

Hand in Hand

Fall 1998 - VOLUME 7, NO. 3

A Publication of Recovering Couples Anonymous World Service Organization

NOTICE... AS OF SEPTEMBER 1st CHANGES! CHANGES! CHANGES!

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What's Happening At W.S.O.

by Fran D., secretary WSO Board of Trustees

The RCA board meeting was held in Minneapolis on July 31, 1998. Present were: Steve, Signe, Ron, Jennifer, Fran, Mike, Ken, Juneanne, Kathleen, Catherine, Mary Monica and Judy.

Information binders containing the history and ongoing projects of each officer and committee were prepared for the new incoming board of trustees.

WSO MANAGER'S REPORT

The 1997-1998 Annual Report was distributed. One of the most significant facts is that 69% of RCA groups have made 7th Tradition contributions, up considerably from last year. RCA is not

completely self-supporting yet, but the financial outlook is getting better. Order Annual Reports from the WSO.

It was suggested that the WSO board chair explain at the beginning of the Annual RCA Business Meeting that the board of trustees is the policy making body of RCA. Any input, motions from the floor or voting by participants are advisory only and are considered by the board when making policy changes.

As of September 1, Judy W. will have resigned from her job as WSO office manager. From that point on, Mary Monica L. will perform Judy's office manager duties and Bob F. will do all the bulk mailings and respond to all e-mail letters. Establishing an RCA e-mail address, paid for by WSO, and web site e-mail mail boxes were discussed.

New Order Forms for WSO tapes and literature are available.

VICE CHAIR REPORT

The vice chair reported on his letters and personal contacts with Regional Liaison Couples. He suggested a primary goal for the next board would be to connect more frequently with the Fellowship as a whole and the Regional Liaison Couples in particular so they know what actions the board is taking and the projects being undertaken.

He announced the purpose of the meeting of the board with Regional Liaison Couples, on August 1, which will be to decide on goals and the relationship of the board and RLCs and how both might be improved. It was suggested that a Regional Liaison Couple and a board couple be paired so a relationship of support might be developed. The Intergroup concept was also discussed.

An e-mail list of all RCA groups is in the process of being developed. Making current board members on each committee an automatic member of that committee after they leave board service was discussed. Signe agreed to produce an informational flow chart on how the Fellowship works.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer reported that for the last four months receipts have exceeded expenditures. He explained to the board the various aspects of the RCA budget. The bottom line is that by politely and consistently asking for money, the Fellowship is slowly becoming self supporting through our own contributions.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FUNDRAISING

The Fundraising Committee chair reported on the new board of trustees nomination process and the Nomination Forms that will be added to future convention packets.

Each board couple reported on phone calls to former board members asking them to consider serving again. It was recommended that in the future RCA couples be contacted about serving on the board prior to the convention.

DIVERSITY

The Diversity Committee chairs discussed future projects and a formal process for translating RCA materials into other languages. The Diversity Pamphlet is complete as well as the process for outreach to people of different cultures and stations in life.

RECOVERY

The chair recommended this committee have several members and be an integral part of any RCA Intergroup plan and process.

COMMUNICATIONS

The chair reported on recommended future committee goals as follows:

- continue the Hand in Hand.
- update and maintain the web site.
- develop a new form of management for the web site. The amount of work is beyond the capabilities of one person and the Web Master needs support.
- use the web site for communicating between Regional Liaison Couples, the board and the WSO office and investigate the possibility of online meetings.

Taking a survey, before RCA invests more time and money, on the number of people in the Fellowship who actually use the web site was suggested. An annual survey of the Fellowship like Vision 2000 was also presented for the consideration of future boards.

It was suggested that RCA issues, that come up in board meetings and committees, be introduced on the web site and Fellowship input be solicited in order to get more member involvement.

It was suggested that RCA formalize the Web Master as a service position. Continuing it as a volunteer position or making it a paid position was also discussed. It was acknowledged that since RCA is a young Fellowship and the web is a new communications tool there may be the need to experiment.

OPEN BUSINESS MEETING

The Open Business Meeting was held on August 1, 1998. The WSO board members introduced themselves to attendees and explained the position(s) they hold and the committees on which

they serve as RCA trusted servants. The chair reviewed the highlights of the WSO board for the last fiscal year. The WSO office manager presented her report to the Fellowship. The new WSO office manager and the special projects manager were introduced.

The Fellowship took a group conscience on the issue of allowing non-RCA members to be presenters at the RCA Annual Convention. Twenty-one speakers, both individual and group representatives, some reading letters and others speaking from notes or their hearts were given the opportunity to express an opinion. The majority of those who spoke did not want non-RCA presenters at annual conventions.

A vote, or group conscience, on the matter of non-RCA presenters at the RCA Annual Convention was taken with the following results: Don't allow non-RCA presenters - 14 Allow non-RCA presenters - 40 Abstentions - 6 General comments and questions were also received from the participants:

- A request was made to remove any further Dr. Z articles from the newsletter.
- The Michigan RCA Group would like the Lord's Prayer to be more a part of RCA.
- A concern was expressed that RCA is trying to grow too fast and go too far and the corresponding constant funding requests were negative.
- The need to remember that we are RCA and take care of only our own needs was stated.
- Information on the budget and what the money it is used for was presented.

BOARD ELECTIONS

The following couples will serve on the RCA board of trustees in the coming year (s):

- Ron (communications) & Jennifer (literature)
- Muhammad (chair) & Siti (fund raising)
- Marcial (treasurer) & Santa (diversity)
- Kim (recovery) & Patty (recovery)
- Scott (fund raising) & Nancy Lee (secretary)

The next board meeting will be held in Phoenix, Arizona on September 18, 19 and 20, 1998.

The Chairman's Letter

by Muhammad Abdul-Qadir C., chairperson WSO Board of Trustees

I want to thank the members of RCA for electing my wife, Siti, and I to the board of trustees. I am honored to serve as your chairperson.

I feel the spiritual level of the RCA organization is very high and I commend all who have blazed the path before me. The work, dedication and pain put into RCA programs and projects by those who have already served is self evident. I see it in the amount and quality of the documents passed forward from previous boards, office managers, staff and committee chairs.

But many past goals and projects are still incomplete and will certainly be a challenge and adventure for this board to continue. My job as your new chair will be to encourage these to be pursued and nurtured with your earnest support.

The end of recovery only comes to me, in my estimation, when I RECOVER what I lost... my return to my Higher Power (HP/Allah/God) or what I had before I came into this world. So my journey on this recovery path is not over by any means. I and all others on this path can and must move forward and empower one another.

My wish, as another child of HP, is to be challenged to be the best I can. I perceive us all doing the best we can yet all in different stages and places on the recovery path. My request of you is to reflect back to me what you see from me with honesty, love, and compassion as that is what I will provide you if that is your desire.

Our great diversity in recovery, in experience, in spirituality and in our everyday lives allows RCA to provide help and support to those who suffer the dis-ease and the “isms” of living. The challenge now ahead is to spread the word to all those who are still suffering and show them “How it Works”.

Despite any challenges or shortcomings you and your coupleship are experiencing, you each have so much to offer. Please, keep coming back and sharing your experience, strength and hope.

Love to you all.

Manager Resigns

May 20, 1998

An excerpt from a letter to the RCA Board of Trustees:

Dear RCA Board of Trustees,

As per my conversation with the board chairman, Steve A. on Wednesday May 20th, I hereby submit my plan for my resignation from my role as RCA WSO Office Manager. You all know the health issues that I am dealing with and I am increasingly aware that it is time to make the decision to do this while I am still able to do it in a way that makes it as smooth and easy for the Fellowship, for the board and for myself as possible.

I have struggled with this decision for some time, as most of you know. At this time, the message is very clear to me from my Higher Power and I am confident it is the right decision for myself, for the Fellowship and for my replacement.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this capacity!! I have learned much about myself while in this position. And I wouldn't change one thing about the experience even if I could !!! I am very grateful for all of the gifts of this program and of the gifts that came from being in this position.

Much love, Judy W.

New WSO Manager Mary Monica L., office manager Perhaps you'd like to know something about me... your new WSO office manager.

On September first Judy W. retired as WSO office manager and I stepped into her shoes. Judy began cutting back her hours after the 1998 RCA Convention in August and helped me with this transition. I want to thank the Fellowship for being patient with us during this time.

I have been a member of RCA with my partner, Scott, for eight years. Scott and I served on the board of trustee's for two years. And, I have volunteered my skills to RCA on various other occasions over the years. For the past year, I have been working with Judy at the WSO office on a weekly basis. By the time you receive this newsletter, Judy and I will have moved the WSO Office from her house to my house.

A Hearty Welcome To New RCA Meetings

- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Van Buren, Arkansas
- Fort Worth, Texas
- Couples Seeking Serenity Group, St. Louis, MO
- Flagstaff, Arizona
- Tulsa, Oklahoma

Remember you need to make mistakes in order to learn. Susanna McMahon, Ph.D.

RCA Treasurer's Report

by Kenneth K., treasurer WSO Board of Trustees

August 1998

RCA is a relatively young Fellowship with an imposing international goal of supporting a World Service Organization that is capable of providing help to all groups that are interested in using the 12 Steps to repair relationships. The WSO requires an office to coordinate communications and carry out the business of the organization. This office requires a minimum cash flow to adequately and appropriately support these activities. RCA's board has set up a budget of \$29,500 per year which they believe will accomplish this goal.

The actual expenses for the past budget year were \$29,519.64 which exceeded income of \$28,584.27 by \$935.37. The bottom line is that this is about what we budgeted. However, we did require an input of \$935.37 from RCA reserves. My analysis continues to suggest that the best source of increasing revenue is Seventh Tradition contributions.

The Fellowship is now growing nationally as well as internationally and this growth will present new opportunities and new challenges. We need to assure that RCA keeps a strong board of trustees and Central Office presence to support this growth. I believe that announcing each

group's financial quarterly support through the Hand in Hand has been a positive influence. Seventh Tradition contributions grew faster in the last quarter than at any time in recent memory, perhaps because we communicated the needs of the WSO in a direct and open manner.

Seventh Tradition Donations

April 1 - June 30, 1998

According to our records, in the past financial quarter, the following RCA Groups sent in the following amounts for 7th Tradition Donations. Thank you one and all!

If you feel that the amount listed is incorrect for your group, or if your group is not listed and you feel it should be, please notify the office immediately and we will seek to correct the situation. Caring Couples of Des Moines, Iowa - \$199.00

Crossroads - Phoenix Thursday RCA - \$75.00

Eagan, Minnesota Friday Night RCA - \$40.00

Farmington Hills, Michigan RCA - \$23.00

First Florida Group of RCA - \$117.00

Houston, Texas Sunday RCA - \$92.00

"Just Us Step Group" - Michigan - \$25.00

LaMorinda Sunday Night Step Mtg. - \$305.63

Los Angeles Sunday Home RCA - \$208.00

Madison, Wisconsin RCA - \$19.50

Oakland CA Sunday Night Mtg. - \$520.65

Oakland CA Saturday Morning RCA \$36.00

Pair-A-Normals RCA of Flint, Michigan - \$25.00

Philadelphia, PA Friday Night RCA - \$140.00

Rapid City, SD RCA - \$15.00

Riverhead, New York RCA - \$148.49

Sacramento, California RCA - \$150.00

San Diego, California Saturday RCA - \$75.00

Santa Cruz Friday Night RCA - \$95.55

Seattle, Washington Sunday RCA - \$56.00

Stepping Together RCA of Gaithersburg, MD - \$150.00

Sunday United RCA of Indianola, IA - \$6.00

Tandem Group of Malmo, Sweden

Today, Tomorrow, Together - Marin County - \$196.54

Tri-County Michigan RCA - \$55.00

Tuesday Night Ravenna, Ohio RCA - \$30.00

In addition, 8 individual donations from 5 individuals or couples were received. Two couples celebrated their RCA Recovery Birthday and made a donation to RCA WSO as a part of that celebration. Thank you.

Fund Raising Builds Fellowship

Siti C., co-chair Funding Raising Committee

I'm writing this introduction within the first 30 days of my appointment as co-chair of the Funding Raising Committee for RCA. I have reflected on the high quality of work performed by previous board members, convention committees and general membership. I wish to thank everyone for their commitment, creativity, and dedication.

It is my feeling that RCA is a strong, viable and healthy organization which is operating from a solid foundation and sufficiency. The "It Takes Three" program, recently implemented, appears to be an extremely effective fund raising tool. Seventh Tradition group donations are consistent and growing as are the sale of books, literature and medallions.

It is because of our strengths and unity that I feel confident new and creative avenues for raising funds, while having fun, is probable. There are three areas I anticipate will be beneficial and worth pursuing: 1) airline fare discounts for conventions and or free airline tickets based on sales, 2) AT & T Long Distance Telephone company (or competitor) incentive discount/commission programs, and 3) weekend get away excursions for couples.

Our next board meeting is scheduled for September 18 in Phoenix. I am looking forward to the opportunity to meet, plan and work together with Scott S., my co-chair, on these ideas as well as other projects. I will do my utmost on your behalf and continue forward using and maximizing the strength and stability I have inherited from those who came before. Please, I welcome your participation, suggestions and experience. You may contact me by e-mail at SitiMhda@aol.com, by telephone at (317) 839-7866, or through the WSO.

Thank you.

Convention '99 Registrations Brisk

CoupleWorld, the 1999 RCA International Convention, experienced brisk preregistration sales at the 1998 convention in Minneapolis this summer. Forty-one percent of this year's attendees signed up to enjoy the Convention in Florida on October , 8, 9 and 10, 1999.

Rumor has it that several factors caused this rush to be included in next year's event. There was an air of FUN involved in all CoupleWorld sales activities, a precursor of things to come.

Diane A., co-chair of the '99 convention with her husband, Glenn, sang all the announcements to the tunes of "The Adams Family Theme" and "It's a Small World." Look for words to these tunes in upcoming newsletters and promotional materials.

On Saturday night, right after a singing announcement, and with the help of several other RCA couples, 50 colorful beach balls were hit, volleyball style, into the audience. Pandemonium followed as little children, who remembered the joy of playing on the beach, emerged from the psyches of many.

All early registrants received the opportunity to place their names in a drawing for a basket of bounty worth more than \$200. Included in the basket were: • a night at the Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort, the host hotel, located right on the beach of beautiful, sparkling Tampa Bay, • a free couple registration for CoupleWorld, • wild sunglasses, water air mattresses and tubes, flip flops for two, and a myriad of wonderful tropical goodies.

Lucky convention attendees, Jeff and Judy, won the treasure. Plans for CoupleWorld include lots of exciting and enjoyable activities such as a luau on the beach on Saturday, and a reception Friday night.

1998 RCA MINI VACATION/RETREAT

Join the First Florida Group on NOVEMBER 13, 14, 15, 1998

Meditation circle on the beach Saturday and Sunday mornings, then nothing but fun, fun, fun and relaxation!

The Vanderbilt Beach Motel 9225 Gulf Shore Drive North, Naples, FL 34108 is pleased to offer a relaxing 2 NIGHT STAY on beautiful VANDERBILT BEACH ALL FOR THE PRICE OF \$95.00 PER PERSON D.O.

FOR RESERVATIONS PLEASE CALL (800) 243-0076 Make your reservations for the nights of November 13th & 14th

YOUR MINI VACATION INCLUDES:

- Gulf view accommodations for 2 nights.
- Continental breakfast each morning.
- Dinner one evening at your choice of 8 popular local restaurants:
- Lunch one day at your choice of 8 local restaurants.
- Your attraction voucher entitles you to a choice of:
 - A beautiful 1 1/2 hour sunset cruise on the "Nautilus".
 - A narrated sight-seeing Trolley Tour of Scenic Naples.
 - 18 holes of golf at the Palm River Country Club. (\$12 Cart fee per person required)
 - Admission to Nat'l Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary or to The Teddy Bear Museum.
- Tennis Court
- Heated Pool
- Shuffleboard Court
- Fishing Docks
- Beautiful Sunsets

Contact Diane & Glenn A. Phone: (727) 898-9653 E-Mail: wlfsg914@aol.com for more information or to let them know you will attend.

Come join other RCA couples at the first annual RCA SIERRA SPRING FLING!!

by Bob F.

A wonderful weekend of couple play and fun (mostly) plus couple recovery (just a little bit) in spectacular South Lake Tahoe, California.

WHEN:

Three (3) days Friday, Saturday, and Sunday April 16 - 18, 1999
(check-in Friday 3:00; checkout Monday noon)

WHERE:

Ponderosa House, South Lake Tahoe, CA.

A great getaway in a beautiful and practical High Sierra home.

HOW TO GET THERE:

Fly into the South Lake Tahoe airport, and get a ride to Ponderosa House from RCAers.

Or fly into the Reno, Nevada airport, and take the \$15 Ponderosa shuttle to Ponderosa House.

Or drive up from Las Vegas or Phoenix or Los Angeles or Sacramento or the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area.

Contact Pat M.
(510) 849-3655
Pat_Manley@LS.Berkeley.edu

or

Contact Bob F.
(510) 836-4876
rcfrey@earthlink.net

Know Your Board of Trustees Couples

Ron and Jennifer P.

We have been in a loving, committed relationship for 5 years. Together we have two boys (12 and 10) from Ron's first marriage and another boy on the way (due October 16th!).

Ron is a software engineer; Jennifer is starting a new career in hypnotherapy and shiatsu massage. Ron has been in 12 Step recovery for 9 years (AA, OA, SAA, Al-anon) and Jennifer for 5 years (AA, OA, Al-anon, COSA). In fact we met at an OA dance!

We came to RCA 2 years ago at the suggestion of a therapist. Our marriage was in deep trouble with frequent threats of divorce, terrible arguments over sex, money, children and anything else of which we spoke. After a lot of hard work and thanks to RCA and God, we are now more peaceful and intimate in our relationship and talk about most things in a healthy manner.

We are currently working the steps with two other couples using the “Relationship Renewal: Step Up to Intimacy” workbook. Married life continues to challenge us and RCA is a fundamental part of keeping our relationship healthy.

Muhammad and Siti C.

After years of individual recovery in many 12 Step Fellowships and other pathways, Siti and I were doing well in our individual programs but our relationship was falling apart. Neither of us wanted a divorce but it seemed inevitable.

RCA came into our lives in 1993 and provided an understanding of the language of the opposite sex. We also acquired the tools and skills necessary to work on healing our relationship.

We thank Allah for guiding us to this way of life and RCA members for opening the way for us and others to heal unnecessary pain.

I, Muhammad was a developer and builder for 30 years, but presently work at the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) as a live-in environmental engineer in charge of development, maintenance and caretaking.

Siti and I started two RCA groups in Swansea Wales UK and now a group in Indianapolis.

We have also been members of and grew with the Des Moines group. We have considered serving on the RCA WSO board of trustees before but, because I was then a university student, our finances would not support it. My degree path allowed me to serve as international students officer and represent over 50 different nationalities which, I believe, gave me invaluable experience with diversity and dealing with individuals from many cultures.

Marcial and Santa D.

We have been married for 36 years and have three grown children, the youngest is thirty years old. All of our children are married and they have given us four grandchildren (all boys). Santa is an insurance salesperson and Marcial is an engineer.

We came to RCA two and one half years ago at the suggestion of a therapist. At the time, divorce papers had already been filed and our marriage appeared to be irretrievably broken. RCA saved our marriage... actually, we saved our marriage and RCA was the perfect vehicle.

We have attended the Des Moines, San Jose, and Minneapolis conventions.

Monthly Themes

In the Vision 2000 survey, the Fellowship expressed a desire to receive information that would make meetings more interesting and inspiring as well as help in developing a perceived connection between local groups around the world. Out of these desires grew the idea for monthly themes. Local groups may decide to use these themes for meeting topics, meeting development aids and for fund raising. By doing so, they will become one of many groups worldwide focusing thought and energy on a single topic of value for recovering couples.

Here are the themes for the rest of the year:

October - Awareness
November - Gratitude
December - Sharing Your Love
January - Coupleship Oneness
February - Co-Addiction
March - Accepting Responsibility
April - Codependency
May - Shame and Intimacy
June - Family of Origin Issues

Awareness

It is not uncommon for two people, each with excellent personal recovery, to be together and find themselves in the most conflicted and dysfunctional relationship imaginable. We may have developed our personal lists of character defects and believe we are well on our way to their removal but fur is flying in our lives together.

The gift we receive from working the 12 Steps of RCA is that two people have the opportunity to fully see and experience those parts of their personality that need healing. Relationship is the proving ground for combating conflicting character defects.

We individually work at the healing needed for ourselves and our partner works on his or her own healing. We know by now that “it takes two to tango” (or “tangle”) and that where one finds a problem with their partner, they need only hold up the mirror to find their own issue.

In RCA’s Step 10, “We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it to our partner...” So, now when issues come up, we see that they are probably just a new coat of paint on an old whipping post.

Because, through working the RCA 12 Steps, we have experienced great healing, we know the solution to changing the painful situation does not come from reacting in the same old way. Our new awareness helps us know that if we do things the way we’ve always done them, we can only expect the same results.

Our awareness now gives us the courage to give the gift of owning up to our mistakes. When we say, “I’m sorry, I was mistaken...” to our partner and then make every effort to refrain from that mistake again, we give the loving gift that breaks the cycle. It gives our partner the opportunity to act differently too... to respond with love and forgiveness. And, there can be no greater gifts.

Gratitude

In a world that bombards us with visions of that which we have yet to “get,” we may fail to have full awareness of the goodness of that which we already have.

We often experience a sense of relief after our first few RCA meetings when we realize that other couples know what we are going through. Not only that, we begin to sense that our problems, which seem so ominous, have been solved by others in the group and they have moved on to happier lives. We are finally with people who understand us and can help us. That feeling that we are at home at last may well be that feeling we can now define as couple gratitude.

Many of us tried all manner of treatments for getting our relationship on track. We read self-help books. We went to therapists and counselors. Yet, it wasn’t until we found the RCA program that we had the tools we needed to fully repair what was wrong. Though 12 Step programs had been around since A.A. started in the middle 1930s, there was no adaptive prescription for using these Steps, designed for individuals, on relationships. Now RCA, in no uncertain terms, tells us exactly what we must do as a couple if we want a happy, healthy relationship.

When we look into the faces of our children and no longer see the fear that goes with membership in our dysfunctional family relationship, we are grateful. When we can disagree with our mate and yet continue our lives together in love, trust and respect, we are grateful. When we are together and feel just wonderful and proud of our relationship, we feel gratitude. When we can nurture and be nurtured without fear of “who’s giving the most,” we must surely be grateful. We express our gratitude by sharing our joy and by helping others find their way to and in RCA through our words, deeds and resources.

Sharing Your Love

There can be no greater gift than the gift of love. Where there is love there is no room for fear. Relief from the bondage of fear and emotional pain is truly the greatest treatment that one can experience.

As individuals in a relationship, we can give this gift to each other. Our expression to our loved one that we genuinely desire their attainment of their Highest Good is incredibly powerful. We, as a recovering couple, will support each other in the quest of seeking God’s Will. We support the Highest Purpose for our relationship. We share the love that comes from God with each other and the relationship.

When we are filled with this kind of love, it shows. It shows to everyone with whom we come in contact. In particular, it shows to couples who are going through the suffering that we once

experienced ourselves. They see by our example what a relationship can be like when certain spiritual principles are followed.

Some of us may experience the rebuff that comes from skeptics who see this healing as too good to be true. However, it is true. And, if we continue to express love, continue to model our loving relationship for others, we find the joy that comes from such a life together.

In the RCA 12th Step, we have two great requirements. First, we must unashamedly carry the message of hope for this way of life. We do this by being available to others who still suffer and by doing that which will “grow” the Fellowship. It is selfish and certainly a defect of character to take what we need from the Fellowship and then leave without giving back. That isn’t love.

The second requirement is that we daily use the spiritual tools we now have to keep our relationship healthy. In this way, we contribute fully to life during our brief stay on this planet.