

**WORLD SERVICE BUSINESS CONFERENCE 2014**

**JILL MEIER and BILL PARTRIDGE**

## Word Service Business Conference 2014 Report by Jill Meier

“WSBC is an opportunity to meet delegates from around the world and share our commitment to abstinence, recovery and carrying OA’s message. We will make decisions that will affect the entire Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous. It is our duty and our privilege as delegates to assure the future of OA through our participation in this, our collective group conscience.” Joe L., the chair of the Board of Trustees of Overeaters Anonymous, said this at the start of his “welcome letter” in our delegate binder.

I first started feeling the experience of WSBC when I arrived at the gate area. I got in line at the coffee shop and while I waited for my order, I heard someone ordering hot water and lemon. Yup, it was one of us. I didn’t confirm this until later but I felt my trip had begun!

When I got off the plane in Chicago to catch my second flight, I met up with good friends from Region 6 who had started off at a different airport. I knew to look for them, and was happy to see them waiting at the gate. Again, this added to my excitement; I would again find myself at a hotel where over 200 OA members were going to be gathering. Yes, there would be long business meetings, but there would also be four OA meetings a day, workshops, and lots of fellowship!

One big piece of news that came out of the business meetings is that we have an Overeaters Anonymous third edition coming this fall. It will have an updated story by our founder, and the rest are brand new stories that were culled from the 168 stories that were received by World Service in response to their request to the fellowship. We now have a Unity With Diversity Checklist on the oa.org website which can be used by groups and service bodies to be sure they are being inclusive of all who have the desire to recover. Something else new is that there will be a list available of email “loops” or mailing lists, who want to be listed and agree to follow the definition of an OA group, other than not meeting in “real time.” Before we had OA online meetings, they were listed as a courtesy, although there was no place yet in the service structure to fit them. Now, there is a Virtual Services Trustee, and provision is made for having representation at WSBC.

Elections were held to fill six positions on the Board of Trustees. Delegate materials included the applications of the nominees, letting us know who they were, what kind of service they had done, why they wanted to be a trustee and their OA “story.” Reading the applications always fills me with awe, seeing where these folks came from and how much service they have already done. I am reminded that the trustees are just OA members like me who are willing to take the next steps in service. The afternoon before the actual elections were held, each nominee was asked to give a short speech. Delegates then came up to ask them questions of all sorts. I don’t know how one would prepare for this, other than to lean on their Higher Power and speak from their heart!

The other big “news” is what remains the same. There is no plan to work towards changing the name of Overeaters Anonymous. And there is no plan to change the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in order to describe a more inclusive Higher Power. Even if the words haven’t changed, OA members may rely on a High Power of their own understanding.

The Seventh Tradition was collected three times during the business sessions. The total Seventh Tradition collected was \$4455.36.

For more information on the business meetings and voting results, see the WSBC Wrap Up Report at [www.oa.org/pdfs/WSBC\\_Wrap\\_Report14.pdf](http://www.oa.org/pdfs/WSBC_Wrap_Report14.pdf)

The next sections of my report will describe the workshops, my committee meeting, a little about the business sessions, and finally some personal notes. My report is fairly long, so if this is “too much information” for you, I ask you to skip to the Personal Notes section at the bottom!

## **Workshops**

The strategic plan for 2014-2016 and theme for WSBC 2014 was “Our Primary Purpose” and the workshops emphasized the three goals of the plan:

- 1) Increase focus on actions required for abstinence,
- 2) Increase focus on the necessity of working all Twelve Steps, and
- 3) Increase focus on the individual’s responsibility to carry the message.

Workshops are offered on Monday night and Tuesday afternoon “to provide practical assistance to groups and service bodies in matters of importance to the Fellowship” and even though they are called “Early Bird Workshops” I think they are a very important part of conference, and well-worth the price of arriving early for conference. And yes, this is a hint to intergroup! Each workshop is presented with a title, a purpose, and three questions for the workshop leaders and workshop participants to keep in mind while sharing.

## **Sponsorship: Its Role in Our Primary Purpose**

Purpose: To share the importance of the role of sponsorship in our primary purpose, which is to abstain from compulsive eating and carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

Questions:

- 1) As a sponsor, how do you encourage your sponsees to sponsor and to do service?
- 2) What are the benefits of sponsorship to each member and the Fellowship as a whole?
- 3) How do you guide your sponsee through the Steps?

Be in touch with HP when you are sponsoring. Suggest, don’t tell, don't lecture, it turns off people, have an open mind. What can I give away to sponsees and/or do to reinforce my own program? Abstinence, commitments, spirituality, keep from practicing compulsion. Do things that encourage sponsees to keep the attraction that brought them in. Don't call them, they will call when ready. Share what you were like, what happened, what you are like now. Encourage and practice willingness. Don't delay finding a sponsor. Work with a person who has recovery. Don't expect what can't be given. Sponsor on your own terms. Plan of eating, plan of working steps, plan to abstain while working steps (use tools). Rules for sponsees: have an open mind, take on service immediately, be available to sponsor when ready. You need abstinence to work the steps. The program is the steps. Keep a steady pace on step work. What is program about? Psychic change.

Steps 1-3 are prep work, steps 4-9 are the work, steps 10-12 are maintenance and growth.

A sponsor is a channel of hope, the message. If problem arises, work through it – honesty. A sponsee's recovery is the sponsee's responsibility. Encourage sponsee to call other people when you're not available. Share their plan of eating with newcomers, not with you! Share their daily inventory with newcomers. Looser sponsoring can help you manage more sponsees. People need to want to recover. Our program is for those who want it. A sponsor is not a counselor, lawyer, etc. Have sponsees focus on what they do to others, not vice versa. A sponsor points out the obvious or from a different perspective. Service and sponsorship are not optional: BB, etc, quotes can be found throughout literature. In order to keep your own recovery, give it away. The steps are a transformation process and rebirth. Maintain a sponsor bank with a person to contact for information. Maintain a temporary list of sponsors at events. Identify sponsors at meetings, have a "hope line" of standing up people. Have intergroup promote a sponsor list. Encourage sponsees to sponsor. Hold sponsor training: why is there a lack of sponsors? not ready? fear, etc. in the way; so how to train sponsors? Hold monthly sponsor training before regular meeting. If abstinent and finished with 1,2,3, you work on 4 and get stepped up (30 days). Training is confidence building, led by experienced sponsors. Include sponsors at training, sponsors help with newcomer retention -- more sponsors, more retention. See [www.oahelps.org](http://www.oahelps.org) for newcomer orientation.

## **Sponsorship: Its Role in Our Primary Purpose (continued)**

Start to sponsor with Guide for Sponsors and Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps and food-related literature, 15 questions. Go over plan of eating and dignity of choice pamphlets with newcomer paragraph by paragraph (15 Questions first), help them create their own plan of eating. Start on the steps. Local handouts, slip inventory, getting honest with food (3 column worksheet). Hold orientation for new sponsors. What working the steps/recovery mean. Willingness comes from pain. Keep calls on track, don't burn out. Use training tapes; can help with sponsor shortage. What would you tell your sponsee if you had one? Do you want to live? Have conference call to help multiple sponsees work steps. Email 10th steps to group? Don't ask "do you have a sponsor" but "are you working with a sponsor?" One CO to another until they believe. Ask potential sponsees what they need from you. What's your bottom line for abstinence? How are you powerless over food? How does food make your life unmanageable? Three types of sponsoring: spot sponsoring, experienced member asks for what they need, newcomer needs direction.

## **Our Primary Purpose: Abstinence First**

Purpose: To increase the focus on actions required for abstinence.

Questions:

- 1) What can we do to elevate the importance of abstinence?
- 2) How can we help the member in the rooms who is still suffering?
- 3) What steps did/do you take to stay abstinent during difficult times?

Actions for abstinence: plan of eating, other tools, repetition. Benefits of abstinence: physical, emotional, spiritual: weightloss, freedom from CO, connection with HP, freedom from food obsession, serenity and presence, stay present and pay attention, physical health, gratitude, principles that can be applied in life. Elevate importance of abstinence: benefits above, prayer/meditation, promises, act sanely, handle situations, learn to let go. How to help member still suffering: commitment to abstinence pamphlet, be example of recovery, can you do these things today, encourage use of tools, offer sponsorship, sponsor to level of experience, reach out to others, give back to others, take calls when they come (it takes courage), be approachable. How to stay abstinent during difficult times: say yes to abstinence, shift focus to gratitude, surrender: steps 1-2-3. do what it takes (put lifeline in fridge), involve family and friends, create/update action plan, ok to have unfinished list--there's always tomorrow, it's a privilege to carry the message. Don't leave things to chance (especially abstinence). Go to any length. The solution is spiritual. It's a gift to give back to HP. Program is a way of life!

## **Our Primary Purpose: Working All Twelve Steps**

Purpose: To encourage members to work all Twelve Steps (The 2013 Fellowship Inventory results indicated that many long-term members have not worked all Twelve Steps.)

Questions:

- 1) How do you work a long-time member who hasn't worked through all the Steps?
- 2) How do you avoid complacency?
- 3) How are we promoting/emphasizing the importance of working all OA's Twelve Steps as the way to recover from compulsive eating?

When you're building a house from the bottom up, the tools come into play: 1. Abstinence: clearing to lay foundation. 2. Contractor: power greater than myself. 3. Trust contractor to build house, trust HP about changes to make. 4. Clear away wreckage, want to use quality material. 5. Admit to another - building trust. 6. Entirely ready to change - look for cheap material to get rid of. 7. Asked HP to help, (get rid of termites, resentments) can destroy house if not getting rid of, 8. Willing to make list, start with columns, all move to yes (mind keeps talking about it), 9. Make amends. 10-12 maintenance steps. 10. When the outside is up and firm, protected from elements of weather, lifelong daily process. 11. Cements everything together, promises coming true. 12. Put it all together, keep checking on termites, spirituality, char defects no longer hurt you and can use them to share with others how program works.

Quit working the steps and live the steps. Relief or recovery? Recovery: live the 12 steps to the best of my ability, on a daily basis, participating in life, not looking at it. living in 6 and 7, makes me think before opening my mouth. work steps with others (don't sponsor, do it together). BB doesn't mention sponsors (work with others), it levels playing field. whack a mole: one defect down, another pops up. Steps are the miracle of the program. If struggling, payoffs and what it cost me to act on those defects. Humility: need to learn. Quick Steps website, 8 weeks, review or overview. PAGGLES: Pride, Anger, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Envy, Sloth. 12 & 12 is a lifelong journey of spiritual growth.

## **Our Primary Purpose: Carrying the Message**

Purpose: To increase focus on the individual's responsibility to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

Questions:

- 1) What do you see as your personal responsibility in carrying the message?
- 2) How do you carry the message one-on-one, at the group level, at the intergroup/service board level, at the region level?
- 3) What is the OA message of recovery that we carry?

We all have the same message, we need to deliver it and not worry about what's being received. What message did the newcomer get? Example of giving directions to draw an animal: same message, different results. What message am I telling? Am I practicing the principles in all my affairs? Even if not abstinent how to carry the message? I knew it worked because... OA is about abstinent relationships. What is your personal responsibility? How to carry message one on one at all levels. What is the OA message of recovery we carry? It works. Encouragement for others to step through the wormhole, it may be more comfortable on the "other side" of program but we want to grab people and tell them it's ok on this side. Share with your group: how did I use the group or a tool not to pick up this week. Carry the message, carry it within yourself. At meetings, people want to see recovery. May 2 from For Today: God gives me the words, I carry the message. Ours is a program of attraction, how to attract others? Work and live the steps. How do I react to newcomers? Do I belong to cliques? OA gives us life to live around normal people. We have to do it for ourselves and recovery, liking myself, acceptance at levels: we share, we listen. Say what you mean, mean what you say, don't say it mean. We have to be physically, emotionally, spiritually fit. Keep coming so newcomers have somewhere to go. Being our authentic selves is an attraction. The steps are a design for living.

## **“Strategic Planning”** (Tuesday evening)

Purpose: To update the Fellowship on the strategic planning process

Question: How can groups and service bodies participate in the Strategic Plan in their own areas?

I attended the workshop on the Strategic Plan (our primary purpose). Our goal was to brainstorm ideas on how we as a fellowship can participate in the plan. We divided into break-out groups for discussion on what we could do at the levels of individual, group, intergroup and beyond. When we got back together, each groups reported back some of their ideas, and the details were recorded and sent back to us from World Service. They appear at the end of this report.

Strong Abstinence Checklist

Powerpoint presentation on abstinence

## **“Who Wants to Stay Abstinent? Play the Game and Stick with the Winners”** (Wednesday morning)

The Forum is always presented by the Region Chairs Committee. It was held Wednesday morning, announced as being a “fun, interactive and informative Forum” designed to complement the theme of our Strategic Plan: “Our Primary Purpose.” It began with a clever skit performed by the region chairs along the theme of a crime drama, and included an interactive “game show” with “contestants” called up from the audience to answer multiple choice questions, with the option of “asking for help” from others in the audience.

## **Conference Literature Committee Meeting** (Wednesday late morning and most of the afternoon)

When delegates register for WSBC, they are given a list of committees from which they can choose. There are five hours devoted to committee meetings on Wednesday and another short meeting on Saturday afternoon to complete unfinished business. The committee is expected to work on various projects throughout the year; I can't imagine how it was done before the internet and free conference calls came along! I was selected for my second year on the Conference Literature Committee. This committee creates, reviews, and revises Conference-approved literature. The committee also reviews literature proposals that are received from service bodies and other WSBC committees and recommends how to proceed. Documents are reviewed by the literature committee as well as by the Board of Trustees, with the intention of bringing them to an upcoming WSBC for approval. The committee is a lot of work and I feel that my skills will allow me to contribute to it. I was elected as delegate co-chair of the committee, and, working with the trustee co-chair, will do my best to help the project subcommittees to succeed.

## **“Literature Q & A”** (Wednesday Evening)

This session provides an opportunity for delegates to ask questions about the literature proposals on the agenda in order to save time on the conference floor. The literature voting takes place as part of the business sessions. If a piece of literature passes, the World Service Office proceeds with publishing. The document may be made available at no cost on the OA website, such as was the case with the Diversity Checklist. Literature is often made available through the OA Bookstore in either hardcopy or as an e-book, as will happen with the Overeaters Anonymous third edition. When a literature proposal fails, the procedure is to allow delegates to fill out an “evaluation” in order to determine the next course of action.

## **Business Sessions** (Thursday, Friday, half of Saturday)

Two and a half days were spent in Business Sessions. At the beginning of the first session, delegates stood by state, as way of calling the “roll.” When Region 6 as a whole stood, most of us were wearing our “Wicked Awesome Recovery” T-Shirts to promote our upcoming Region 6 Convention!

## **Personal Notes**

As an experienced WSBC delegate I have the privilege to pass along what I have learned to others. Bill P. was a “Green Dot” (first-timer) and we were assigned to learn from each other, because it is never just the “sponsee” that learns from the “sponsor.” I am grateful to have had the chance to “hang out” with Bill and for us to share our experience, strength and hope with each other! Never say no to working with another OA member if you can help it!!

Another advantage to coming to WSBC early is to take advantage of the “extracurricular activities.” I went on the bus trip to Santa Fe on Monday. On the bus I had the chance to sit with Bill and chat for an hour, which was awesome! In Santa Fe, I “hung out” with my “Green Dot” from last year, her husband, who came across the country as a volunteer, and her cousin, who took us for a “grand tour” of Santa Fe. It was an awesome experience, and it shows me that even if I wasn’t part of the “in crowd” before program, I am now! And we all are! 😊

Friday night is a “free night,” which means there are no planned activities but it’s a chance to spend a lot of money! A group of us reserved a shuttle bus and took the tram up to the top of the Sandia Mountains for dinner. I’ve done this before several times, but the views and the fellowship are always the main attraction and worth repeating! As I mentioned in the past, this hotel is pretty isolated, so shuttle buses were provided to take attendees to Old Town for dinner and shopping. Saturday night was the chance to celebrate all that we accomplished during the week. Dinner, a “keynote” speaker, dancing, and more fellowship were a great way to celebrate!

I will close with another quote from Joe L. Although it refers to WSBC, what Joe says can be expanded to much of our work, and especially our service, that we do in OA at all levels: “...you will have many opportunities to make informed decisions for our Fellowship. You will probably need to call upon your Higher Power many times for direction and guidance in our decision-making process. Give yourself time to reflect and meditate... Ask yourself each day what you and OA can do for the compulsive eater who still suffers. And ask how our decisions will help to carry the message that we have found recovery through the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. Talk with [others] about the issues. Listen carefully to, and participate in, the debate. Then cast your vote for the good of OA as a whole. If we ask for knowledge of God’s will for OA and the power to carry it out, our decisions will surely fall in line with our primary purpose.”

It’s hard to describe the experience and privilege of attending the World Service Business Conference, and how much it fills me with gratitude for Overeaters Anonymous. We all worked hard together, but we had a lot of fun as well. WSBC is an awesome opportunity to give service and share our experience, strength and hope, and to do our best to carry the message of recovery to others. Together we can!

Love and recovery,

Jill Meier

## WSBC 2014 Strategic Planning Notes

During the World Service Business Conference, a Strategic Planning workshop was held, the goal of which was to brainstorm and share ideas based on the 2014 BOT Strategic Plan. Here are the top ideas from your delegates. Please feel free to share them with your groups. (note: shortened list; see oa.org for original list)

What can we do (take home) to increase actions on abstinence?

At meeting/group level:

- Newcomer plan: greeters, long-timers take newcomers aside and talk to them, have new-to-me greeter
- See [www.oahelps.org](http://www.oahelps.org)
- Understand difference between a plan of eating and abstinence (more specific than an action plan)
- Do service, work the steps and use all the tools
- Qualifying and/or literature meetings, include definition of abstinence, encourage abstinence focus
- Sponsors identify themselves at break and talk to newcomers, identify temporary sponsors
- Print out Strong Abstinence Checklist, talk about it at meetings, share ways to use it
- Don't make food the enemy. Do we need a group conscience to be able to mention specific foods?
- Fellowship after the meetings
- Qualify when we share, identify as being abstinent
- Encourage meetings to be open to new ideas, and, if needed, do group inventory
- Celebrate abstinent birthdays, hand out recovery coins/chips
- Step up sponsors at your meeting, hold sponsorship training, have sponsor contact list
- Day in OA workshop to focus on plans of eating
- Abstinence individual action plan, "on the spot" part of meeting format
- Encourage sharing about what abstinence feels like
- Call others if struggling, have abstinent buddy match-ups, use phone lists to call people you haven't seen
- Approach/greet newcomers, have a new-to-me greeter
- Have available: Recovery OA insurance policy, up-to-date meeting lists, Strong Abstinence Checklist
- Pamphlet meeting – Dignity of Choice, Plan of Eating, Abstinence
- Q&A meetings, especially for newcomers

At intergroup:

- Abstinence workshops/conventions/marathons
- Intergroups can add "how are we helping members?" to the agenda every month
- Intergroups can have web materials available for reps (e.g. Strong Abstinence Checklist)
- Workshops on how plans of eating help abstinence, sponsorship workshops
- Newsletters, flyers, hand outs

At World Service: interactive Q&A step-by-step guide to customize your own abstinence; abstinence individual action plan completed at a workshop

Individuals:

- "What's my abstinence?"
- Define food plan/follow it, write it down and share with sponsor (accountability)
- Focus on the total package
- List trigger foods and share with sponsor (red, yellow, green lists)
- Actively work with a sponsor and others right away
- Take a sponsee to the supermarket/restaurant
- Use newcomer packet as foundation for starting to sponsor



## **2014 World Service Business Conference Report by Bill Partridge**

It was an honor and a privilege to represent New Hampshire Intergroup at the 53rd Annual World Service Business Conference. My sponsor had told me that it is a life-changing event and again he was right. I have to say that it was the most apprehensive and emotional week of my life. I had fears, tests, trials and challenges. I know that I am addicted to my comfort zone and World Service Conference was "out of it."

Just to be away from my wife who tells me what gate to go to at the airport, what plane to get on, which fork to eat with, which napkin is mine, etc. was a challenge. Other than getting on the wrong shuttle and going for a free ride around the Albuquerque airport parking lots, I did pretty well.

I arrived 2 days early and left two days late in order to explore a part of the country I had never visited. I found the Old Town area of Albuquerque was about a 40 min. walk to the west of my hotel and discovered an independent health food co-op about 2 1/2 miles to the east - which featured a nice walk through the University of New Mexico campus. My last day in Albuquerque I split a car rental with two other delegates and rode the Sandia Peak Tramway, a beautiful 2.7 mile ride to over 10,000 feet in elevation. I spent another day taking a scheduled bus to Santa Fe, about an hour away.

The conference started on Monday with registration in the afternoon and a sponsorship workshop in the evening. From Tuesday until Saturday we had daily open sharing OA meetings every morning, noon and evening. Tuesday morning we had shuttles available to take us shopping for groceries. On Tuesday afternoon we had 3 workshops: 1. Abstinence 2. The Steps and 3. Carrying the Message. For 2 hours on Tuesday evening we had a meeting for new delegates called "All About Conference" which helped us understand what we might expect during the business meetings.

Wednesday started with a two-hour Forum: "Who Wants to Stay Abstinent?" An entertaining play done by the region chairs. This was followed by our first committee meeting at 10:15. From this time until noon on Saturday we spent 26 hours either in Committee or at the Business Meetings.

My committee was Public Information. We discussed the challenges involved with getting the message out to the world. One of our members started a mentor/mentee program two years ago, but received very little response to his invitation for groups and intergroups to seek or offer help with P I work. The committee plans to redouble its efforts to make this program more accessible and hopefully more effective. It will be our mission over the next year to make such connections more prevalent to both intergroup chairs and P I chairs around the world. We understand that many working in public information have had successful experiences carrying the message. We also know that many could use some help in this area. It will be our goal until the 2015 Business Conference to find ways of connecting those who know with those who don't. We plan to review our progress in June, September and January, using Skype, conference calls and/or email to keep us connected.

The World Service Business Meeting consisted of 180 delegates from around the world and 17 Trustees. The agenda for this meeting is available at the oa.org website and much of the business discussed related to minor adjustments to the bylaws and policies. Some of the more important issues to me are as follows: 1.) We moved to adopt a Unity With Diversity Checklist. 2.) We passed a motion to publish a new Overeaters Anonymous, 3rd Addition. This manuscript will keep Roseanne's Story but will contain forty new stories and will have a new appendix written by a supportive clinical psychologist; Dr. Marty Lerner, PhD. Dr. Lerner operates an eating disorder treatment center in Florida. He received the

2010 OA Appreciation Award in recognition of his long-time support of Overeaters Anonymous. This volume will become available to us in October. 3.) A new pamphlet called The Promises of The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous was not passed. It will probably be revised this year and brought back for approval next year. 4.) A motion to begin the process of changing the name of Overeaters Anonymous was proposed and defeated. Most agreed that a name change would be expensive and confusing. The purpose of the proposed change was to find a way to make our program more inclusive of anorexics and bulimics. 5.) We passed a motion requiring OA e-mail groups commonly called loops to register with the World Service Business Office. These groups will then be listed on our website and available to others who might be looking for such information. 6.) A motion to change our steps and traditions to be gender neutral was defeated, but not without considerable discussion.

The business meetings were well orchestrated with time limits for discussion and questions. I was impressed with the amount of issues which we had to deal with over about 18 hours of actual meeting time. We churned through eighty pages of proposals and elected trustees without hurting each other. Jill Meier was my mentor. She was available to me when things got confusing and her knowledge was a great help when I needed it.

During all business meetings, the Overeaters Anonymous World Service Office staff was available for questions. OA is fortunate to have such a staff available. They provided answers to all queries in a professional manner. They are nice hard working professional people.

Over the week, I witnessed many different characters. Many delegates were passionate about the business at hand; they had sticky notes and colored tabs all through their binders and had obviously spent many hours pondering each prospective motion. Others knew the Traditions and Concepts inside and out. I saw still others every morning in the Fitness Room at the hotel. Some exuded kindness and love, others not so much. Some seemed serious about abstinence, while others talked a lot about sponsorship, carrying the message of the Steps. We were certainly a group that might not ordinarily mix, but we got the job done as we were expected to do.

On Friday, Karin H, our Region 6 Trustee asked me if I would be back next year. I replied, "I'm not sure." About four days after I arrived home, after talks with my sponsor and my Higher Power, I said "Yes, I would return." Serving my intergroup and OA as a whole was a wonderful experience.

Thank you for allowing me to go.