

# The Check IN

Volume XVII

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

Spring 2010

## 2010 ISO International Conference

The 2010 ISO of SAA International *Conference* is being held in Albuquerque, NM and it is going to be a unique experience.

This year's meeting has been renamed a *conference* versus the former title *convention* that it has carried for many years. What was formerly the “Call to Convention” has been renamed the “Call to Conference”. The primary reasoning behind this change is that the delegates who are representing the various groups in SAA are actually meeting to *confer* when they conduct business, so the change seemed to make sense.

Our conference has functioned since its inception without a Conference Charter. A charter, by its definition, grants certain authority and responsibility to its delegates and the groups that they represent. It provides clarity, purpose, authority and responsibility to all of those who are involved in the process of conducting business for the SAA fellowship and for the addict who still suffers.

An internal Standing Committee of the ISO Board of Trustees, the Conference Charter Committee, has been working diligently to develop a conference charter for

See, *Conference*, page 8



## Spring Workshop April 24

There is still time to register for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual IISAA Spring Workshop.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 24, from 10 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. in The Barn at Northview Christian Life Church, 5545 E. 131<sup>st</sup> Street, Carmel, IN.

The \$15 registration fee covers lunch, refreshments and all materials.

Financial aid is available and will be gladly provided to anyone who needs it.

**Dale W.** (317 281-0215) is chairing the event; **Mike C.** (317 784-2180) is the registrar. Contact either one to volunteer as a presenter, to register, or for more information. Your IISAA group reps should have registration fliers available at your meeting.



## Website Upgrade

The official website of the Indiana Intergroup of SAA, [www.indiana-saa.org](http://www.indiana-saa.org), has been updated.

An increasing proportion of initial contacts seeking information about SAA in Indiana is being made via the website. It is important that the website be accurate, easy to use and true to the SAA message.

Please take some time to check it out. If you have questions, comments or suggestions for further improvements, please email Mike M., our webmaster, at [iisaa@indiana-saa.org](mailto:iisaa@indiana-saa.org) or share your concerns with your IISAA group representative.

## Carmel Adds Second Meeting

Beginning Monday, **April 26**, a newly formed group will meet at the Northview Christian Life Church at 131<sup>st</sup> and Hazel Dell in Carmel.

The new meeting is a result of the large attendance at the St. Luke Monday Afternoon meeting and a growing interest in the SAA program on Indianapolis's north side and northern suburbs.

The new meeting is a closed, mixed meeting and will meet on Mondays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. in The Barn at the rear of the church grounds. **Ken L.** (317 698-0735) is the contact for the meeting.

From the Editor

## Why Bad Things Happen to Good People

The sun is shining today and it seems unfair.

Last week, I learned of the suicide of Randy R., a recovery friend of many years (see adjacent article). Tomorrow, I will attend the funeral of a former colleague's 19 year old son. Yesterday, my sister informed me that recent medical tests have disclosed cancer in one of her breasts and some lymph nodes.

And yet, the sun goes on shining.

These apparent tragedies are the kinds of painful experiences that in my active addiction would have led me to act out. I would have seen these events as further proof that life sucks and that God doesn't care. Bad things should not happen to good people.

Fortunately, 18 years of recovery work and the kindness of two of my sponsees have given me a new perspective.

Some time ago one of my sponsees gave me a copy of the book *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chödrön. Recently, another sponsee gave me a copy of the book *The Ragamuffin Gospel* by Brennan Manning.

The experience of sharing SAA meetings with hundreds of good, worthwhile and lovable people who happen to be sexually addicted, along with the wisdom found in the gifts from my sponsees help me to realize that bad things happen to good people because *we are all good people*—wounded, broken, weak,

damaged, weary, imperfect, addicted perhaps, but good nonetheless.

The adversities of life are not some divine punishment for our moral failings. Like the countless blessings that we also receive, they are simply the fruits of being human.

Just as we could not appreciate heat without knowing cold or health without sickness, so we could not appreciate joy without hardship.

Randy R. brought joy and humor to my life; my friend's son enlivened his family and delighted his friends; my sister has been blessed with 58 years of life free from serious illness or accident. It is precisely the experience of goodness that each of them have brought to my life that makes the current events sad—it is the loss of life as I know it and the dread of living a new reality that frightens me.

But I do not need to act out. My trust is in the Higher Power who graced me with the great gift of these individuals in my life. Everything that he has given me has worked to my benefit—even my addiction. These hardships will, no doubt, do the same. Peace.

*Mike C.*

## The Loss of A Friend

*Richard S.*


I received a call this past week from Bill H., a very good recovery friend, informing me that **Randy R.** had passed away. Sadly, it was by his own hand.


His struggle with addictions had finally become too much and he chose not to continue to work recovery. Obviously, his choice about recovery was made long before he took his own life.

I'm not criticizing him; instead, I am remembering the times that he and I had together. We weren't really close friends but we had the type of friendship that is developed through recovery. I learned so much from Randy, but I'm not certain he ever really understood that, or even accepted it.

Addiction is cunning, baffling and powerful when we don't work the program of recovery. I can easily relate to the selfish act that Randy initiated. I remember walking down East Washington Street and thinking that I could just step into the traffic that was whizzing by and end it all. But I didn't have the will power to do it. I was struggling with a real sense of helplessness and hopelessness at the time as I thought about some of the really dumb situations I had put myself into. And

See *Friend*, page 6

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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## Thoughts from My Sponsor

Frank W.

From my view, my role as **sponsor** (better described, I think, as “guide”) is:

- To listen carefully, respond thoughtfully, pray diligently and care deeply while recognizing that I can only carry the message, not my sponsee. A sponsee is responsible for working their program, not me.
- To limit my guidance to what AA literature tells me about the 12 Step Program and my own experience in that regard, leaving counseling, professional, medical or financial help and all other such non-recovery issues to others.
- To be available to a sponsee 24 hours a day, seven days a week as long as that sponsee is not acting out, is trying to practice the Program and exercises reasonable judgment in getting in touch and seeking help.
- To not be a banker, baby sitter, employer or other such service provider.

I think the **sponsee** has the following obligations:

- To keep an open mind, carefully consider the sponsor’s guidance and work the 12 Step Program reasonably diligently.
- To not act out sexually and to attend a predetermined number of meetings.

- To have an agreed upon meeting/email schedule to “check in” and work the Steps.
- To fire your sponsor if he does not make you very mad on occasion.

Some assumptions I have:

- Working the Program is a life-long undertaking and an addict is always moving, either toward or away from recovery. I might catch my breath in working my program, but not for long, and will keep up the pressure on sponsees to do the same.
- I look at my sobriety as having two “phases.” The first is **not acting out** and that is clearly fundamental. If I don’t do that, all else is lost. But there is also a second stage, **growing in sobriety**, and continued practice of the Program opens the door to a wonderful life based on the Promises coming true. Said another way, the fear of the **consequences** of not being in recovery, keeps me focused on Stage I and the **benefits** of a sober life keep me forever moving toward more and more serenity, peace and joy, Stage II.
- I care about “personal history” but only as a source of information upon which to work the Steps, not an excuse for current or future behavior. Whining is not a well-respected or long-tolerated activity.
- Sensitivity is important but clear, direct and honest communication is more important. Thick skin is a valued possession.

- “Slips” scare me to death and I don’t take them lightly. I believe we all have one more slip in us, for sure, but we don’t know if we have another recovery.
- My spirituality is very important to me; I have a conventional, Judeo-Christian concept of a Higher Power who I call God. I have no reservations about referring to my God, prayer and other spiritual practices and encourage a sponsee to address dependence on a Higher Power of their choice.
- I believe a “spiritual awakening” as defined in Step 12 of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is crucial to progress; but, as the book says, “Maybe there are as many kinds of spiritual awakenings as there are people who have had them.”

## Picnic June 26



The annual IISAA picnic will be held in the shelter house at the

Greenwood Knights of Columbus, 695 Pushville Rd., in Greenwood.

All S-Group members and their adult guests (18 or older) are welcome. We have exclusive use of the picnic shelter for the day. No children will be present.

Admission is free. Intergroup will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, brats, tableware and drinks (water and soda). You are asked to bring a covered dish that will feed six people.

Modern restrooms are available.

Watch for the official picnic flier at your meeting group.

## The Ties That Bind

Ryan I.



It's interesting that sex addiction really has nothing to do with sex at all. Sex between two partners is all about communication, connecting and sharing. There is a bond established between the two partners that is intimate, trusting and loving.

Sex addiction is about isolation. It is not about communicating or sharing your experience with another person. In the addictive mindset, even if acting out involves another person, that act and intention are still isolation, being disconnected from each other's feelings and hiding in the shadows to cover up shameful actions.

Out of all the potential addictions a person chooses, and usually it's more than one, sex addiction is much more complicated because it is closely linked with actions of another person that supports the addict in a positive or negative way.

Alcohol, for example, is not a native desire and we don't instinctively depend on anyone else to provide us the drink. Sex is a basic human desire (not a need, however, we can actually survive without sex) that can only be shared with someone else.

Although the conditions and context surrounding the addiction are different with sex than other addictions, the root causes tend to have the same meaning to us and have nothing to do with the acts

themselves and everything to do with medicating to avoid painful feelings and trying to control our environment. So why is that?

We are not born addicts. There may be a genetic predisposition that some of us are more susceptible to addictive tendencies, but that is a topic for a different discussion. We are born into this world with a clean slate and as experiences happen, both good and bad, we learn how to react to them. If something makes us feel good, we want more of it. If something makes us feel bad, we want to avoid it. Patterns develop that help us cope with different events that are happening and these patterns develop at a very early age. These patterns and mental models serve as the structure for how we operate as adults and influence every aspect of our lives at both conscious and subconscious levels. So what happens when we don't have a perfect childhood? We have imperfect lives. This is beautiful because no one has had a perfect childhood and therefore has the potential to grow closer to what they really want to be. Being aware of our background and why we tend to recreate negative experiences over and over again in our lives is critical in true recovery.

It is no accident that an extremely high percentage of all addicts came from an addictive household. The addiction in the family does not have to involve sex in order to spawn a sex addiction. This just happens to be the addiction that we gravitated to because of circumstances that were presented to us as children. I would also classify abuse in

most cases as an addictive tendency as it tends to be a repetitive activity that abusers feel they have no control over. Sexual abuse in a household almost always creates sexual addiction in the victim as this is what they know and what they are taught. Mental and physical abuse can also lead to a sex addiction since the victim is searching for thoughts and actions that help them cope with negative abusive experiences. Through these experiences we search for mechanisms that help us survive, cope and live our lives. The addictive behaviors, in isolation, tie us down and keep us rooted in practices that are self-defeating. But on the contrary, many of these mechanisms actually enhance our lives by giving us an internal drive to succeed. As addicts, we know this cycle well - we commit a shameful act, worry about judgment and consequence, search for something to make the pain and suffering stop, and commit a shameful act. The burden is heavy and the guilt is extreme and it serves nothing but an insatiable appetite for the addiction itself. So how do we change?

I think we can all agree that as addicts we are not where we want to be. We may feel that something went wrong along the way to the present; but, I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. The addiction we carry, if looked at with a different light, is actually a gift that can be used to serve a much higher purpose for our lives. All of our lives we feel we have been victimized in some way, which as children we certainly were on

See, *Ties That Bind*, page 6



## 2010 Convention Committee Raffle

*Richard S.*

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual SAA International Convention runs from May 28 through May 31 in Albuquerque, New Mexico which also hosts one of the world's

premier hot air balloon ascension festivals annually.

A dedicated group of people from the Albuquerque area SAA groups meet via teleconferencing on a regular basis as they prepare to host the convention. However, the New Mexico fellowship is rather small and has limited funds to support the convention. Recalling had challenging fund raising was when the Indiana fellowship hosted the convention in 2006, I decided to become involved with the 2010 ISO Convention Committee by helping to conduct a raffle to provide financial support for this year's convention.

The raffle includes two (2) prizes. The first is a two (2) night stay at a hotel near a hot-air balloon event and admission to the event. There are hundreds of these events held throughout the year all over the country. The winner could opt to experience an event near where they live or enjoy a mini-vacation in another location.

The second prize is a two (2) night stay at a timeshare located either in Hawaii or one of the other western United States. Transportation is not included.

Tickets are \$5.00 each with the drawing being conducted at the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 International Convention. Winners need not be present to win.

If you wish to purchase a ticket you may call me, **Richard S.**, directly at **(317) 840-0304**. Also, **Ken L.** and **Keith P.** have tickets that can be purchased. Ken is involved with the Sunday Morning Men's Meeting and the Thursday Night Step Workshop. Keith is involved with the Sunday afternoon Carmel Abstinence and Growth Meeting and the Friday Morning Abstinence and Growth Meeting. If you are interested in taking a block of tickets to sell to your meeting group, please let me know.

## Is "It" Addiction?

I recently came across the lyrics to this 1991 Stevie Nicks song written by Jon Bon Jovi and Billy Falcon. As I read the lyrics I couldn't help but wonder whether or not the "it" referred to in the song might be addiction.

### *Sometimes It's A Bitch*

*Well I've run through rainbows and castles of candy  
I cried a river of tears from the pain  
I try to dance with what life has to hand me  
My partner's been pleasure . . . my partner's been pain*

*There are days when I swear I could fly like an eagle  
And dark desperate hours that nobody sees  
My arms stretched triumphant on top of the mountain  
My head in my hands . . . down on my knees*

*Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes it's a breeze  
Sometimes love's blind . . . and sometimes it sees  
Sometimes it's roses . . . and, sometimes it's weeds  
Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes it's a breeze*

*I've reached in darkness and come out with treasure  
I've laid down with love and I woke up with lies  
What's it all worth only the heart can measure  
It's not what's in the mirror . . . but what's left inside*

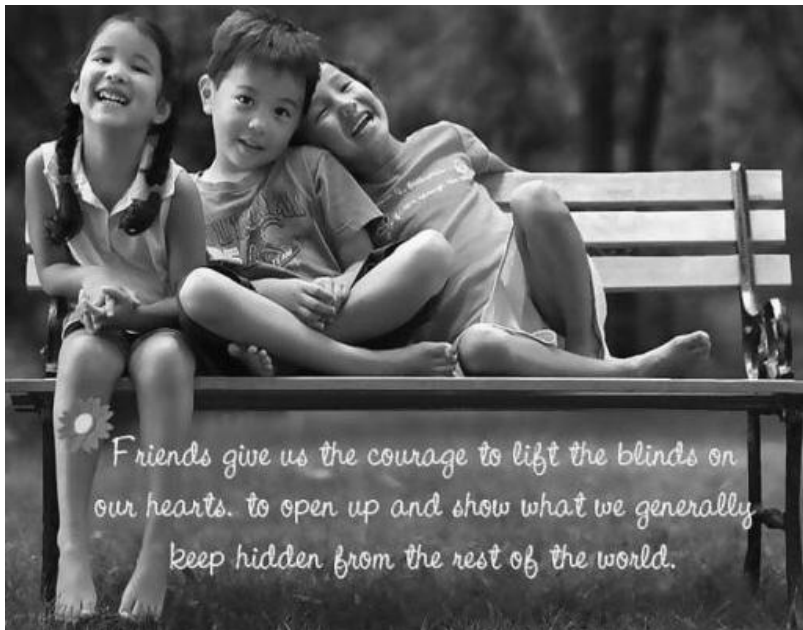
*Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes it's a breeze  
Sometimes love's blind . . . and sometimes it sees  
Sometimes it's roses . . . and, sometimes it's weeds  
Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes it's a breeze*

*You gotta take it as it comes  
Sometimes it don't come easy*

*I've run through rainbows and castles of candy  
And I've cried a river of tears from the pain  
I tried to dance with what life had to hand me  
And if I could . . . I'd do it all over again*

*Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes it's a breeze  
Sometimes love's blind . . . and sometimes it sees  
Sometimes it's roses . . . and, sometimes it's weeds  
Sometimes the picture just ain't what it seems*

*You get what you want . . . but it's not what you need  
Sometimes it's a bitch . . . sometimes . . . it's a breeze*



*Friend*, from page 2

this was even before I became lost in the addiction that would change my life forever.

Randy had a wonderful way of sharing his struggles with addiction. He just spoke what was in his heart in a calm and simple manner.

He had returned to prison after getting lost, once again, in his struggle with drug addiction. It was perhaps a year ago that I was sitting and waiting for the Sunday Morning Men's Meeting to start when Randy walked through the door shortly after his release. I remember the emotion that welled up in me as I immediately smiled, stood up and gave him a big hug. My eyes were filled with tears of joy at seeing my friend, once again. It was the last time I would see Randy.

My time in recovery has given me the opportunity to meet many people and to learn as they shared their struggles and successes with addiction. I have learned that addiction is the effect of my struggle with my emotions and not knowing how to handle them. The resentments, anger, anxiety, fears, and even happiness that I did not know how to manage expressed themselves in my

experience with sexual addiction. I chose to medicate myself with various behaviors that I somehow thought were going to make me feel better about

myself. And, of course, they did not. The shame, guilt and confusion only worsened and I repeated the destructive cycle of addiction over and over. It was my experiences with Randy and many more like him that finally allowed me to better understand myself.

I shall miss Randy. Just as I have missed him since that brief meeting after his last release from prison. He probably didn't consider this when he was in the process of taking his own life, but he has reinforced my need and desire to work my recovery program even more. His act only magnified my need for recovery--the sanity, clarity and balance in my life that allow me to make the next right decision.

I will remember Randy as that quiet voice sharing his experiences in the meeting. That's the Randy I know. I'm sorry it ended the way it did, but I hope that he has found the peace and serenity that evaded him while he was with us.

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*Ties That Bind*, from page 4

many levels even if not readily apparent. A victim states that it's not their fault or it is their fault, seeking for ways to assign blame to someone or something rather than accepting

ownership of a situation no matter how painful it might be. Being a victim has definite payoffs; otherwise we wouldn't play that role. But playing the role of victim, and the actions that go along with it, don't work very well as an adult because we are tied down to thoughts and actions that lead to destructive cycles. The cycles are very difficult to change, along with anything else in your life, if you are a victim.

As adults, every decision we have ever made, regardless of its influence, has led us to this very moment and how we are feeling, thinking and acting right now. If we can get through the fog of addiction that clouds our judgment, we can see other possibilities. We can see that we didn't get to necessarily choose how we lived our lives as children or what experiences we had, but we do have a choice to make once we are self-aware adults. We can decide how we want to live our lives, how we react to events and how we handle our feelings. Of course we cannot go through our lives alone in these decisions and as any recovered addict knows, we need our higher power and a support system; however we define that, to help us along the way. But even doing that, by definition, is a choice that we make. You may not fully understand why you have made the choices in your life, but regardless of the understanding, everything has been a decision you have made based on implicit or explicit reasoning. Once we have a better understanding of where we have been and why, our recovery becomes a clear pathway because our decisions are in alignment with how we want to view our world. Releasing the bonds of addiction through surrendering to your higher power and leveraging your support system with SAA, is a choice you can make every moment of every day. The choice is yours.

## Porn Hurts Here's Help

Pornography and in particular Internet pornography are a plague on modern society.

Here are some random stats from a variety of sources:

- The number one search term used at search engine sites is "sex".
- 70% of 18 to 24 year old men visit pornographic sites in a typical month.
- 66% of men in their 20's and 30's report being regular users of pornography
- 20% of men and 13% of women surveyed admitted to accessing pornography at work.
- One out of three visitors to all adult websites is a woman.
- One in six women (17%) struggles with pornography addiction.
- Women favor chat rooms two times more than men.
- The largest group of viewers of Internet porn is children between the ages of 12 and 17.
- 90% of 8-16 year olds using the Internet have viewed pornography on line (most while doing homework).
- Half of all hotel guests order pornographic movies.
- 40% of adults surveyed believe that pornography harms relationships between men and women.
- 30 % of surveyed adults said their partner's use of pornography made them feel more like a sexual object.

Here are some random resources for help in understanding and dealing with Internet pornography: (Inclusion in this list is NOT meant to constitute endorsement).

- Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA), [www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org), 1 (800) 477-8191
- Codependents of Sex Addicts (CoSA), [www.cosa-recovery.org](http://www.cosa-recovery.org), (763) 537-6904
- Covenant Eyes, [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)
- Safe Eyes, [www.internetsafety.com](http://www.internetsafety.com)
- ***In the Shadow of the Net: Breaking Free from Compulsive Online Sexual Behavior***, Patrick Carnes, 2007
- ***Confronting Your Spouse's Pornography Problem***, Rory C. Read and Dan Gray, 2006
- ***How to Protect Children on the Internet***, Gregory S. Smith, 2007
- ***Getting Internet Pornography Out of Your Life***, Chris Countryman, 2009
- Do a general search such as "The problem of pornography"

## The Gift of the Group

*Adapted from an email.*



A member of a certain 12-Step group, who previously had been attending meetings regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, his sponsor decided to visit him.

It was a chilly evening. The sponsor found the sponsee at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Knowing the reason for his sponsor's visit, the man nonetheless welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.

The sponsor made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the sponsor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The sponsee watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and inactive.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The sponsor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the sponsor reached the door to leave, his sponsee said, with a tear running down his cheek, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for your fiery testimony. I will be back in group next week."

We live in a world today, which tries to say too little with too much. Consequently, few listen. Sometimes the best lessons are the quiet ones.

*Conference*, from page 1  
the delegates who meet to conduct the business of SAA. The Conference Charter Committee has sent a motion to the Board of Trustees for the conference to consider writing its own charter. Ideally, that vote will be conducted at this year's meeting of the delegates.

SAA has been organized a bit differently than Alcoholics Anonymous. AA has been our primary model for establishing the Twelve Steps of SAA and our Twelve Traditions. In fact, SAA continues to use the AA Twelve Concepts for World Service as part of its spiritual philosophy even though the structure of SAA creates some contradictions with the Concepts when they are closely studied.

AA has a bottom up type of organizational structure. This means that the delegates representing the AA meeting groups, while working through the concept of their Conference Charter, bear the burden for establishing committees directly responsible to the conference as they address the needs of the AA fellowship and the addict who still suffers.

SAA has relied on the ISO Board of Trustees to assume these responsibilities. While managing the Corporation that is the ISO of SAA, Inc., the Board also established committees and implemented an executive process that is somewhat convoluted.

Currently, three internal standing committees; Fellowship, Finance and Operations and Policy, have subcommittees that study concerns and issues and

report their findings and suggestions to the internal standing committees for further consideration and evaluation. Then, the work of each subcommittee is either sent to the Board of Trustees for consideration or is returned to the subcommittee for additional work.

Members of the fellowship who have concerns, suggestions, ideas or requests can send them directly to the Board or through the executive process that I have outlined.

The purpose of the Conference Charter is to allow the delegates who make up the Conference to assume responsibility for conducting the fellowship's business and give them, rather than the Board, the authority to carry it out.

The Conference will then be able to establish committees pertaining directly to those issues, concerns, ideas and requests that originate in the fellowship.

I will be introducing several motions to the conference to make changes in the Bylaws of the ISO of SAA, Inc. I believe these changes will allow the conference to function more effectively by recognizing its authority and responsibility to establish committees that are directly responsible to the conference as it seeks to meet the needs of the fellowship.

The changes I am proposing will impact not only the Conference Charter Committee, but other committees dealing with a wide range of responsibilities and needs within the fellowship of SAA.

Any changes to our Bylaws take two years to be implemented. I believe that introducing these changes now will provide the impetus necessary for the Board of Trustees to have these committees move forward with the work of considering the ambiguous parts of the Bylaws and clarifying them in a manner that best serves SAA, as a whole.

I am hopeful that the delegates from Indiana and the Great Lakes Region will keep the groups they represent fully informed as to the progress being made by the conference that represents them.

I also want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Intergroup delegate for the past year. Being involved in service work at the international, regional and local levels has been challenging, exciting and a real plus to my personal recovery.

Sincerely,

Richard S., IISAA Delegate  
2009 ISO International Convention

## 2010 Calendar


### April

- 10 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.
- 24 Spring Workshop 10 a.m.

### May

- 8 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

### June

- 12 IISAA booth at Indy Pride
- 26 Picnic, Noon - 6 p.m.
- 30 Check  N Deadline

### July

- 10 IISAA Meeting 4 p.m.