

The Check IN

Volume XI

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

Fall 2004

Holiday Party December 18

The 2004 Holiday Party will be held Saturday, December 18, at the Lawrence United Methodist Church, 5200 N. Shadeland Avenue.

SAA and COSA members and their adult guests are invited.

The party will start at 7:30 p.m. and end at 10:00 p.m. The doors will open at 7:00 p.m. for those who would like to come early and help set up.

SAA will provide the meat and drinks. Participants are asked to bring a covered dish to share.

Postcards from the Edge . . . of Camp Pyoca

A new feature of the retreat for 2004 is a book discussion session. The book selected for this year's discussion is *Postcards from the Edge* by Carrie Fisher. Whether or not you attend the retreat, you might enjoy this book.

In just over 200 pages, Suzanne Vale, our heroine takes us on her journey through addiction, in-house treatment, 12-Step programs, relationships, and life in recovery.

The thought processes of addiction are vividly portrayed by a rich cast of characters who illuminate the dark corners of addiction, co-dependency, and life in recovery.

People Magazine says, “*Suzanne Vale is funny and famous, a thirty-ish actress who has crash-landed in rehab, and navigated the humorous and harrowing byways of all of her addictions . . . even love.*”

Poignant, painful, excruciatingly funny, Carrie Fisher's bestseller is a dazzling survivor's tale, and a wickedly shrewd, black-humor riff on the horrors of rehab and the hollows of Hollywood life.”

In addition to discussing the book at the retreat, we will also view the film version of *Postcards from the Edge* featuring Meryl Streep, Shirley MacLaine, and Dennis Quaid.

***“Every one of us alone has the power to direct the course of our lives by choosing what actions we will or won't take. While sometimes it's easier to believe you don't have a choice, the reality is that you always have a choice to behave differently.*”**

Francine Ward

Controversy Surrounds Publicizing of Sponsor Training Seminars

Controversy has arisen over the IISAA's publicizing of the Sponsor Training Seminars which have been produced by the SAA groups which meet at St. Luke's United Methodist Church.

A letter from the Bloomington Women's Serenity Group to the editor of the Check-IN and the Intergroup expresses the belief that the seminars violate SAA traditions and that the Check-IN should not have carried a story about the seminars and Intergroup should not have allowed brochures to be distributed to IISAA reps at the Intergroup meetings.

In turn, members of the sponsoring groups from St. Luke's have issued a letter of rebuttal.

Both letters are printed in their entirety beginning on page 3 of this issue. An editorial on the subject can be found on page 2.

See, To IISAA, page 3

From the Editor

Can Conflict Lead to Growth?

At the September IISAA meeting, copies of a letter were distributed to the representatives in attendance.

The letter was from the Bloomington Women's Serenity Group and expressed concerns about IISAA publicizing what the group believes are non-SAA events. (See the letter beginning on page 3.)

In part, the letter objected to the inclusion in the Check-IN of a story concerning the Sponsor Training Seminars hosted by members of the St. Luke's SAA meetings.

While I am in agreement with some of the arguments advanced by the Bloomington group, I am also convinced that the seminar advocates were acting in good faith and without any intent to damage our fellowship.

As editor of the Check-IN (and its only staff member), I take full responsibility for the newsletter's content.

In the absence of any guidelines, policies, or directives from the Intergroup, I rely on my 13 years of experience in the program to form my judgments as to what content should be included in the Check-IN.

I believe that our fellowship owes a tremendous debt to the founders of AA and to the many alcoholics who, who over the years, have helped that organization to grow and mature. I also believe that we cannot and should not measure our program with the AA yardstick.

We are still a small and struggling fellowship that needs to work through our own growing pains. What works for our "big brother" may not be appropriate for us at our stage of development.

The trick, of course, is to "place principles before personalities" as we work through the growing pains.

Thanks in part to my own personal history, I am not comfortable with conflict and controversy. However, I know that reasoned discussion can, and usually does, lead to growth.

I hope that the current discussion will strengthen our fellowship and help us to better understand how we can best reach the "addict who still suffers"—because, often that addict is me.

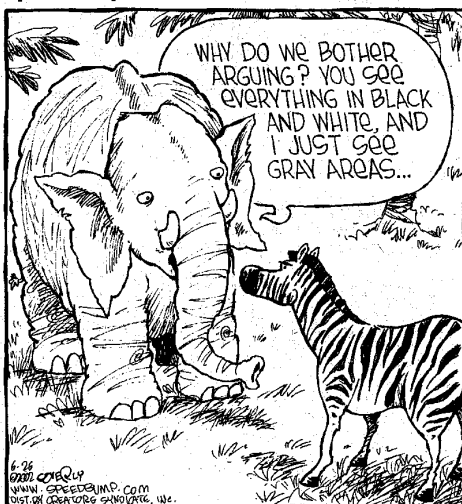
Mike C.

Handouts Included

The final two handouts from the 2003 retreat have been included in this issue of the Check-IN.

The inserts describe ways to work Step 12. They are a follow-up to the handouts in the previous issues of the Check-IN that highlighted Steps 1-10. (Step 11 was not discussed at the 2003 retreat because it was the topic of the 2002 retreat.)

Speed Bump



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

The Check **IN** 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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Controversy, from page 1

To IISAA

It is our group conscience to speak to you about an issue that has troubled us. As a group, we object to articles about the "Sponsorship Training Seminars" appearing in the Indiana Check-IN and to registration flyers being distributed at SAA meetings. We feel that publicizing these seminars in the Check-IN or at meetings violates a number of our SAA Traditions. We bring up this topic because of concern about adhering to the Fifth Tradition and keeping to our message and our message only.

We object to associating the sponsorship training seminar with SAA for several reasons intrinsic to the seminar itself. The six-month sobriety requirement is in conflict with our Third Tradition, which states that the only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. We are unaware of any specific sobriety requirement for sponsorship in any previous SAA literature or practice. The intention of the seminar seems to be in violation of Tradition Eight, which states that SAA ought to remain forever nonprofessional. Our experience, and the experience of other twelve-step programs that have come before us, suggests that the strength of sponsorship comes from one addict sharing experience, strength, and hope; with another addict. There are no special techniques or "training" required beyond our own honesty, our own experience of

the Steps, and our own willingness to be of service to others. To suggest that specially-trained sponsors, meeting requirements imposed only by the seminar facilitators, are better qualified to sponsor others within SAA, is in contradiction to the spiritual principles of anonymity, equality, and non-professionalism.

Since the seminars seem to present an idiosyncratic view of sponsorship that is informed more by a therapeutic model than a twelve-step model, we feel the seminars push against the boundaries established in Tradition Four, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.A.A. as a whole." To present sponsorship as a semi-professional activity with specific requirements and techniques does affect other groups and SAA as a whole, giving the wrong impression of the role of sponsorship within SAA.

Specifically, we do not believe that attending a one-day seminar can "train" a sponsor. Rather, our knowledge of sponsorship is handed down from one addict to another in the actual sponsorship relationship, and refined by serenity, courage, and wisdom. The seminar seems to follow the model of continuing education credit in the helping professions, rather than the slow process of living out a spiritual commitment to being sponsored and sponsoring others.

We believe that sponsorship is passed on by example. To imply that any one addict or group of addicts can set up requirements and claim to be able to train numerous others in sponsorship in a one-day seminar is very troubling to those of us who are deeply committed to ongoing sponsorship relationships. We are concerned that those who meet the arbitrary "requirements" for the seminar, but have otherwise no experience of being sponsored, may now imagine they are prepared to sponsor others on the basis of having completed the course. This is only one of the dangers of a semi-professional seminar that claims to "train" sponsors, rather than a gathering of equal members of the fellowship sharing their experience strength, and hope on a matter of great spiritual importance. We would have no objection to workshops or study groups on the subject of sponsorship; our objection is to the professionalism of a sponsorship "training" course, which runs counter to all our experience in twelve-step recovery.

For these reasons, we sense that the seminars might best be characterized as an outside enterprise, diverging from the standard SAA message. We suspect there will be debate as to whether the seminars are "SAA" or "non-SAA" in content. These questions will probably not be easily decided.

See, Women's Serenity Letter, page 5

To all IISAA Representatives,

We, the facilitators of the Sponsor Training Seminars (STS), recently received a copy of the letter to the IISAA from the Women's Serenity Group in Bloomington. We would like to respond to the concerns of our sisters in recovery. We regret that they did not first approach us privately and directly and hope that they will soon enter into dialogue with us and our sponsoring meetings.

We have been asked why we would spend the time, money and energy to put together the STS. The answer is that we have seen an overwhelming need in our fellowship for sponsors. We have each been to meetings where no one was available to help newcomers and we wanted to do something about it. Our efforts to help individual sponsees mature in recovery and become sponsors themselves have been painfully slow. The STS is an effort to share our experience, strength and hope with a wider group of recovering sex addicts and in a small way hasten the development of more sponsors. We see the STS as a supplement to what they are learning from their sponsors because we believe that the sponsor/sponsee relationship is primary. This is why we insist that attendees are being sponsored and we place STS attendance at the sponsors' discretion. This standard, we believe, is far from arbitrary; it is our effort at being most

respectful of the sponsor-sponsee relationship.

Since no one from the Serenity group has attended either STS and, as best we can tell, has not contacted any of the presenters or past attendees about what we do, we would surmise that their concerns are based only on their interpretation of the registration flyer. To bring more information into discussion, please let us give a brief outline of the STS activities:

- I. Suggestions for setting up the sponsor-sponsee relationship
- II. Identifying one's addictive behaviors.
- III. Spirituality of Steps 1, 2, and 3.
- IV. Lunch
- V. Steps 4 thru 10.
- VI. Suggestions for helping expand sponsorship in your meeting; feedback.

For each session except lunch, the facilitator shares his experiences on the topic of the hour, draws on the experiences of those present and shares some printed resources. Almost all of the materials offered are drawn directly for the 2003 IISAA Spring Workshop on Sponsorship, the 2003 IISAA Fall Retreat (which were shared through the Check-IN) and from past Sponsorship Corner articles in the Plain Brown Rapper. We also add handouts that have been floating around some of the Indiana SAA groups, among them "Things to Talk About

With Your Sponsor or Other Recovering Sex Addicts," (suggestions for effective recovery phone calls) and "Preparing a Fire Drill" (suggestions for dealing with addictive sexual cravings). Looking at this line up, it is safe to say that there is nothing particularly therapy-esque or professionalized about the STS. It is simply an effort to share our SAA experience, strength and hope employing tools already in use in the fellowship.

Our sisters in recovery seem to take umbrage with our use of the word "training" in the title of the STS. It is just a word, and it is certainly not meant to cause anyone serious upset or trouble. Rather, it was chosen to give a brief sense of what we were trying to do. The word can be changed. With the completion of the September 18, 2004 seminar we are now taking feedback from attendees to the sponsoring groups (the three SAA meetings at St. Luke Church in Indianapolis). If they support a change in the title, it will happen.

The members of the Women's Serenity Group also state their belief that the six-month abstinence standard for attendance is arbitrary and contrary to the Third Tradition. We respectfully disagree. While SAA membership is open to anyone who wants to stop addictive sexual behaviors, some activities, like service on the international level and

See, St. Luke's Response, page 5

Women's Serenity Letter from page 3

If the seminars are non-SAA, the question of publicizing them is settled fairly easily on the basis of Tradition Six, which states that we ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, and Tradition Ten, which states that as a group, we have no opinion on outside issues. If the seminars do claim to represent SAA, then our concerns about Traditions Three, Four, and Eight remain to be addressed.

In general, we feel that any non-SAA material (used as "filler" or otherwise) ought not appear in our newsletter, first because it detracts from our primary purpose as stated in the Fifth Tradition, and secondly because it violates the Sixth Tradition insofar as its appearance in our newsletter implies an endorsement.

Any addict is free to design or attend any seminar he or she sees fit. Our concerns arise from associating the seminars with SAA. Our group has chosen not to distribute the flyers or publicize the seminars in our meeting because we feel the seminars do not represent sponsorship in SAA as we understand it and negatively affect SAA as a whole. We felt impelled to share our concern after seeing the seminars publicized in the newsletter. We encourage you to consider removing IISAA endorsement of the seminars by no longer publicizing the seminars in the IISAA newsletter.

Sincerely,

Women's Serenity Group
Bloomington, Indiana

The 12 Traditions of S.A.A.

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

St. Luke's Response, from page 4

sponsorship, are best offered by those who have actually been able to achieve that desire. We hold this standard because our experience has taught us that it took at least six months of abstinence from all addictive behaviors before we started to gain a little of the sanity and serenity that SAA recovery offers. We have also found that

newcomers believe abstinent members are more credible guides for working the program. We trust that, though our sisters in recovery may have a different experience, they will certainly respect that the Traditions are broad enough to allow for different, equally valid interpretations of what constitutes SAA recovery. After all, the international fellowship has not articulated a sobriety definition and therefore leaves newcomers unclear on what we stand for. That seems far more arbitrary than our holding out for six months of abstinence.

We eagerly invite the members of the Women's Serenity Group, IISAA reps and all other abstinent SAA members to attend one of the STS in 2005 (February 19 and September 17). We hope for fruitful dialogue about the needs of the fellowship and we truly welcome all informed feedback to improve the seminars. We are confident that you would agree SAA needs many more capable sponsors and we believe that, after learning more about what we are doing, you will agree that the STS is a modest contribution toward filling that need.

We sincerely hope that IISAA representatives and the whole Indiana SAA membership will see the STS as consistent with the Traditions and support continued dissemination of Check-IN ads and the distribution of flyers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chris C., Brad S., Jim K.

Directory Update

Shortly after the fall issue of the Indiana SAA Fellowship Directory went to press, a meeting change was received:

The Indianapolis Thursday Night Meeting held at the Faith Lutheran Church has switched to **Monday** night.

All of the other information in the directory about this meeting remains the same:

INDIANAPOLIS:

SAA ☉ ♀ ♂

Monday Night Meeting

Faith Lutheran Church

711 South High School Rd.

Weekly 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Tenth Annual IISAA Fall Retreat *Three Circles, Targeting Recovery*

October 22 – 24

Interactive Sessions

Fun Activities

Fellowship

New this Year:

Book Discussion

Canoeing

Meditation Labyrinth

Call (317) 784-2180 to Register

2004 Calendar

October

9 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

22–24 Tenth Annual Retreat,
Three Circles,
Targeting Recovery

November

13 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

December

11 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

18 Holiday Party, 7:30 p.m.

31 Check  N Deadline.

January

8 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.



Acronym Alley

FAITH

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F or
A nything
I mpossible
T rust Your
H igher Power