

CHAIR'S REPORT

The 2020-2021 General Service Board was composed of eight Class A (debtor) trustees: Bill D., Josie P., Matthew E., Paul M., Rob B., Roger H., Sharon S., and Tom B. Our Class B (non-debtor) trustees were Bob D., Karma K, and Tom R. We were grateful to have welcomed our second trustee from outside the U.S. in 2020.

While Class A trustees are debtors in service to the fellowship that often saved their lives, Class B trustees are not members of D.A. We are especially grateful for these dedicated trusted servants on our "working board."

Because D.A. is a relatively small organization with two part-time employees, the trustees carry out much of the actual work needed to keep the not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) entity thriving and sustainable. The board is responsible for financial oversight, risk management, and all legal and fiduciary responsibilities required of not-for-profit corporations. The board oversees that staff and special workers act ethically and with integrity so D.A. can continue its mission of reaching debtors who still suffer.

We are also charged with ensuring that our day-to-day operations follow the D.A. *Bylaws* while being aware that our organization must comply with laws and regulations of state and federal governments. The Board of Trustees has fiduciary duties, including the duty of care, duty of obedience, and duty of loyalty.

Each volunteer member of the D.A. Board of Trustees appreciates the tremendous responsibility we have been charged with as "trusted servants." In making the best decisions for the Fellowship in all matters of the administration and operation of D.A., we act slowly and prudently, and listen to the will of the groups and the Conference, while carrying out the business of the D.A. Fellowship.

Most importantly, the board is subject to the *Bylaws*, which "*cannot be in conflict with the Twelve Traditions, the D.A. Conference Charter, or the laws of the State of New York or the United States.*" The board is "*expected to exercise the powers vested in them by law in a manner consonant with the faith that permeates and guides the Fellowship, inspired by the Twelve Steps, in accordance with the Traditions, and in keeping with the Certificate (of Incorporation) and the bylaws*".

The *Preamble to the Bylaws of Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, Inc*, states, in part, "*Debtors Anonymous...is a corporation created and designated by the Fellowship to maintain services for compulsive debtors who seek, through Debtors Anonymous, the means to arrest the disease of compulsive debting through the application to their own lives of the Twelve Steps, adapted from the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which constitute the recovery program upon which the Fellowship is founded.*"

Trustees participate on multiple GSB Committees. Full reports can be found in the delegate binder. Because we are not giving reports at the Conference as we normally would at a live WSC, I will summarize the service the GSB trustees have provided this year, most often as members of a team.

General administrative accomplishments include:

- Communicated with A.A. GSO and respectfully requested in writing that A.A. allow D.A. to adapt the Steps and Traditions to change male pronouns to gender neutral pronouns (awaiting response).
- Consulted with other 12 Step fellowships about best practices during pandemic.
- Discussed co-hosting “Day of Sharing” for leadership of 12 Step fellowships - (usually held annually in person at the A.A. GSO in NYC) – by videoconference in 2021.
- Consulted with governance specialist and African American parliamentarian for guidance and best practices to promote anti-racism.
- Evaluated the feasibility of holding 2021 World Service Conference in-person at the Newark Marriott as per our two-year contract, or whether the pandemic would preclude the in-person conference again in 2021. Kept abreast of the weekly “New Jersey COVID-19 Updates” by email.
- Determined in February 2021 that the WSC would be held via videoconference. Negotiated the existing contract with the hotel to cancel the in-person event which resulted in no costs assessed to the fellowship.
- Investigated options for liability insurance required for the contract for the 2022 WSC in London. It has been challenging to find an insurance company willing to underwrite liability coverage for a U.S. not-for-profit event held outside the U.S. Insurers have been hesitant to underwrite policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the emerging virus variants and the instability of the travel and hospitality industries.
- Reviewed insurance policies for the GSO in Needham: updated Business Insurance for contents and liability and increased coverage based on addition of a new adjoining office space. Reviewed D.A.’s workers’ compensation, directors and officers, and other insurance products.
- Renewed copyrights and trademarks for multiple D.A. assets.
- Convened an ad hoc committee to address issues of race, debt, and the Traditions, and to reply to requests by delegates for clarification of procedures.
- Board members attended a seminar on “Inclusive Leadership” offered by the Harvard Business School Club that had been recommended by a member of the UUOC. D.A. employees (were required to) and board members (voluntarily) completed 12-hour anti-racism training offered online by the University of Colorado, Boulder. Several board members registered for additional anti-racism training courses, including an “Implicit Bias Module Series,” offered online by the Ohio State University.

GSB Office Committee

- Negotiated new leases and optional extensions for Needham office.
- Investigated options for possible relocation to Tier 1 cities based on interest from Intergroups.
- Provided human resources training for our two part-time employees, (Teresa H. and Patti B.).
- Conducted employee performance reviews. GSB office liaisons conducted meetings with Office Manager (weekly) and literature fulfillment clerk (as needed).

- Performed a physical inventory of our literature before the close of the fiscal year (June 30th of each year). Trustee members of the GSB Office Committee spent three days at the GSO in Needham in June and counted the literature: (we had 7,594 books, 51,950 pamphlets, 12,971 bookmarks, 9,567 cards, and 243 thumb drives included in our inventory at the end of this fiscal year!)
- Assembled heavy-duty shelves for storage of additional literature in GSO. Assisted GSO staff with configuration of new office space. Organized the storage room for improved space utilization and workflow. Assessed need for and approved purchase of new office equipment. Interviewed and hired general contractor to complete office upgrades. Met with building owner to discuss new space, lease, and insurance requirements.

GSB Finance Committee:

- Maintained the Income and Spending Plan for FY 2020-2021 and prepared the 2021-2022 Income and Spending Plan for D.A. Worked with D.A.'s bookkeeper and accounting firm to prepare and review taxes and other legally-required yearly filings.
- Generated monthly reports for the WSC Resource Development Committee and for members of the fellowship.
- Paid invoices promptly.

GSB Conference Committee (with Executive Committee):

- Requested quotes, costs, determined the logistics, and assessed the feasibility of providing simultaneous interpretation services in multiple languages at the WSC.
- Held multiple phone and videoconference planning meetings with London, U.K. venue to plan 2022 WSC – the first WSC to be held outside of the U.S.!
- Planned and assisted the WSC Conference Committee and Host Committee with the virtual 2021 WSC, including Orientation Sessions, Registration Packet, Mentor-Mentee program for delegates (new program, with WSC Conference Committee!), and compiled and distributed Conference materials and videoconference links.
- Interviewed and hired videoconference specialists and event coordinator for WSC 2021.
- Developed spending plan for 2021 WSC.
- Responsible for all aspects of WSC registration process and, with the Host Committee, facilitated payments for John H. Scholarship program. With the GSO, maintained records of payments, inquiries, refunds, and resolution of challenges.

GSB Communications and Technology Committee:

- Upgraded and maintained D.A. website (with the assistance of Project Contributor, Jeffrey F.), and addressed and resolved “glitches” as they were identified.
- With the technology and communications ACMs and PCs, (Sherri H. and Staci L.), produced four issues each of the *Ways & Means* and the *D.A. Focus*, including layout and design, editing, and proofreading.
- Continued to assess for best practices and improvements for the D.A. website.
- Sent out approximately 90 eNews blasts to members of the fellowship.

GSB International and Literature Translation and licensing Committee:

- With the ACM and PCs for International and Literature Translations and Licensing, (Christine S. and Rody D.), worked with members outside the U.S. on literature translations and licensing projects in languages other than English.
- Assisted WSC International Committee to look for ways to provide literature for groups outside the U.S. who have difficulty getting D.A. literature.
- Hosted two “listening calls” for members outside the U.S.

GSB Public Information Committee:

- With our ACM for Public Information (Siobhan K.) responded to requests for interviews by members of the media (newspaper, radio, TV, podcasts).
- With ACM, facilitated Media Contact Training for D.A. members.

GSB Nominations and Procedures Committee

- Interviewed candidates for the General Service Board, Appointed Committee Member, and Project Contributor.
- Implemented a streamlined online application process for GSB and ACM applicants.
- Developed credit card questionnaire for Class A trustee and ACM applicants.
- Encouraged members to consider opportunities at the world service level.

GSB Literature Publications and Literature Services Committees:

- With the Literature Services ACMs (Janet S. and Rachel A.), reviewed and edited literature projects, including the *Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA*, the first draft chapters (in progress) of D.A.’s Basic Text, and D.A.’s meditation book.
- Collated all D.A. Conference-approved literature and formatted for electronic versions during COVID-19 pandemic. Investigated options for publication with multiple vendors, assessed pricing structure, and implemented process for print-on-demand. Arranged for D.A. literature to become available electronically. Continue to assess options for publishing with multiple vendors.
- Hired and wrote contracts for writers, copy editors, layout and design, and proofreaders for D.A. literature projects.
- Investigated options for publication of *Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA*. Proceeded with publication for print-on-demand, available worldwide (in many, but not all, locations), as well as ordering copies for the GSO.
- Applied for new copyright for *Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA*.

These are some of the projects that we are responsible for addressing as a “working board.” It is a team approach, with the participation of trustees, appointed committee members, project contributors, employees, special workers, and professional consultants.

“Life on Life’s Terms”

The 2020-2021 Conference year certainly presented its challenges. Most face-to-face meetings were shuttered and became virtual – either on a videoconference platform or by phone.

As HP would have it, there were some “silver linings” that emerged during the pandemic. Newcomers and longer-term members were able to attend virtual meetings hosted all over the world, many of which continue today, providing a new look for a “home group.”

Because of the pandemic, we held our first virtual World Service Conference in 2020. This enabled more members from outside the U.S. to attend the WSC. Even more non-U.S. delegates, (thirty, from nine different countries), are at this virtual WSC, which includes the most total delegates ever, 169, to attend a World Service Conference.

We hope to resume in-person in 2022, with our first World Service Conference outside the U.S. It will be hosted by the U.K. Intergroup in London, in August 2022. We are truly becoming an international fellowship!

Generosity

As you will hear in the next report from our Treasurer, D.A. members have responded with generous financial support over the past year.

We have added line items in our 2021-22 Income and Spending Plan to support the mission of D.A., including increases in spending for public information and outreach. We are assessing for opportunities to hire special workers to serve additional needs of the fellowship. We cannot let D.A. continue to be one of the “best kept secrets” in 12 Step recovery.

We trust that our members will continue this spirit of generosity with Seventh Tradition contributions.

One example of an idea that was generated during committee work at the WSC came from the WSC Resource Development Committee. Several years ago, the RDC proposed “Lucky 7th,” a 7th Tradition monthly event encouraging members and groups who are able, within their spending plans, to contribute \$7 to the GSO on the 7th of every month.

This small action can have a great impact. If 1,000 groups and members participate, it would result in a monthly increase in contributions of \$7,000, and a yearly increase of \$84,000 USD.

Let’s continue our practice of generous financial support for the fellowship – and thank you!

Challenges and Solutions

D.A. has weathered plenty of controversy over the years.

This year, as in other years, members wrote Issues and Concerns expressing concern for the fellowships’ lack of focus on D.A.’s primary purpose of not incurring unsecured debt and disregard of the Traditions.

This group of delegates will be asked to evaluate sensitive and difficult issues. Some of these may be related to how we come to D.A. and how we recover in this voluntary, spiritual, 12 Step program. There may be differences of opinion about D.A.’s primary purpose of not incurring unsecured debt, the relevance of the Traditions, and what constitute “inside” and “outside” issues.

One member, in writing their Issue and Concern, quoted A.A.'s Bill W., speaking about the Traditions: "May we never forget that without permanent unity we can offer little lasting relief to the scores of thousands yet to join us in their quest for freedom." The Traditions guide us in our relationships with other members of the fellowship to promote unity and inclusion for all who seek recovery from compulsive debting.

Harsh and hurtful words have been exchanged among some members during this past year.

If we cannot be civil and respectful with one another, we have lost our way. We have no common ground. If we cannot communicate within the framework of the Twelve Traditions, then we don't have a common language.

One trusted servant shared, "I'm so sad that some members are paying such consequences for things that could have been settled through communication, HP, prayer, and the need for human connection and understanding, rather than what looks and feels like so much hatred, exclusion, separation, and lack of the willingness or want for better understanding of facts or feelings."

Our hope for all who seek relief and recovery from incurring new unsecured debt is that we will find refuge in D.A. Our hope for our work together this year is that we can come with humility and respect for all others in love and service.

In 2008, the board chair wrote, "Without accepting that we are compulsive debtors who need to stop debting to deal effectively with the disease's symptoms, our Fellowship will never reap the real rewards of recovery."

They continued, "Our individual recovery depends on the unity we share in our groups and here at this Conference. Let's do all we can to focus our service work on carrying the message to the debtor who still suffers...Let's balance our interest in underearning, prosperity, and visions with renewed commitment to the basics: the Steps, Sponsorship, the Traditions, and Service. We are the ones who can do this, here at this Conference. The work that we do here ensures that the D.A. program will be here for those who need it, whenever they need it."

I am so grateful to be able to give back to the fellowship that saved my life. D.A. was here when I really needed it. Recovery and service in D.A. can be challenging, but it has rewarded me with ongoing awareness, gratitude, and serenity that I never dreamed was possible.

When I first came to D.A. I thought it was all about the money, and no matter how much I had – I felt like it would never be enough. I now define recovery as being humbly aware of and grateful for the abundance my Higher Power has already provided. By working the Steps, that god-sized hole of feeling like I never am and never have enough has been filled with the spiritual solution of recovery available to us in D.A.

Being of service has been an integral part of my D.A. recovery. Service really is the secret. I try to "just say yes" when asked, with the caveat that my greatest form of service is to not incur

unsecured debt one day at a time. Sometimes I want to shout about my D.A. blessings from the rooftops, but I realize that it is only by attraction, not promotion, that we can inspire hope in recovery for others.

I have come to believe that my Higher Power is my employer. I know that being of service in D.A. is both the best job I have ever had and the greatest gift I could have ever received.

As we go into our Committee and Caucus work now, and for the rest of the 2021-22 Conference year, I pray that the gentle grace and inspiration of a loving Higher Power will guide us all in this service.

I am humbled and honored to serve the fellowship of Debtors Anonymous.

With gratitude and in service,

Sharon S., GSB Chair, 2020-2021