

■ 58th General Service Conference

NEW YORK, May 3, 2008 — The 134 members who make up this year's General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States and Canada convened in New York City, April 27–May 3, for the 58th annual meeting of what many consider A.A.'s business meeting.

The theme of this year's Conference was "Communication and Participation — The Key to Unity and Self-Support." Conference members were the delegates from the 93 service areas of the U.S. and Canada, Class A (nonalcoholic) and Class B (alcoholic) trustees, and directors and staff members of the two corporate boards—A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine Inc.

Registration for the weeklong event took place Sunday morning, when Conference members lined up to eagerly receive their copy of the Conference Manual. The Opening Session began with a welcome from chairman of the General Service Board Leonard Blumenthal. Then the Conference was officially opened with the roll call, by Greg M., G.S.O.'s general manager.

France J., of Northeast Québec, was the delegate chairperson, and though French-speaking, she delivered her greeting in English: "I stand before you at the mike to welcome you in the language of Shakespeare. I hope my pronunciation is correct...."

Chuck B., West Central regional trustee, delivered the keynote address, in which he said, "we must strive to keep our primary purpose first and foremost as we progress through the week and to do what is best for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole."

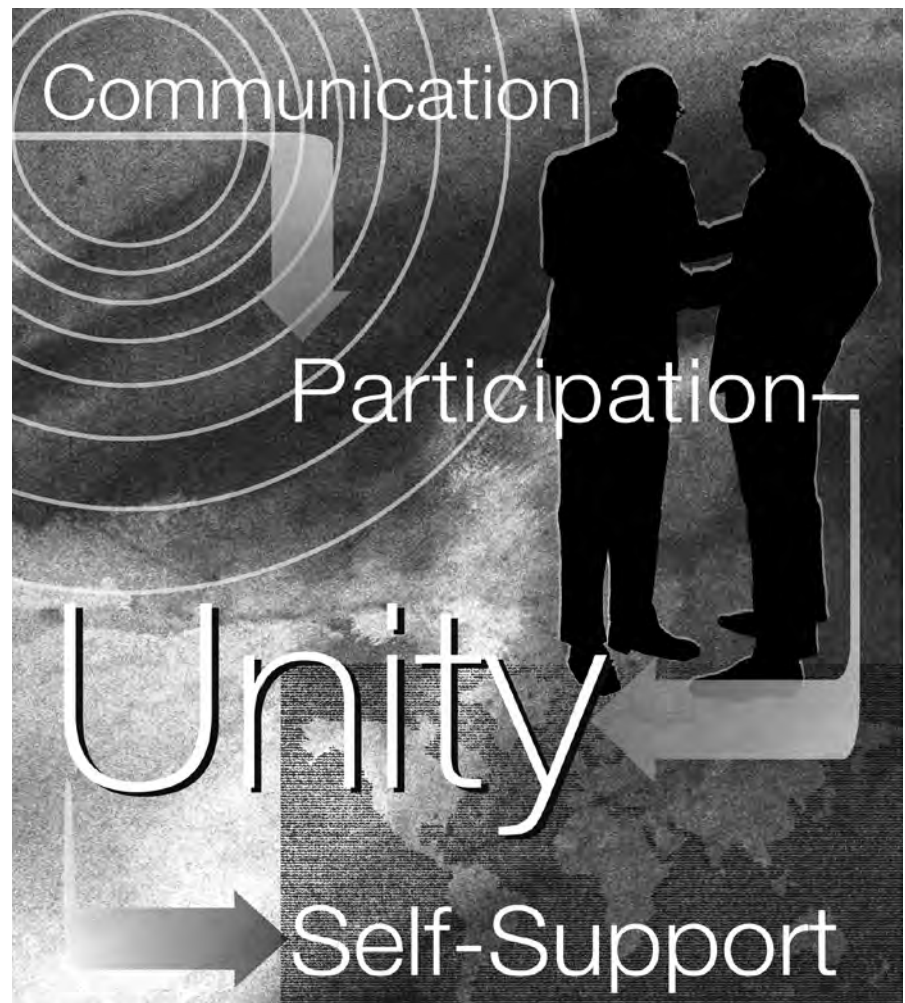
That evening was the opening dinner, a time of fellowship and seeing old friends. Many past delegates and

former trustees attended. Tim D. (Alabama/NW Florida), chairperson of the Conference Agenda Committee, chaired the open A.A. meeting that followed the dinner. Bill F. (Colorado), alternate chairperson, led the meeting. Speakers were Janet H. (Western Pennsylvania), Andy T. (Grapevine director), Mike D. (Nevada), Mary D. (G.S.O. staff), and John S. (trustee).

Presentations and sharing sessions at the Conference, which met at the Crowne Plaza Times Square, addressed such subjects as how to keep A.A. strong, the importance of service, leadership, and contempt prior to investigation. Kiki R., delegate from the District of Columbia, touched on how the message of unity

expressed in the First Tradition leaves room for a divergence of opinion in our Fellowship. Bob C., Southeastern Michigan, noted in his presentation that in the give and take at the Conference, "we trust that a democratic process engaged in by people acting in good faith will be in the best interest of our Fellowship, even though we may not agree with all the decisions made."

Four observers attended the Conference at the invitation of the General Service Board: Ann N., general secretary of G.S.O. in York, England (equivalent to our general manager); Louise Foxcroft, a nonalcoholic trustee on the G.S.B. of Great Britain; and Elvido Q. and Jose R.,



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two regional trustees from Mexico.

Spaced throughout the week, new delegates presented their Area Highlights. There were four “What’s On Your Mind” sharing sessions in which Conference members come to the mike to ask questions, present concerns of their areas on issues that did not appear on the committee agendas, or simply speak on any A.A. business they choose.

The agendas of the 13 Conference committees consist of items forwarded to them by the corresponding trustees’ committees. After deliberation on agenda items each committee reports its recommendations to the entire Conference for discussion, approval, or rejection. Beginning Wednesday evening, the delegate chairperson of each Conference committee presented its recommendations. Conference members were then free to go to the floor mikes to ask questions, disagree, make suggestions or changes, and share the concerns of their area on any given issue. This process continued for the next day or more before some items resulted in Conference Advisory Actions. (Highlights of Actions appear on page 3.)

Among the agenda items at this year’s Conference, the Public Information Committee reviewed the results of the A.A. Membership Survey, which is produced every three years. The Treatment Facilities Committee assessed sample footage of the revised video “Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous.” Another agenda item was a review by the Conference Literature Committee of the revised version of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Native North American.”

The work of the Conference goes on 365 days a year—in the groups, in the districts and areas, at the General Service Office, and in the constant work of committees, from the local areas to the trustees’ committees. However, it is during Conference week that it all comes together. Doug R., G.S.O. staff member, was the Conference coordinator. Working behind the scenes, staff and support personnel from the General Service and Grapevine offices made the week run seamlessly.

The work of chairing the Conference was shared by Leonard Blumenthal, (nonalcoholic) chairman of the board, Greg M., G.S.O. general manager, and France J., the delegate chairperson.

Each morning at 7:30 the G.S.C. Serenity Group met for an open A.A. meeting, with topics taken from A.A. literature. Sharon F., Central Southeast Ohio, was the chairperson. Secretary/treasurer was Ted K., of Virginia.

New York Intergroup hosted a hospitality suite for early arrivals Saturday afternoon. Throughout the week local A.A. and Al-Anon members planned a variety of activities for the family and friends of delegates.

Tuesday afternoon there was a trip to G.S.O. and Grapevine offices. Conference members and the family and friends who accompanied them to New York had the opportunity to tour the offices and visit G.S.O.’s Archives.

At the Delegates Only Meeting Tuesday evening Joe B., Mid-Southern California, was elected delegate chair for the 59th Conference; John T., South Dakota, will be alternate chair.

Wednesday afternoon the Conference elected three new trustees: Ken B., Nebraska, will be the new West Central regional trustee. The new Western Canada trustee will be Vic P., of Olds, Alberta. Terrance Bedient will replace Vince Keefe as Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee.

Friday afternoon, following closing remarks by Leonard Blumenthal, the Conference officially closed with the Serenity Prayer in English, French, and Spanish.

On Saturday morning, members of A.A.’s 58th Conference came together for the last time at the closing brunch. Rotating Class B trustees Chuck B. and Tom K., and Class A trustee Vince Keefe addressed the gathering.

Then it was off to Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois W. Conference members were especially interested in visiting “Wit’s End” a small cement block studio in the woods behind the house where Bill spent hours, “just sitting,” thinking and writing.

■ Estimates of Groups and Members as of January 1, 2008¹

	Groups	Members
United States	53,595	1,220,993
Canada	<u>4,745</u>	<u>93,559</u>
Sub-Total	58,340	1,314,552
Correctional facilities ²	2,359	60,912
Internationalists		37
Lone Members		<u>97</u>
Total	60,699	1,375,598
Outside U.S.& Canada ³	<u>52,469</u>	<u>669,057</u>
Grand Total	113,168	2,044,655

1. The General Service Office does not keep membership records. The information shown here is based on reports given by groups listed with G.S.O., and does not represent and actual count of those who consider themselves A.A. members.

2. U.S. and Canada only.

3. We are aware of A.A. activity in more than 180 countries, including 60 autonomous general service offices in other lands. Annually we attempt to contact those G.S.O.s and groups that request to be listed in our records. Where current data is lacking we use an earlier year’s figure.

■ 2008 Conference Advisory Actions and Additional Considerations

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole; or recommendations discussed and voted upon by all Conference members during general sessions. Some Advisory Actions and a few additional committee considerations appear below in condensed form. A complete list will be published in the *Final Conference Report*.

Advisory Actions

Agenda— that the theme for the 2009 General Service Conference be: “Our Commitment to Carry A.A.’s Message — Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action.”

Cooperation With the Professional Community— that the video segments directed to professionals in the legal/criminal justice and health care fields to be streamed on G.S.O.’s A.A. Web site be approved with suggested changes and that the trustees’ Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment Facilities oversee these changes.

Finance— that the trustees’ Finance and Budgetary Committee gather input from the Fellowship on the benefits and liabilities, both spiritual and practical of fully funding G.S.O. Services to the Fellowship (G.S.O. functional expenses) by the voluntary contributions of A.A. members and groups and that this information be forwarded to the 2009 Conference Committee on Finance.

International Conventions/A.A. Regional Forums—that the following four cities, expressed here in alphabetical order, be considered as possible sites for the International Convention in 2020: Detroit, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Vancouver; that up to 21 non-A.A. speakers be invited to attend the 2010 International Convention at A.A.’s expense.

Policy/Admissions— that representatives from other National A.A. service entities be granted admission as observers upon their request to the annual General Service Conference of the United States and Canada; that admission is not to exceed three countries and two representatives per country; that the request for admission be made through the General Service Office in New York; and that decisions regarding responsibility for guest observer expenses be at the discretion of the General Service Board.

Public Information—that the 2008 television public service announcement, “I Thought,” developed by the trustees’ Public Information Committee be approved, and that reference to newspapers be added to the tag line; that the Conference Committee on Public Information annually review current television public service announcements for relevance and useful-

ness, retiring a P.S.A. only when it is no longer relevant and/or useful to the Fellowship.

Report and Charter—that a section titled “District Information” and an illustration of the District Information Change Form (F-43) be added to Chapter Three of *The A.A. Service Manual*, after the section on redistricting; that the Online Intergroup of A.A. (OIAA) be listed in a new section titled “Online Intergroups” under the section “International Correspondence Meetings” in the A.A. Directories above where “Online Meetings” appear; the listing will include the online intergroup Web site and e-mail addresses.

Treatment Facilities— that the revised video “Hope: Alcoholics Anonymous” be completed with minor changes and brought back to the 2009 Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities for review.

Trustees—that the slate of trustees and officers be elected at the annual meeting of the General Service Board at the May 2008 meeting; that the slates of directors of the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Corporate Boards be elected at the annual meeting of the boards, May 2008.

Additional Considerations

Archives— requested that the G.S.O. Archives’ “Statements of Policy” related to accessing the Archives, as well as the “Sound and Video Access Policies,” be added to the next printing of the Archives Workbook; discussed various ideas for creatively making A.A.’s archives and history more readily available to the Fellowship in the future.

Corrections—reviewed the Corrections Kit and Workbook and the Corrections A.A. Group Handbook and made several suggestions to both.

Grapevine— agreed to forward to the A.A. Grapevine Board the suggestion that the A.A. Grapevine produce in the year 2009 or later two CDs of stories from *La Viña on Traditions One — Twelve*; discussed the Grapevine’s legacy of self-support and encouraged the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. to uphold that legacy; suggested several ways that the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and the Fellowship could increase awareness of the Grapevine and *La Viña*’s roles in A.A.

Literature—that a draft of the revised pamphlet “A.A. for the Native North American,” taking into consideration the committees’ suggested changes, be returned for review to the 2009 Conference; that a draft of the revised pamphlet “The A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs” be brought to the 2009 Conference for review.

The Budget Highlights

2008 G.S.O. Budget

These budget highlights describe the "OPERATIONS" of the General Service Office — A.A. World Services (the Publishing operation) and the General Fund (Service activities) and the Grapevine Operations. It excludes any activities reported separately in the Reserve Fund, Convention Fund, Post Retirement Fund or the Capital Projects Fund.

Income: The 2008 budget projects gross sales of \$12,700,000, approximately flat when compared with the 2007 actual results of \$12,730,000, which were \$730,000 greater than the \$12,000,000 estimated for the 2007 budget. While reviewing and recommending the 2008 budget, the A.A.W.S. Board considered that revenue and expense assumptions made for the G.S.O. budget ultimately affect the long-term health of the General Service Board's Reserve Fund.

Manufacturing costs are budgeted approximately 3.8% higher than 2007, because we are anticipating higher paper and manufacturing component costs. Royalties are budgeted at \$52,000 this year. There are only two remaining recipients.

Shipping and warehousing costs are budgeted approximately 3.6% higher than the 2007 results.

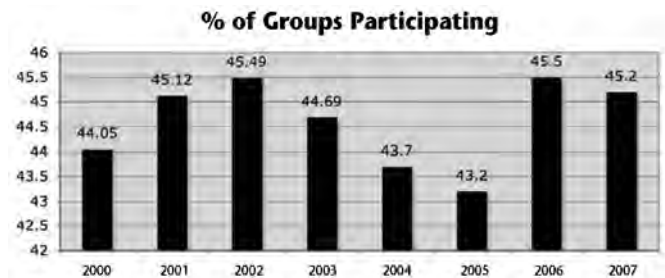
After subtracting manufacturing costs, royalties, and shipping expense, gross profit is budgeted at \$6,822,500, or 55.2% of net sales. Gross profit has been budgeted about \$225,000 less than 2007. The 55.2% gross profit percentage anticipated for 2008 compares with 56.8% for 2007. It should be remembered that as we strive to have literature available in Spanish and French as well as English for our Service Conference, lower print runs in those languages usually result in higher production costs. Because we strive to have similar selling prices regardless of our manufacturing cost, lower gross profits for individual items may occur that affect the overall gross profit. Thus price increases may become necessary as things progress.

Gross Profit Percentage has fallen from 58.8% in 2006, to 56.8% in 2007, and to 55.2% for the 2008 budget.

Even though contribution revenue has seen favorable upward movement over the last several years, prudence dictates that actions have been necessary to control costs and reinforce the revenue stream to provide sufficient funds to continue providing services. Trusted servants continue to explore methods to reduce the costs of operations as well as assess the services supplied.

Contributions: Contributions for 2007 were over budget by \$326,000 (5.2%). Total contributions for 2008 have been budgeted at \$6,675,000, an increase of approximately 2.3%. During 2007, contributions from groups and individuals of \$6,381,600 were \$330,700 (5.5%) greater than budget and \$459,200 (7.8%) greater than 2006. Contributions received from World Service Meeting countries toward the World Service Meeting International literature fund amounted to \$144,400, approximately \$1,400 less than 2006. In total, contributions received for 2007 were just over \$6,526,000. In addition to the work trusted servants are doing to carry the message of the necessity for voluntary contributions, historical evidence suggests that usually in the year following an International Convention we enjoy a healthy increase in contributions. Afterward the rate of growth declines somewhat.

The chart to the right reflects the approximate percentage of the A.A. groups listed with the General Service Office that have participated in the 7th Tradition by contributing to the General Service Office.

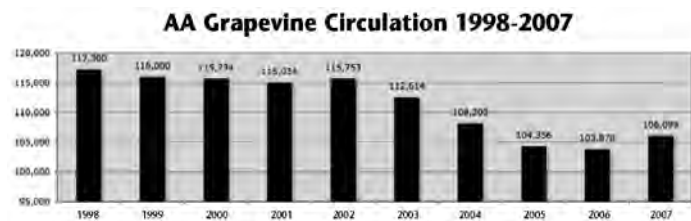


Total Operating Revenue for 2008 is anticipated at \$13,507,500, just slightly less than the 2007 results of \$13,582,000.

Total Operating Expenses for 2008 have been budgeted at \$13,266,700, approximately \$703,000 or 5.6% more than 2007 and \$593,200 or 4.7% more than the 2007 budget as well. The 2008 budget includes expenses for the G.S.O. U.S.A. net expense for the World Service Meeting. Absent the W.S.M. costs, the increase in the 2008 budget over the 2007 budget would be approximately 3.7%.

The 2008 G.S.O. budget anticipates an excess of revenue over expense of \$240,796. This compares with an actual income of \$1,018,600 for 2007 and the \$89,450 net income budgeted for 2007 (including midyear adjustments). The large variance from budget to actual results is due to higher than anticipated revenue from both sales and contributions. The expected 2008 operating income, the 2007 actual income, as well as other transfers, assist in maintaining the Reserve Fund. However, during 2008, the A.A.W.S. Board will be carefully considering future actions.

2008 Grapevine Budget



The 2008 Grapevine Budget calls for an average circulation of 107,000, approximately 4,000 greater than the 2007 budget and approximately 900 greater than the 2007 paid circulation of 106,099. Circulation for the last several years is depicted in the chart below.

Income: Magazine income of \$2,089,461 is expected, \$139,000 greater than 2007. Other Publishing Income from books, cassette tapes, and miscellaneous items is budgeted at \$812,700, \$42,500 higher than 2007.

Total Gross Profit: Combining the magazine and other publishing items, a gross profit of \$1,825,966 is budgeted for 2008. This compares with \$1,667,395 for 2007 and the 2007 budget of \$1,639,059.

Total Operating Expenses: Total Operating Expenses for 2008 are budgeted

at \$1,895,500, \$130,300 more than the 2007 expenses of \$1,765,200.

Net Income: For 2008 the Grapevine anticipates a profit of \$3,200. This compares with a 2007 budgeted loss of \$81,300 and an actual loss from operations of \$25,000.

2008 La Viña Budget

For 2008 La Viña expects a gross profit on the magazine of \$34,858, compared with \$35,234 in 2007. Circulation for 2008 is estimated at 11,000, about equal to the 10,979 average for 2007. Other Publishing income is estimated at \$40,800, which after deducting cost of product of \$10,500, expects to contribute \$30,300 to revenue. Total costs and expenses are estimated at \$132,529 for 2008, just \$2,300 less than 2007. The 2008 budget projects a net loss of \$67,371, even with the 2007 loss of \$67,040.

The chart to the right reflects the La Viña magazine losses since inception (1995). To date losses of approximately \$1,134,000 have been incurred.

