



Hand in Hand

Newsletter Date
Winter Issue 2007

Recovering couples Anonymous, P.O. Box 11029, Oakland, CA 94611
<http://www.recovering-couples.org> phone: (510) 663-2312
<mailto:wso-rca@recovering-couples.org>

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Board Members

Doreen and Doug, from
Winnipeg

Jean and Joe, from New
Jersey

Carl and JoAnn, from
California

Newly elected to the
Board are:

Andy and Steve from
Hawaii

Bob and Keren from
Boston

Jade and Gladys, from
Oregon

Kate and Dan, from
Maryland

Randy and Gerrie, from
Winnipeg

Wayne and Linda, from
New York

Letter from the Chair

By Dan IRW Kate, Chair RCA WSO Board, 2006–2007

This is a joint message from both of us, Kate and Dan. We send our wishes for a New Year filled with joy, growth, and continued recovery, a year that leads each couple to an increased commitment to communication, caring, and intimacy. As we review the many challenges we faced this past year, we are reminded of the need to keep our priorities in order, our lives in balance, and our trust in our Higher Power. Our individual recovery is our first responsibility, for without that our couple recovery suffers. The heart and soul of RCA rests with the individual couples in each RCA member group. After couple recovery our focus within RCA must remain on our RCA group and the other couples within it, for that is where the real work in recovery takes place. The World Service Organization plays a limited role in the life of RCA, providing assistance to RCA groups as they carry the message of intimacy and commitment to couples who still suffer.

Please see *Letter from the Chair* on page 2

Commitment

The following is an adaptation of a passage about marriage and love affairs, from *An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in conversation with Michael Toms*, 1988. In RCA the only requirement for membership is that we seek to restore a caring, committed and intimate relationship. Words taken from the book are in quotation marks. "...the whole thing in [a coupleship] is the relationship and yielding - knowing the functions, knowing that each is playing a role in the organism... [a coupleship] is not a love affair. A love affair has to do with immediate personal satisfaction. But [a coupleship] is an ordeal; it means yielding, time and again... you give up your personal simplicity to participate in a relationship. And when you're giving, you're not giving to the other person: you're giving to the relationship. And if you realize that you're in the relationship just as the other person is, then it becomes life building, a life fostering and enriching experience, not an impoverishment...what a beautiful thing is a life together as growing personalities; each helping the other to flower, rather than moving into the standard archetype... when people make the decision to be something quite astonishing and unexpected ...it's an adventure..."

Letter from the Chair page 1

*“Committee Service
Workers”*

Dan as Chair
Gerrie as Vice-Chair
Andrea as Treasurer
Steve S. as Co-treasurer
Bob as Secretary
Jade as Egalitarian
Gladys as Timekeeper

*OUTREACH committee
will send out the Board
minutes, financial picture
and a note from literature
committee.*

Recently, we have been trying to focus as a couple on letting go of that false sense of urgency that others and life in general seem to try to hook us with. As we work to let go of false urgency in our lives, we will be trying to let this principle guide us in our actions on the RCA WSO Board. We think the actions of the Board need to reflect the desires and needs of the fellowship, and we think the Board must always seek the views of the fellowship on matters important to RCA. And we hope that the Board will be able to gather those views without imposing unnecessary urgency on RCA groups and the couples within them. Seeking the guidance of our Higher Power, we pray that the actions of the Board support the needs of the fellowship without disturbing the serenity of the couples within it.

Now that 2007 has arrived we are eagerly counting the days to the August convention in St. Louis. The recovery we experienced in the workshops at the last four conventions has been a key part of our couple recovery. We hope to see many of you in St. Louis. On a personal note, Kate talks of her recent surgery in another article in this edition of the H-in-H. She is recovering well.

"Important Dates to Remember"

Feb. 28, 2007 All feedback on the 2006 draft due. Send to:
Steve Adams, Office Manager
Recovering Couples Anonymous
World Service Office
P.O.Box 11029
Oakland, CA 94611
Phone: (510) 663-2312
wso-rca@pacbell.net

<http://www.recovering-couples.org>

Feb. 28 to Mar.2, 2007 Face to Face World Service Board meeting in Berkeley, CA. All are welcome. RSVP to Gerrie 204-668-1515
gprymak@mts.net Leave a message if you would like to attend.

March 15th, 2007 Last day to submit articles for Spring Hand in Hand.
Send to:

Elise: davidandelise@earthlink.net or

1201 Brickyard Way, #416, Richmond, CA 94801

August 3, 4, 5, 2007 RCACC in St. Louis

Details and Registration form in this issue H in H and on the RCA website

<http://www.recovering-couples.org>

To the Fellowship – Reaching Out: A Journey

This fall, I was surprised to find out that my routine colonoscopy showed a very small 1cm cancerous polyp. Having it taken out through a colonoscopy was just the first hurdle. The doctors could not determine if it spread into my colon wall or whether a pesky cell went on to my lymph system. After much consultation and prayer, I decided to have a colon resection in which one foot of colon and many lymph glands were removed and found to be cancer free. I tell you this story for three reasons: one is that I want everyone in the appropriate age category to get their sigmoid or colonoscopy as recommended by your physician; and two, because it once again showed me my need for my friends and my Higher Power. I was lucky in many ways because I had many people praying for me. I had learned through life and my Program to depend on my HP. I am grateful to be cancer free.

Continued on next column

If you have read this far, you may be wondering about the third reason. I'm thinking that a space in the Hand in Hand could be created for people who need prayers/support for health reasons and coupleship reasons. In our Friday night "Stepping together group", we have two struggling couples who need our help. One is reaching out a little to the group and one is not. Since we all know we are powerless (and that feels yucky), I thought we could create this space to ask for spiritual help from the Fellowship and our Higher Power.

In this space, we could ask for special intentions (if we don't want to say a name) or specific requests for healing through prayer. If we are uncomfortable with the word prayer, we could ask for the Fellowship to hold people in the light, or whatever makes us feel like we are doing our best for those who are hurting in the Fellowship in general, or our small group in particular, while we are "letting go and letting God". Another, non-religious suggestion: "May the spirit of our recovery be alive in the many forms and faces of the world. We respect each one and dedicate our thoughts to the serenity of mind and physical well-being of: _____ ("name: respecting anonymity, with permission only), their families and friends, and to all couples in the world who still suffer."

So for now, I would like folks to think positive thoughts or prayers for the two couples in my "Stepping Together" group.

Thanks from Kate IRW Dan

News from Germany

Evelyn IRW Thomas in Koln, Germany

I would like to tell you something about RCA in Germany. We currently have two meetings, one in Stuttgart and one in Koln. Also, we have A-holidays, a vacation group of 40 to 80 people from various recovery programs. We gather together for 10 days during the Christmas holidays in abstinence of any drugs, alcohol, and nicotine. We become a kind of 12-step community.

This holiday season we gathered in Blankenheim. Everybody can offer meetings in the evenings so it is a good place to invite new people to 12-step programs that they have never heard about, like RCA. Evelyn and I offered for the 4th time an RCA meeting in Blankenheim, and this year it was the biggest RCA meeting ever. We shared about the first step in RCA and gave the RCA message to them. Ten couples and two half couples attended. They are in 12-step programs, have been for many years, but never heard about RCA!

World Service Office Needs a New Computer

If anyone in RCA would like to help select the best computer deal (purchase or lease) for the best price, or has a donation idea, please call Steve at WSO. We can use all the expertise we can get!

Our Journey to Intimacy and Healthy Sexuality

Submitted by Scott and Mary Monica

Whenever we share at a meeting we like to start with a brief “who we are” segment. We are both the oldest children of our families. We both grew up with fathers who were alcoholics. My father discovered the AA program and was active in his recovery program until his death. While Scott’s father went to various treatment facilities, he never was able to maintain sobriety for any length of time. Scott and I both had several years of 12-Step recovery when we started our relationship.

We wanted our relationship to be different from what we grew up with. We thought that because we were in individual 12 Step programs things would be different when we got married. “We would intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us (Promises from the Big Book). Yet, healthy communication seemed to be an elusive goal. We wanted to fight fairly but we had never seen a fair fight, nor did we have the tools to resolve our arguments respectfully.

I tried to be honest with Scott about my feelings. Scott would get angry when I spent money, and yell, so I began to not tell him things. Pretty soon we said very little to each other. Tasks we needed to complete, what we were having for dinner, and very superficial conversations became the only things we talked about. If we talked about more intimate feelings or money we often ended up fighting. There were circular fights that were the same arguments time after time. I hated to fight and if Scott got angry and started shouting, I would have a panic attack, get a headache, and then go to the bedroom.

When I was a child my father would start shouting and I would go and hide. When Scott would get angry and begin shouting I would turn into a terrified child and try to hide somewhere. He would follow me, I would feel trapped, and I would not hear a word he said; my only focus was on his shouting and anger. It took me a while to communicate to Scott that when he shouted I did not hear what he was saying; I was too panic stricken to take in what he was saying. We had very little intimacy. We both walked on eggshells trying to avoid fighting. As a child the messages I got were that girls were supposed to be happy, polite, helpful, and pleasant. Girls did not get angry, shout, or hit others. The wife is supposed to control the household and keep everything running smoothly.

We were frustrated that we could not resolve our differences in a respectful manner. I took classes in college to try to communicate in a healthy manner. Sixteen and half years ago we began to attend RCA. At the time we were close to divorce. I was tired of Scott’s angry outbursts. I felt he was treating me and talking to me like I was a child. He thought if he did not shout I would not know the level of his anger. He was frustrated because he thought I spent too much money.

As we became active in RCA and started working the Steps as a couple we began taking baby steps towards become truly intimate. We witnessed other couples taking off their masks both to the group and their partners. We decided to take a leap of faith and let each other know our true feelings. This was a slow process. We started with those feelings just below the surface, slowly peeling away more and more layers. As we got more involved in RCA, attending We Came to Believe, attending conventions, and doing service work, we acquired tools and skills that made intimacy possible.

As our communication and intimacy improved we became willing to talk more openly about sexual issues. Prior to recovery we got to the point where we would do almost anything to avoid discussion of this part of our coupleship. Early in our relationship we suffered from the dysfunctional characteristic of equating being sexual as being intimate. Additionally, there were so many different feelings wrapped around our sexual togetherness. Discussing our sex life was very difficult for us. We were concerned about hurting each other’s feelings, worried that each person would take wrongly what the other said. I wanted Scott to magically know what I wanted, and for our sex life to be perfect without needing to talk about it. This did not happen. In the sexual education class I took in college, the professor said that seems to be a popular feeling many women have when they begin to be sexual. Television shows and movies add to this fantasy that sex should be magical, and should just work perfectly without the need to communicate with each other.

Intimacy and healthy sexuality are two areas that we continue to work on. We have heard other RCA couples voice that they too continue to work on improving their intimacy, and strive for a greater level of healthy sexuality. We are looking forward to attending this year’s convention program, and assisting with its creation. We hope the St. Louis RCA convention will encourage all of us to explore ways to deepen our intimacy. The RCA convention committee plans to include breakout sessions regarding healthy sexuality.

Continued on next column



Recovering Couples Anonymous
International Convention
Saint Louis, Missouri
August 3,4,5 2007

Tapping into Romance The Journey to Intimacy and Healthy Sexuality August 3, 4, 5 2007 RENAISSANCE ST LOUIS HOTEL AIRPORT

9801 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63134 USA
Phone: 314-429-1100
Fax: 314-429-3625

stlouisrca@recovering-couples.org

Hotel Directions from the Airport; (314-426-8000) Interstate I-70 one half mile east to the Natural Bridge Road exit. The hotel is after the first stop light on the left. **Note:** Airport shuttle service on request

RCA - Who We Are

We are understanding couples with three aims;

- Improve our communications
- Expand our self-caring
- Strengthen our commitment and watch our relationships grow to fulfill our Hopes and Dreams.

We suffer from many addictions, co-addictions, some identified, some not, some treated, and some not. Many of us have been separated or near divorce. Some of us are new in our relationships and seek to build intimacy as we grow together as committed couples.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

RCA is a tool for recovery and not an end in itself. It exists to promote caring, communication and intimacy. A quite successful formula of RCA is my individual recovery plus your individual recovery plus our couple recovery equals a healthy recovering relationship.

The convention is open to couples & singles wanting to improve their relationships. We want everyone to feel comfortable and safe. Please be considerate of others in your choice of clothing and no perfumes.

**Please join us in St. Louis at the RCACC and see what you can have!
You deserve it!!!!**

Hotel Reservation Info:

- Reservations Toll-free: 888-340-2594
- To receive the discounted rate when registering by phone, you must mention **RCA 2007**. The St. Louis Renaissance is Smoke-Free.
- Outdoor smoking area available.
- The special convention rate is \$99.00 per night per room (up to 4 people). Available on a space available basis two days before and after the convention.
- Rate not guaranteed after July 10th, please make reservations early.
- Make any special needs room arrangements directly with the hotel



Recovering Couples Anonymous
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9801 Natural Bridge Road St. Louis, Missouri 63134

Phone: 314-429-1100 Fax: 314-429-3625

Reservations Toll-free: 1-888-340-2594 \$99/night

CONVENTION REGISTRATION:

Registration for the conference does **not** include hotel rooms. Please contact the hotel directly to reserve a room.
All registration information is strictly confidential.

PLEASE PRINT:

Name: _____
Address: _____ City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

How long in RCA? _____

Do you want you email(s) & Phone(s) on attendee list? ___ Yes ___ No

CONVENTION REGISTRATION FEES:

Early Bird Discounted Registration: Only \$39.00 per person, available until May 15, 2007

| | Before June 1 | On or after June 1 |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Registration only: | _____ \$45 | _____ \$60 |
| Meal Package: | _____ \$120 | _____ \$130 |
| Sat. Banquet only: | _____ \$55 | _____ \$60 |

Banquet Meal: Chicken ___ Fish ___ Vegetarian ___ Pork Chop ___

Special Meal Considerations: OA, gluten free, salt free. Please send email

Fri. WSO RCA Lunch Buffet _____ \$18.00 _____ \$20.00

If you are only sending in your registration at this time, do you plan on purchasing the Meal Package? ___ Yes ___ No

Note: Convention meals offer a special time of fellowship and include Speaker Panels focusing on 'Working the Steps as a Couple'

Deadline for ordering meal packages is July 31, 2007.

SORRY NO REFUNDS!!

SERVICE:

I/We are interested in providing service _____

As a leader Couple Topic we are interested in a break out meeting
titled _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER

MAILING INFORMATION FOR REGISTRATION: Registration confirmation will be e-mailed.

Program packets will be available at the registration table at time of check in.

For additional information, contact RCA WSO (510) 663-2312 or

Email stlouisrca@recovering-couples.org

Please mail your check or money order in US funds made payable to: **RCA 2007**

C/O Scott Lemmons

27 Debbie Drive

St. Peters, Missouri

63376-2109

Tapping into Romance: "The Journey to Intimacy and Healthy Sexuality"

Theme for St. Louis Convention

The 2007 Convention wants you to 'Meet Us in St. Louis!' for the 17th Annual International RCA Convention to be held at the Renaissance St. Louis Hotel Airport August 3, 4, and 5.

The Convention theme sub-title, "*The Journey to Intimacy and Healthy Sexuality*," focuses on this area with speakers, workshops, and sharing meetings. Of course, there will be lots of socializing and fun as well. Saturday night there will be a banquet and speaker couple. At this event one of the fun and interesting activities will be a Silent Auction. Items that members have acquired in interesting places, crafts, food baskets, and guest accommodations in fellowship homes will be on display during the weekend, and go to the highest bidder on Saturday night. In the past, proceeds from this and other convention-related activities have been able to support WSO Office expenses for up to three months.

Many couples use the Annual Convention to re-connect with RCA friends across the country and around the world. Some use the convention as part of their spiritual quest agreement. The meetings and workshops seem to super-charge our recovery and increase coupleship intimacy.

RCA has active groups in many U.S. cities, and in Canada, Germany and Sweden, and last year's Boston Area Convention gathered couples from those places. Annliz and Per, who started the Stockholm meeting in Sweden, have been able to attend each year since the 1999 Florida Convention. We value their friendship and dedication to RCA. As part of their service and recovery they have translated the Blue Book into Swedish. There's no question that was a big service, and if you want to know about the recovery part, you can ask them this year in St. Louis.

The St. Louis Convention Business Meeting will have group-elected delegate couples voting on the 2006 Blue Book Draft and other matters vital to RCA as a whole.

We're looking forward to Meeting You in St. Louis!
Betsy, in recovery with Bob members of the **St. Louis Convention Support**

*A relationship is like our good crystal;
we don't realize its value until it breaks!*

RCAC 2007: The Journey to Intimacy and Healthy Sexuality

Mary in Recovery with Jim

Recovering Couples Anonymous lists the Characteristics of Functional and Dysfunctional Couples as a tool of recovery. I remember it was about 1991, and we were reading the "Characteristics of Dysfunctional Couples," and a member said, "I know the Dysfunctional side; I've lived that side. I need to hear the Functional Characteristics to keep my eyes fixed on the goals of recovery." An RCA Committee then wrote the match as it is presently appears in our RCA Blue Book.

One definition of intimacy is that of a close personal relationship, feeling connected with another. Sherry Sedgewick wrote in her book, The Good Sex Book: Recovering and Discovering Your Sexual Self, "When individuals allow themselves to feel the joy that comes as they find their unique selves, they begin to experience their spiritual and sexual energy."

The RCAC convention program, August 3, 4, and 5, 2007, will focus on intimacy and healthy sexuality as a way to *Tap into Romance*. The Functional Characteristics of Couple Recovery share the vision of what intimacy looks like in a recovering couple. Here are a few examples:

- Being alone and intimate with our partner is as safe as being with other people.
- Being together brings us joy and happiness
- When I really let my partner know what I've done or what I'm thinking (who I am) it increases our intimacy. It's met with acceptance.
- Being interdependent adds strength to the relationship.
- Being Sexual enhances our relationship and increases our intimacy.
- We can play and have fun together.
- We are proud of ourselves as a couple.

RCA 7th Tradition Bed and Breakfast Club

The **7th tradition Bed and Breakfast Club** is an idea that was generated by Bob and Betsy from San Francisco. It gives RCA couples an opportunity to connect with other RCA couples. Instead of spending money on a hotel, traveling couples could stay with members of the [RCA fellowship](#), and a recommended donation of \$20 to \$30 per night would go to WSO. **This is a way to support RCA through our own contributions!**

These are some initial offerings ...some serene spots

We have a guest room and a hot tub with a view of the Cascade Mountains, all in a dog-friendly setting; we have 2 dogs and 2 cats. Our kitchen is generally vegetarian, but we are open to your needs. Jade loves to cook and her breakfasts are famous. For a city our size we have incredible restaurants, which we'd love to share with you. See world-renowned theatre, Broadway shows, and National dance troupes at the Hult Center for Performing Arts! 541) 343-4920

Gladys IRW Jade in Eugene, Oregon

Condominium with a private bedroom and bath suite for you, on the San Francisco Bay with views of the City, just 20 miles by freeway, or 5 miles to the BART station. We have no pets and are vegetarians, but we will feed you well, and can provide "concierge" service as you need it. (510) 235-6111 **In recovery together, Elise and David in Richmond, California**

Randy and I live in Winnipeg...about a half hour from the city center. We invite you to stay with us. We recommend renting a car. If you are dog lover you will enjoy our 2 dogs Moon and Phoenix. Come in the summer. Of course, if ice fishing strikes your fancy, you better come in February. We live 10 minutes from a park with great walking trails and an hour from lakes to swim in. We would be happy to go out for dinner with you and show you some of the sights of Winnipeg. If we are headed to a lake, you are welcome to come along. Come to our Sunday night RCA meeting. Share your experience, strength and hope with us." (204) 668-1515 **Gerrie committed to Randy, Randy committed to Gerrie**

AND...these couples invite you to stay with them:

Bob and Betsy from San Francisco

Kate and Dan from Rockville, Maryland (outside of Washington DC)

either at their Rockville home or at their Delaware condo (a mile from Bethany Beach).

If you want to add your name to the RCA Bed & Breakfast Club send a finished description to the editor [Elise davidandelise@earthlink.net](mailto:davidandelise@earthlink.net)

A promise and an Offering

When I began AI-Anon 23 years ago little did I know where the journey would take me! All I knew then was that my mother was an alcoholic, and that my brother was likely to die from his disease. As I did my inventory my goal became to live in the present, vs. my pattern of reactivity - living at the affect of my past. RCA invited me in Step One to see how my parents and their relationship had and was still conditioning my present thinking and behavior in relationship.

I was moved to write an article about the wonderful breakdown Dr. Patrick Carnes did of the Serenity prayer (pg. 30 in the new 4th edition). "Serenity meaning that we no longer recoil from the past, live in jeopardy because of our behavior now, or worry about the unknown future." What a promise and offering! We can "seek regular times to re-create ourselves," and further, "avoid those times of depletion which make us vulnerable to despair and old self-destructive patterns."

My partner, Gladys, and I are both from alcoholic families, and it is easy to become human *doings*, missing time being together, or spending it in unfulfilling ways. Every night before we go to sleep we say the Serenity prayer two times, as we feel that we really hear it the second time.

Coupled with our contracts on communication, conflict, money, and recreation we are equipped with the spiritual and practical gifts of this program. We can hold ourselves in the grace of this moment (no longer our haunting past) and in the practical accountability of our agreements.

We love this program, Thank you RCA.

Jade irw with Gladys in Eugene, OR

VALENTINE'S DAY COUPLES HEART TO HEART

Flowers fade, and we know what happens to chocolates. Recovery is just for today; please share your recovery with other couples still suffering. Consider a donation to RCA-WSO honoring your coupleship. **Send to**

**Recovering Couples Anonymous
World Service Office
P.O. Box 11029
Oakland, CA 94611**

THANK YOU for donating

7th tradition donations help to carry the RCA message

Final Thoughts

- Santa Cruz CA has 22 couples.
- Winnipeg Sunday Night RCA Group had a party and celebrated 8 years!
- There are over 100 RCA groups.
- Thanks to all RCAers serving on a World Service Committees.

Service keeps your spiritual self sober and serene!

The 2008 RCACC will be in the West.

In 2009 RCACC will be in the East.

The 2010 RCACC will be in the mid continent.

Maybe your RCA group wants to bid on the RCACC!

Do you want to be a sponsor couple to a struggling RCA group and phone into their meeting and serve as speaker couple? Email Betsy betsyf2720@earthlink.net

Hope every RCA group sends a couple to RCACC ST. LOUIS Convention. Last year 70 couples attended Boston.

Attitude of Gratitude

THIS edition of the Hand and Hand is brought to you by many RCAers

THANKS TO:

Elise...the amazing technical editor

Tyler... the phenomenal computer wizard

All those who wrote articles!

Jade and Gladys, OR

Scott and Mary Monica, Missouri

Mary Jane and Jim, Missouri

Bob and Betsy, CA

Thomas and Evelyn, Germany

Kate and Dan, MD

Bob and Keren, MA

JoAnn from CA

Meetings of the Board of Trustees:

This year's Board has met five times: 6 Aug; 24 Sep; 12 and 19 Nov; and 7 Jan.

The Board's intent is to have meeting summaries and minutes available on the website or through the WSO office

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