

## **OA South East England Intergroup**

### **World Service Business Conference 2016**

#### ***Final report***

I attended the Overeaters Anonymous 2016 World Service Business Conference (WSBC) as a delegate for OA South and East England Intergroup (SEEIG). The Conference was held 2 – 7 May 2016, at the Embassy Suites Albuquerque Hotel and Spa, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. This was the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual WSBC, and its theme was “Responsibility – to carry the message”.

WSBC is effectively the group conscience of OA worldwide, where OA members from around the world conduct the business of OA. I feel very privileged to have attended WSBC on behalf of SEEIG, to carry our Intergroup’s views. I think it’s important that we as an Intergroup are represented at WSBC, not just so that our Intergroup has a voice and in part of the decisions that are made, but also so that we are self-supporting in service, by contributing to the committee work that takes place throughout the year.

As this was the first time I have attended WSBC (making me a “Green Dot”, i.e. a first time WSBC delegate) I was assigned a mentor to assist me with the process. I was in contact with my mentor before I attended, and we met up early on in the week, before business started, to check in with each other. We also sat together through most of the business meetings and had fellowship outside the allotted times, so they were able to answer questions that I had about the process and procedures as they arose. My mentor was an invaluable source of support to me throughout the week.

This year there were 199 eligible voters (as of 08.30, 5 May 2016, Business Meeting 1), consisting of 17 trustees and 182 voting delegates. 19 countries were represented (10 of which were in Region 9, including Great Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Greece, Israel, Germany, Sweden and Austria).

**7<sup>th</sup> tradition:** There was one 7<sup>th</sup> tradition collection, on Friday morning (6 May 2016). The total contributed was \$4,423.25. This is a decrease from WSBC 2015 (where a total of \$5,921.51 was collected).

#### **An overview of the week:**

**Monday, 2 May:** Workshop on the “Responsibility Pledge: To Extend the Hand and Heart of OA”

**Tuesday, 3 May:** Workshops on “Responsibility: Of Abstinence”, “Responsibility: of Working All Twelve Steps”, “The Real Deal: Sharing Experience, Strength and Hope (Young People), and “All About Conference (including parliamentary procedure)”

**Wednesday, 4 May:** Forum: A Carry on Message. Committee Meetings. Region Fellowship, and Literature Q&A

**Thursday, 5 May:** Business Meetings 1 and 2 (introductions, credentials, adoption of standing rules, reports from officers, committees and regions, trustee nominees speeches and Q&A, etc.) Workshops on “Strategic Planning: Carry the Message Back Home” and “Virtual Services: Responsibility to Carry the OA Message”

**Friday, 6 May:** Business Meetings 3 and 4 (trustee elections, new business motions.) Workshop on “Sponsorship Training”

**Saturday, 7 May:** Business Meeting 5 (new business motions, committee and workshop summaries). Board of Trustees meeting, Delegates’ dinner/entertainment/presentations.

OA meetings were held throughout the week: early morning, noon, and in the evening. I attended an OA meeting most days. For me this helped keep me grounded in recovery, and remember my primary purpose, during a week that is by its nature very “business” heavy.

The reference sub-committee met on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Reference sub-committee (RSC) is made up of delegates from each region who review new business motions. Motions are referred when they receive three or more proposed amendments. These RSC meetings are often early in the early morning, and late into the evening as they have to work around the times of the main business meetings, which are 8.30am - 5pm. I attended two RSC meetings: one because I was involved in an amendment being proposed, and one as an observer. This was one of the highlights of the week for me, and I would strongly encourage future WSBC delegates to attend these meetings.

**Committee meeting:** The committee meetings took place from 10.15 to 16.45 on Wednesday 4 May 2016. The WSBC Conference Committees are:

- Bylaws
- Conference-Approved Literature
- Finance
- Professional Outreach
- Public Information
- Region Chairs
- Twelfth Step Within
- Unity with Diversity
- Web/Technology
- Young Person’

I was assigned to the Young Persons Committee. There are 16 members on the committee this year. The Young Persons Committee’s statement of purpose is:

- 1) To serve OA members, groups, and service bodies in carrying the message to young people within the Fellowship, as well as to young newcomers
  - a) Act as a resource by outlining appropriate OA material including literature, online resources, and meeting formats
  - b) Provide information regarding projects, initiatives, and other activities that have been successful in supporting young people within the Fellowship and carrying the message to young newcomers
- 2) To provide recommendations for literature and other resources intended to support younger members within the OA Fellowship
- 3) To assist WSO in responding to inquiries regarding young persons in OA.

We began by introducing ourselves and having some informal discuss as to why the committee's work is important to us and how we can continuity in how OA carries the message to young people. The outgoing delegate co-chair also talked about the history and background of the committee.

The committee then held elections, electing a new delegate co-chair, vice chair and secretary.

We discussed what the committee wants to focus on in the forthcoming year. We chose to continue working within the broad scope of demographics in our statement of purpose by moving forward with a resource for parents/families of children with possible compulsive eating behaviours and continuing to expand our services to the young adult demographic identified as robustly underserved that has been the focus over the last four years.

We sorted the projects and goals of the committee into two subcommittees themed around either resources for service bodies and recovery fellowship development for the demographic we serve. I will be serving on the "Resources" subcommittee.

The Goals/Actions (which will be completed in the upcoming year) agreed on by the committee include: reviewing existing literature, developing a workshop, creating resources for young people in OA, formulating a response template for enquiries to service bodies from or on behalf of young persons, pitch a young persons' column in Lifeline, and creating a young persons' outreach contact list.

My personal commitment to the committee for the next 12 months includes working on a review of OA's current policy on its relationship to O-Anon, a separate but similar fellowship for the friends and families of compulsive overeaters. This is relevant to the Young Persons Committees work, as many enquiries and requests come from parents, about their children's eating problems. I've also committed to submitting an article to Lifeline with a YP focus.

If you or your groups would like any more information about this committee, or any of the other WSBC committees, please get in touch.

## **Literature**

The conference considered two new pieces of literature:

- *Twelve Traditions Pocket Guide*
- *Twelve Step Workshop and Study Guide*

A Q&A session was held on Wednesday 4 May 2016 (20.00) where delegates could ask questions about the proposed literature, prior to the deliberation and voting on Thursday 5 May 2016.

The conference seal of approval was granted to the two pieces of proposed new literature. I'll keep the IG updated as to when the new material will be available.

## **New Business Motions**

The consent agenda consisted of New Business Motions A, B, C, and E, and Bylaw Amendments 1,2,3 and 7, and was adopted. (Please refer to the e-mails sent out prior to the February Intergroup meeting for full details of all the motions, or contact me for more information.)

Bylaw Amendment 5 (about the procedure for an OA body to transfer from one region to another) was pulled from the consent agenda.

The following items were deliberated and voted on individually:

**New Business Motion D:** to change the date of Unity Day from the last Saturday in February to the first Saturday in June.

This motion failed. The reference sub-committee discussed this motion and made a recommendation that it be defeated.

The main objection to the motion was that it seemed to centre on weather preferences for one specific place (i.e. the northeast of the United States, the motion was submitted by Central Jersey IG, Region 7). Whilst weather may be better in this location in June, this may not necessarily be the case for other countries in other parts of the world. It was felt to be a very “North American-centric” motion, and not in keeping with OA as an international fellowship. Delegates against the motion explained they had attended Unity Day events in extreme/poor weather conditions, yet they had been well attended and successful events.

**New Business Motion F:** to change to wording of the OA Statement on Public Media, to clarify that OA members, groups, and service bodies may use public media for public information and public awareness and that in their use of this medium, they need to maintain the personal anonymity of OA members.

I submitted an amendment to new business motions F, on behalf of SEEIG, which was to insert the words "and others" into the proposed changes to the statement on public media. As two other members also submitted amendments, the item was sent to the reference sub-committee for review. The other two members (a trustee and another delegate) and myself were able to work on alternative wording that captured the essence of what we were all trying to achieve. This was accepted by the RSC and returned to the body for deliberation. I'm pleased to say the amended proposal was adopted, and the relevant paragraph will now read: members of Overeaters Anonymous using social media are responsible for maintaining their own personal anonymity, and respecting the anonymity of other OA members."

I'm thrilled that our IG's group conscience has been carried all the way to WSBC and incorporated into the new policy wording. Well done SEEIG!

**New Business Motion G:** to establish an OA Virtual Services Conference Committee.

An amendment was proposed to insert the words “ever mindful to maintain and enhance connections and relationships with regions and meetings that meet face to face.” The amendment was defeated.

The motion was adopted in its original form, and a new Virtual Services committee will be created at WSBC.

**New Business Motion H:** to remove policy that is no longer required since definition of a group was amended in 2008.

The motion was adopted.

**Bylaw Amendment 4:** that the Region Chairs Committee meet only in North America. This was motion was made by our IG.

I observed the reference sub-committee meeting where they discussed this item. They didn't look upon the motion favourably and made a recommendation that the body defeat the motion.

The motion went before conference on Friday 5 May 2016, presented by myself on behalf of SEEIG as the maker of the motion. There was some powerful deliberation on the matter. It was quite a controversial proposal.

A motion for a written ballot was requested, which was adopted (so essentially members could vote without anyone else knowing how they voted, as opposed to raised hand or voice voting, which is the norm). There were questions about the disparity in the approximate costs given in our rationale, and the costs the Region Chairs Committee provided the conference.

Ultimately, the motion was defeated 42 to 150. The main cons were that there was no guarantee that the money saved would be spent in a way to benefit the fellowship internationally, that as a worldwide fellowship the RCC shouldn't be limited to meeting in North America, and that the proposed change would compromise the Region Chairs Committees autonomy.

Whilst I am of course disappointed with the outcome, I feel that SEEIG has done great service by bringing this issue to WSBC for discussion. This is an important issue for the fellowship, I believe, and because of our motion, these issues were aired and subject to the group conscience of OA worldwide.

**Bylaw Amendment 5:** to clarify the procedure for an OA body to transfer from one region to another.

An amendment was proposed to substitute the wording as follows: *should states/provinces/countries/territories within a region or intergroups/national/language service boards within a state/province/country/territory wish to transfer to a region that is geographically more convenient, the body notifies their current region, the region they would like to join, and the Board of Trustees of their desire to transfer. The Board of Trustees then submits a motion to WSBC to amend Subpart B, Article VII, Section 1 of the Bylaws.*

The purpose of the amendment was to ensure the Region that the body is transferring to is made aware of its intent to join it, rather than just the former region and the Board of Trustees.

The amendment was adopted, and the motion was passed, as amended.

**Bylaw Amendment 6:** to change the definition of an OA group, removing limitations that it must be fully interactive and meet in real time (so long as all other requirements are met).

The motion was adopted.

## **Trustee Elections**

**Region 2** (contested) Hanna S elected for first term

**Region 5** (uncontested) Linda J elected for second term

**Region 8** (uncontested) Linda H elected for second term

**Region 10** (uncontested) Letitia M elected for first term

**General Service Trustees** (contested) Gloria L and Steven M both elected for first term

## **Workshops**

I attended a number of workshops throughout the week. The “All About Conference” workshop was invaluable to me as a Green Dot. Whilst I have been attending Intergroup for several years, and have attended National and Regional Assemblies, WSBC was quite a different experience. It is a lot more formal and, of course, is on a much larger scale. So this was a really helpful opportunity to find out about how the business meetings run, what rules they operate by, and hear questions that other Green Dots had.

The other workshops were on different topics (please see overview of the week, above, for the different topics), but with the common theme of “Responsibility: To Carry the Message”. These consisted of “speakers” and then open sharing. If you’d like any more information about any particular workshop, please get in touch.

## **Forum**

The Forum topic was *A Carry on Message*. The forum was presented by the Region Chairs committee on Wednesday morning (4 May 2016). This was 2 hours long and the theme was “A Carry On Message”. According to Tradition Five, our main purpose in recovery is to carry the message. The purpose of the forum was to look at how we can carry the message without promoting OA, how we can carry the message in every life, and what is the message?

Members were allocated places at different tables, seated with delegates and trustees from different regions. Each table was given two scenarios, and a list of questions to consider for each. The scenarios were examples from every day life where we have the opportunity to carry the message (for example, being questioned about your food at a work event, or your weight loss at the doctor’s surgery). For each scenario we discussed how we would handle the situation, what we would say, how we would apply the steps, traditions, concepts and principles, and the resources we would use. Each group then did a role play of the scenario.

Each delegate was given the wallet card “Carrying The Message”. This is a piece of Board Approved Literature, with suggestions of what to say and what not to say when speaking to someone about OA for the first time.

## Finance

OA Inc is required by state law to have an official audit conducted annually. For the fiscal year (1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015) the auditors found OA had strong internal financial controls and that the accounting staff was highly competent and proficient. There were no areas of concern or discrepancy. OA's balance sheet was healthy with adequate income in reserve. It was also stated that OA, as a non-profit corporation, was fiscally stronger than many comparably corporations. OA Inc ended the year in the black, i.e. greater income generated than expended).

Whilst this is very encouraging, Tradition 7 says that "every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions". And whilst there are no dues or fees for membership, OA is not free.

***At present, OA is not self-supporting through its own contributions. In the 2015 financial year, approximately 30% of the income generated in OA was from the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition. The major source of income was from literature sales.***

As a fellowship we have many wonderful resources that assist us in our primary purpose of carrying the message, but these cost money. Producing literature, publications, translations, member services, and running World Service Office all require money. I would urge you to consider this, as individuals and groups, going forward. You may find the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition Tent card, circulated earlier this year, a useful tool in illustrating this to your groups.

Members are encouraged to consider setting up an Automatic Recurring Contribution (ARC), which is a way of to make regular, ongoing 7<sup>th</sup> tradition contribution to OA (you can chose how much and how often you give). You can find out more about ARC on oa.org by clicking "contribute".

The Board of Trustees is committed to Lifeline, and it is working with WSO staff to improve and enhance the content of Lifeline. Ways you and your groups can support Lifeline:

- Submit articles;
- Renew your group or individual subscriptions;
- Become a new subscriber (or have your group take out a subscription);
- Tell newcomers about Lifeline;
- Share copies with your health care provider, etc.

If you'd like more information about the audit and 2016 budget, please get in touch.

## Board of Trustees meeting

On Saturday 7 May 2016 I observed the Board of Trustees meeting. They elected a new Executive Committee. This was a very interesting process, and I would encourage future WSBC delegates to observe the Board of Trustees meeting.

## Convention

The next OA World Service Convention is being held 1 – 4 September 2016, at the Boston Marriot Copley Place, Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The theme is Recovery: The Trail to Freedom. Registration is open. For more info, please visit oa.org

## **Responsibility Pledge**

*Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; For this I am responsible.*

Given the theme of the conference, there was a strong focus on the responsibility pledge, and we often opened and closed sessions with it. The theme is in line with the Strategic Operating Plan (SOP) for 2016, which is to increase the focus on the individual's responsibility to carry the message.

As a reminder, the Board of Trustees updated the meeting format earlier this year to include the responsibility pledge. If your group hasn't already updated its meeting format to reflect this, please raise this at your next group conscience. This was circulated to all IG reps and contacts in the 1 April 2016 SEEIG announcements e-mail.

## **Personal Experience and observations**

Attending WSBC was an amazing and eye opening experience. Throughout the week I got to meet recovering OA members from all over the world. It was very inspiring to meet members who are clearly so committed to their recovery, and to giving service. Many members I met, or heard sharing, had multiple decades of abstinence.

In addition to the help I received from my mentor, I'm also very grateful for the support and guidance I received from many other members throughout the week, particularly from other Region 9 delegates, our Region 9 Chair and Trustee.

I feel I have a much better understanding now of the OA service structure, and how we can apply the traditions and concepts in our service work and in every day life. I hope that this will make me a more effective trusted servant of SEEIG.

From talking to more experienced delegates, I began to realise that my WSBC experience wasn't the typical "Green Dot" experience, on account of the fact I not only proposed an amendment to one of the motions, but actually presented our SEEIG's motion. This was very nerve wracking, and I had a good deal of fear and discomfort around it. However, it was another demonstration of how rolling up my sleeves and getting in the middle of the bed makes for a much richer and rewarding experience. I don't think I would have gotten quite so much out of the week, had I sat on the sidelines observing.

The conference theme of "responsibility: to carry the message" made me reflect on what I do to carry the message. Do I pass up opportunities to let people know OA exists, because of fear and pride? I was reminded many times throughout the week that, whilst our members are anonymous, the fellowship is not. And that, in any event, anonymity shouldn't be used to limit our effectiveness.

I was reminded of the vast wealth of wonderful resources our fellowship has to help us in carrying the message. However, I was also reminded that with this comes responsibility, including financial responsibility.

I saw and heard some amazing recovery at WSBC. Here are a few snippets I took home with me (please take what you like and leave the rest):

- HP is the Healthy Part of myself
- I'm a recovering liar
- I need to face my stuff, not stuff my face
- If I can't moderate it, I have to eliminate it
- Service is slimming
- Share it or wear it
- I only need one meeting a week. But I don't know which one it is, so I need to get to as many as possible
- If you like everyone you've met at OA meetings, you haven't been to enough OA meetings
- The world record for abstinence is 24 hours
- I suffer from terminal uniqueness
- Sometimes we need to take a brave pill and ask a sponsee to do service
- Carrying the message is the greatest service and it comes from being abstinent
- God doesn't call the equipped, he equips those who are called.

Thank you for electing me as the WSBC delegate for SEEIG this year. I am committed to fulfilling my role to the best of my ability throughout the year. If you would like any more information about WSBC, or anything else I've mentioned in the report, please get in touch on [worldservice@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk](mailto:worldservice@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk)

The final conference report will be available in August 2016, and I will forward it for distribution when I receive it.

**Holly A.**

**24 May 2016**