World Service Business Convention Report  
Annual FA World Service Business Convention  
June 2-4, 2017  
Danvers, MA 

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OVERVIEW

The following report details the 16th Annual FA World Service Business Convention (WSBC), held June 2-4, 2017 in Danvers, MA. **Whether you attended the Business Convention or not, ALL are encouraged to download and read the report in its entirety.** Questions may be directed to fa@foodaddicts.org.

The Conference In Brief:

564 FA Members registered for our convention this year. We came from eleven countries, including: Australia, Bermuda, Canada, China, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States.

Members from 34 U.S. states were in attendance, including: AZ, CA, CO, DC, FL, GA, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NJ, NV, NY, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI.

Business sessions included a general overview of FA’s structure, five motions, opening and closing remarks, our treasurer’s report, acknowledgement of our outgoing treasurer, election of the 2016-2017 World Service Board, highlights from the Maine Chapter, the Western Area Intergroup, the Eastern Area Intergroup and several WSI Committees, and FA Sharing Sessions.

Other events included the recording of four new qualification CDs, WSI committee meetings, entertainment, dance, and celebration.

REMINDEERS

- Please mark your calendars: The next FA World Service Business Convention will be held June 1-3, 2018 in Danvers, MA.
- The next FA Fellowship Convention will be held October 12-14, 2018 at the Saddlebrook Resort in Tampa, Florida.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to every member of this life-giving organization. Together we ensure that our program will continue to be available for every food addict who desires to stop eating addictively. It’s wonderful to work with all of you. Thank you so much for the support and service you have given the fellowship this year.

Yours in service,

Dave I., WSB Chair
OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE

Practically speaking, the World Service Business Convention fulfills our legal obligation. As an international non-profit organization, we are required, for instance, to meet annually to provide conference members with a financial report and an opportunity to elect board members.

Spiritually speaking, each year’s convention helps us keep FA strong and helps us further our efforts to reach the newcomer. This practice is working. Since our incorporation in 1998, we have grown from less than 100 members then to over 6,000 members now, collectively attending more than 600 meetings worldwide.

It is important to know that structurally, FA is a “bottom-up” service organization. World Service, Inc., or WSI, is here to help reach the newcomer by serving FA as a whole and by supporting intergroups. Intergroups support chapters and meetings, who in turn support the most important entity—the individual FA member. WSI officers, committee chairs, and committee members are not here to exercise power or authority. It is just the opposite. Our role is to humbly serve and support.

FA At-A-Glance

| Members | Meetings | Chapters | Intergroups | World Service, Inc. |

To be useful to the overall fellowship, WSI needs some amount of formal organization. This includes a board made up of four officers and nine committee chairs. The specific committees are Bylaws, connection, Convention Planning, Literature, Office, PI, Service Group Support, Traditions Review, and 12th Step. Forty subcommittees support these WSI standing committees.

Six additional committees—finance, personnel, design, inquiry response, board motions review, and book—support the board. Each year, if needed, the resolutions committee and the emergency new business committees are available to support the conference with main motions.
OPENING REMARKS: JAMIE M., WSB VICE-CHAIR

Seventeen years ago, fearful and filled with unacknowledged grief, I made the 150-mile ride down to Carmel to say goodbye to my father who was about to die in a nursing facility. I stopped 3 times on the way down and 3 times on the way back to stuff my feelings down with fast food items and sugar products. I liked only certain things at certain places so I made stops on both sides of the freeway, if you followed me with a GPS it would have looked very strange. It was Mother’s Day and I knew that I would be joining my family and my in-laws at a dinner out so on the way back, as I reached San Francisco, I pulled over to throw out the last traces of my sneaky and shameful eating. I really didn’t know how else to handle my feelings around this very sad farewell, how does someone say goodbye for the last time? I did it with some grace at the time and I felt fortunate that I was able to hug my father and tell him that I loved him, I don’t know if he knew but I feel like he did because he died 12 hours later. I feel sad though that I never allowed myself to appropriately grieve. I was so fearful that there would be an unstoppable torrent of tears and an overwhelming sadness that I would never get out of, so my best coping skills were to stuff any emotion down with food and repress! How sad that I couldn’t let myself cry the tears that heal. How sad that fear ruled my life. I ate my way through the next 4 weeks keeping the emotions at bay and stuffed down until my higher power brought me into FA.

About 6 days after my dad passed away I ran into an old friend who told me about FA. I ran into her in a parking lot, and I can’t tell you how many others had the same experience. The last time that I had run into her she was 100 lbs. overweight, scornful, grumpy, and frumpy. Here was a trim, smiling, radiant, new person standing in front of me. I had known her for years, thin and heavy, and I had never witnessed her so happy. I knew that whatever she did I was going to do! If it worked for her, it would work for me!

When I think of all the people who she brought into FA directly and indirectly it is amazing! The connections that we all had to make as newcomers and to newcomers to get here, the simple act of staying abstinent which enables us to do the service to be there for the newcomer, whether it is in a parking lot, a health fair, a doctor’s office or at a meeting. We all have that power to make that connection with the food addict who is still suffering.

So this brings me to the question of why are we here this weekend. What are we here to accomplish? We are gathered here to do the business of FA so that we enable ourselves to reach the food addict who needs and wants a solution. We are here so that we can connect to the newcomer. We are here like my friend was there for me! Sadly, my friend passed away last year on June 6th but I feel that she is here today. I am still working on how to handle my feelings but today I know that I don’t have to eat my way through them, I can cry, I can share my feelings and I can ask God for help every step of the way.

This brings to mind the fact that we will be voting this weekend on some motions, which may bring up many feelings, differences of opinions and philosophies. We will make
some decisions, hopefully with each of our Higher Power’s help, which will affect our fellowship and how we reach the newcomer. We may see our sponsor or our best friend voting differently, we may feel confused and uncertain. What I find useful and absolutely necessary is to ask God to help me to be true to my conscience and to help me make decisions that are beneficial to, first and foremost, the newcomer and to our organization as a whole. I ask God to take away my self-centered fear and for the fortitude to vote my conscience. Sometimes that is easier said than done! My self-centered fear wants everyone to like me, I want everyone to be happy but that is not my job here as a voting member of the WSC. For me, what makes the potentially difficult decision easier is the very clear and heartfelt knowledge that God is ultimately in charge and that nothing is irreparable, that our spiritual principles of honesty, humility, integrity and service are paramount.

As we go into our business sessions, we need to listen, to be thoughtful and mindful of our spiritual principles and we need to express our gratitude for participating in this wonderful group process. In the small but very valuable book entitled The A.A. Service Manual Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service, Bill W., the author, refers to the voting members when he writes that they should be entitled to cast their votes “according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time.” (Pg. 15 Twelve Concepts for World Service) He also said the “The group conscience could safely act as the sole authority and sure guide for Alcoholics Anonymous.” (Pg. 12 A.A. Service Manual)

This is where we get to see this wise guidance in motion. This is where we get to witness how God works to insure that FA is here to honor Tradition 5, which reminds us, always, that our primary purpose is that of carrying our message to the Food Addict who still suffers. I was that food addict who was suffering and comforting herself with food, stuffing down fear and uncomfortable emotions. This is the person I am here to help. That is my primary purpose today as a voting member of the FA WSC. I have definite and heartfelt opinions regarding some of the motions and some of the content and I am going to ask God for help to let go of my preconceived notions, to listen carefully and free of fear, to reflect and resolve to be open minded so that when I vote I will be able to vote with a well informed conscience…and then I will ask God for help to let me be accepting of the group conscience. Letting go and letting God will allow me to be there for the newcomer, it will allow me to honor my friend’s spirit who always seemed to be there for any newcomer in her path.
TREASURER’S REPORT (COLLEEN B., WSB TREASURER)

PRINCIPLES FOR FA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Guiding principles for FA finances: to carry the message
  - **Concept 12:** use prudent financial principles & have “sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve”
  - **Corporate poverty:**
    - Be self-supporting (Tradition 7)
    - Use FA funds wisely (Concept 12)
    - Keep focused on our primary purpose (Tradition 6)
    - Keep a prudent reserve (Concept 12)
    - Pass on extra funds to support more FA work (Tradition 5)

➢ From “Your 7th Tradition” pamphlet

(Treasurer’s report continued on following pages)
Tradition Contributions – What Do I Do?

Recommended split:
75% WSI, 25% IG
(EAI requests 50%/50%)

FA Member

Meeting

Chapter

Intergroup

World Service

Operating Expenses

Prudent Reserve

Project Reserve

Expenses – rent, literature, copies, etc.

Prudent Reserve – 1 month’s expenses

Prudent Reserve

Expenses

100% Expense
How WSI Manages its Funds

WSB with WSB Finance Committee

Donations 79%
- Meetings
- Chapters & IGs
- Members
- Paid Interest

Publications 18%
- Literature & Books
- Speaker CDs & Downloads
- "connection" Subscriptions

Conventions 3%
- Business Convention
- Fellowship Convention

Operating Expenses

Services & Functions
- Office
- Website Maintenance
- Corporate Expenses
- Committee Expenses

Prudent Reserve

Projects:
- Living Abstinently Pamphlet
- Public Information Efforts

1 yr Operating Expense
1 yr "connection" Expense

Project Reserve
SUMMARY Fiscal Year 2017:  
July 2016 – June 2017

(FY2017 actual through April, plus May & June forecasted)

Beginning Balance: $310,000 (incl. inventory & temp liabilities)

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*Individual donations are up! Thank you!

2017 Net Income (Income – Expense)  $-17,400

Projected FY2017 Year-End Balance: $290,000 (incl. inventory & temp liabilities)

Remaining funds for next fiscal year: FY2018

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<td>Prudent Reserve = $200,600</td>
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<td>Project Reserve = $89,600</td>
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BUDGET Fiscal Year 2018:
July 2017 – June 2018

(FY2018 based on moderate estimates)

Projected FY2018 Beginning Balance: $290,000

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Funds from Project Reserve $ 63,000

Total Net Income (Income – Expense) $ 0

Budgeted FY2018 Year-End Balance: $227,000 (Bottom Line)

Remaining funds for next fiscal year: FY2019

| Prudent Reserve | $201,000 |
| Project Reserve | $26,000 |

***Suggestions, Reminders, & Questions***

- Donate On-line to WSI
  - Mailed checks are still acceptable
- Subscribe to connection for yourself
- Donate what you can when you can
  - The suggested donation is $2.00 per meeting
  - A member can donate $3,000 per fiscal year and one time bequest of $5,000
- Detailed Report Available
  - WSC members can request a detailed report of FA financials – contact the Treasurer of WSI at treasurer@foodaddicts.org
WSB MAIN MOTIONS

Notification was sent to the Chapter and Intergroups in September regarding the procedure and time frame for submitting motions for the 2017 World Service Business Convention (WSBC). Motions received were reviewed and edited by the bylaws committee and sent to the Board Motions Review committee (BMRC) for review and suggestions. The board accepted the revised motions and they were sent on to the WSC (conference voting members).

Five motions presented to the 2017 World Service Conference were voted on and adopted by the conference as amended:

**Motion #1:** The World Service Board moves to update the meeting format’s “meetings” tool by inserting the words “in person” to reflect the wording in the WSI Bylaws and the WSI Continuing Effect Motions Manual.

**Results:** The conference adopted that the words “in person” be added to the “meetings” tool of the FA meeting format to read:

“We attend meetings in person, sharing our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We have found that unless we give to newcomers what we have received from the program, we cannot keep it for ourselves.”

**Motion #2:** The World Service Board moves to update the tools in the meeting format to be consistent with the tools in the *Living Abstinently* booklet.

**Results:** This motion was withdrawn because the change was already included in the adoption of the revised meeting format in Motion #4.

**Motion #3:** The World Service Board moves to change the reference to the location of the World Service Office (WSO) in the *Terms and Definitions* in the *Twelve Concepts Short Form* and the *Twelve Concepts Long Form* from a specific municipality to a location within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts designated by the World Service Board.

**Results:** The conference adopted that the *Terms and Definitions* in the *Twelve Concepts Short Form* and the *Twelve Concepts Long Form* be modified to be consistent with the bylaws: the reference to the location of the World Service Office was changed from a specific municipality (Malden, MA) to a location within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts designated by the World Service Board. The following wording changes were made: from “delegates” to “voting members elected by FA meeting groups to represent the fellowship;” from “FA Conference” to “WS Conference;” and from “FA Business Convention” to “WSBC.”

**Motion #4:** The World Service Board moves to adopt the revised sample meeting format.

**Results:** The revised sample FA meeting format (including the tools from the *Living Abstinently* booklet and the addition of the words “in person” from motion #1) was adopted by the conference.

**Motion #5:** It was moved that the words God, Higher Power, and any other references to God or Higher Power be capitalized in all FA literature.

**Results:** The motion was adopted by the conference.
WSB ELECTIONS

Retiring Board Members
- Holli N. Treasurer

Board Members Running for 2nd Term
- Allison G., CA Secretary
- Jennifer N., MA Literature Chair
- Paul B., MA Service Group Support Committee Chair
- Paula K., NY 12th Step Chair

Election of New Officers
- Colleen B, MA Treasurer

2017-2018 World Service Board

WSI Officers
- Chair Dave I., Alberta
- Vice-Chair Jamie M., CA
- Secretary Allison G., CA
- Treasurer Colleen B., MA **

WSI Committee Chairs
- Bylaws Marti M., CA
- Service Group Support Paul B., MA
- connection Adrienne P., CA
- Convention Planning Ebony F., CA
- Literature Jennifer N., MA
- Office Margaret H., NY
- Public Information Annie H., CA
- Traditions Review Patty R., ME
- 12th Step Paula K., NY

** Indicates new board member
HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHAPTERS & INTERGROUPS

FA MAINE CHAPTER OF EAI (SHIRLEY H., CHAIR)

Summary
This year the FA Maine Chapter celebrated its 15th Anniversary. The Chapter began in 2002 when members from the first few meetings organized around four common goals:

- To further the FA program in accordance with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of FA
- To maintain a communications center for FA groups
- To provide unity
- To educate the public about the FA program

FA members help meet these goals both on a Chapter and meeting level. Meeting level members provide resources, support and information to help anyone access FA recovery. Active participants of the Maine Chapter further the work on a broader scope.

This year by working together on a Chapter level we were able to leverage our resources and participate in the Maine Nurse Practitioner Annual Meeting. This event was an opportunity for over 200 primary care providers to learn about the FA program. The Chapter also helped to coordinate resources for participation in 12 health fairs, the first Chapter FA Awareness Day and the Annual Maine Meeting Support Weekend. Members continued to maintain the communication system for FA groups and our presence on the FA website.

These activities and more continue to support current FA members find and maintain strong recovery, support those who still struggle and assure that information about the FA program remains accessible to anyone seeking recovery from the obsession and compulsion of food addiction.

Vice Chair Report
The Vice Chair facilitates Chapter communication through the FA Maine Chapter Highlights. The Highlights include information about resources, activities and service opportunities available throughout the Chapter. The Highlights are published monthly and distributed via email to Chapter Contacts. Chapter Contacts read pertinent information during meeting announcements and business meetings.

Office Committee
- Offered sessions on how to use the FA website at Chapter meetings
· Communicated regularly with WSO to keep the FA Maine Chapter page of the FA Website up-to-date
· Produced and distributed the Maine Chapter Meeting Directory to Chapter Contacts and other interested persons/organizations quarterly
· Distributed Chapter Meeting Highlights & 12 Step Service List to Chapter Contacts monthly
· Maintained Chapter affiliated meeting registration database
· Maintained Post Office Box in Augusta

PI Committee
· Participated in 12 Health Fairs where fellows distributed over 500 waiting room booklets, 300 health care brochures and 1,100 Meeting Directory trifolds
· Placed ads and Community Calendar postings in 10 newspapers
· Arranged an interview with two FA members for a health blog
· Contacted 16 Colleges and Universities proving information about FA. One University has added the FA link to their website
· Participated in the Maine Nurse Practitioner Annual Meeting with an FA Information table
· Reached out to PCP practices and one psychiatric practice to provide FA information
· Supplied FA Banners, FA tablecloth, FA Meeting Directory trifolds, Waiting Room Booklets and registration fees, as needed, to support participation in Health Fairs and Information Sessions
· Coordinated with the 12th Step Committee on the first Chapter FA Awareness Day. FA Flyers and Meeting Directory Racks were provided to meetings to distribute in their communities
· Coordinated seven volunteers who respond to calls received on the Maine Phone Information line. Volunteers respond to callers and offer to mail information packets to individuals.
· Reached out to our FA Members via the ‘FA Chapter Highlights’ to seek volunteers willing to help with 12 Step service
· Held one PI conference call and reached out to PI Representatives from meetings to provide information and support for PI activities
· Participated in WSI and EAI calls and events.

12th Step Committee
· Hosted a connection Writing Session
· Coordinated with the PI Committee on the first chapter FA Awareness Day. FA Flyers and Meeting Directory Racks were provided to meetings to distribute in their communities
· Provided an orientation for newcomers to the Maine Chapter at each chapter meeting. The orientation is led by experienced volunteers from the Chapter
· Organized the 10th Annual Meeting Support Day/Weekend
· Worked with the Chapter Treasurer and the Office Committee to offer FA Conferenced approved literature for purchase at Chapter Meetings. Created a Literature Sales Coordinator Service Position
· Continued to update the FA Maine Chapter 12 Step List. Fellows on this list are willing to do FA service. The 12 Step List is circulated at the Chapter meeting and the updated list is sent to the Office Committee for distribution. Volunteers may also email their names to the 12 Step Chair or sign up at local meetings.
· Provided Thank-a-thon information to meetings

Bylaws Committee
· Provided information at Chapter Meetings regarding FA Bylaws and Meeting Requirements. Created a Bylaws Binder for reference at Chapter Meeting complete with Bylaws and Meeting Requirement documents
· Located and arranged meeting space for the monthly Chapter Meeting and the annual Maine Meeting Support Day. Established dates for Maine Chapter monthly meetings for the 2017-18 year.
· Provided support and awareness by assuring signage is present in the community to assure ease of navigation to Maine Chapter events.
· Collaborated with EAI and WSI to explore issues and questions raised at Chapter Meetings
· Provided information regarding the WSI motions process for members of the FA Maine Chapter

Intergroup Liaison
· The FA Maine Chapter continues to collaborate with EAI to carry the message of recovery and support local meetings.
· A telephone conference call was attended monthly, keeping the Maine Chapter updated and aware of EAI resources and activities
· EAI representative, along with the Maine Chapter Chair, collaborated to ensure no duplication of services, and for Maine Chapter members to participate in EAI events.
· EAI members attended Maine Chapter meeting support day to participate in our annual meeting support event.

Registered Meetings in Maine
Number of individual, registered meetings at beginning of fiscal year: 21
Number of individual, registered meetings at end of fiscal year: 21

WESTERN AREA INTERGROUP (HEIDI V., CHAIR)
· 12th Step Committee
  – Provides homebound meetings for FA members unable to attend FA meetings due to illness or injury
- Provides 12th Step calls to people interested in FA who are unable to attend meetings due to a physical condition
- Manages connection Committee
  - Conducts writing and artwork sessions
  - Offers long-distance connection support to members on the frontier
  - Leads bi-monthly calls for connection reps
- Office Committee
  - Supports 250 meetings
  - Manages 1-800 number and local area numbers
  - Maintains tri-folds
  - Sells FA literature monthly at Intergroup meeting
- Convention Resource Committee
  - Provides key information re: Business and Fellowship Conventions
- Public Information Committee
  - Community Outreach services five geographic areas
  - Informs healthcare professionals, employment sites, colleges and community lay groups about the FA program of recovery
  - Coordinates volunteers for health fairs and public information sessions
  - Partners with Weblinks and Service Group Support Committee
  - Provides trainings to Intergroup subcommittee members on ways to get the word out through public information
  - Reaches out to organizations interested in learning more about FA, to schedule an information session, participate in a health fair, or arrange FA literature for display/distribution
- Service Group Support Committee
  - Assists in Establishing Local Service Groups in Northern California
  - Supports the established Local Service Groups
  - LSG’s Service Focus:
    - Placed over 200 FA books in libraries
    - On line meeting announcements
    - Trifold Rack Management

EASTERN AREA INTERGROUP (COURTNEY G., CHAIR)

Who we are:
- As of April 1, 2017, there were 334 registered EAI meetings in six countries: Canada, Germany, Israel, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We are also the Intergroup affiliation for our growing fellowship in China.
- In the U.S., there are registered EAI meetings in 23 states and the District of Columbia.
- This year, we gained expanded into the state of Vermont.
- Chapter: Maine
- Local Service Groups:
  - Metro Atlanta, GA
Southeast Michigan  
Charlotte, NC  
Washington, DC  
Rochester, NY  
Ithaca, NY  
Philadelphia, PA  
Owensboro, KY  
West Michigan, MI

What we do:  
• Our purpose is twofold:  
  o To serve meetings, individuals, and newcomers within our area  
  o To facilitate meetings and local service groups in carrying out their own service efforts.

• Committees  
  o Financial Aid & Resources  
  o Service Group Support  
  o Office Services & Support  
  o Public Information  
  o Teens & Twenties  
  o 12th Step Committee (connection committee)

• Schedule:  
  o 8:30-9:30am Board Mtg (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Chairs)  
  o 9:45-10:30am Committee Mtgs  
  o 10:45-11:45am Body Mtg  
  o Followed by optional fellowship lunch

• REMOTE PARTICIPATION

• QUARTERLY CALLS
• We sent a monthly EAI report that EAI contacts are asked to read at their business meetings.

• There was a high level of consistency of mission and protocol at EAI over the past year. It was a calm year of continued service, continued learning, and continued gratification in the experience of coming together as a fellowship to help spread the message.

• A top priority continues to be supporting service outside of the Boston area (mainly through Public Information and Service Group Support Committees) as well as
actively engaging attendees during our body meetings by offering things like a deep dive into the subject of crosstalk, a connection writing session, and a mock Teens & Twenties outreach.

- Our biggest annual project is the Service Support Weekend. Even during a year in which we shared focus with a Fellowship Convention, we hosted approximately **145 FA members from 13 states and Canada at the Service Support Weekend on November 12 and 13, 2016.**

- The next annual Service Support Weekend will be held November 4 & 5, 2017.

- We experimented with using web conferencing to include an out-of-town committee chair in our Board meetings, and to invite anyone 2+ hours away to join our Body Meeting. Not so simple, but we can forge ahead.

- Issues we explored together and on Quarterly calls: crosstalk; MESA committee; planning for possible meeting location closures due to weather or holidays; self-care at Convention.

- Service Conference Calls:
  - EAI Quarterly Call led by the Vice Chair, with support from Chapter & Region Support, Financial Aid & Resources, connection, and 12th Step. Recent topics:
    - Four committees—Chapter and Region Support, connection, Public Information, and Teens and Twenties—offer a conference call dial-in option for members who are 2+ hours away from Intergroup who wish to participate remotely in committee meetings.

- We continue to invite a member who doesn’t have 90 days of abstinence to do a reading from *As Bill Sees It, Writings from AA’s Cofounder.*

**INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEES**

**Public Information:**
1. Focused on supporting the Frontier
2. Generated a Letter to the clergy for all members to use in the towns. Approved by WAI.
3. Targeting teaching professionals for the medical field for exposure to FA.
4. Rack and banner program running great.

**Teens and Twenties**
The EAI Teens and Twenties Committee this year has continued its commitment to coordinating classroom and health fair outreaches at high schools, colleges, and universities. Between June 2016 and May 2017, our committee will have coordinated twelve outreaches in the New England area and provided information for one in WI. We have also been working to address a common misperception about participating in T and T outreaches: that fellows over 30 shouldn't participate. By encouraging fellows of all ages to recall their own adolescent experiences as food addicts, we hope to broaden the participation in our outreaches.

12th Step: Service Support
The Service Support Committee hosted approximately 145 FA members from 13 states and Canada at the annual Service Support Weekend on November 12 and 13, 2016. The next Service Support Weekend will be held November 4 & 5, 2017. The Committee reports that local service groups are functioning in the following areas: Charlotte, NC; Washington DC; Southeast Michigan; Rochester, NY; Ithaca, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Owensboro, KY; West Michigan, MI; Metro Atlanta, GA

Vice Chair
The efforts of the Vice Chair thus far have been consistent with the goals established in October 2016. Vice Chair has maintained good relationships with all committee chairs and has embraced the activities, thoughts and ideas of the EAI Chair wholeheartedly. There has been a limited increase in representation of the local service areas in the EAI report as this will be an ongoing effort. EAI Contact calls of 2016-2017 were successful with representation from the following committee chairs, Connection, 12 step, Chapter and Regional Support and Financial Aid and Resource committee and MESA Committee. We average at least 15 people or more on the calls and have had lively discussions about MESA Committee, Meeting Health position, “Taking care of yourself at convention”, “Cross Talk, “Meeting changes/closures during inclement weather and holidays”. Future call dates are established and efforts to have ongoing participation from above chairs and EAI contacts will be encouraged.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM WSI COMMITTEES

OFFICE COMMITTEE (MARGARET H., CHAIR)

- Hired a copy editor to edit our website content
- Began an extensive search-engine-optimization effort to help people find our website
- Completed installation of software that makes it possible for changes in a document on the website to be made simultaneously in every location where that document resides
- Handled the online registration processes for the October 2016 fellowship convention and the June 2017 business convention
- Assisted EAI with its online registration for the November 2016 service group weekend
- Added online application form for WSB elections for June 2017 convention
- Developed a system for online submission of motions for business conventions
- Kept accounts of FA financial transactions, paid bills, deposited funds
- Handled daily phone calls, email inquiries, and literature orders
- Processed work orders for mass emails and for additions/changes to the website
- Improved our website FAQ pages for newcomers and for FA members
- Created a two-page list of tips from the FA office for the business convention booklet
- Negotiated contracts with vendors

LITERATURE COMMITTEE (JENNIFER N., CHAIR)

WRITING AND EDITING SUBCOMMITTEE (WES)

- Completed Living Abstinently, submitted to the design committee for production.
- Updated the meeting format to include the new tools and made other edits and modifications.
- Updated the Twenty Questions pamphlet and will propose the new changes to the board and potentially the conference for 2018.
- Completed a draft of a new pamphlet to replace “Food Addiction: There is a Solution”.
- Completed a review of all the FA pamphlets and prioritized for revision and editing
- Started a subcommittee to review gender non-binary language.
- Proposed a new pamphlet consisting of the first two chapters of the FA book.

UPCOMING:

- Will finish new version of “Food Addiction: There is a Solution” including the Doctor’s Opinion from the FA book
• Will update “Anorexia/Bulimia” pamphlet
• Will update “Some Thoughts on Sponsoring” with new tools
• Will update “Friends and Family”
• Will start work on a slogans pamphlet
• Will start work on a Service pamphlet

TRANSLATION COMMITTEE

• Welcome Lisa A. as new translation chair who quickly formed a new committee to include members from international fellowship. We are doing work for the French, Hebrew, Chinese and German speaking fellowship. The Spanish speaking fellowship is on hold at present as there is not a pressing need. We have formed work groups for the French, German, Hebrew, and Chinese-speaking committees. At present there are two members in the Chinese group. We are beginning work on non-public facing documents and are in the process of finalizing some other documents as well.

• There are three members in the French-speaking group who are busy working on translating non-public facing documents. We anticipate work to be done on a slow and steady basis without a given deadline. This group is small and the members have limited time available but are enthused about the French-speaking fellowship and see a strong need for professional documents to be translated. This group will translate as well as active as editors for all professionally translated documents into French.

• The Hebrew group will act as editors only as they do not have free time available to dedicate. Translation work is on hold until green light is given for professional translation to be initiated.

• The German group is comprised of seven members and will be finished with non-public facing translation work most likely by the end of the year. At which time our goal is to then have these documents placed on the website for the general fellowship. They will also act as editors for all professionally translated documents once such work is initiated.

• Finally, a translation service was found and is ready to be utilized once a green light is given. Much research was done as to which type of agency would be used to support the fellowship and a most cost-effective and comprehensive way.

AUDIO RECORDING SUBCOMMITTEE (ARC)

• Facilitated all aspects of the qualifications of four frontier members at the fellowship convention, in the process of reviewing and determining titles for distribution.
• Obtained approval from the board to pursue the creation of an FA audiobook.
• Determined through Intergroup monthly meetings, strong interest in the Audiobook.
• Completed extensive research on the audiobook and obtained three quotes for the completion of the project.
• In the process of developing a subcommittee for the audiobook creation.

OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

• Facilitated Living Abstinently to be print ready including corresponding with Library of Congress, obtaining ISBN numbers, preparing copyright page and having it professionally edited by a new editor.
• Identified and contracted with a new editor for various documents.
• Assisted with professional editing of the new format.
• Submitted Living Abstinently pamphlet to the design committee for creation and distribution of publication.
• Distribution finalized for mid-April.
• Discussed distribution of FA book through Amazon with Office Committee.
• Arranged for monthly sales reports of all book and audio recording sales to help assist in prioritization of projects.

SERVICE GROUP SUPPORT COMMITTEE (PAUL B., CHAIR)

• The SGSC continues to support Intergroups, Chapters and Local Service Groups with a bimonthly conference call on the 3rd Sunday every other month from 3:30-5:00 pm EST.

• The SGSC has completed a document titled “Local Service Group Guidelines and Recommendations” which is posted to foodaddicts.org under Local Service Groups.

• The SGSC core committee meets bimonthly to discuss agenda items.

• The purpose of this committee is to provide more support for local service groups requesting it. The additional support can be in the form of providing assistance with reach out activities, or other PI related activities. The committee will provide an FA member with an experienced FA member to assist the LSG requesting support.

• The service Group Support Committee facilitated two in-person committee meetings at the WSC in Danvers, MA. Both were well attended a stimulated effective conversation. All minutes of these committee meetings and conference call are available at foodaddicts.org under the service group drop down tab.
CONVENTION PLANNING COMMITTEE (EBONY F., CHAIR)

2017 Business Convention
- On June 2-4, 2017 we hosted our 16th annual World Service Business Convention in Danvers, MA.
- Five hundred thirty-four members attended from Australia, Bermuda, Canada, China, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, and the United States.
- Business sessions included a general overview of FA's structure; opening and closing remarks; our treasurer's report; five motions; acknowledgement of outgoing chairs; election of the 2017-18 World Service Board; highlights from the Maine Chapter, the Western Area Intergroup, the Eastern Area Intergroup, and several WSI committees. There was also a session called "Living Abstinently" with sharing from members with 20 years or more of continuous abstinence in FA. Other events included the recording of four new qualification CDs, connection magazine workshops, WSI committee meetings, an FA game show, and a lively dance party.

2018 Business Convention
- Planning is currently underway to welcome everyone to the 2018 Word Service Business Convention taking place Friday, June 1 - Sunday, June 3, 2018 at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Danvers, MA.
- Hotel, pricing and meal plan information will be placed on the Business Convention section of the FA website. As soon as it becomes available.
- Each year at the World Service Business Convention we hold elections for WSI Officers and Committee Chairs. As 2018 is an even year, we will be accepting nominations for the following positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Bylaws, connection, Convention Planning, Office, and Traditions Review.

2018 Fellowship Convention
- We are looking forward to hosting the 2018 Fellowship Convention at the Saddlebrook Resort & Spa in Tampa, Florida, Friday, October 12 – Sunday, October 14, 2018
- Last year we had over 500 fellows join us for an amazing weekend of fellowship and recovery. This year we are hoping to welcome more people from the fellowship to the convention. The more the merrier -- ALL ARE WELCOME!!
- Conference information will be placed on the Fellowship Convention section of the FA website. As soon as it becomes available.
- PLEASE NOTE: FA Fellowship convention registration will open after registration for the Business Convention closes.
TRADITIONS COMMITTEE (PATTY R., CHAIR)

The Traditions Review Committee (TRC) consists of eight members in addition to the Chair, who represent a diverse geographical spread and depth of experience (with a minimum of 5 years of abstinence). The WSB Bylaws Chair serves as an ex-officio member of the committee. This year we welcomed two new members to fill spots vacated by others.

The TRC generally meets by telephone every two months for 90 minutes, in addition to holding two in-person meetings at the FA World Service Business Convention. Each meeting includes updates from the Education and Index subcommittees, followed by discussion of the traditions related issues submitted to traditions@foodaddicts.org by individuals, meetings, local service groups, chapters, intergroups, or the World Service Board members since the previous meeting.

This year, the Education Subcommittee published TRC content in each GIA newsletter. The Index Subcommittee developed a format and contracted with a professional editor for a user-friendly archive to be posted on the FA website, which will contain all TRC opinions issued since 2002.

In FY 2016-2017, the TRC received 47 inquiries; many were referred either to the Inquiry Response Committee or the Meeting Effectiveness, Safety, and Accessibility committee, or were provided with responses from historical opinions on similar questions. The committee in full addressed 17 new submissions.

The following are selected examples of Traditions issues resolved since the last Annual Report:

1. Voluntary Group Email List
2. Earmarking 7th Tradition Donations
3. Member Receiving Texts From Other Member Promoting Outside Event
4. FA Meetup Website
5. Member Selling Food To Other Members
6. Clapping Suggestion A Rule?
7. Personal Email Searchable On FA Website
8. Posting Full Name or Just FA on Meeting Signs
9. FA Facebook Page
10. Doctoral Dissertation - Weight Loss Maintenance
11. Serenity Prayer in Maori
12. Creating a Slide Presentation for Health Care Providers Information Meetings
13. Member Profiting from FA
14. Member Giving Lecture Series on Weight Loss
15. Should a TV Interview Video on FA be Posted on Members’ Facebook?
16. Announcing FA Survey Results During Meeting Announcements
17. Listing VOIP Apps on Frontier Phone Lists
1) Voluntary Group Email List

- **Issue:** A local fellowship would like to start a private, strictly voluntary email group that exchanges deaths, births, sickness only for people who have volunteered to be in the group or have given permission for the info to be disclosed. Any other kinds of information would be discouraged.

- **Response:** It seems that this idea of a group email list may infringe in a small way on some traditions. It doesn’t appear that it would affect the anonymity of the group’s members as long as it is open to everyone who wants to be on the list. However, there was some concern that some people may feel left out, especially newcomers who may not know about the email list. This could affect the unity of the group (Tradition 1).

Tradition 5 is put to question as well since our primary purpose is to help the still suffering food addict. The question to ask is, “Is this an effective way to place our energy and our service for the still suffering addict?” It might be more of a social activity, thus taking away focus from our primary purpose. It is also unclear about how and by whom the list would be updated and managed in a way to mitigate the above concerns. This concern may be more of a best practices issue. It seems that if a group of individuals wish to make a group email list among themselves outside of an FA meeting (even if it is all FA members) there would be no problems with the traditions. However, it could be seen as a conflict with the traditions if it were done within a meeting, announced at a meeting, or if an FA logo is placed on the top of the list.

2) Earmarking 7th Tradition Donations

- **Issue:** A member inquired whether earmarking 7th Tradition donations is in the spirit of the 12 Traditions? One member in her meeting donated money specifically to buy 1000 trifolds for the area. Another thought that it may be better to have the generous member put money in the 7th Tradition basket and let the meeting choose whether to buy the trifolds.

- **Response:** The long form of the 7th Tradition states "acceptance of large gifts from any source or contributions carrying any obligations whatever is unwise". The TRC suggests contributions should be made to the 7th Tradition without a specific purpose. The final decision of how funds are used is determined by group conscience.

A 7th Tradition donation allows members to show gratitude and do service by supporting the overall functioning of FA. According to the pamphlet, “Your FA Seventh Tradition,” meetings use 7th Tradition donations to cover expenses (meeting space, literature, public information). Any funds beyond local meeting needs get passed on to a chapter, intergroup or WSI. FA members may donate up to $2,000 in a year directly to WSI.
3) Member Receiving Texts From Other Member Promoting Outside Event

- **Issue:** A member reported receiving a text message from a fellow who is an actor inviting herself and numerous other fellows to come watch her in her film. She does not normally receive calls from the fellow, and was concerned that this kind of advertisement using FA phone numbers is against our Traditions.

- **Response:** After discussion, the TRC determined that there are several concerns regarding texting FA members to attend an outside event (in this case, to view a film in which a member had a role). The inquiry indicates that, in this particular instance, the text recipient hadn't received calls from the "texter" in the past. Therefore, it could be assumed that cell numbers provided on the local FA phone list were used. This could be a potential breach of our principle of anonymity (Tradition 12). We need to ensure that we maintain an environment of trust so that members, particularly newcomers, feel safe. Also, because the film is really an outside event, not associated whatsoever with FA, Tradition 6 may have been violated. Although not explicitly stated, and the intent is not necessarily clear, this method of invitation could be seen as an endorsement or promotion for personal benefit and completely unrelated to the business of FA recovery. FA members often develop long-lasting friendships where it is very common to support one another in outside endeavors. However, blanket invitations, solicitations and/or advertisements can detract from our primary purpose (Tradition 5).

The TRC recommended that calling members or speaking with them directly (face-to-face) rather than group texting would be the preferred way to ask for support (provided there is no associated monetary benefit).

4) FA Meetup Website

- **Issue:** A member contacted the TRC about an online FA "Meetup" group in which FA members are publically identified in social media. The group currently has over 60 members, a Leadership Team of one, one “Organizer” identified with a generic last name, and uses the FA logo. Members of the Meetup are clearly identified, and many (not all) use their full name and post an identifying photo. The group lists all FA Meetings in the area, which are described using FA-approved language.

- **Response:** The TRC discussed this issue at length and reviewed the Meetup site in question. Although the committee applauds the FA group’s PI efforts for their meetings, this site raises several concerns about the Traditions, specifically 2 (no leaders in FA), 6 (endorsement of outside enterprises), 10 (opinions on outside issues), and 11 (attraction vs. promotion and anonymity in the media).

Tradition 6 cautions us against endorsing outside enterprises, either explicitly or implicitly. Using the FA logo on a wholly separate website clearly implies some level of approval or endorsement. Further, in 2009 the World Service Conference
voted to limit use of the logo to registered FA meetings and service groups, and to require permission from the World Service Board for any use on the internet or in any other public communication (see Continuing Effects Motions Manual on FA website).

Similarly, Tradition 10 may also be relevant in this case, as Meetup groups encompass a wide range of activities and political opinions, including groups devoted to various forms of diet and exercise, on which FA has no opinions.

The TRC recognizes that the internet in general and social media sites specifically are powerful mechanisms for reaching newcomers. As with all public information efforts, caution should be our guiding principle, as advised by Tradition 11. As distinct from other “advertising” on general news websites or even Craigslist, the linking of full names and faces with an FA activity clearly contravenes this Tradition. Further, the FA Public Information Committee has established a policy guiding member use of social media, including the suggestions against giving the appearance of FA as a “social club.” (The policy is posted on the FA website.)

In support of this FA’s group’s PI attempt, the TRC encourages the group to look for possible ways to address and mitigate these concerns. First, remove the FA logo. Then explore available options for structuring this Meetup group – Can the Meetup be listed as a Private group, with new members having to request to join, at which point they would be given information on going to a meeting. Can the ability of members to post comments also be restricted, to avoid the appearance of this as an online meeting or social club?

After reviewing this, the TRC forwarded the request to the Public Information Committee to provide further guidance to the members involved.

5) Member Selling Food To Other Members

**Issue:** A member was informed that another member is buying specific foods from another FA member and paying him or her. The food could be argued to be abstinent, or may not be. The member was concerned about the implications of using our FA connections to make money.

**Response:** The Traditions Committee discussed the member’s concern and had further questions. Was the phone list and the FA meeting being used as instruments for profiting from this member’s business enterprise, or was this transaction between two members taking place outside of the meeting?

If it is taking place at a meeting, if the product is being promoted and offered to multiple people, or using meeting resources like the phone list, Tradition 5 comes into play. It states “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the food addict who still suffers.” This selling could be a distraction for members and confusing to the newcomer.
If the subject of the product came up casually and the member was selling to only one person outside of the meeting, the TRC felt that was an arrangement between two people and would not affect the meeting. It would then be an issue to be discussed with their sponsors. The Traditions are not meant to monitor what two people do between each other where FA as a whole is not being affected.

6) Clapping Suggestion A Rule?

- **Issue:** A member of a meeting inquired whether it is a “suggestion” or a “requirement” that FA members not clap at meetings when a member stands up to go to the front of the room to speak for the first time. When the TRC responded with a reference to Document 4 of the Meeting Guidelines, the member requested further clarification as to whether the meeting could apply group conscience to allow clapping because it “expresses gratitude that an individual had the faith and courage to stay abstinent for 90 days.” The member asked if “WSI approves the suggestion to take this expression of gratitude to a vote.”

- **Response:** The TRC recognizes that the use of the word “request” in Document 4 (“request that people not clap”) may be considered a suggestion and may therefore be voted on by the group conscience. However, we believe that the intention behind the request should be considered. As stated in Document 4, applause is perceived as a reward for an accomplishment and it focuses on the individual, but abstinence is a gift from our Higher Power. We give credit to that power rather than the individual. This protects the individual and allows for the practice of “But for the grade of God, there go I.” So it doesn’t matter if the applause is before or after the member speaks, it still emphasizes the individual (Tradition 12).

Although the TRC recognizes the sense of encouragement and sentiment behind the clapping, there are several concerns to consider. A new member’s perception that their applause was not as enthusiastic as another’s could make them feel “less than” and could potentially discourage a member from returning to a meeting where there is clapping (Tradition 5). Clapping may inadvertently put pressure on a person, and many a fellow has eaten on day 91 due to pressure. The practice of clapping for a person who gets 90 days could easily open the door for clapping for other successes, for example: 6 months, one year, multiples of years, or for sharing. Where do we draw the line? Furthermore, the meeting would honestly have to consider if this affects other meetings, unity and ultimately FA as a whole (Tradition 4).

7) Personal Email Searchable On FA Website

- **Issue:** A member was concerned because she had started a new business using her personal email. A potential customer “Googled” her email address (common practice as of late) and became concerned because the search revealed several entries about food addiction. The documents she found were reports of various service committees on the FA website. The member is concerned for her anonymity as well as FA’s.
• **Response:** The TRC discussed this issue and, first and foremost, regrets that this has happened. FA has made a conscious decision that no aspect of our website is to be private. Additionally, the FA website now has a more powerful search engine so more documents (such as service committee minutes) are now more widely available.

However, we do not find this to be a Traditions issue, because members who use their personal emails for FA are essentially choosing to break their own anonymity. Rather, this raises an issue of educating both our members and our service groups that any FA document containing contact information may now be more “public”.

To prevent this, many members who are concerned with anonymity create an FA-exclusive email with no identifying features (e.g., firstnameFA@gmail.com). At the service levels, committee chairs (and subcommittee chairs) may use a generic email address at the FA domain (traditions@foodaddicts.org). Members can contact their Intergroup or WSO if this applies.

Two suggestions for service groups themselves to consider are 1) adding disclaimers on documents so members are aware of the potential for their information to be discovered; and 2) determine whether members’ phone numbers and personal emails need to be included in documents that are then posted on the FA website.

8) **Posting Full Name or Just FA on Meeting Signs**

- **Issue:** The Convention Committee inquired whether FA meetings and Conventions should use our full name, "Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous", or "FA" on posted signs.

- **Response:** The TRC recommends local meetings keep it generic, FA, since it is for the newcomer. A newcomer may feel uncomfortable walking into a meeting with a sign that says Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous. Similarly, a meeting phone list is best simply titled with the day and the title of phone list. We do not need to identify it as a phone list for Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous. For meetings one should use “FA”. The 5th Tradition reminds us that our primary purpose is to serve the newcomer. The 11th and 12th Tradition reminds us to protect anonymity.

For conventions, welcoming signs could conceivably use the full name, Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous, where it has attracted public attention and people have attended a convention meeting. So it does have PI value. The groups are so large, and most members are away from their communities.

But the newcomer walking into a meeting in their community would be more comfortable with “FA”.

9) **FA Facebook Page**
• **Issue:** A member contacted TRC regarding a sponsee stating that she was participating in an “FA Facebook page”. The member shared the FA Social Media Statement with her sponsee and several other members in the meeting. The member was concerned with whether this Facebook activity was in keeping with the Traditions.

• **Response:** The TRC had definite concerns about the use of social media in a way that connects FA with an outside entity (Tradition 6), could involve comments on outside issues (Tradition 10), and reveals individual members’ identity to the public (Tradition 11). We believe that the FA social media statement found on the FA website presents a sufficient explanation of the principles and the clear suggestion: FA fellows should refrain from using FA in their profile.

On further discussion with the inquirer, we agreed that many members of FA are not aware of the Social Media statement and it would be helpful to reiterate this through the GIA, intergroup and chapter reports, and the Meeting Health service position. It was also suggested that we share this information with the PI and 12th Step committees, suggesting that they reiterate the point during their periodic conference calls.

10) Doctoral Dissertation - Weight Loss Maintenance

• **Issue:** An FA member wrote to the TRC in regards to research they are conducting for their doctoral degree and in particular their dissertation topic. The member is looking for individuals who have successfully lost weight and kept it off for a minimum of a year to gain evidence of the motivation that may lead to successful weight loss maintenance. The member would like to survey a target population of individuals who have made lifestyle changes in the area of weight loss/weight loss maintenance to support a specific theory of motivation they have studied. The member asked whether FA World Service has ever allowed other researchers to survey their fellows either worldwide or locally. The TRC inferred that the member was looking for TRC or WSB authorization to allow such a survey.

• **Response:** The TRC and WSB reviewed the inquiry; many commented that the theory that the researcher is focusing on seems to directly conflict with the principles of the FA program and the 12-steps, so FA members would likely be an inappropriate sample, notwithstanding that they have the requisite weight loss and maintenance requirements.

That being said, the TRC provided the following comments regarding a number of potential conflicts with FA Tradition. Tradition 11 (attraction rather than promotion; maintenance of personal anonymity at level of press) was highlighted due to the potential that this study could be published. A potential positive side effect of this publishing would be another means to “get the word out” about FA and perhaps help the still suffering food addict by reaching the professional community in a new manner that would not be considered “promotion.”
Tradition 12 (anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions; placing principles before personalities) was also noted as it is vital that personal anonymity be respected for the protection of FA, as no individual speaks for FA, only for themselves.

The primary concern raised is how the member finds their subjects. The TRC and WSB were unanimous in the view that the principles of FA would prohibit the organization from assisting the member in finding a list of potential research subjects. FA does not maintain lists of members available to outside professionals. It was also made clear that it would not be appropriate for an FA meeting phone/email list, a convention phone list or any of the 12th Step committee phone lists to be used for this purpose.

It was noted that making an announcement requesting subjects for a study would not be appropriate at an FA meeting since the study is not part of FA and therefore not an FA announcement. Similarly, handing out any flyers or literature at a meeting would also be in direct conflict with the FA Meeting Requirements & Standards. These practices might also adversely impact any newcomers who might think that their anonymity in attending the meeting is threatened.

That said, if the researcher/FA member decided to personally approach individual members in their local area, it would be a personal decision if those FA members chose to participate in the study. If so, they would be speaking for themselves and not for FA. It was suggested that it may be preferred to approach more experienced (rather than new) FA members, discreetly, after a meeting as to not impact newcomers (Tradition 5) who may be put off by a request to be studied.

Should FA members proceed they would be doing so as individuals, using their first name only or a pseudonym and not representatives of FA. It would be vital that the study respect the principle set out in Tradition 6, that FA not endorse or lend the FA name to any outside enterprise, and Tradition 10, that FA has no opinion on outside issues.

As an additional confirmatory measure, the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) General Service Office (GSO) was consulted and their position on this type of request was sought. AA has a group in their organizational structure called “Cooperation with the Professional Community” (CPC) which has a mandate to respond and cooperate with outside professionals while maintaining the principles of the AA program including AA’s 12 Traditions. CPC explained that AA, as an organization, does not participate in research, education nor therapy and will not agree to carry the message of any other organization. They will, however, educate and communicate with outside organizations and provide support and education in order that these organizations may carry the AA message. The CPC representative stated that AA members could participate in such a study but the AA GSO would not be involved. Members would
be expected to made it clear that AA must remain anonymous at the public level and members could not use their full names. Should the study desire to use any AA literature, permission must be sought as all AA literature is subject to copyright laws.

11) Serenity Prayer in Maori

• **Issue:** A group member from a New Zealand meeting shared that their group recently voted to say the Serenity Prayer in Maori at the end of the meeting. Maori is a minority population and there is a social/political movement for more rights and recognition for members of that group. Including this has caused conflict in their fellowship. The fellow would like to know if this practice is in conflict with meeting guidelines or Traditions, specifically whether FA should be seen as aligning with this cause even though, as individuals all of our members do support the promotion of the Maori language.

• **Response:** The TRC feels this practice is in conflict with two traditions, Tradition 1 (unity) and Tradition 10 (outside issue). Although the intent was to make the meeting welcoming to Maori communities, the language is only spoken by 10% of the population. The vote to say the Serenity Prayer in Maori was tied (2-2) with the secretary casting the deciding vote, dividing the fellowship. Therefore, the decision was in conflict with Tradition 1, which states personal recovery depends on FA unity.

Since the promotion of the Maori language is a social and political movement in the community, it is in conflict with Tradition 10, which states that FA has no opinion on outside issues.

Since the format is in English, the TRC suggests fellows recite the Serenity Prayer solely in English. The group could request a translation of the whole format if there was a demand.

12) Creating a Slide Presentation for Health Care Providers Information Meetings

• **Issue:** A subcommittee of the PI Committee submitted a proposal to develop a new format for an electronic slide presentation of an FA Information meeting to Health Care Professionals in place of a written format. This is a presentation method HCPs are more accustomed to, and is an effective format for presenting the data FA is gathering with its surveys. The presentation format will still require at least two FA members presenting their experience before and after FA with emphasis on their health issues. A detailed proposal was reviewed by the TRC, which provided suggestions to the PI Committee to ensure that the presentation stays within the Traditions.

• **Response:** The TRC did not see this as impeding on the Traditions, as the electronic slide presentation is simply intended to provide information in a more professional and up-to-date manner when presenting to groups of HCPs. The committee agrees
that FA members presenting should have at least 5 years of abstinence and completed at least 2 AWOLs. Perhaps each of the two presenting FA members would present half of the slides as well as tell their personal story, thus not giving the impression of anyone being an FA expert (Tradition 2). Staying away from other issues such as obesity as a national and international health problem, opinions on bariatric surgery (other than sharing from their own experience or the statistics of other members coming to FA who have had the surgery), etc. will be key as well (Tradition 10). The final slide version should be reviewed by all pertinent FA committees, including Traditions, before being introduced to the fellowship.

13) Member Profiting from FA

• **Issue:** A group of members asked the Traditions Committee whether or not it is a violation of traditions for a current member of FA to profit from her affiliation with and knowledge gained from being in FA and offering her "service" for a fee.

An FA member for several years from Rochester, NY is the Founder and CEO of Bright Lines Eating. Bright Lines Eating (BLE) is a program that appears to be based on many of the principles and practices of FA. She left FA around the time she launched BLE, but has since returned to FA.

• **Response:** The TRC spent a lot of time reviewing the Bright Lines Eating website. We saw that the member has given considerable thought to the traditions and appreciate those efforts. That said, our collective opinion is not in favor of an FA member profiting from their FA experience. Even though there is nothing in the Traditions directly stating that a member should not profit from 12th-step work, Tradition 2 reminds all of us that God is our ultimate authority, no one among us is an expert. One TRC member reminded the group of Bill W’s early experience with this very theme. The TRC reflected upon that experience, found in “Tradition Two” in the Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions. This FA member may find it helpful to refer to and reflect on this text. However, that tradition also states that we as a committee are powerless to stop anyone from doing what they will.

A larger concern of the TRC involves Tradition 6, which states “An FA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the FA name to any related facility or outside enterprise….” The TRC noted a statement on the Bright Lines website that can be viewed as FA endorsing Bright Lines Eating. In the FAQ area, it states, “The program we recommend the most, because of its staunch commitment to the four Bright Lines and its strong track record of success, is Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA).” This clearly implies an endorsement, by stating that FA is “committed to the four lines.” This is not true and we would like to see that part of the statement removed from the website and from any other literature where it appears.
The committee also wondered if the member is promoting her business at FA meetings or with sponsees. If so, that would clearly go against FA’s traditions.

14) Member Giving Lecture Series on Weight Loss

- **Issue:** Two members emailed the TRC for assistance in addressing a member of their group who is presenting a series of discussions on weight loss in conjunction with a local doctor. The presentations are being held at the public library, and the publicity includes the member’s full name along with before and after photos, but no mention of FA. FA is sure to come up in the discussion of how he lost 200 lbs. The members are certain the presenting member means well but they see concerns with FA’s traditions.

- **Response:** The TRC has several concerns with this speaker series, if the member connects his weight loss with FA in any way. Most obvious involves Tradition 11, that the member would be coming across as a spokesperson for FA, while revealing his full name and showing his face to the public in connection with FA. Similarly, by promoting his weight loss and himself as an expert, he is placing himself before the principles of this program, which goes against Tradition 12.

What is the difference between this and a public FA Information Meeting? In that case, faces and names are not revealed in the press - faces and first names only are revealed only at the meeting. There are also multiple fellows at an Information Meeting- this member is flying solo, along with a non-member. If he cares about FA and its Traditions, he should never mention his association with FA. We all have clay feet and can’t represent our fellowship publicly, particularly in the media. It would be in the best interest of FA and the protection of the traditions (which protect FA) not to mention FA at all.

There are other concerns with Tradition 6 and 10 as well. This member is an author and media personality, and he is affiliating with a doctor who has a practice and a message. This sounds like an endorsement of both of them, professionally, which Tradition 6 warns against. Further, Tradition 10 warns of the peril of taking an opinion on outside issues. It is likely that other issues will come up and be discussed during this 4-part series.

As an individual, this member has a perfect right to discuss with others the techniques that helped him lose weight, but not to mention his association with FA. He is free to talk about the food plan, meditation, using a support system, etc., but he will definitely be outside of FA’s traditions to mention FA, have literature available, or give out contact information. He could give his “simple solution” and then state that a person could join a support group such as OA, FA, FAA, RFA, etc. and not single out FA. He also should not give his phone number or say “call me to find out what I did”.

15) Should a TV Interview Video on FA be Posted on Members’ Facebook?
• **Issue:** A member contacted the TRC asking whether it would be recommended for FA members to post a recent TV news segment about FA in which “about 15 food addicts showed up for a "mock" meeting. The TV producer was really wonderful and spent a good amount of time getting an understanding of what makes us different from other "weight loss" programs out there. They were so impressed about the length of time several of us had kept it off, and they loved how we were able to gather a group of us with just a few days notice.”

• **Response:** Although all members of the TRC were very pleased and impressed watching the video of the segment, the majority of members agreed that, given the Board-Approved Statement on Social Media, members should be dissuaded from posting this on any form of social media. We believe that includes even something positive and well done by an outside entity.

Consistent with the Board statement, we believe that a couple Traditions would come in to play with such posting. Although the video is produced to sufficiently protect the anonymity of the members in the video, the anonymity of the people posting or commenting would not be protected, contrary to Tradition 11. Also, the posting member may inadvertently be viewed as representing FA, impinging on Tradition 2. Sharing by others could then lead to comments, language, sentiments and content that is not representative of the FA program and could be inappropriate or offensive.

All that being said, the TRC was unanimous in its praise for the piece and hope this becomes a link on our website that we can forward to interested parties – either on the media page or even on the front page. It will be a great PI tool.

16) **Announcing FA Survey Results During Meeting Announcements**

• **Issue:** A member requested that the TRC review for future reference, the appropriateness of reading the FA Survey Results at an FA meeting during the announcements where newcomers, visitors or members in early recovery who have not fully grasped the FA principles are present. Does the TRC believe that reading the FA Survey at an FA meeting conflicts with Traditions 5, 6 and 11? The main concern is item IV - Health Benefits, where it lists recovery statistics from specific illnesses other than food addiction.

Does reading this report imply that FA can also help anyone suffering with illnesses other than Food Addiction like musculoskeletal and joint problems, cardiovascular issues or Type II Diabetes to name a few? Is reading these statistics at a meeting trying too hard to "promote" our program? (Tradition 11). Are we sticking to our primary purpose (Tradition 5) or are we trying to be all things to all people? " (Tradition 6 AA 12 Steps and 12 Traditions page 157)?

• **Response:** The TRC does not believe that any Traditions are violated by reading the survey results at the meeting, although it may have been better to read at a Business
meeting. It is not distracting to our primary purpose because it is read to those interested in FA and weight loss does have many physical benefits. It is not presented in a public venue where it might be considered promotion; it is more about attraction by sharing some of the benefits many members have found through our program, just as we share our stories. We do not believe that the results of FA recovery are overstated. No issue of affiliation was identified.

17) Listing VOIP Apps on Frontier Phone Lists

• **Issue:** A subcommittee of the 12th Step Committee requested that the TRC review a previous opinion discouraging listing VOIP services on the Frontier Phone List. VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) is a common method of voice communication, typically a free service that many FA members have been using for a number of years. It has been a major cost saver, and a far more practical, user-friendly method of dialing members.

Referring to the TRC’s previous opinion that including a brand name (such as Skype) could be seen as an endorsement or affiliation with an outside enterprise, the committee cited phone lists, which include email addresses, providing visibility for the Internet Service Provider for each member (e.g., “aol.com”). This does not imply that a user is recommending/endorsing a particular service.

The 12th Step Committee proposes to include on the Frontier Phone List a column titled "VOIP", where any member may indicate their VOIP address or state which VOIP application(s) they are accessing. Since many members use multiple VOIP applications, there will be a simple key at the top of the document to identify what service the initials represent (FT, V, WA...).

• **Response:** The TRC believed that there was possibly a misunderstanding about its previous TRC response to listing VoIP options on the Frontier Phone List. Previously the TRC had suggested that listing columns for specific VoIP options (e.g., a column for people using Viber, another column for What’sApp) could be perceived as limiting choices and thereby endorsing just a few select services. Because this issue came up when the technology was new, that had been a concern. However, now that it is so common, the suggested, free-form column is seen more as informative rather than an endorsement. The TRC believes that the way the committee has presented this revised version is generally within the Traditions, although suggests some clarifying changes.

It is suggested that “VOIP” be spelled out/defined for the fellowship and a key included to spell out the abbreviations (W=What’sApp, V=Viber, etc.), as the list as presented to the TRC is confusing. It was also suggested that the heading at the top of the page include a statement that listing of these VOIP services does not imply endorsement by FA.
• **Completed the 2016 FA Membership Survey**
  - 4,238 FA members took the survey from 16 countries and 46 US states.
  - Almost half have been at goal weight for 5 years or more.
  - Over 80% reported improvement in dealing with stress, relationships and effectiveness in getting things done.
  - Personal contact is still the most important way people find out about the program.
  - We will also use health data from the survey to reach out to health professionals.
  - For example, there was a high rate of improvement in muscular/skeletal issues, cardiovascular problems, and sleep-related problems.
  - Of members diagnosed with Type II Diabetes, 93% reported improvement, and 43% reported that the issue was resolved and no longer a problem.
  - If you’d like more details, please email pi@foodaddicts.org

• **Significant Public Relations and Media Outreach Efforts**
  - We have 8 articles and 11 interviews in both major and local news outlets including two of special note:
    - A CBS Los Angeles story including a tape of a mock FA meeting.
    - An article in the San Francisco Medical Society journal, which reaches over 1000 physicians in the San Francisco Bay Area.
  - Three published FA book reviews.

• **Internet Optimization Efforts**
  - Due to Weblinks efforts the link to our FA website can be found on 195 new websites that are accessible around the globe.
  - Google AdWords campaign resulted in 281,000 new people finding our FA website.
Launched Google AdWords campaign in Mandarin resulting in over 15,000 hits to our FA website by Mandarin speakers.

- Colleges and Universities
  - 9 new Weblinks on colleges and universities
  - As part of our National Eating Disorders Awareness week campaign in February, over 5000 emails were sent to healthcare and counseling professionals at 530 colleges.

- Healthcare Subcommittee
  - Piloted an electronic slide presentation for information sessions for healthcare professionals.

12TH STEP COMMITTEE (PAULA K., CHAIR)

Gratitude in Action Subcommittee

The Gratitude in Action (GIA) subcommittee of the WSI 12th Step Committee reorganized the GIA team, and invited FA members from the U.S., Canada and Israel to participate. The team refocused the content of the quarterly newsletter to concentrate more directly on service. GIA will emphasize FA meeting service positions, public information initiatives, and will highlight aspects of the FA website. The committee also decided to solicit submissions from FA members for inclusion in GIA, and to leverage the graphic resources of connection, in order to create a more visually appealing look and feel for the newsletter.

Frontier Subcommittee

The current focus of the Frontier subcommittee is:

1) To redefine the FA Frontier (currently 100miles/161km from an FA meeting)
2) To determine the unique needs of FA frontier members
3) To help frontier members work their tools and build strong connections to the fellowship as a whole.
4) To raise awareness among FA members in established fellowships about the challenges of working the program on the Frontier.
5) To encourage members in established fellowships to learn about how they can help frontier members.

Many initiatives are being discussed, including:

- Welcome packets for frontier members
- A Newcomer Greeter phone list for inquiries from the Frontier
Continuing Work of the Frontier committee:

1) Phone Lists
The Frontier Committee currently distributes 3 phone lists for the Frontier:
- The Long Distance Sponsor list
- The Universal Language list
- The Frontier phone list.

Until now, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) names and numbers have not been included in phone lists. The FA Traditions Review Committee had considered the inclusion of this information an endorsement of particular providers, and consequently a break of Tradition 6. Because the technology has become so commonplace, however, the TRC has revised this policy. Rather than implying endorsement of particular providers, the listing of VoIP numbers is now considered purely informational. Please update your contact information!

2) Frontier Support Conference Calls
The Frontier Committee organized a series of four informational conference calls to share experience, strength and hope with FA members living on the frontier.

During the planning stages, the committee:
I. Initiated a new format, based on the 2010 *Gratitude in Action* article, ‘The ABC’s of Growing a Fellowship.’

II. Scheduled four conference calls.

III. Announced the calls using the following technologies:
- Emails to Frontier members
- Business meeting announcements sent to WSI contacts
- FA website updates and Frontier e-communications.

Synopsis of the calls, to date:
I. Conducted our first session on January 29th with over 100 participants. Topics included:
   - Support Call Series Overview
   - Introduction of the GIA article, The ABC’s of Growing a Fellowship
   - 'A' is for Abstinence: The Basics of FA; Staying Abstinent on the Frontier
II. Conducted our second support call on March 26th with over 100 participants. Topics included:

- Attending AA meetings on the frontier
- Creating and disseminating Public Information materials
- Spreading the word about FA in the community

III. Conducted our third support call on May 21st with over 60 participants. Topics revolved around the idea of “Getting the Word Out”:

- Creating FA flyers and developing public announcements
- Sharing your recovery with family and friends
- Responding to interested callers when a call comes in

IV. The committee is currently planning our fourth support call, scheduled for July 30. Topics to include:

- Going From One to Two
- Sponsoring
- Establishing A Meeting
- 'C' is for Courage

3) Frontier E - Communications (E-Comm)
The Frontier Committee releases a monthly communication to FA members who have listed themselves on the Frontier phone list. The e-communication is a cover letter for members who receive the phone list.

The e-communication:

- Encourages frontier members to connect with their Intergroups or Chapters by providing links to the monthly reports
- Provides tips on connecting with the global fellowship
- Reinforces points raised in support calls
- Outlines service opportunities for those on the frontier

Meeting Effectiveness, Safety, & Accessibility Subcommittee

Major MESA Initiatives of 2016-2017

1) Meeting Health Representative
There has been substantial confusion about the role of the Meeting Health Representative. The MESA committee has been trying to formulate clear guidelines for this service position. Resources currently available for the Meeting Health Representative include:

- Meeting-health inventories during monthly business meetings
- A list of Meeting Health Questions that can be read during the announcement portion of an FA meeting.
2) Predatory Behavior in Meetings

We have been getting more and more calls concerning predatory behavior at meetings and in local fellowships. Up to this point, we have been sending inquirers a document from an AA intergroup workshop on this topic. While people have found it very helpful, it is also becoming clear that we need to develop a similar document of our own. We feel this will help people to understand that this is a recognized problem within our growing fellowship, and that they can ask for help and receive the support they so much need.

3) Prison & Hospital Initiative

This year, for the first time, we have received an inquiry from an incarcerated individual. Up to this point, we haven’t had any experience working with prisons or inmates. The committee is in the beginning phases of looking to AA for experience in this area, and finding ways to approach this inquiry. For the time being, we are approaching our friend in prison as a member on the frontier. He has received letters, literature, and someone offered to try sponsoring him. There are clearly obstacles, but God is great, and will help all those involved feel out the situation one step, one day at a time.

CONNECTION COMMITTEE (ADRIENNE P., CHAIR)

• **connection Writing Sessions**
  – New and easy ways to organize, facilitate and connect: http://connection.foodaddicts.org/writing-sessions/

• **connection website views**
  – Home page – 4,500
  – Subscription page – 628
  – Frontier page – 628
  – Submission page – 683

• **Financial update**
  – Expenses: $25,097
  – Income: $32,065

• **Subscriptions**
  Digital: 212
  Print: 2212

• **Articles from the Frontier**
  – Exciting news! connection will be adding a section featuring articles from members on the Frontier, (how they stay abstinent without a local fellowship and what challenges they may face). If you’re out there, we need your experience, strength and hope. Please feel free to reach out at connection@foodaddicts.org if you have any questions.
CONCLUDING REMARKS: DAVID I., WSB CHAIR

My name is David. I’m a food addict.

Our brief time together of service and celebration, reflection and connection, honesty and gratitude, is drawing to a close and will soon belong to the past. But the impressions and benefits left upon us - that will be carried on to others - shall be long-lasting.

I find it both inspiring and stabilizing to read in the Big Book of A.A., the words, “Into Action.” It doesn’t say, “Into brilliance while sharing in an FA meeting,” or “Into feelings,” or “Into smart people with a good opinion.” No, it says, “Into Action.”

This convention is certainly representative of action – both this past weekend as well as this past year. This is what FA is about: giving back what we have so generously been given.

I have thought recently about how our Traditions direct us to “our common welfare should come first.” When we speak of our “common welfare,” the word common has for us a unique significance. In preparation for this convention I have spent time reflecting on what we, in this room, have in common. On a walk behind our home, I took this photo this past week. When I think about this young sapling establishing roots in a rock, it represents, in my mind, the resilience and determination that every person here has displayed - to find this program, to accept that we need this program, and to commit our lives to what it takes to live a life of recovery. If we take a moment to think about this, it is remarkable.

What I have also come to understand about “common welfare” is that our common welfare as a fellowship starts with our own personal recovery. Unity around us begins with unity within us. Before program, what I experienced within myself was internal disunity, a bunch of fragmented, disorganized, self-serving voices that lived in my head. As my sponsor at the time liked to call it, my “itty-bitty-shitty-committee.”

These voices, which seemed to take on their own personalities, had no apparent plan or sense of direction. They travelled in my troubled mind like, in the words of Dr. Paul, in his book, There Is More To Quitting Drinking Than Quitting Drinking, “a crowded tour bus with no driver. One of the passengers drove for a while in any direction. After a while, another passenger took over without talking to the first. Later, a third drove wherever he wanted until someone took over from him. Later, we all wondered why we never got anywhere.”

I had a similar problem with eating. In the morning, one part of me would decide to go on a diet forever. By the evening, another part of me, cut off from and defying the first, would start binging.

In order to bring these voices into coherence and face the problems they were all avoiding, I had to find a Center of Calm, an area of peace and serenity, a deeper voice within me, where the God of my Understanding resides. While this Power beyond myself has always been there, I didn’t know it, and addiction prevented me from finding it.

Only when these voices within me found unity and could work toward inner harmony was I able to serve the common welfare of the fellowship. It begins from within. It
starts with internal accord and then rises to another level of fellowship unity around me – by way of service and working together with others. Opposing voices within me contribute to the disunity outside of me.

It gives me a deep sense of gratitude and awe when I reflect on this and realize how far I have come in this area, and how far there is for me to go. But the program teaches me that the problem is not “out there.” The problem – and the solution – are “in here.”

Today, as we wrap this convention up and send you on your way to various locations around the globe, I would like to leave you with five lessons I am learning – and continue to learn – on my life-long recovery journey. All of these lessons help me understand, in a continuing and evolving way, my emerging understanding of “common welfare.”

Lesson #1. Always make your gratitude bigger than your circumstances.

Gratitude, like love, is not a feeling. Gratitude is a decision. Gratitude is an action. Deciding to open my heart and be grateful, and acting on that decision instantly changes my life. No matter what our circumstances, with abstinence we can always find a reason to be grateful. Gratitude brings us into the present moment and empowers us to see the future with renewed hope.

I recently went to Walt Disney’s Beauty and the Beast with my daughter. The movie had particular sentiment to us both, as Hayley starred as Belle back in her high school musical theatre production. The movie is a fairy tale in which a merchant’s pure-hearted daughter gives her father his freedom in exchange for being enslaved by a horrifying, hideous beast. The loyalty and special feelings between a daughter and her father resonated with us both.

But the movie had an additional personal relevance for me.

For fifteen years prior to coming into recovery I lived like the beast, isolated, alone in my thoughts, full of personal revulsion, self-hatred, and self-pity, with increasing instability, unmanageable mood swings and anxiety, promiscuity, debt, depression, rage, and caving in to self-serving cravings.

One day, following my father’s death and my second divorce, and after hours of binging, I found myself standing alone on a highway ready to step in front of a semi-truck. There was no hope at this moment. No ultimate purpose. I was completely and utterly lost.

When we come into an FA meeting, we aren’t just coming into a meeting. We are coming into a new life. Like Belle who looked for the best in the beast and the beast, who opened his heart to the beauty, when I was eventually led to this program I was able to find my way free of the dark misery of addiction and discovered the beauty hidden deeply within the beast.

When we open our hearts, when we raise our voices, and when we find our courage, we are able – both personally and collectively - to transform the beast of addiction into the beauty of recovery.

From that moment of realization on, there is always gratitude – beyond any possible circumstance.
Lesson #2. While love is all-powerful, love alone is not quite enough.

There is a reason that people take time to be away from their loved ones and their work and their personal life – to gather at this convention. Many of us have gone to great effort to rearrange our schedules. Most of us have traveled a long way and gone to much expense to be here. And what compels us to make such an effort? It’s simple - it is love. It is love for our recovery, for our fellowship, for each other, for our program. We know that in order to keep this thing, we must give it away. In order to be strong in recovery, we must be strong in our conviction to be here and to be involved, committed to something, to service beyond our own self-interest.

However, while love is necessary for recovery, it is not sufficient.

On the porch of Solomon’s Temple, the first Temple of Jerusalem, you had to enter between two pillars. The left pillar was called Boaz (bō’az), which means, in some interpretations, LAW, while on the right was Jachin (yāḵīn), which means LOVE. LAW and LOVE. These are the two pillars one had to walk between to get into the temple. The ancients knew you needed both and thus, the instructions were that you had to walk between the pillars.

I have come to know, all too well in the course of my recovery, both sides that are necessary to bring balance to my program. I have known, in times of fear, what it is like to hang on to the pillar of law, and turn the program into mere structure with directions and procedures and rules. I have known, also in times of fear, how to hang on to the pillar of love, attempting to please people in my need to be liked. What I have discovered is that there is more to this program than being rigid or being nice. Love animates the law, and the law animates love. Recovery means walking between these pillars. I must have both structure and compassion. Through a commitment to abstinence, I surrender to the disciplines of our program—the “laws,” if you will—and reap the rewards of recovery in the experiences of health, inner strength, and a capacity for service beyond anything I would have thought possible for myself. Then—and only then—I discover love – through the joy of living and giving and sharing recovery. Law and love—I need both, and I find both here. The strength of the union between love and law is what brings us through the doorway of recovery.

Lesson #3. Be careful what you give, for what you give is what will be returned to you.

We learn in the Big Book of AA that what we focus on is what grows.

A Native American grandfather was talking once to his grandson about how he felt about a tragedy.

He said, “I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one.”

The grandson asked him, “Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?”

To which the grandfather responded, “The one I feed.”
I have learned repeatedly from my devoted sponsor over the years: “Be careful what you give, for what you give will be what you receive back.” When I start to worry about the direction our fellowship is headed, I put energy into feeding the problem and it grows. With prayer, meditation, and acceptance, I put energy into a loving solution and can feel the progress.

The Big Book actually describes that when we jump into the answer, and stop focusing on the problem, the problem goes away. I believe we come to this business convention not just to address the problems of our fellowship, but even more so to recognize and celebrate our solutions, and to coordinate the efforts to build and serve and make better what we have. (By the way, reaching and supporting the Frontier will continue to be a highest priority for this board in the coming year).

Let’s focus on building the solution rather than being part of the problem.

Lesson #4. Be a light, not a judge.

We learn in the 24 Hour A Day book [May 13] that each of us are so complex and unique that it is impossible to judge wholly the personality of another. I certainly have done my share of judging of others, and I have come to know that my judgments always originate from my own fears, self-doubt, and insecurity.

Living our own program fully - being a light - and then respecting each other - is the only path I know to unity, both within the fellowship and within ourselves.

Respecting each other’s differences does not imply we need to have agreement. Unity is not uniformity. Unity means that we accept that differences and diversity are a part of any healthy community. What else can we do if we want serenity within us and among us? Acceptance, after all, is the answer to all our problems.

This program is not the business convention or about the motions that we debate here. It’s not the literature that we wordsmith or the decisions we make as a board in an attempt to serve this fellowship.

The real program is at the grass-roots. It’s how we live our lives. It’s the courage of personal conviction and the strength of the sponsor/sponsee relationship, one food addict helping another food addict. It’s about taking a ten-minute phone call in the middle of a busy afternoon that can change the course of a person’s day and maybe even the course of a person’s life. It’s keeping our program simple and stable - learning to work the Steps as we learn to work together – respecting each other’s differences, focusing on our commonalities, and building on each other’s strengths.

I heard early on that it is a sign of spiritual maturity to be able to be around people who do things differently than I do and not feel that my program is diminished in any way. I want to keep putting my trust in my own program, to be a light - a spirit of attraction - not a judge.

Lesson #5. Be sure to preserve what has been handed down to us.

When two women from the Boston area first came to speak at an OA meeting in
Calgary (FA was still an OA fellowship in 1996), and I listened to their message, I was inspired. I was inspired by their clarity and calmness, by their understanding that this thing with food was actually an addiction, and that after more than twenty-five years of a progressively unmanageable, miserable life, hope was born.

Within days I asked one of these women to sponsor me, and soon after I came down to visit the fellowship in Boston. When I attended that first meeting in Chelsea at St. Luke’s Church, what I heard was people talking about freedom and neutrality from food, that food was a drug, and that abstinence, as it was clearly defined, was the doorway to recovery. What I saw was honesty, unselfishness, a commitment to service, clear eyes, thin, healthy bodies, and a program that was simple and pure. What I experienced being around those early members was humility, joy, dedication, a profound gratitude for what they had found, and a sense of wonderment. There was no ego. No imposing wills upon anyone. Only kindness and clarity. A small group of good people, committed to stand for the principles they believed in.

As I watched them respectfully work together for the “common good,” I was inspired. I stayed in their homes and observed how they worked their program. I watched them humbly put their recovery first in their lives, and while far from perfect, they were practicing the Twelve Steps in all their affairs.

After that first visit to Chelsea I returned to my home in Western Canada, determined not only to bring the program back to Calgary, but also to bring back these members’ presence – the kind of people that they inspired me one day to become.

What holds us together today is what held us together twenty years ago and will continue to hold us together in years to come. It is our beliefs and our practices that sustain our individual recovery and our common welfare.

This program has been the foundation that I stand on. I don’t mess with it because I rely on it. My life, like the lives of all of us in this room, is filled with ongoing change. Friends and family members dying, injuries and illness, caring for aging parents, raising children, career changes, and so on – the realities of life that we are taught to face squarely, maturely, honestly, and with a strong connection to our own internal compass.

These ongoing changes in our life represent the living room of our lives. The furniture gets rearranged. The pictures on the mantle get replaced. The walls get repainted. The cabinets get refinished. What doesn’t change is the foundation of our lives - our FA program. We need to be careful to protect the fundamental underpinning of this thing. I trust that I speak for all of us, that in the midst of all the changes in our lives, we need something that is constant and unchanging. With all the disruptions and instability around us, what we don’t want to do is go downstairs and take a hammer to the foundation. While we may not live in the basement, we depend on the foundation to keep us stable and sustain us through the changes.

Through the love of the people in this room and through the disciplines that remain constant and unchanged, I continue to receive enormous strength and support, both this past year and beyond, during my brother’s three-and-a-half year journey through brain cancer, and eventual death, through my mother-law’s diagnosis of dementia, through the launching
of our daughter’s into adulthood and learning to be together in a marriage now without kids at home, through the continued growth of my business, and the real tough stuff like getting myself through an airport when my gate changes and I’m late for a flight.

It is vitally important to us to have an oasis in the chaos of our lives, tools of constancy that keep us stable and connected to the God of our understanding: daily quiet time and readings, phone calls, scheduled times to connect with our sponsor, and meetings with a familiar format, to name a few.

I have reverence for our past and for the lessons it can impart. I have unspeakable gratitude for those who walked before me and paved the way. And I am not bound by the past. I know that this program is a place where change is possible. I don’t fear change. I just know that the foundation upon which we change and evolve must remain solid.

FA, as I have known it, has never let me down. It works, and will keep on working as long as we choose to keep our foundation strong.

Safe travels, my good friends, and until we meet again, may God bless you, support you, and sustain you all in this vital work as we travel this road of joyful destiny together.

And as always: Easy does it in the transition home.

Thank you.