to the NJ fellowship from the beginning, that it was an activity solely to unify, love and help each other; one addict helping another, we keep what we have by giving it away. It was never intended, stated or requested to be a fundraiser in any form for the NJRSC.

However, over these many years and still to the upcoming NJRSC 19th NA Convention, some of us have forgotten our simple and humble beginnings, that our Regional Convention was never and should not today be considered a fundraiser for the NJRSC. It is as it was 18 Years ago, an activity where NA members come from all over N.J. and from far away to celebrate their recovery for this life saving program in an atmosphere of gratitude. It truly is a "Unity Weekend."

So why did some of us change our thinking and start considering this a fundraising event? Has money, property and prestige entered into the picture? Surely, some of the excess money has been used to support our service efforts at the region as they should be, but the convention has never been intended to solely be put on for that purpose. It is not a "money making" oriented event, it is a "carry the message" oriented event.

It takes a lot of hard work, commitment and integrity to put on an NA Convention today. As our Traditions state, "We are volunteers and no member should give more than his or her fair share", meaning, *we need your support* to volunteer to help plan and make the Convention happen, and *we need your support* to attend our Regional Convention and support what we all are; living examples of the program of NA here in New Jersey working in our lives.

We do not want to see our convention, this long-standing tradition of NA Unity here in NJ, come to an end because we might not make a financial profit. We think it's more important to continue having the convention and profit in are own personal recovery by celebrating together in gratitude, the NA WAY.

I have simply and humbly shared this with all NA members in N.J. in the hopes that you will "Please support the continuation of our Regional Convention in all ways."

Thank You Very Much

Richard S

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Sanity is published every two months as a service of the New Jersey region for its groups and members. Input and articles are welcome on all recovery-related topics. Opinions expressed here are those of individual addicts, not N.A. as a whole.

SANITY will soon be available for download from the Statewide website. Stay tuned for more info.

Convention Issues II—Self support Workshop

The following is a condensed version of our Regional Delegate's issue discussion paper for the WSC relating to self-support and the Regional Convention.

Much of the discussion at the New Jersey Assembly focused on the issue of the Regional Convention. We focused here because our Regional Convention has become somewhat controversial. For some years we were forced to rely on the Regional convention as a fund-raiser. Also, as the membership in the Region grew, Areas began to develop their own conventions. Now, four of our ten Areas already host conventions and a fifth is planning one for the near future. For two years Regional convention has struggled just to break even financially. Also contributing to the tension is the fact that the Regional convention committee's attitude of independence alienated some other Regional trusted servants.

The result of these multiple influences brought the issue of the convention to the floor of the November Region meeting where it was suggested that we ask our groups to consider the desirability and wisdom of continuing that event. This suggestion was not greeted by everyone as loving concern for the well being of the Region. Instead, some considered it an attack on the integrity of their service efforts.

Here, in one of the oldest Regions in NA with a large recovering population, with many people with double digit clean time and many celebrating over 20 years of recovery, with an established service structure and sufficient wealth to make major contributions to NAWS on a yearly basis, we are suffering confusion about how to handle the luxury of too many conventions.

About 25-30 people participated in an open discussion that is paraphrased for you.

- ✍ Are we having a Regional convention because we need it? Do we want it?
- ✍ What is the Region supporting? Is it able to support what it does? Isn't that the important question under self-support—whether we can support what we do?
- ✍ Once the convention was tremendously supported but 18 years later Region was asked to consider abolishing it because people aren't supporting the event either by planning or participating.
- ✍ How can a Regional body treat a convention as a matter of making money? The activities shouldn't only be about money. It's a tradition problem when we put money, property or prestige before our primary purpose.
- ✍ The saddest thing about a convention is to think about it as a money making venture. A convention is about a celebration of recovery. If we don't come together to celebrate recovery, then the activity isn't functioning. Do the convention speakers touch and transform the people who attend? Convention meetings and speakers should lay out a sacred path. If the way we do things now isn't working, we should find a new way to walk the spiritual path.
- ✍ Conventions can be seen as entertainment and each convention's entertainment value is diluted by the number of other available convention in and around the Region. In this sense, in the wealth of options and the ability of the

NA community in a multi-state area to plan and produce conventions, the struggles of our Regional convention is best understood as a residue of our success.

- ✍ Where once we truly needed the convention to make money to support our helpline, we don't have to think about it in such limited terms today.
- ✍ The convention is not there to serve the Regional service body but to serve members in their recovery.
- ✍ It is important to remember that the primary purpose is not having a convention, it is to carry the message to addict who still suffers.
- ✍ We have a responsibility to the people who put money in basket to use that money to carry the message. When you subscribe to losing money at an event or series of events you are using money that could be spent to buy texts for people who need them. Events supported by money from 7th tradition collections have a responsibility to earn that money back. We owe it to the people of fellowship to serve NA by providing services to people who need services. We have no business spending money on a party.
- ✍ To have these conventions we need seed money. If each area holds a convention then all the seed money being stored up could be used to provide services to people who need them. If we had 1 and not 5 conventions, people would come and stay and make the single venture profitable. NA is now big enough to be a business. We must face this fact. We must make each undertaking cost effective.
- ✍ Conventions should not come out of 7th tradition basket collection money. They should be supported by fundraising instead.
- ✍ We cannot carelessly squander NA money. It is irresponsible. We must remember that people sacrifice to put money in the basket and use the money with the respect.

Convention Issues III— a Celebration of Unity?

The point has been repeatedly made that a main goal of the Regional Convention is to be a celebration of unity. This seems indisputable. In fact, it seems so indisputable as to convince one that if this were truly being accomplished fully the fundraising aspect would almost take care of itself. It might also be expected that a failure to serve this purpose would itself account for declining support. So— a few questions:

Have we actually had a celebration of unity in recent years? Do we celebrate the unity of N.A. in all the diversity that exists in the region, or does our convention largely promote the ideology of one particular faction within N.A. to the exclusion of all other viewpoints? Do members who are not doctrinaire ODOPers feel that this is "their" convention in any meaningful sense?

What function can a Regional convention be seen as serving that individual area conventions do not, and if the answer is to both demonstrate and promote *regionwide* unity, and a sense of "being a part of," in what ways might we reimagine the convention so that it better served this function?

(continued on next page)

Convention Issues III—continued

In terms of everything from the selection of speakers to the nature of workshops, have we done everything to serve the full range of tastes and interests in the region, or have we left this to be dictated by the personal taste of a fairly narrow group of like-minded people?

Who do we envision as the main group to be served by the convention, and what implications does this have? Is it our intention to compete largely for the attendance of the hard-core travelling conventioners who are so into the circuit that they do ten plus conventions a year, and often seem to expect a circus for their money? Or do we want to emphasize serving the more typical members in the New Jersey region? Do these groups enjoy the same aspects of a convention, or do things designed to attract the one group render it fundamentally unattractive to many members of the other?

Might involvement region-wide be stimulated if we went back to more actively soliciting areas and groups to organize and run a large fraction of the workshops? In the past, each workshop done this way seemed to bring in a number of people who might very well have not become involved otherwise.
—ed.

WSC Discussion Items

The following is a condensation of our Regional Delegate's report on the discussion items for the 2004 Conference. A fuller treatment of the topic is included in her report to the Region.

Please feel free to send me your responses. You can email me at maprem@aol.com. Be sure to give CAR as your subject heading since I only open emails from known senders. You can send hard copy to me at MUK 127 e 14th St. Ship Bottom NJ 08008. If you want to give me a chance to read your comments, send them before April 1. Thanks!

Our vision is that one day all addicts in the world can experience our message in their language and culture, that all NA communities in the world work together in a spirit of unity and that our program acquires recognition and respect as a treatment for addiction that works.

The mission of the World Service Conference (WSC) is to unify NA as a worldwide fellowship and further the common welfare of NA. The CAR (Conference Agenda Report) is one of the ways we unite in fellowship.

Your participation in this process is important to the fellowship. You provide guidance in the form of experience, strength and hope to the RD and RDA of the New Jersey Region in your votes and in the ideas you share with us at workshops. To make that participation as humane as possible, the World Board continues to work with the format of the CAR, making it user friendly. Your RD and RDA try to help by creating this abbreviated version of the CAR, presenting the information in an efficient manner. As we work together we use the opportunity of the WSC to consider matters of importance to the fellowship as a whole.

At the WSC far less emphasis is placed on motions and voting—the formal business sessions—than in the past; far more emphasis is placed on discussions about strategic planning for the growth and well-being of the fellowship or about issues of deep concern brought to our attention through the CAR, through Assemblies and Workshops, and by the World Board.

Strategic planning involves coherent planning for the growth and development of NA. In the past we often acted haphazard or reactively; you know, the way we did when, as active addicts, we tried to keep everyone off our backs. We just responded to the demands of the moment without thinking ahead or making reasoned choices according to considered priorities.

Now we try to do things differently. Strategic planning means moving toward our vision. Moving toward our vision requires enhanced communication and cooperation within the fellowship, streamlined ability to provide services, increased accountability, and professionalized interaction with nation-states and public & private health organizations.

To this end the World Board would like the RD & RDA to come to the WSC with input from our communities on the five topics listed below. To facilitate discussion the Board has provided information on pages 6-10 of the CAR.

- 1. Communication: For this topic please discuss:**
 - ✓ How can we improve communications within NA?
- 2. Developing and Supporting NA Communities: For this topic please discuss:**
 - ✓ Are there tools, information, support that World Services could provide to your groups, areas, regions that would strengthen its relationship with the fellowship and help forge a stronger foundation for carrying the NA message?
 - ✓ How can we make NA more attractive to our current members?
 - ✓ How can we make NA more attractive to potential members?
 - ✓ Is NA a respected resource in your community? If there are problems in that regard, is there anything we can do to solve those difficulties?
- 3. Recovery Literature: For this topic please discuss:**
 - ✓ Who do we need to make a greater effort to reach through our literature?
 - ✓ Do you have ideas to make the literature review process more effective, efficient, and responsive?
- 4. Cultivating Leadership: For this topic please discuss:**
 - ✓ How do you encourage people to get involved in service?
 - ✓ What do you expect from the people you think of as NA leaders?
 - ✓ How do you determine if the people you select for trusted servant positions are doing a good job?
- 5. Resources: For this topic please discuss:**
 - ✓ When, as now, donations are not enough to cover needed services at some levels of the service structure (World Services, for example), what should we do?