

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Carrying the message of hope to the still-suffering sex addict since 1988

INSIDE:

- THE 'RUFF' ROAD
- A PUZZLING LIFE
- MENTAL HEALTH
- EXCERPT FROM THE GREEN BOOK
- POEM
- AREAS AND SERVICE





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1988, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers”—especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on page 34. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 35.

To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

September - October 2024

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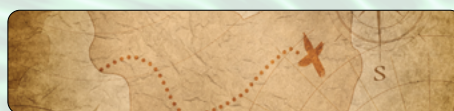
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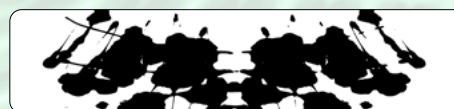
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Share *The Outer Circle* with your recovery friends in SAA and encourage them to submit their experience, strength, and hope (see page 35).

FROM THE EDITOR

The Pathway to Recovery

BY ALEX B.

THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*If you feel inspired
to share your story,
remember they can
be submitted online*

*([saa-recovery.org/
tocsubmission](http://saa-recovery.org/tocsubmission)) or via
toc@saa-recovery.org.*

It's only natural that I think of my recovery using metaphors of travel and movement. The language I've heard in the rooms has suggested that repeatedly: "trudging the road of happy destiny" is a well-worn phrase in Twelve-Step programs. An early sponsor shared with me the idea of a ditch running along the road of my life, always there to ensnare me when my complacency kicks in. There are days where I think my recovery takes the shape of a trek across an enormous desert, requiring me to move enormous endless dunes of sand and all I've been given is a teaspoon.

But if the roads in our recovery are endless, the pathways we find can take many notable twists and turns. I have had anything but a straight shot to my current location in my recovery, but at the same time I would not trade the experience I've had – and the growth it has inspired in me – for anything else.

Our journeys are taken the only way we know how: with each individual step pointing in the proper direction. I am grateful to have a Higher Power that helps me know which direction that should be. That Power's job is to point me in that direction; my job is to tread the path.

I hope you enjoy the tales of the journey in this month's issue. As always, if you have a story to share, we welcome you giving us permission to do so. Please visit our website at saa-recovery.org/toc to submit your story.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

We need your voice!

BY TRACY R.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ISO OF SAA, INC.**

We are all the fellowship of SAA, and every voice counts. Please encourage your group to elect a GSR and participate in your area assembly, so your voice can be heard.

The 2024 annual meeting of the ISO Conference is less than two months away. Motions have been posted. Areas are assembling. GSRs and delegates are discussing the business before the Conference. The Board and the Conference Planning Committee are preparing. The Nominating Committee is processing service resumes.

Much remains to be done to ensure that the 2024 Conference effectively serves as the group conscience of the SAA fellowship. In SAA, the groups are the ultimate authority, and the ISO Conference brings the groups together via their area delegates (who are elected by the groups' GSRs) to determine the will of the Fellowship.

We are all the fellowship of SAA, and every voice counts. Please encourage your group to elect a GSR and participate in your area assembly, so your voice can be heard.

The ISO exists to help the groups carry the SAA message to the sex addict who still suffers. The ISO exists to serve. To serve well, we need members who are capable of and willing to get involved in service.

Please consider volunteering to serve yourself or encouraging others to do so. More information and a service resume are available on the service website. (Email or call the ISO office for login information.)

“In Step Twelve we put our awakening into practice by serving others. With spiritual awareness comes the responsibility, the desire, and the need to help other suffering sex addicts, just as help was freely given to us. This impulse springs from selfless love and gratitude, but it is also essential to our own sexual sobriety and spiritual growth. Carrying the message to our fellow addict is as important in maintaining our own recovery as it is in helping others find theirs” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 87).

DEAR GRACE

Why do some people want me to go to a different fellowship?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

Our fellows don't have to understand why we belong in SAA. We don't have to explain ourselves and make them understand.

Disclaimer: We cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case. – SAA Women's Outreach Committee

Dear Grace,

I have been to three meetings and at every meeting a male attendee has made the comment that perhaps I would be more comfortable in Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA), a different fellowship altogether.

What gives?

**Signed,
I Belong in SAA! How Can I Make Them Understand?**

Dear Belong:

Taking the first step of attending an SAA meeting can be intimidating, and we want to acknowledge the courage that it took to enter recovery and ask for help. We are so sorry that you have not been welcomed in our rooms.

There are many reasons men are hesitant to welcome women into their groups. Some fellows have reported that their wives "won't like it." Others have said that having a woman present is "too triggering." Some just fear the unknown. What we do know is that "SAA is open to anyone who has the desire to stop their addictive sexual behavior" (Tradition Three). This tradition allows all people, regardless of personal identity, to step over the threshold and to go from Shame to Grace.

Many of us have been the only woman in a mixed meeting and have been met with resistance. This is disheartening and a disservice to SAA. There are several ways to respond to this. Some of us challenge incorrect assertions by asking questions like "Why do you feel I'm a love addict? Why are you assuming where I would be more comfortable? Do you say this to every

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: to reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail (grace@saa-women.org) receives.

**Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

newcomer?” Another response could be to set a boundary such as, “I’m new here, and I haven’t asked for feedback. I’ll let you know if I have questions or need help.” You could also share at the next meeting about your experience. A simple “I felt when it was suggested that I should try a different meeting,” could start an empathic dialogue around how your presence was handled at your first few meetings.

Many of us have felt like we must explain ourselves and defend our decision to attend SAA. We are concerned that if we are opposed to someone’s spontaneous “helpfulness” that we come off as combative or worse — as an ungrateful shrew. What’s important to note is that our fellows don’t have to understand why we belong in SAA. We don’t have to explain ourselves and make them understand. What a relief! What

we can do is ask our Higher Power to help us do the next right thing, attend meetings, take what is helpful in our recovery, and leave the rest. Sometimes our belonging is a gradual understanding that will come to our fellows as we enter recovery alongside them in the rooms.

Our traditions state our meetings should be safe, anonymous, and open to anyone with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. If a meeting is “mixed,” it should be proactive when welcoming newcomers from any demographic. Some ways meetings could prepare for women newcomers are to talk about how to greet new women at meetings, print out and have available the “Women’s Newcomer Letter” (available under the “Women” tab on the SAA website, saa-recovery.org), and designate a “Women’s Newcomer Greeter.” Meetings could use a “Dear Grace” column in a topic meeting or ask a woman sex addict to come and share her story.

Focusing on the solution rather than the problem is what we do in meetings to stay sober. We can use that same mindset when someone different comes into our meeting the first time.

**Be Right Where You Need to Be,
Grace**

The ‘ruff’ road to recovery

BY STAN

Hi, I’m Stan, and I’m a sex addict.”

It took me a long time to be able to say those words. It has been eight years since I first dabbled in self-help for porn addiction. I slowly came to the vague realization that I had, what I called at the time, a “porn problem” or a “bad porn habit.”

No way was I sex addict — that’s a step too far! I made up many lies to myself about my addiction, preferring to rot deep in the swamp of denial. I’m clever; I used to brag that I could “rationalize anything.” Now I know that’s the very character defect that could end my life.

Before I committed to SAA and Twelve-Step programs, I refused the faintest suggestion of powerlessness. I have always been an atheist, so I thought I controlled my destiny. After all, hadn’t I done so before? I’d beaten addictions to alcoholism and drugs, so surely I could handle this. All I needed was more discipline: better habits, more self-punishment. I just wasn’t trying hard enough. I didn’t employ the right tool or strategy, I told myself.

Most of all though, I had the belief that I must do recovery in isolation, sharing as little as possible with anyone. The feeling of shame was absolutely overwhelming, and the consequences of exposure weighed heavily on my calculating heart. I became convinced that I could never come out and tell people what I had become, and certainly could never ask for help from a Higher Power. I rationalized that if I could “cure” myself, then I wouldn’t need to tell anyone, ever. I could just forget about the whole thing.

Along these lines, I found a suggestion from an online self-help group. I’ll always remember it as my final failed act of foolish willpower to free myself from this addiction: eating dog food.

Someone shared with me that whenever they relapsed, they would punish themselves by eating from a can of dog food. Another person said their self-punishment was to rip up money. “Brilliant!” I thought, “This is the motivation I need for my recovery! I’ll do both!”



True enough to my vow to self-directed sobriety, I drove to the grocery store in search of dog food. I laugh about it now, recalling my anxiety as I fraudulently browsed the canine treats section when I don't even own a pet. I looked for the most expensive "organic" dog treats I could find, read their ingredients, and then thought, "How much should I buy?" This question had me stuck for a bit, because I believed this stomach-churning ritual would be the key to keep me sober, while also knowing that no trick had worked to date.

As I cautiously proceeded through the checkout line (flirting with the cashier, of course), I had a creeping feeling of suspense, like security would grab me at any moment, cuff me, and drag me out of the place. But my heist was not so dramatic — I paid for my new punishment and drove back home.

It wasn't long before I found myself gnawing away at the tough, crunchy, plastic-y food. I acted out again a few days later and remembered my deal with the devil of addiction: I stomached what I could (two treats at first, then more) and proceeded to rip up \$1 bills as well.

I remember wondering if I should donate the money to the homeless. Why should it go to waste? There was a person in the neighborhood, who I avoided, that could benefit from my new arrangement. I decided against this though, simply because it would make me feel good about myself. And if there's one thing my addiction never wants me to do, it is to feel good about myself. I absolved to rip up dead presidents on my own.

Did it work? Of course not. I only embarked on these self-punishment behaviors a few more times before shoveling my own grave further, reaching my most recent bottom of

erectile dysfunction. It was a wake-up call, and hopefully my last one. This addiction was no habit, no “porn problem.” What I had was very serious and it was killing my physical self. I needed help. I was finally ready to try anything. Even — and this was the most important part — coming out of my secret double life to tell others what I had done.

That’s when I searched for online SAA meetings. That’s when I discovered the fellowship, revisited the Twelve Steps, and uncovered all they had to offer. That’s when I learned that there wasn’t just one meeting a week — I attend meetings every day now, sometimes as many as four in a single day.

Over time, I have developed the strength of getting honest with fellow addicts, sharing things I’d never told another soul in my life. I also have the hope and beauty of hearing from those for whom recovery has become a living reality: people with a lasting relief from this addiction for years, even decades; people who have been to prison or treatment centers; thoughtful, committed people who share their most intimate lives with each other, every day, to be better human beings. The one thing we all have in common is our addiction.

Subsequently, we also share a common bond in our commitment for self-improvement, fixing the harms that our actions and behaviors have caused ourselves and others.

In the five months since I fully committed to this program, I have acted out for a total of thirty minutes. It was not in my deep inner circle, but still something I don’t wish to repeat. I keep my thirty-day SAA sobriety token close to me on my nightstand now, and I meditate and pray every day. If someone had told me I would be doing such a thing six months ago, I would have laughed at them.

It is the great paradox of this program that only by relinquishing control over my addiction can I finally have manageability in my life and sanity restored. When I was running the show, I was still acting out: ripping up money and eating dog food. Today, by the will of my Higher Power, I am sober and I use my money to buy human food. The Green Book says we must be willing to go any length to achieve relief from our compulsive sexual behaviors. For me, that means checking my ego at the door, asking for help, and perhaps most of all, finally admitting powerlessness. ©

**I believed this
stomach-churning
ritual would be the
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Tracing the path from acting to actualization

BY ANONYMOUS

Acting

Before coming to the program, I acted as if my actions had no consequences, as if I had control over my life, and believed both to be true. In my first few weeks, I shared with very few how severe my withdrawals truly were, acting as if I was okay. I had people in fellowship cross boundaries and acted as if it was no big deal. I played in middle circle on a regular basis, acting as if I had any length of sobriety. And now, several months in, still scared and clueless, I was acting as if I had this addiction under control. I was thinking, “My Emmy should arrive any day now...”

Action

The first thing my meeting’s new member representative told me was, “If you had time to act out six hours per day, then you have time to go to six meetings every day.” And there it was, my first step in my plan of action: Attend meetings. Seven months and seven sponsors later I had “Frankensteined” an action plan for sobriety: meetings, surrender, prayer, meditation, fire drills, sponsor calls, moderating, daily fellowship calls, gentle path worksheets, outer circle activities, and step work. All whilst not over-scheduling and remaining present for it all.

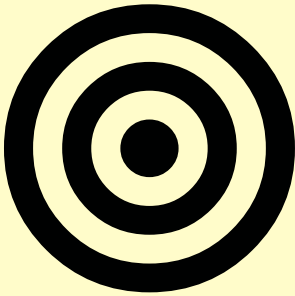
Actualization

Now, later in my pathway, I have seen that life is much simpler once the illusion of control is shattered and I have surrendered to the One who is actually in control: God. “May you find God now. Half measures availed us nothing.” is one of the most powerful messages in twelve-step literature, and it took a while for me to truly be willing to go to any length for my sobriety.

Once I comprehended that I was powerless over this addiction, I was willing to do what was necessary to stay sober, and I had developed a plan of action to put into place, I was actually ready. So long as I stop acting, take action, and work my program of recovery, I can actualize my sobriety...if only for today.

©

The Literature Committee is asking the fellowship for new personal stories to be featured in the Green Book. You don't have to be a writer, just a member sharing experience, strength, and hope. Submit your SAA recovery story, accompanied by a release form (page 35) at: saa-recovery.org/gbstories or see contact information on page 34.



The Outer Circle

By Vicki

I need some outer peace

I need some outer peace.
My insides are heaving with it.
It's time for you to try it.

I need some outer peace.
Some collaboration, neighbourly love.
I need some outer peace.

I need some peaceful streets.
Some reap what you sow and watch it grow.
Some spread some cheer and let it go.

I need some outer peace.

I need some outer peace.
Some meet in the middle.
Some ease in the struggle.
A kiss and a cuddle.

I need some outer peace.

I miss my inner peace.
I gave you a piece.

I was catch and release.
No intent to mistreat.
Not whole heart, just a beat.

I miss my inner peace.

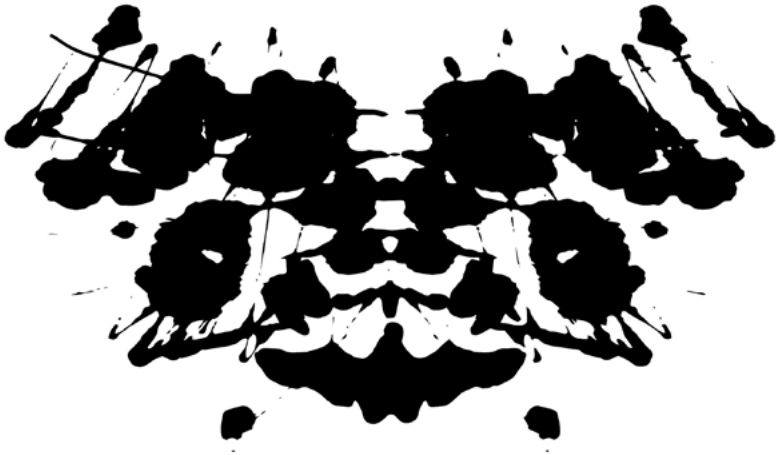
We need a little peace.
A bit of do unto others.
A bit of loving your brothers.

We need a little peace.

I need some lasting peace.
Settled home.
Not alone.

Just my phone, dog and bone.
Just keep it going.
Keep on growing.
No one's owing.
No one's knowing.
Highs and lowing.

I want to find our peace.



Mental Health and the Path to Recovery

BY KURT D

I am a sex addict. I am also bipolar with symptoms of borderline personality disorder. I have a dual diagnosis, and I know I am not alone.

Is having a serious mental illness an outside issue? As it relates to our fellowship, absolutely. But as it relates to me, an individual addict on a journey of recovery, I am doomed if I try to address my sex addiction while ignoring my mental health. They are intertwined. If I am going to live a sane and whole life, I cannot consider one without the other.

My sanity starts with my sexual sobriety. When I hit my knees every morning upon waking, I am praying for a day of sobriety, not a day without symptoms or setbacks in my mental health. I have no chance of mental and emotional equilibrium if I am not sober, because when I relapse, the downward spiral of my mental health is swift and steep.

I learned this immutable fact in my very first relapse. I came into the rooms in my late 20s, and after slipping for a short time, I got a sponsor, began working the Steps, and gained some sobriety. I had dealt with depression up to that point, and when I got sober it became apparent

that I could use additional help in that area, so I sought outside help. Things were good and stable such that after a year of sobriety and fairly good mental health my wife and I decided to have a baby.

I would never have had the tools to effectively address my mental illness if I had not worked the Steps and learned from others how to live a life in recovery.

Four years later, I relapsed, and I could not stop acting out. I remember very clearly sitting on my back patio watching the black clouds of a storm roll over the foothills as I realized the wheels had fallen off the cart and I was in trouble. Shortly after I was hospitalized for the first time. I was breaking down under the stress of returning to acting out behaviors with a wife and two young kids, and I checked myself into the hospital when I knew my life was in danger.

This began fifteen years of chronic relapse, hospitalizations, and brief yet recurring periods of homelessness. After a particularly demoralizing binge I spent two weeks in the psychiatric ward. At this point they didn't know what to do with me; I was so broken that I showed no

interest in going back to my life as a husband, father of four, and professional.

How did my addiction and my disorder get twisted and tangled? For one, when my perceptions or moods shift for the worse or my agitation goes off the chart, I want nothing more than to rip my skin off and die. I can be steady in my recovery and sobriety, and then a major mental health episode will lead me to do anything to escape. I go straight to my inner circle, and my mental health plummets. The spiral begins again, sometimes with hospitalization, sometimes not.

After fifteen years of chronic relapse, a shift occurred when I found a therapist and approach that fundamentally improved my mental health, making me more ready to address my symptoms. No doubt that the Higher Power I found in SAA guided me through this journey, but would extended, deep recovery have been possible without an acknowledgment of my mental health? I didn't find success until my mental disorder was managed more effectively through distress tolerance and mindfulness.

Just as the symptoms of my diseases are tangled, so is my recovery intertwined. Again, it starts with my recovery from sex addiction. The

most effective tool I have in managing my mental illness is a daily routine in which I use visualizations, mantras, meditations, and mindfulness to proactively diffuse triggers, regulate my emotions, and change my brain through neuroplasticity. But it started with Step Eleven and One Day at a Time. I would never have had the tools to effectively address my mental illness if I had not worked the Steps and learned from others how to live a life in recovery.

My morning routine is now focused on recovery from both my diseases. Though my disorder is outside of the fellowship of SAA, my recovery necessarily encompasses my mental health. It is my experience and my story, one I must accept if I am to stay healthy.

Note: The preceding article discusses the experience of mental illness in conjunction with sex addiction. SAA is a Twelve-Step program of recovery, and conditions requiring therapy are outside of this program. If you need support for mental illness, please contact a licensed health professional. ©



The puzzle of a life in recovery

by Brad W.

A lot of us live by fixed ideas of what life is all about. Sometimes such ideas are represented in our hearts and minds by similes and metaphors.

For instance, some may think, as the movie says, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get.” For others, life’s box of chocolates is only a cheap, thoughtless, perfunctory gift that no one ever asks for. Our interpretation is how we make sense of the world and what we believe our place in it to be.

Looking back over 51 years, I now recognize several similes and metaphors by which I've lived my life (for good or ill).

As a child, I believed that the larger world was just an extension of my hometown which, to my young mind, was simply an extension of my home and family. A little later, not consciously, I saw the world as a stage on which the epic play of my life would be acted out, with me as writer, producer, director and lead actor. That simile gave life to the egomaniac within me.

I had gradually forgotten how to live.

Following that view, as a growing inferiority complex took its place alongside my egomania, life was no longer a stage play but a battlefield in a world at war. In hindsight, for a time (and despite reams of evidence to the contrary), I honestly saw myself as a “good soldier” in the perpetual war of all against all: principled, courageous, at times even heroic. That metaphor continued to represent my picture of life for a long time after it ought to have ceased to do so. But, over time, self-limiting perfectionism gave rise to a new metaphor underpinning my picture of reality.

Whatever other metaphors may have framed my worldview since childhood, my perfectionism stands out: I was a light switch turned either all the way “ON” or all the way “OFF” for most of my life. Depending on a hundred things over which I had no control at any given moment, life was either a glad-handed “Great, thank you! How are you?” or an enormous tapestry of excrement blotting out the sun. There was no in-between.

This was the frame for my addiction. In fact, as an addict-alcoholic, I had gradually forgotten how to live. So life degenerated from actual living to bare survival, from reality to fantasy and from dreams to nightmares. Eventually the switch was turned “OFF” far more often than “ON.”

Finally, the day came when turning the lights off forever seemed like the best thing for everyone. My relationship of more than ten years was over. My then-seventeen-year-old child could barely stand the sight of me. My career of more than twenty years in a noble, helping profession was on life support. I had no friends left. There was still a roof over my head, but my house had long since stopped feeling like home. And, when I looked in the mirror, I could no longer recognise the pallid, emaciated ghost with black

holes for eyes staring back at me. I wouldn't accept a car ride home from that apparition, let alone willingly spend the rest of my life with him. This metaphor was the most unsettling of them all.

So what happened? The biggest thing that happened was I found my way into recovery. There, I found community. In that community I found growing pockets of peace and self-respect, and in those pockets, I found courage and gratitude. Most importantly though, I found a whole new definition of humility. My light switch now had a midpoint between grandiosity and self-loathing; my emotional spectrum operates on a dimmer switch.

Now, rather than a stage or a battlefield or a switch, my life is much more like a giant jigsaw puzzle. The puzzle has more than 10,000 pieces. Most of them are in a huge pile in the middle. But the four sides of the puzzle are coming together nicely and working their way towards the center, one piece at a time. Some of the pieces are damaged. Others are misplaced at the moment. But I don't need to worry about the entire picture anymore. Not all at once. All I need to focus on is finding the next piece and snapping it into place as neatly and cleanly as I can.

Before working the Twelve Steps of SAA and getting recovery, I would have seen only the massive heap of disorganized pieces in the middle. Now, even on my hardest days, I can see the progress I've made. I'm genuinely grateful for it and genuinely excited that there still so many pieces yet to put in place. After sixteen months in the rooms, I've only just started this enormous puzzle called "Life On Life's Terms." And I've learned one of the most important lessons of all – one that somehow escaped me for most of my life: That there are no short-cuts or quick fixes to the important things in life. Everything important takes time and consistent effort. The effort is up to me. The time is up to God. And, today, right now, I have time. ©

I've learned one of the most important lessons of all – that there are no short-cuts or quick fixes to the important things in life.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Owning my Sexuality

BY ANONYMOUS

*Embracing my
sexual energy as a
part of me seems to
work better.*

*Do you have at
least five years of
sobriety? Work Step
Twelve by sharing
your experience,
strength, and hope
in The Outer
Circle. Submit your
story at
saa-recovery.org/toc.*

Sexual energy is part of my soul.

When I rely on it too much to feel alive, my life gets out of balance. But if I try to disown it or cut it off to make my life seem better or less shameful, I am compartmentalizing, cutting off, or suppressing myself.

Trying this never makes myself go away.

Embracing my sexual energy as a part of me seems to work better.

This kind of acceptance embraces all that I am. With it comes awareness of vulnerabilities that can lead to problems when this part of myself is not kept in check.

Keeping my parts in check is self-love that leads to balance. Disowning my sexuality or cutting myself off has the opposite effect. ©



STORIES OF SERVICE

The Privilege of Service

BY JIM L

Service begun at the local group may naturally extend to the intergroup and even to the ISO.

Stories of Service inspire others to be of service. Send your word story to toc@saa-recovery.org.

Two basic tenets of the Twelve-Step program point to the necessity of getting involved in service. The first is getting out of self. From day one, we learn that selfishness — self-centeredness — is the root of our troubles. The program is a step-by-step prescription for moving out of self.

As a natural progression, the second tenet is recognizing the needs of others. As we work the program and as we surrender our will to the God of our understanding, we find that our sensitivity to the needs of others increases noticeably. We are also taught that we must give away what we have in order to keep it.

Recognition of a need often occurs when a member asks us to serve as his or her sponsor. We are immediately faced with the question, “Am I willing to help someone else find recovery?” There is no greater challenge or benefit for us than being the facilitator of another’s recovery. There may be times when a service role may be inconvenient or personally costly, but the reward is always well worth the effort.

At a recent Let’s Talk session, the point was made that service begins at home. Beginning with sponsorship and growing into other acts of service at the local level, we begin to see how service helps others and reinforces our own recovery. Recovery is not a solo endeavor; we recover in community. I am told that a piece of coal removed from the fire will soon

go out. So it is with service. If we don't serve, we lose our desire to help others and our recovery suffers.

Service begun at the local group may naturally extend to the intergroup and even to the International Service Organization (ISO). For a local group to connect to the larger fellowship, each group elects a group service representative (GSR). The GSR attends an area assembly. The area assembly discusses matters of interest to its member groups and elects a delegate to represent the groups in that area in the ISO Conference. The Conference, in turn, is designed to serve as the effective voice of the fellowship within the ISO.

In support of the ISO mission to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery, there are numerous opportunities for volunteers to serve on committees and subcommittees that have been developed to focus on specific needs within the fellowship. Any member can participate in the various committees. Participation in this way is often an introduction to international service, leading to possible service on the ISO Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, or Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom).

To learn more about these opportunities, consult the ISO service website (saa-iso.org) and click on the International Service tab in the left-hand menu. There, you will find descriptions of each of the elective positions, including estimated time commitments for each and instructions on how to submit a service résumé for consideration by the NomCom.

Service opportunities abound — locally and within the ISO. Each of us has talents and skills, and those gifts can be applied to help other addicts seeking recovery. Local groups and the ISO need members to step up and make a commitment to service. Please consider how you might serve within this life-saving fellowship. It is a privilege not to be missed.

“Service in SAA ranges from one-on-one outreach over a cup of coffee to the worldwide outreach performed by the International Service Organization (ISO).” - Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 75

DEAR WILL

Surrender?

BY WILL

*Surrender can
look very different
for each of us in
recovery from sex
addiction.*

*If you have a question
for Will, please send
an email to [Men4SAA@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org).*

Dear Will,

I was at an SAA meeting the other day sharing about how, even though I have been attending meetings for a while now, I am still struggling with my sexual addiction. I am beginning to wonder if SAA is for me.

After the meeting a fellow approached me and asked if I had fully surrendered yet. I thought I had, but — Surrender? What does that even mean? I have been going to meetings and have given up some of the people, places, and websites that were part of my addiction. What else do I have to give up?

**Sincerely,
Sir Render**

Dear Sir Render,

For such a frequently used term like “surrender,” you would think there would be a specific guide on just how to do that. My experience has been that surrender can look very different for each of us in recovery from sex addiction. I have also found that my pathway to surrender has been ongoing and evolving and now covers new areas that were not even on my radar when I first began my recovery. Let me share with you a bit about my relationship with surrender and maybe it will help you with yours.

At the beginning of my recovery, I worked really hard to give up things associated with my acting out. I gave up going to bars, visiting certain websites, cruising, and other behaviors that always led me back to acting out. This really helped me gain some abstinence. However,

I eventually learned that surrender was less about what I was saying “NO” to, which was another attempt on my part to control my addiction, and more about what I was saying “YES” to: people, ideas, and actions. By surrendering I was giving up the fight on my own terms, and giving in to the wisdom of the program, sex addicts who had gone before me, the Twelve Steps, and my Higher Power. My surrender was not only saying “NO” to my addiction, but also “YES” to recovery.

For me this pathway to surrender meant ignoring all the maybes, mights, and coulds that present the suggestion of our program — instead, considering them as directions on how to work our program. I was not at a place to allow my addiction to decide to pick and choose from the Green Book what I was and was not willing to do to get sober. I was told that while the book was written in the voice of suggestions, they were truly polite directions, and surrendering to those directions helped me work the program.

Like many of our brothers and sisters in recovery, my first act of surrender involved attending SAA meetings. Attendance at meetings, however, was not a sufficient surrender for me. I had to participate in the meetings,



get involved in the fellowship, connect with people before, during, and after meetings, and seek opportunities to be of service to the meetings. This type of surrender allowed me to slowly release the death grip I had on my addiction and surrender to a new way of life in recovery.

One of the most important areas for me to actively surrender was in working the Twelve Steps of SAA. My first sponsor showed me through the steps using a specific working guide. This guide had all sorts of questions for some steps and inventories on others. This was a big moment of surrender for me. This sponsor, however, explained to me that the steps were more than a series of worksheets that I would complete; they are a series of actions that I could take, and continue taking, that would teach me the spiritual principles of the program, and show me how to surrender my addiction and my old way of living.

Surrender isn't just what we say “NO” to from our addiction. It may have a lot more to do with what we say “YES” to in recovery.

Will

FROM THE BOARD

Board urges areas to elect delegates for the conference!

**BY JIM L.
BOARD MEMBER**

We value your input. Email the board at

board@saa-recovery.org

As this issue of *The Outer Circle* goes to press, we are only six weeks away from the annual meeting of the ISO Conference. As a reminder, the Conference is designed to provide spiritual guidance and to serve as the effective voice of the SAA fellowship within the International Service Organization (ISO).

For that reason, the Board of Trustees encourages—even urges—every ISO area to hold an area assembly and to elect a delegate to participate in the annual meeting. Several important items are on the agenda for the meeting on October 12-13, and your Board is very much interested in knowing the opinions of the fellowship on the issues facing the ISO.

At present, the Board has a diverse membership—members from every US time zone and from the UK. We do our best to look after the well-being of the ISO, but we do not presume to always know the needs and opinions of the fellowship at large. The Conference is the vehicle that allows the fellowship to have a voice in the overall direction of the ISO.

If your area is inactive or you are not sure about its status, contact the ISO office, and you will be directed to members who can answer your questions and help you connect with your area or discuss how to get your area up and running. We need an all-out effort by group service representatives (GSRs) and area leaders to be sure the voice of the fellowship is heard. ©

Board Actions

July: Approved Code of Conduct for ISO sponsored and managed events.

August: Approved IT security policy.

Contact the ISO:

- » Phone: [713-869-4902](tel:713-869-4902)
- » Email: info@saa-recovery.org
- » Board: board@saa-recovery.org
- » Literature Committee: litcom@saa-recovery.org
- » Conference Steering Committee (CSC): csc@saa-recovery.org
- » TOC Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org
- » Submit literature to LitCom: saa-recovery.org/submit
- » Submit to *The Outer Circle*: saa-recovery.org/toc
- » Submit a story for the Green book: saa-recovery.org/gbstories
- » Find a meeting: saa-recovery.org/meetings
- » More on page 34

FROM THE GREEN BOOK

We depend on each other to stay sexually sober, and SAA depends on our service to keep functioning. Service in SAA ranges from one-on-one outreach over a cup of coffee to the worldwide outreach performed by the International Service Organization (ISO). Helping keep SAA running is an extension of carrying our message of recovery. Our voluntary efforts are essential to the success of the fellowship and the recovery of every sex addict who is a part of it.

Personal service, one addict helping another, is the most essential way we carry our recovery message. We perform this type of service whenever we greet newcomers or listen to someone in the fellowship who needs to talk. We may sponsor others in the program, visit or write to addicts in jail or prison, or be available to take phone calls from members who are reaching out. In all cases, we share our experience and offer support. The paradox is that service helps us to stay sexually sober ourselves, regardless of the benefit that others may receive from us. We have learned that the best insurance against relapse is helping another sex addict.

At every level of our service structure we are guided by the Twelve Traditions of SAA

In addition to personal service, we provide general services that help to keep our groups functioning. These services include finding places to meet, providing public information and outreach, and producing and distributing literature. We need trusted servants and committee members at every level: from the officers of our local groups, to the delegates we send to the International Convention, to the representatives and staff serving us at ISO. All of these efforts require the voluntary financial contributions of SAA members and groups.

Our local meeting is the foundation of our personal recovery. Without a healthy and well-run meeting, the recovery of every member is threatened. Each group needs trusted servants to perform the tasks necessary to keep the meeting available to all. Some of the tasks trusted servants perform include: chairing the meeting, ordering literature, answering letters to the P.O. Box or calls to the phone line, collecting donations, and paying rent. A group may hold business meetings on a regular basis or as needed, in order

to elect trusted servants and make the decisions necessary for running the meeting smoothly.

Our local meeting is also the foundation of the SAA service structure. Through our local meetings, we have a voice in SAA as a whole. Our groups send delegates to the annual International Convention. The delegates bring the decisions and concerns of their local groups to bear on matters affecting SAA as a whole. In this way we each contribute to the decision-making process of the entire fellowship. We rely on our Higher Power for guidance in all our deliberations.



In some areas, local meetings band together and form intergroups to provide services that a single meeting could not provide on its own. Intergroups may publish meeting directories and newsletters, organize area events, serve as a clearinghouse for literature orders, sponsor a phone line or a website, provide outreach to the community, or perform any number of other services as determined by the needs of the member groups.

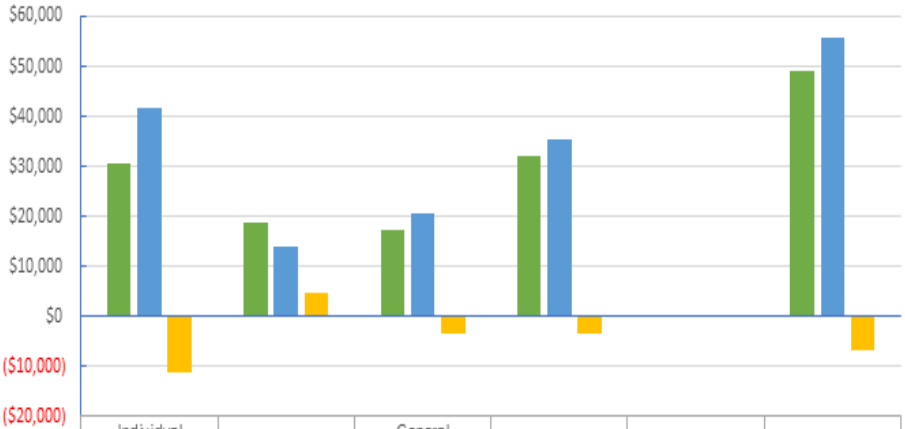
At the international level, the ISO provides services that member groups and intergroups cannot provide on their own. ISO helps to ensure that our SAA message remains uniform and available to new groups worldwide as they arise. In addition, ISO answers letters, phone calls and emails asking for information, maintains the world meeting directory, operates a website, publishes and provides translations of SAA literature, organizes international events and conferences, and provides many other services determined by the needs and funded by the contributions of the member groups.

At every level of our service structure we are guided by the Twelve Traditions of SAA, as adapted from the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Just as the Steps teach us the spiritual principles necessary for healthy individual recovery, the Traditions embody the spiritual principles necessary for the healthy functioning of our groups. Adhering to these principles safeguards our fellowship, thus protecting the recovery of each individual member. We have found that they also help us to act with integrity in our personal relationships and as responsible members of society.

From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 75-76

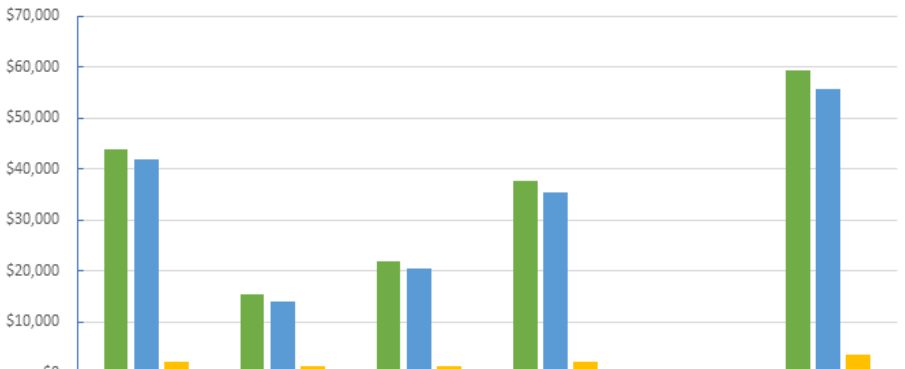
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

June 2024 Donations



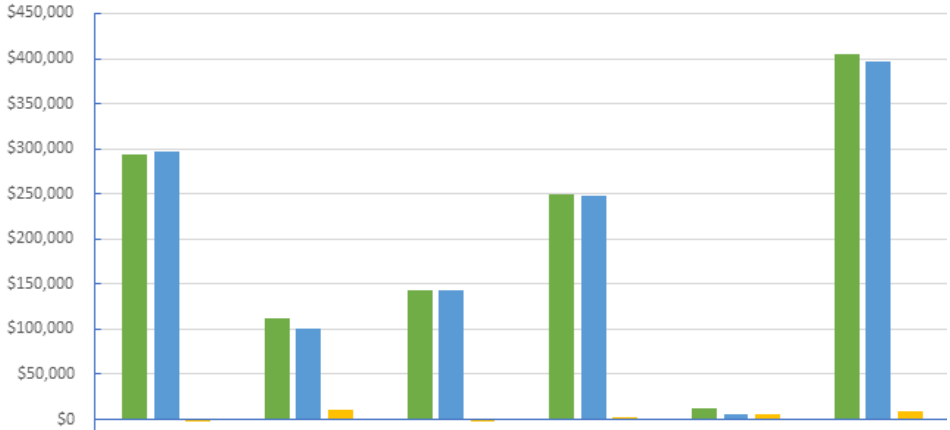
	Individual Donations	Group Donations	General Donations	Lifeline Partners	Other Donations	Total Donations
Actual	\$30,564	\$18,631	\$17,191	\$31,994	\$10	\$49,195
Budget	\$41,800	\$14,050	\$20,550	\$35,300	\$0	\$55,850
Difference	(\$11,236)	\$4,581	(\$3,359)	(\$3,306)	\$10	(\$6,655)

July 2024 Donations



	Individual Donations	Group Donations	General Donations	Lifeline Partners	Other Donations	Total Donations
Actual	\$43,941	\$15,360	\$21,751	\$37,539	\$10	\$59,301
Budget	\$41,800	\$14,050	\$20,550	\$35,300	\$0	\$55,850
Difference	\$2,141	\$1,310	\$1,201	\$2,239	\$10	\$3,451

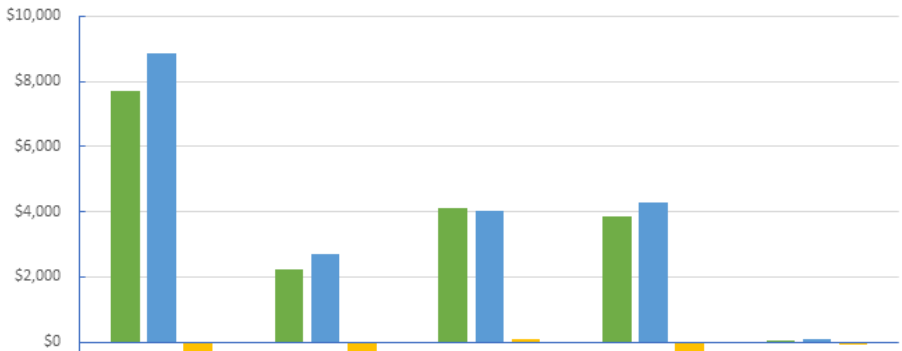
2024 YTD Donations (to July)



(\$50,000)

	Individual Donations	Group Donations	General Donations	Lifeline Partners	Other Donations	Total Donations
Actual	\$293,989	\$111,717	\$142,621	\$250,018	\$13,067	\$405,706
Budget	\$297,100	\$100,300	\$143,850	\$247,100	\$6,450	\$397,400
Difference	(\$3,111)	\$11,417	(\$1,229)	\$2,918	\$6,617	\$8,306

June 2024 Sales

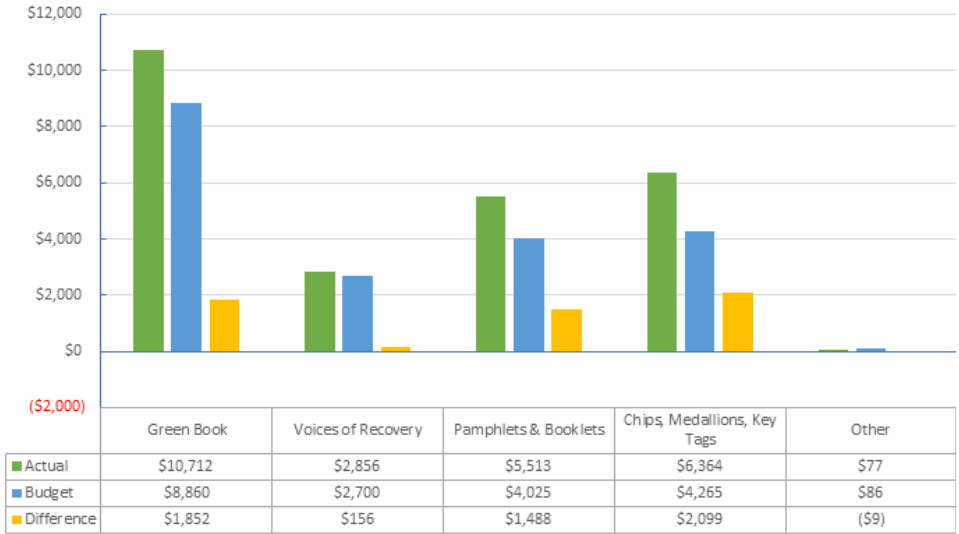


(\$2,000)

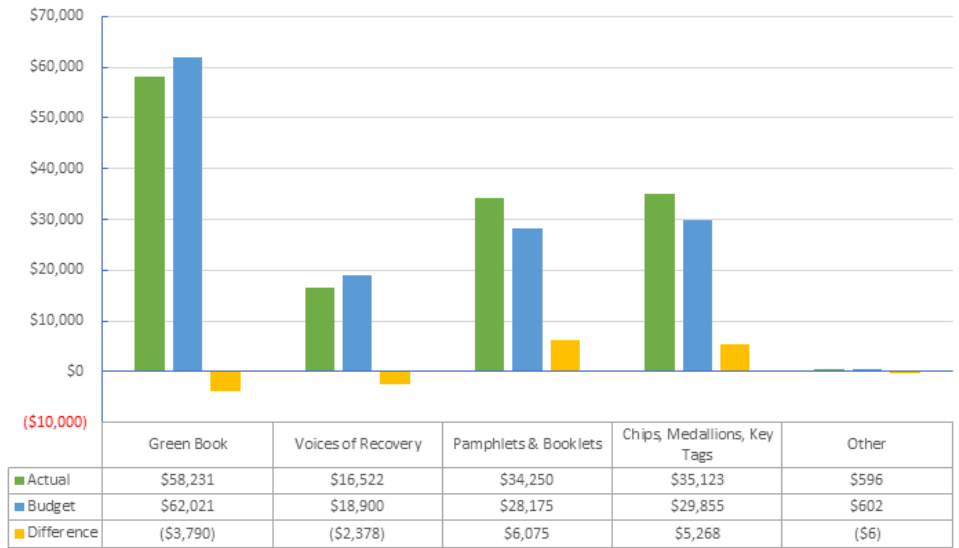
	Green Book	Voices of Recovery	Pamphlets & Booklets	Chips, Medallions, Key Tags	Other
Actual	\$7,700	\$2,236	\$4,130	\$3,855	\$21
Budget	\$8,860	\$2,700	\$4,025	\$4,265	\$86
Difference	(\$1,160)	(\$464)	\$105	(\$410)	(\$65)

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

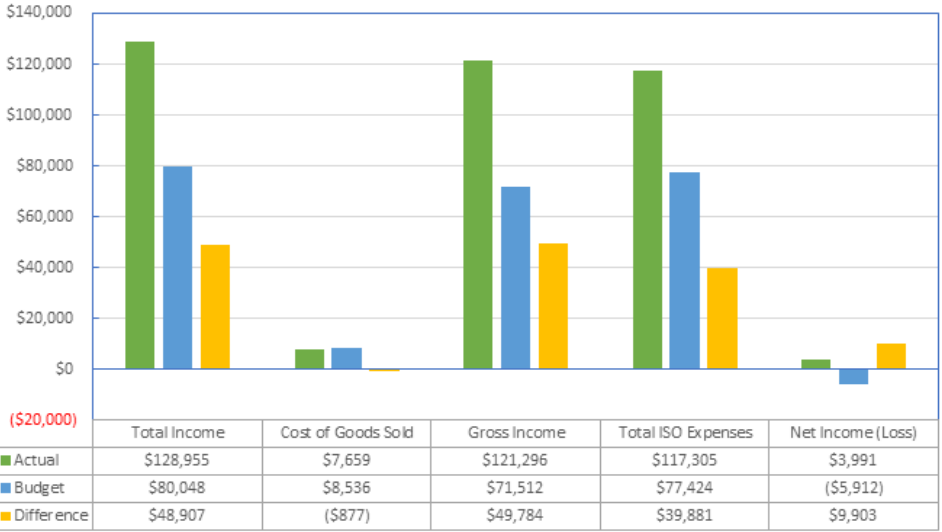
July 2024 Sales



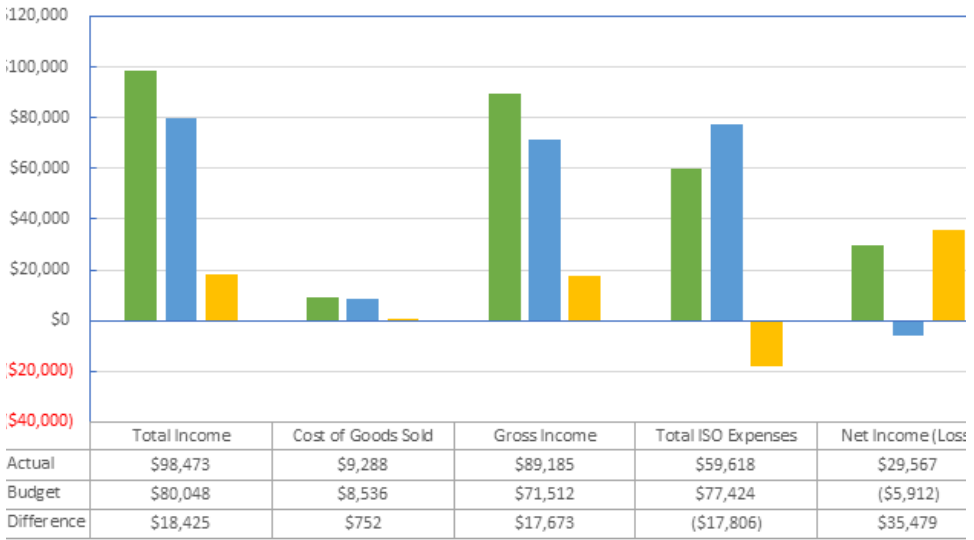
2024 YTD Sales (to July)



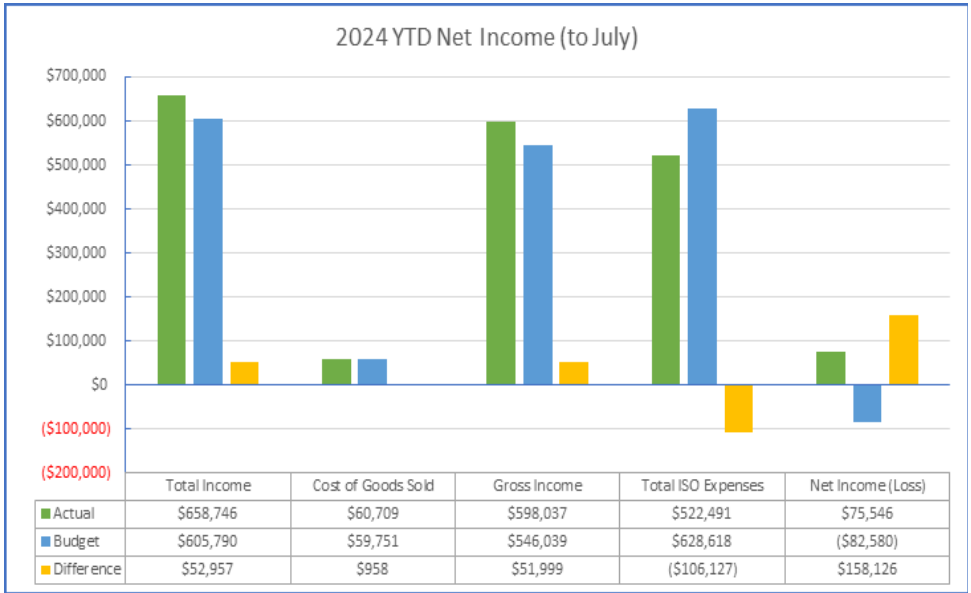
June 2024 Net Income



July 2024 Net Income



FINANCIAL SUMMARY



The 2023 audit fieldwork has started. It is projected for completion in September.

Overall, donations are slightly above the budget. There has been a decline in Green Book Sales, and overall sales are slightly below budget for the year.

Expenses are below budget in part because the office has been operating with open positions for most of the year. One, the Web Developer, was filled at the end of May while we continue to look for an Administrative Support Associate. Additionally, the 2023 audit, which was in the budget for earlier this year, has yet to be billed.

The 2024 Convention was held from May 31 – June 2. One hundred ninety-three members and fifteen guests attended the convention. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Columbus Convention Committee, net income was substantially above budget.

Thank you all for your generous support!

Tracy R.,
Executive Director

ISO NEWS

It's not too late to serve at the international level!

The ISO Conference Nominating Committee has begun vetting candidates for the open Conference-elected positions on the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, and Nominating Committee.

There may still be a place for you! If you are interested in serving, complete a service résumé at saa-iso.org/svc/.

How you can help?

- Talk about the importance of doing service among all with whom you come into contact.
- Announce at every meeting this month the need for more ISO trusted servants and where to find and how to submit the service résumé form to be considered (see below).
- Identify potentially interested members you know and give them a personal call.

If you have any questions about the process, please email info@saa-recovery.org or call/WhatsApp +1 713-869-4902.

The service résumé is available at: saa-iso.org/svc/

Registration for Conference Is Ongoing

The ISO Delegate Conference (business meeting) is coming October 12 - 13. Call or email the office for more information. +1 713-869-4902, info@saa-recovery.org. This event is separate from the ISO convention.

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone/WhatsApp: +1 713-869-4902
Fax: 713-692-0105

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

Editor: Alex B.

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees also has an e-mail box, which may be used to register comments, positive or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff: board@saa-recovery.org.

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Board

Bill I (Chair); BJ M; Bob H; Brian S (Treasurer);
Carl D; Carol Ann M; Eddie N; Jim L (Secretary);
Karen S (Vice-chair); Michelle W;
Tim A (Vice-secretary); Wayne K

Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org

Office Staff

Executive Director: Tracy R: director@saa-iso.net
Associate Director and Publications Manager:
Cody S
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition Manager:
Phillip B
Information Technician and Prison Outreach
Manager: Jonathan C
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Alex B (TOC Editor); Chris D; Darren S; David
C; Deb W; Jim P; Juan K; Mike K; Peter L; Ruth
(Chair); Sergio; Stephen P; Zach R.

Calendar

The most up-to-date committee schedule and information about joining any ISO committee can be found at saa-iso.org.

Prisoner Letter Writing Program

Writing and sponsoring prisoners by correspondence continues to be the mainstay of the ISO prisoner outreach program. In addition, the Prisoner Outreach Committee has encouraged members of the fellowship to consider the possibility of starting SAA meetings in a nearby prison. As a result of the pandemic, a new possibility has emerged—namely, meeting by video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference can open new opportunities to carry the SAA message of recovery into prisons. If interested in learning more—whether you are in the free world or in prison—contact the ISO office by telephone (713-869-4902), email (info@saa-recovery.org), or postal mail (PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community)

The Twelfth Step says that, “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” At the ISO level, this is done in part through the work of the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee. If you would like to handle the Twelfth Step at the ISO level, contact PhillipB@saa-iso.net or call the ISO at 713-869-4902.

LifeLine Partners

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. Don't worry if you're not a writer. Tell us your story and we'll do the rest. If we have any questions, we'll contact you.

There are three ways to submit your story.

- First, you can submit online at saa-recovery.org/toc. This is the easiest for most people.
- Second, email toc@saa-recovery.org. If possible, include a copy of the release form below.
- Third, mail your submission, with the release form, to ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Requested deadlines and suggested topics are below. Email toc@saa-recovery.org if you have any questions.

Issue	Deadline	Topic
» November/December	» October 1	» Amends

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

The Twelve Steps of SAA

1. We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.

The Twelve Traditions of SAA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.