

# The Check N

Volume X

“... *Spiritual Progress Not Spiritual Perfection...*”

Fall 2003

## IISAA Trusted Servants chosen for 2003-04

The following persons have been elected to serve as the Intergroup's officers for the coming fiscal year:

Chair	Morris B., Bloomington Thursday Evening Meeting
Vice Chair	Katrinka G., Wednesday Methodist Hospital Meeting
Corresponding Secretary	Sherwood W., Thursday Night Open Meeting

## Intergroup Finances

The finances of the Indiana Intergroup of SAA are the business of every member of our statewide fellowship.

All of the financial activity that transpires within our organization is reported monthly and copies of our Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and Checkbook Register are made available to each meeting's IISAA representatives.

All donations are accepted either as general donations or as directed donations. The entire amount of directed donations goes to whatever fund the donating group specifies. General donations on the other hand are split as follows: 50% of the funds are placed in the IISAA general fund, 30% goes to the International Service Organization of SAA, 10% goes to the North Central Region of SAA, and 10% goes to IISAA's ISO Convention Delegate fund.

This division of general donations reflects the belief of the IISAA that it is important to financially support the work of

the ISO in keeping with the Seventh Tradition. It also supports the work of the four states that make up ISO's Great Lakes Region (**Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan**). Finally, providing 10% to the ISO Convention Delegate Fund allows IISAA to help offset the cost of sending a voting delegate to the annual ISO international convention.

During our most recent fiscal year (July 1, 2002 thru June 30, 2003), IISAA received a total of \$### in donations. Of that amount, \$### was passed onto ISO, \$333 went to the Great Lakes Region, and \$### was placed in the ISO Convention Delegate Fund. That left \$### for use by the Intergroup to fund our program of work.

Recording Secretary

Brad S

Treasurer

Dale W.,

Literature Representative

Mike C., We

From the Editor**Does It Work?**

In a recent group discussion at a meeting of my home group, the question was raised, "How do we do a better job of retaining newcomers?"

One answer on which there seemed to be a consensus was that we needed to do a better job of sharing our success stories. After all, why would any newcomer "want what we have" if he/she only hears about our struggles and our slips?

If the SAA program really does work, there should be many success stories to be shared. One avenue for that sharing is thru this newsletter.

I would like to invite *YOU* to share your SAA successes with our fellowship by completing the following phrase:

*I know SAA works because . . . .*

Send your thoughts to me at one of the addresses listed below. Responses of less than 50 words will be incorporated into a feature article. Longer responses will be considered for use in a series of follow-up articles.

PLEASE, flood my mailbox.

*Mike C.*

**F.Y.I.****Directory Correction**

The most recent version of the Indiana SAA Fellowship Directory was released to the Indianapolis area groups in early July. The outlying groups should receive it following the July 12 IISAA meeting.

Everyone needs to be aware that there is an error on page 1 of the directory. This directory covers the period:

*July 1 thru Sept. 30, 2003.*

The dates listed on the directory (April 1 thru June 30, 2003), are from the previous directory that was printed on yellow paper. The current directory is printed on green paper.

The information in the green directory is the most current. Please share this correction with everyone who receives a copy of our fellowship directory.

**Picnic Update**

As of our publication deadline, details concerning the date and location for the annual picnic had not been announced.

Once the picnic details have been finalized, a flier will be distributed to all of the meeting groups.

**Retreat Info**

The 2003 IISAA Fall Retreat, *Stepping Into Sponsorship*, will be held the weekend of October 24, 25, and 26 at Camp Pyoca in southern Indiana.

Registration materials will be available following the August Intergroup meeting.

Anyone who would like to volunteer as a presenter, or for any other task, can contact Chris C., Mike C., Jim K, or your Intergroup Representative.


**ISO Registration****Calendar**October

- 11 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.
- 24-26 Fall Retreat  
*Stepping Into Sponsorship*

November


- 8 IISAA Meeting 4.p.m.


December

- 13 IISAA Meeting 4 p.m.
- ?? Holiday Party
- 31 Check  N Deadline

January

- 10 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

The Check  N is the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup of Sex Addicts Anonymous (IISAA) and is published quarterly.

The Check  N is provided free of charge to SAA members and others upon request.

Material for inclusion in the newsletter, permission to copy all or part of the newsletter, or comments for improving this publication may be addressed to:

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## Suggestions for Meeting Discussions on Sponsorship

by Chris C.

**October:**      *How does sponsorship help my spirituality grow?*

Suggestion: SAA is a spiritual program. Discuss: What does having a sponsor contribute to my spiritual growth? How has my sponsor helped me grow spiritually?

**November:**      *How do I know when it isn't working and how do I fire a sponsor?*

Suggestion: Ask the sponsors in the group who have been fired by sponsees to talk about how it happened and their reactions to it. Then ask people who are being sponsored if they are getting what they need from their sponsors.

**December:**      *What have I learned from my relationship with my sponsor this year?*

Suggestion: Go around the room and ask everyone to share one thing they have learned or gained from their sponsor(s).

## Multiple “S” Groups

Can you name a 12-Step program for alcoholics other than AA? How many support groups can you name for persons who struggle with over eating? Can you think of any support groups for drug addicts other than NA?

Why, then, are there so many different 12-Step programs for sexual addiction?

As shown on the grid below, there are no fewer than five nationally known “S” groups that follow a 12-Step program for recovery from sexual addiction. There are several reasons for this phenomenon.

Most of these programs are about 20 years old. They all responded to the need for a 12-Step program for sex addicts at about the same time but in different areas of the country.

Geography alone, however, does not explain the diversity of the “S” programs. If it did, there would no doubt be a grass roots push to unite all of the groups into one national or international program.

The more challenging obstacles to such unity lie in the philosophical differences between the programs.

*continued on page 5*



As you read the “Distinguishing Principles” column on the grid, you will note that each group tends to define sexual “sobriety” differently. How the groups define a “committed” relationship and how they view homosexuality tend to set them apart.

There is an ongoing dialog among the groups as to how best to support sexually addicted persons; and, whether

or not unification could or should be pursued. There is an annual gathering of representatives from interested “S” groups that discusses inter-fellowship issues.

Take some time to examine the grid and perhaps visit the websites of the various fellowships to gain a better understanding of the broader sexual addiction 12-Step landscape. If you have questions, thoughts or

concerns, communicate them to ***Sherwood W.*** who is IISAA’s Inter-fellowship contact.

Editor's Note: This is Part Two of a three-part article that is being presented in three consecutive issues of The Check  N. Part One appears in the Summer 2003 issue of The Check  N.

## Working a Program in Prison

by John M.

### 2. Executing Your Prison Plan

When I entered federal prison, I was ordered to refrain from telling anyone the actual nature of my offense, lest I be placed in protective custody, that is, isolation, for the duration of my prison term. While federal prisons place a high premium on safety, I know that this often doesn't apply to state and local prisons, where guards may go out of their way to alert the inmate population of an inmate's offense(s), especially sex-related offenses.

When I was placed in a prison housing unit, I learned within 24 hours how to set up a telephone calling list and a visitor's list, and I was able to transfer the information on my contact sheets to the requisite forms so that I could begin making phone calls within a few days and receive visitors once they returned the prison questionnaires. I could call my home sponsor and Lexington contacts whenever I wanted, within the confines of allowable phone minutes and evening or weekend hours.

Within a few weeks, I received my first S.A.A. visitor, Jerry K., and in short order these visits became regular and weekly, with Jerry often accompanied by another program visitor. For one to two hours each visit, we held a mini-meeting in a corner of the prison visiting room, with voices lowered to preserve anonymity

and confidentiality. (In federal prisons, visiting rooms usually are not monitored for sound. It's important to note that this was my only opportunity for confidential S.A.A. conversations.) In time, Jerry became what I called my prison sponsor, and I was able to even get involved with his home group by correspondence. Jerry also saw to it that I received copies of P.B.R. and other S.A.A. literature.

Most prisons have what are sometimes called "counselors" who inform inmates about prison regulations, rules, and penalties, and from whom an inmate acquires forms, an initial phone call, legal telephone calls, etc. With only one exception, I found that counselors were not interested in an inmate's specific circumstances, needs, or problems. (More about this later.) But I discovered other programs that were, in fact, sympathetic to inmates' needs, if not always able to address those needs directly.

The chaplain's office can be a source of spiritual guidance, relief, and retreat, and chaplains usually will do what they can to accommodate an inmate's spiritual needs, whatever the inmate's spiritual orientation. Larger prisons will offer a broad array of spiritual services, from confidential counseling to holy day ceremonies. Though I was left to my own devices to do what

I needed for my Hindu-oriented beliefs, I always found the senior prison chaplain to be both willing and interested in discussing my spiritual issues and my recovery program. The chaplain's office, really a suite of rooms, also provided me a quiet and peaceful place to perform my daily meditations.

However, the chaplain's office could not extend its authority to help me work my S.A.A. program in a way that I knew would work best for me. For this, I sought help from my unit's assigned psychologist, a very smart, sympathetic, and sensible psychology Ph.D. who had embraced the (believe-it-or-not) less chaotic practice of prison psychology to escape the moral compromises and procedural bedlam demanded by managed-care practice. I discovered quickly that prison psychologists generally have a wider range of discretionary powers than do chaplains, and I arranged to see the psychologist regularly, every one or two weeks, to discuss my recovery, my personal background and addiction issues, and specific issues as they related to my growing desire to extend a hand of help to other inmates that I assumed were struggling with their own sex addictions.

*See Prison Program, page 7*

## Prison Program

from page 6

Once my psychologist became familiar with my personal history and my sincerity about actively working a recovery program in prison, he was willing to take my queries, and information I had provided concerning S.A.A., to his department head and the warden.

One result was the purchase, by the psychology department, of S.A.A. annual meeting tapes for me to listen to in the privacy of the psychology department offices, for which the department obtained a waiver of the rule forbidding inmates from using tape recorders. Over the course of a year, I listened to tapes each week and constructed an annotated index that the psychology department and other inmates could use for future use.

Finally, the psychologist provided me, at my request, copies of all his notes about our therapy sessions that I was able to take with me upon my release from prison. These notes have been very useful in helping people—including my probation officer, halfway house counselors, and counselors involved in my court-ordered probationary sex offender counseling—determine that I was a step ahead of most released felons, which in turn has allowed me greater latitude in how I work my probationary obligations. Additionally, the psychologist provided me with a recommendation, in the guise of a lengthy session memo, for use in applying for further schooling or work.

Twelve-step groups are an obvious,

and available, resource in most prisons, though this usually does not extend beyond A.A. and N.A. Participation in these groups usually requires special permission, especially if the groups are part of a prison drug and/or alcohol treatment program. In Lexington, I tried to start an S.A.A. group under the auspices of the psychology department, which had agreed to identify and notify relevant inmates, based on their legal offenses and other confidential information known to the department, and provide a

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***“ . . . I tried to start an SAA group . . . . Despite my best efforts, the warden rejected our proposal as too risky with respect to inmate safety.”***

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confidential meeting space. This also entailed getting the approval of an outside S.A.A. member to come into the prison to help run a group. (No inmates were allowed to chair groups.) Despite my best efforts, the warden rejected our proposal as too risky with respect to inmate safety.

Although I attended A.A. meetings (since any twelve-step group is better than none), almost all attendees were involuntary participants through the prison's treatment programs, which made meetings, for me, less than I'd hoped. But yet again, unforeseen help arrived when one of my unit's counselors (that one exception I mentioned earlier) told me about her desire to start a Gambling Anonymous (G.A.) group to

address what was a pervasive, and increasingly troublesome, inmate activity that had sparked in increase in thefts and self-surrenders into protective custody of inmates who were unable to pay their gambling debts and feared retaliation. The counselor had obtained the cooperation of a local G.A. member, and ex-felon, and a waiver from the Bureau of Prisons for that member to run a G.A. group in the prison. Since I was studying at the time so-called “behavior” addictions with thought of attending graduate school upon release, I readily agreed to help, with the result that I helped start, and attended weekly, the new G.A. group as a fellow “addict.” Keeping in mind that the Twelve Steps are a “we” program based on addicts helping one another, the prison G.A. meetings became a place where I was able to offer my experience, strength, and hope to other addicts, and they took the place of A.A. meetings as my group of choice to supplement my visiting room “mini-meetings.”

I need to identify one caveat concerning prison twelve-step

*See Prison Program, page 8*

## Acronym Alley

**HOPE**

=

**H** ealthy

**O** ptions

**P** ositively

**E** xist

## Prison Program

from page 7

meetings: in many prisons, meetings are attended by at least one prison counselor or other staff member who usually is obliged to report any illegal behavior that takes place or is reported in meetings. While the psychology department was willing, in my estimation, to interpret this liberally for our requested S.A.A. meetings, I recognized that it nonetheless could make meetings less than ideal for anyone seeking to be rigorously honest about their past if it included illegal activity that had not been brought to the attention of legal authorities.

My hope was that sponsorship outside the confines of meetings would address this need, but as I already noted, the warden rejected our request. Although I had made some educated guesses about other inmates who I thought were likely sex addicts, the nondisclosure orders (and consequences of violating them) I received when I entered prison prevented me and other inmates from seeking help from one another.

According to prison regulations, sexual activity of any kind is not an option for inmates, although I can attest to the availability of contraband print and pictorial pornography that was circulated among inmates, and to the sometimes consensual sex that took place between some inmates. Openly gay inmates were available for sexual encounters after “lights out,” and even pre-op

transvestites were admitted into the general male prison population. Although all inmates are tested for H.I.V. upon entry and prior to release from prison, I learned that most sexual encounters between inmates is unprotected. At the time, my inner circle precluded masturbation or sex of any kind, and through my active participation in my S.A.A. program, and a job in the prison library that kept me busy at all times, I found abstinence to be, for me, a relatively easy requirement to observe. Nevertheless, I can understand how a sex addict might find prison to be, in fact, an ideal environment for acting out, even with unprotected sex. There remains a very real need for S.A.A. behind prison walls.

To summarize, an S.A.A. prison plan ought to include: a) frequent contact with S.A.A. members back home and, if possible, locally; b) seeking help from prison staff, such as psychologists and chaplains, who can help you work your spiritual and therapeutic programs; c) daily meditation and reading of S.A.A. and related literature; d) working the steps within the restrictions of monitored contact with outside S.A.A. members; e) attendance at available twelve-step meetings; and f) complete sexual abstinence.

## 2002 Retreat Reflection

The following excerpt from *Letters of Spiritual Direction* by St. Francis de Sales was posted at one of the stops on the Mediation Trail at our 2002, *Prayer and Meditation*, retreat.



The mistrust of our strength is not a lack of resolve, but a true recognition of our weakness.

It is better to distrust our capacity to resist temptation than to be sure that we are strong enough to do so, so long as what we don't count on from our own strength we do count on from the grace of God.

This is how it happens that many persons who very confidently promised to do marvels for God, failed under fire, whereas many who greatly mistrusted their own strength and were afraid they would fail accomplished wonders when the time came, because the great awareness of their own weakness forced them to seek God's help to watch, pray and be humble so as not to fall.

We do not always have to feel strong and courageous; it is enough to hope that we will have strength and courage when and where we need them. We don't have to have a sign that these virtues will be ours; it is enough if we hope that God will help us . . . .

Now God, who does nothing in vain, does not give us either strength or courage when we don't need them, but only when we do. He never fails us.