

Hand in Hand

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A Publication of Recovering Couples Anonymous World Service Organization

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What's Happening At W.S.O.

WSO Board of Trustees

The WSO Board of Trustees met in Phoenix Arizona on September 19 and 20, 1998. This was the first full RCA Board of Trustees meeting since new members were elected.

Present were Muhammad, Siti, Ron, Jennifer, Marcial, Santa, Nancy Lee, Scott, Kim, Patty and Mary Monica, WSO office manager from St. Louis. Only one Board couple, Ron and Jennifer, were returning from the previous year.

Each couple shared with the group what had brought them to RCA... a mini First Step. Then Board chair, Muhammad, led an exercise in personality types which helped Board members identify their working styles.

A brainstorming session followed in which wishes and desired projects were expressed by each Board member. These were broken down into four main categories: communication, diversity, money and growth. Ongoing committees are already addressing many issues corresponding to the identified categories. Current committees are: Communication, Diversity, Fund Raising, Structure, Literature, Recovery and Vision 2000.

The prime directive from the fellowship to the Board, by way of the Vision 2000 survey, is to facilitate RCA's growth. The Board discussed ways that each standing committee could contribute to the fellowship's growth.

Some of the ideas on how to become more visible and hence enhance growth were:

- articles in recovery magazines, newsletters and newspapers
- short stories on the web linked to the RCA web site
- provide information to counselors and therapists
- creating awareness in schools (Friends Don't Let Friends Break Up)
- forming a Hospitals and Institutions Committee
- communicating with other 12 Step Boards
- cross fellowship retreats ("Dozens of Cousins" Retreat, Phoenix)

There was discussion on the state of the fellowship and why some meetings die and others survive and prosper. It was suggested that a pamphlet be developed on developing a healthy, thriving meeting. Other issues discussed by the new RCA Board included:

- the function of the Board is to provide an environment for diversity and group independence — a bottom up organization
- providing continuity to the Board and the RCA fellowship by including previous Board members on committees and projects
- giving Board members the option of serving an additional (third) year
- recruiting at least 3 new Board couples for next year — the capacity is seven Board couples and two alternate couples
- encouraging current and past Board members to visit local meetings when travelling
- encouraging RCA members to attend local Board meetings using the chair as the hub for communicating all issues.

Elections

Kim Kanaga was elected vice chair.

Contributions

Seventh Tradition contributions to WSO are at an all time high. This includes all RCA group donations, individual donations, fund raising donations, and profits from anniversary medallions.

RCA WSO Staff

Mary Monica L. in St. Louis, MO, has made the transition to office manager and Bob F. in Oakland, CA has assumed more of the everyday work load of the WSO. Both of their annual contracts were approved by the Board.

1999 Meeting Dates

- January 30-31, in Washington, DC
- Conference Call Meeting April 24, 3:00 PM EST/12:00 PM PST
- July or August Santa Monica.
- October 8-10, St. Petersburg, Florida

Treasurer's Report

The new treasurer will develop a budget and work closely with the Fund Raising Committee. Currently there is no way to evaluate the cost versus the advantage of some RCA projects, so there is a need for cost analysis. Even though RCA is a nonprofit organization, it is currently paying banking fees, so the treasurer will investigate ways in which to reduce or eliminate these fees on both long- and short-term accounts.

Committee Reports

Recovery committee

The following are goals of this committee:

- create pamphlet on How to Start a Meeting
- update long-distance sponsor list
- link each regional liaison couple with a Board member and keep in touch
- send letter to all groups introducing their regional liaison couple
- put article on liaison couples in the Hand in Hand
- clarify liaison couple job description
- invite liaison couples to Board meetings in their geographical areas
- produce an article on "How to Keep Meetings Strong"
- explore how the Traditions fit with closed meetings
- work on structure of online meeting
- set protocol procedure for convention speakers

• Fund Raising Committee

The Holiday Appeal was discussed. It has increasingly improved funding since it's year of inception, but must be sent out prior to Thanksgiving in order to have it's full impact. The committee will investigate negotiation with airlines for group rates and commissions for the annual convention and the possibility of auctioning off free tickets or a scholarship. Many groups still are not making any contributions to the WSO and the committee will try to determine why this is happening.

Diversity Committee

It was reported that RCA materials are being distributed at booths at other conventions and RCA was featured on a member couple's radio show in Providence, Rhode Island. There was discussion on promotion versus carrying the message and a decision was made to place an article on "carrying the message" in the Hand in Hand. Members of the RCA fellowship will be asked to help on and support the various RCA working committees to provide more diversity in the work and decisions of these committees. Progress is continually being made on providing a complete Spanish language section for the RCA web site.

Communications Committee

The need for Hand in Hand articles from more individuals or couples was discussed. Soliciting more articles from the fellowship would help increase the diversity of the contributors. Couples who have written their stories for the RCA big book and web site are being contacted and asked to write summaries for the web site. Sample summaries are being provided to suggest the length and style. The committee hopes to have a draft of the Spanish language web site by the next Board meeting. An RCA wish list will be developed for publication in the Hand in Hand. The need for the ability to accept credit card orders and the difficulty of finding an affordable vendor was discussed. The committee will investigate credit card vendors to see if one can be found that is within the financial capabilities of the WSO.

Literature Committee

The committee is working on:

- placing a model couples contract in Hand in Hand
- a pamphlet that explains baiting and button-pushing statements
- expanding the reflections booklet
- an RCA workbook for working the steps on specific issues and using RCA tools
- development of an RCA 12 & 12
- a new edition of the big book
- reviewing all literature and condensing it

The committee proposed working on:

- a Twelve Traditions pamphlet
- an RCA workbook

The committee's top priorities are:

- model contracts
- a reflections booklet.

The consignment policy for big books to book sellers was determined. There was a discussion of "conference approved" and "not conference approved."

A short wish list was developed by the Board for:

- a web site upgrade
- the ability to accept credit cards

- five compatible computers
- a new copier & folder for WSO office

The Chairman's Letter

by Muhammad Abdul-Qadir C., chairperson

Over the past three months, I have been privileged to serve as chair of the RCA Board with its' many challenges. The potential for learning the things I need for my own recovery and our coupleship recovery is great. I believe the basic challenge we all share is in the communication process. Even though there is e-mail, fax, and low phone rates, personal interaction between the hundreds of RCA members at large is still lacking.

It is a very tall, difficult order to find the time to respond to all the communications I receive let alone reflect, for a clearer understanding, on the problems we all face in our relationship environments. It seems impossible. Yet, I am continuously amazed at the real life stories and miracles I see when visiting other RCA communities. With our Higher Power, we can do together that which we could not do by ourselves.

It is my perception that RCA, in order to bridge the gap between the RCA membership at large and the RCA WSO Board and staff, needs to create a reliable, safe forum for increased communications. I suggest the Hand in Hand be used as this forum with: letters to the editor, stories of your experience, strength and hope or other recovery messages. Additionally, articles could be submitted to discuss such topics as RCA growth and how best to plan for it.

This letter from the chair is hopefully the beginning of such a forum and, if you choose, it is also a challenge/invitation for your participation. It is my intention for all RCA members to have a voice and express individual concerns for RCA as it evolves. Yet, I believe some members have jumped to conclusions. Since we are a new Board, planning is in progress, there is a lot of brainstorming and lots of ideas are being considered. Nothing has yet been fully considered and discussed nor approved.

As the chair of RCA, I strongly recommend that respect for your Board and staff is of the highest priority. Board members are not compensated financially for serving. Yet each member gives his or her best effort to make RCA work so it is available to others still suffering. The past and present staff, in my opinion, have often gone well beyond the call of duty. I believe, that as part of our life-long recovery process, there need to be healthy boundaries created for communication between the RCA membership at large, the RCA WSO staff and the RCA Board.

Our own traditions suggest using the "Safety Guidelines" to establish a contract for communicating in our home groups. These guidelines make it possible for individuals within a coupleship to share safely, develop coupleship boundaries and create a fair fighting, or enrichment, contract. Practicing the "Safety Guidelines" during communication between the fellowship, the Board and the staff will ensure our future growth.

Conscientious participation in healthy activity puts energy and excitement into being alive. It is up to each of us to communicate our thoughts and ideas about RCA, no matter how different they seem to be. It is the manner in which ideas are communicated that matters. Controversy is not negative. It is required to find “What Works.” Healthy communication will identify what we, as a fellowship must keep and that which we must discard. But let’s communicate lovingly. This will not only encourage couples to come to RCA, but to become life-long participating members.

Older recovery predecessors, such as AA, provide an example of how their traditions, NOT LAWS, were formulated. They too had similar challenges. In the pamphlet AA Tradition - How It Developed Bill W. said, “So we have with us the enthusiasts and the ultra-cautious: the ‘do every things’ and the ‘do nothings.’ But the average AA is not so worried about these phenomena as he used to be. He knows that out of the heat and smoke there will soon come light. Presently there will issue an enlightened policy, palatable to everyone. Tested by time, that policy, if sound, will become AA tradition.” (Bill W., p21)

At our first meeting as your newly elected Board, we reviewed the Vision 2000 survey results. We are still absorbing what RCA couples said they want and need for their recovery. What is the biggest obstacle to fulfilling most of their requests? Money to fund the project(s).

Unfortunately, money is the oldest and most necessary “evil” or “blessing” in our spiritual path. Money can either act to benefit or deter the well- balanced survival of the RCA fellowship. If we value so little our RCA recovery — the benefits, the tools and skills we have learned here — that we do not support the fellowship financially, then we’ll fail.

I personally believe we should take a middle of the road approach, with our primary purpose to carry the message of coupleship recovery. “The Promises” are our guiding light. Let us not be paralyzed from taking action by the dread of making a mistake. If we do, we shall surely fail. The rest of the recovery world will pass us by, watching us suffer in our own self-pity and fear. Let us take the good and rejoice in it. Let us acknowledge and release our mistakes, but use them as lessons of progressive learning.

The next Board meeting, our second, will be in January, 1999. Let us know how you are doing. Your responses may be e-mailed through www.recovering-couples.org or snail mailed to the RCA WSO office.

With much love and compassion in recovery,

Muhammad A-Q C. - MAQC

Reminder

The RCA Holiday Appeal is happening this month! Has RCA saved your relationship? Have you learned how to communicate with your partner and others you care about? Is your family happier, stronger? How do you express your gratitude for these gifts? Well, one thing RCA always needs is money. It is through the financial support of grateful couples like you that RCA is able to reach out to other couples who still suffer. Without the financial support of our

members, there would be no World Service office, no RCA literature, no convention and probably no RCA. So, give from your heart when the Holiday Appeal reaches your doorstep.

GroupContactCouples... Take Note!

Please bring your issue of the Hand in Hand to your local meeting so all group members may read it or use it for topics of discussion.

Humor...

Affirmations for the Unrecovering

A good scapegoat is nearly as welcome as a solution to the problem. As I let go of my feelings of guilt, I can get in touch with my Inner Sociopath. I am grateful that I am not as judgmental as all those censorious, self-righteous people around me. Today, I will gladly share my experience and advice, for there are no sweeter words than "I told you so." False hope is nicer than no hope at all.

World Service Office Transition

Hello All,

Just wanted to take a moment to let the fellowship know that the World Service Office transition is complete. Bob F. has been busy sending out the Hand in Hand and answering e-mail inquiries from the web site. I have been processing your literature orders, updating the directory, answering phone inquiries and processing your Seventh Tradition donations, just to mention a few of the things we do in the office.

Like all transitions there are still some minor equipment bugs to be worked out. In order to have both fax and voice messages forwarded to the new location, I have been using my computer to receive both incoming faxes and voice messages. When you send a fax to the World Service Office you will hear my outgoing message. Just let your fax machine continue... the beeps that a fax machine make will alert my modem to receive the incoming fax. If, by chance, you have any difficulties you can also e-mail me directly at RCAWSO@iname.com or contact me by phone.

I really appreciate the ongoing patience that all of you have given Judy W., Bob F. and I during this transition. My husband, Scott, and I will continue to try to work out the ongoing problems as we become aware of them.

Thank you very much — I will get better at this as time goes on.

Yours in Recovery,

Mary Monica

Seventh Tradition Donations

7/1/98 to 10/15/98

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.

RCA regrets our failure to note the generous \$87.58 donation from the Tandem Group of Malmo, Sweden in the last Hand in Hand newsletter.

Back To School Lodi CA Group 50.00
Caring Couples of Des Moines, IA 161.00
Crossroads Phoenix Thurs. RCA 174.69
Eagan, Minnesota Friday Night RCA 21.25
Celebrating Partnership Group of Minnesota 100.00
First Connecticut RCA Group 10.00
First Florida Group of RCA 179.00
Houston Texas Sunday Night RCA 180.00
Houston Wednesday Night RCA 446.00
Just Us Step Group 25.00
LaMorinda Sunday Night Step Meeting 57.89
Lloydminster RCA Canada 30.00
Los Angeles, Ca Sunday Home Meeting 93.00
Los Angeles, California 6pm Share Meeting 40.00
Madison, Wisconsin RCA 48.75
Massachusetts / Rhode Island Sunday RCA 160.00
Monday Night Buffet Bunch - Indianapolis 50.00
New Orleans RCA 40.00
Oakland CA Sunday Night Meeting 239.30
Oakland, CA Saturday Morning 25.00
Palo Alto, CA Sunday RCA 300.00
Philadelphia, PA Friday Night RCA 72.00
Rapid City, South Dakota RCA 15.00
Riverhead, New York Wed. Night RCA 80.00
San Diego Saturday RCA 91.70
San Fernando Valley Sunday RCA Group 60.00
Seattle, Washington Sunday 5 PM RCA Meet 125.00
St. Louis MO, Sunday Evening RCA 200.00
Stepping Together RCA of Gaithersburg 466.00
Tri-County Michigan RCA 63.00

Tuesday Night Ravenna, Ohio RCA 15.00
Tulsa, Oklahoma RCA 50.00
Phoenix Saturday Night Ad-Hoc meeting 31.00

Additional donations: 12 donations from 10 individuals. Also the Stepping Together RCA group of Gaithersburg had a special event donation of \$170.00. There was a donation from the 1997 Convention of \$250.00. Of course the big news is the donation from the 1998 convention of \$5942.17.

A Hearty Welcome To New RCA Meeting

- Juneau, Alaska
- Back to School Group of Lodi, CA

Outreach

On Labor Day weekend Board members, Muhammad and Siti set up a booth at the Islamic Convention with the assistance of the fellowship in St. Louis. This outreach resulted in the purchase of an RCA starter package and, hopefully, a new RCA group.

Deep Thought

by Anonymous

HONOR the place within your partner where love abides; The place where there is nothing but the peace of God; The place where the Mind of Christ dwells within her mind and looks out on a forgiven world.

Then Honor the place in YOU where love abides; The place where there is nothing but the peace if God; The place where the Mind of Christ dwells within your mind and looks out upon a forgiven world.

If you are in that place in you, and you can see that place in her/him, YOU ARE ONE.

What is Diversity? diversity (die vur' sih tee) noun, 1. variety; many various kinds.

RCA DIVERSITY GOAL

To have a variety of faces, cultures and coupleships at RCA meetings and conventions.

WHO AND WHAT?

Who and what different groups of people must be represented in RCA to have real diversity? • Many different ethnic groups • All racial communities • Differing spiritual belief systems •

Heterosexual and homosexual relationships • Hurting committed couples (the epitome of diversity)

WHERE?

Where will we find this diversity of relationships? • Other support groups • Twelve Step meetings • Churches, mosques, synagogues • International institutes • Ethnic associations and societies

HOW?

How can we spread the RCA word to diverse groups of people? Through OUTREACH by offering the Philosophy Brochure brochure to: • Cultural and ethnic spiritual leaders • Cultural and ethnic gatherings and conventions • marriage counselors • addiction therapists • recovery facilities • couples in pain, wherever we find them

WHEN?

When should we start?

TODAY- As Soon As Possible. **PRACTICE** Step 12th and bring the **MESSAGE** to others. **CONTACT** the WSO for brochures.

The fellowship is in this together. Notify me of your outreach activities. These activities will be shared in the Hand in Hand as a guide to others call Santa D. (314) 275-8779.

CoupleWorld: Adventure Beyond

Join Us October 8, 9, 10, 1999

In the last issue of Hand in Hand we told you about the exciting, hang onto your hat, programs and meetings. In this issue it's the fun, the hotel and the city!

The Fun

- Bring your grass skirt or sarong and surfer pants for a relaxing, romantic luau on the beach.
- Bid for a dream vacation, a computer program or an heirloom at the Annual RCA Auction.
- Win big at the annual RCA raffle.
- Be thoroughly entertained by the best ideas and talent RCA has to offer.

The Venue

The Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort is located on a secluded, white sandy Tampa Bay beach, boasts two sparkling swimming pools, a whirlpool spa, exercise/weight room, sailing vessels, and a newly completed full-facility renovation.

The City

Situated on a peninsula surrounded by the beautiful Gulf of Mexico and pristine Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg, Florida is minutes away from several of the world's top ten beaches and boasts over 7 museums of international quality. It is also near a plethora of attractions... Disney World, Sea World, Busch Gardens, Universal and MGM Studios, the Florida Aquarium, Kennedy Space Center and many more. Noted for its subtropical climate and breeze swept palm trees, St. Pete will be a vacationer's paradise during October 1999.

RCA Convention Schedule

Friday, October 8, 1999

• Registration: 1:00 pm onward • Program: Begins at 4:00 pm

Saturday, October 9, 1999

• Program begins at 8:00 am • Luau begins at 6:00 pm

Sunday, October 10, 1999

• Program begins at 8:00 am • Closing ceremonies 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Schedule subject to change.

ATTENTION

Register before February 15, 1999 and your name will be placed in a drawing to WIN a personalized, recorded song with special words about your coupleship or your RCA group. So request your registration form TODAY! (Those already registered are also eligible.)

Questions about or requests for the 1999 RCA Convention may be directed to Diane or Glenn A. at:

Phone & FAX: (727) 898-9653

or

E-Mail: wlfsg914@aol.com

or

CoupleWorld

166 17th Avenue S.E.

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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:

January - Coupleship Oneness

February - Co-Addiction

March - Accepting Responsibility

April - Codependency

May - Shame and Intimacy

June - Family of Origin Issues

July - Abusive Parents

August - Addicted Coupleships

September - Relationship Relapse

Coupleship Oneness

Together two people who are in a committed relationship form a coupleship, a oneness, a distinct and separate entity. This coupleship has a life of its own and needs to be nurtured appropriately. Couple recovery depends on this nurturance. Both partners in a relationship need individual recovery: meetings, sponsors, therapy, a support group, spirituality, recreation, vocation, and other individual interests. A coupleship needs commitment, communication, honesty and true caring. There are, then, three elements of couple recovery. Our individual recoveries are the two basic components. Our coupleship's recovery is the third component. One of the symbols of RCA is the three-legged stool. Each leg represents one of these components. If one leg is missing, the stool will fall. If one component is missing, the relationship will fail. This is why, for example, many of us know how hard it is for one partner to be identified as the addict and in recovery while the other partner has no individual recovery. One partner grows and the other doesn't. Individual recovery for only one partner will, therefore, produce more distance in the relationship.

Co-Addiction

In addictive relationships, the partner of a primary addict is referred to as the co-addict. Addiction theory suggests that this person is often a co-dependent and/or an enabler. Some co-addicts have assumed that if the addict gets sober they will no longer be co-addicts. This is not true. Co-addiction is a disease in and of itself. Co-addicts grow up in families where they learn to cope with addictions of all kinds on the part of other family members. They may find that throughout their lives they related to a series of addicts. Their current partner is just another in a long list. They make a choice to be with their current partner for good reasons. They will not get well just because their partner is recovering. Being in relationship with an addict is normal for

them. Co-addicts should, therefore, be in recovery for themselves. Sobriety becomes learning healthy self-nurture, boundaries, and individuality. Co-addicts may have their own primary addiction(s). It is not uncommon that two addicts are in relationship and are co-addicted to each other. Each one might historically claim that his or her addiction is fueled by trying to cope with his or her partner. This is not true.

Accepting Responsibility

Both partners must accept responsibility for the health or disease of their relationship. Each of us brings our own addictions, personalities, family-of-origin messages, and various individual dysfunctions into the relationship. The relationship doesn't create them. The elements brought by both partners contribute to the nature of the relationship. This does not mean that we are responsible for any addictive or dysfunctional behavior on our partner's part. Those behaviors are his/her responsibility and reflect choices that he/she makes in order to cope with feelings (including the feelings generated by the state of the relationship). Both of us are responsible for the presence or absence of intimacy between us. As soon as each of us accepts mutual responsibility, we are ready for the First Step of RCA: "We admitted that we were powerless over our relationship and that our life together had become unmanageable."