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## Trustee Line for July 2012

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## Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

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**Unity Step 7**

7/1/12 - 12:01 AM

Unity Step 7

Every Gamblers Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

What does "fully self-supporting" mean? The obvious is the second part of this step, we don't take money from people who are not GA members. But if that was the only message of this step, we could shorten it and get rid of the self-supporting statement. And what is meant by "every GA group"?

Many GA members, especially those in groups that do not have an Intergroup Representative, have the misconception that they just have to pay the rent, buy literature, and cover the coffee expenses to be self-supporting. Some of those groups may have an ISO can, but do the members of that group know what that is for? And what do you do with the extra money left over? Recently, I went through another situation where a group allowed their treasury to get too large a balance and the money was stolen by the treasurer. It is important to know what to do with those extra funds and we have treasury guidelines to help groups properly manage their funds. The guidelines are available from ISO for a small fee.

Did you know that all GA literature could be free to GA members? ISO is another GA group that must be self-supporting. ISO relies on several sources of income: first and foremost are group contributions, then there is Lifeliners, ISO cans, walkathons, and finally there is literature sales. If ISO got full support from our fellowship, they could stop charging GA members for literature.

Unfortunately, they have to use the literature income to pay the bills and make up for the shortfall of the members and groups that do not donate to ISO. As Trustees, I feel we need to stress to every GA member that if they use one piece of GA literature and find it useful, they need to do their part to support ISO.

I have heard some members remark on the large balance carried by ISO each month, but a big reason for that is to make up for any months where donations are light and still maintain a modest reserve. They have legal contracts and formal financial commitments they must meet each month, they cannot reduce their reserve to near zero and rely on monthly group donations and literature sales to meet those obligations. If you want more detail on the handling of money at ISO, contact a member of the Board of Regents.

Another GA group that should be self-supporting is an international conference, held twice a year by a host committee and made up of GA members in the area where the conference is held. If you really want to see "faith in action", join one of these committees. These conferences are reliant on registrations to be self-supporting and most GA members procrastinate until the last minute to get in their registrations. We could reduce the stress on these committees if we could get people to sign-up earlier. There has also been a lot of discussion on Gam-Anon participation at these conferences and how the finances should be handled.

Although GA should not be affiliated with any outside group, there is a special relationship of cooperation with Gam-Anon that cannot be minimized or eliminated. Our families have been affected by our gambling and we want them to recover and heal as much as we care about our own recovery. But that does not mean that GA should provide financial support to Gam-Anon, they should be self-supporting as well. Whether a conference or a combined meeting with Gam-Anon participation, Gam-Anon should be self-supporting and they should get a proportional share of the expenses and any profit on the event. There was an agenda item at the Boston Board of Trustees meeting to bring this split of profits more in line with the level of Gam-Anon participation and reduce the controversy around the subject; hopefully it will pass the second vote in San Diego.

What are your experiences with self-support, good and bad, or what would you like to see changed?

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, CT and Western MA

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7/26/12 - 11:20 PM

Paul, I always find your unity step observations interesting.

As a brief response to your questions in the second paragraph along with personal points of view that come to mind...Splitting this step into three parts, It has seemed to me that 1 Every gamblers anonymous group, refers to groups as defined in the Guidance code rather than committees etc. which may comprise members giving service rather than holding a meeting. 2 Ought to be fully self supporting, again it seems to me that Ought to be is carefully written rather than must be, perhaps lest groups be under more pressure to attain the ideal before they are able, and Fully self supporting, fully means Fully. 3 Declining outside contributions would seem to me not just to refer to financial help, rather that each group ought to provide for itself everything it requires to exist as a group, without outside contributions of any sort, outside referring to non members. Again, the use of the word ought is something I remember throughout but on that last point it would seem non negotiable.

It never ceases to amaze me of the new and varying viewpoints on any step, unity or recovery, when I attend a step meeting, so its only fair to say my experience is limited and most of what I believe is what I have heard in the rooms.

I'm very much looking forward to your next Unity step submission.

Odie. B. Trustee, Area 36, Republic of Ireland-South-East

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## **The Orlando Quick Response Question**

7/1/12 - 12:01 AM

Hello To All Trustees,

Thank You for participating in the quick response meeting called by the Chair. And approving the date change for the October 2013 Conference.

We have a very good relationship with this facility and with your approval our relationship has gone from good to GREAT! So they also Thank You.

The NEW Registration Form is now ready on the Trustee Website, and the link to the hotel will be up shortly. The only change is the dates.. So please discard the old ones. And we will have plenty of new forms at San Diego.

Enjoy your summer and be safe.

Looking foward to seeing everyone in San Diego.

Peace and Serenity

Richie S. - Area 6 Trustee, South Florida

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## **Thank You BOT**

7/1/12 - 12:01 AM

As my term of Trustee comes to an end, it gives me time to reflect what a great experience it has been for the past four years and to say thank you to the BOT, and all of my fellow brothers and sisters. I never knew what was in store for me, but I am so grateful because it has strengthened my program and gave me a whole different perspective of GA as a whole.

Whether it was learning how the process works for new literature to be approved and seeing new literature come out of that process, to standing up in front of a microphone in a room full of people to represent my area, or hearing brothers and sisters from around the world represent their areas, to seeing new areas be formed and allocated trustees, to hosting an International Conference. All of these make me feel a part of, and that is a priceless gift. It humbles me to know that we work together to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers. It doesn't seem to matter if we have 1 day or 50 years, the message is the same. Thank you for sharing that message with me, so I can share the message with someone else.

I am also one of those who believes in rotation, and it was time for me to step down, and give someone else that same opportunity that was given to me. I learned a great deal from serving on the BOT, and I will continue to be a part of it as a past trustee. I've found that not only do I enjoy being a part of the process, but I also enjoy staying connected with friends that I have made from all over the world. I thank my Higher Power that I was afforded this opportunity as it has been a truly rewarding experience for me during the past 4 years.

My life today has taken new directions, and each day I feel grateful that I am a member of GA. Sometimes, I stop and think that I could have missed all of this, had I not had the courage to come to my first meeting.

Thank you for giving me my life back one day at a time.....

Best always,

Steve F. - Past Trustee, Area 1, Los Angeles

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## **Thanks For The Memories**

7/3/12 - 4:14 PM

I have loved serving the members of Area 8, which included all meetings north of Springfield and all of Northern Indiana. What we see on our meeting list is

just a portion of the meetings in Area 8. We cover 74 meetings. I love meeting everyone and carrying our message to the meetings who struggle and just visiting all the different meetings. I want to thank all the members in Area 8 and especially the Chicagoland Intergroup for allowing me to serve for 6 years. Pass the torch as we say and may the new trustees, Larry J. and Rich S. continue to carry the message, and may Fred and Debbie give guidance to the new trustees. Thank you also for contributing to the ISO walkathons. In total over 12 conferences I raised over \$30,000 for the ISO through all of your generous donations. My check is in the mail to Debbie in Support of her effort to raise money for the ISO.

Kathy H. - Area 8, Chicago

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<b>Internet Access To The Rooms</b>
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7/9/12 - 9:42 AM

It has recently come to my attention that a long standing member, who is out of the country for an a few months, I believe, has been Skyping himself into a meeting room here in the Chicago area. The member who brought it to my attention, felt uncomfortable and left the meeting without saying anything. My questions are, first, is it allowed and secondly, have other Areas encountered this and how did they address it, if it is not allowed? The meeting in question is an open meeting. Does that make a difference?

Any help on this would be great. The website is wonderful.

Debbie M. - Area 8, Chicago

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7/10/12 - 12:19 PM

I think the room has to approve this type of meeting each time. Of course if the majority says yes, then it is okay, and the uncomfortable member can make up their own choice stay or leave. The room needs to talk about it at the beginning of the meeting because different people are in attendance each week.

Kathy H. - Past trustee, Area 8 - Chicago

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7/14/12 - 12:52 AM

I know I am in the right Fellowship, because I was convinced that this topic would have brought with it a huge number of responses from both sides. I guess my handicapping still isn't good. So allow me to throw a few flies into the ointment.

Saying that I am thrilled that Debbie brought up this topic is a heavy understatement. For too long our members have been doing what they want in this area, without any guidance from the Fellowship, which includes the local areas, in addition to the Board of Trustees. As technology races ahead of mankind, it is GA that consistently lags behind. It's time, everyone, time to update our Guidance Code to deal with the Internet and electronic media. I hope to have something ready for the San Diego agenda to finally deal with this subject.

Going direct to Debbie's posting, this situation is over the top inappropriate and must be stopped immediately, even if the room approves of it. Although it is nice to have a member connected to a meeting via the Internet, we cannot have anonymity breached at any time. Anonymity breached? Why would that even be a subject? No doubt this was an effort mounted with the best of intentions. What's wrong with this? Recording of any kind is just not allowed, especially via the Internet.

There is a laptop involved in the meeting Debbie referenced, which could be recording the session for distribution to anywhere. What if someone mentions a crime that he/she can still be prosecuted for? What if someone uses full names? The list is lengthy, which is why in NJ, we read opening announcements that include a very specific statement - no cameras, tape recorders or recording devices or any kind can be used at any time.

Although the people involved with this posting may feel that both people can

be trusted not to distribute any such 'potential' recordings, the fact of the matter is that we cannot be certain of that with anyone. I applaud the member who got up and left in protest, but wish it had been stopped completely. The fact that this was an open meeting makes no difference at all. What's next - full facial videos with our email addresses and phone numbers, in case someone wants to contact us?

It is commendable that the member out of the country wants to stay connected, but this is not the way to do it. Unfortunately, if there are no meetings in the countries he is in, he may have to just 'white knuckle' it, or rent a cell phone with global coverage to call back to the US for support when it's needed.

Continuing with the topic thread, I am completely opposed to what Kathy posted about the room being able to approve this situation beforehand. The answer of the uncomfortable person having the option to leave is not the solution. We had the same thing in Tampa when someone videotaped a workshop. Someone said in the beginning that it was taking place and if any one was uncomfortable, they should leave. HELLO ?? .... Why does anyone have to leave? If we do the right thing, nobody has to leave. It is only when people follow the thinking of 'Who is it really hurting?' do we run over the line of appropriateness.

This entire subject is an outright violation of Unity Step 4 and 11, especially now with the recent official addition of the Internet to Step 11. It's time that those who persist in trying to figure out a way around provisions of the Guidance Code, think a bit more about how such actions connect the dots from those specific situations to matters that affect Gamblers Anonymous as a whole.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

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7/17/12 - 10:31 PM

Debbie, I have not directly come across the situation you describe but if it is any help I submit what I believe would be my answers to your questions if I had.

It would seem clear to me that any room using the name Gamblers Anonymous should follow the Guidance code as that is what a G.A. Group ought to do. I believe that position was unequivocally clarified by a substantial majority at the most recent conference.

It seems equally clear, as stated in a previous post by David, that there is a clear violation of the Guidance code on one or more levels. Therefore it should not happen.

Regarding suggestions / guidance to secretaries I believe the literature recommends that " ....members should be admonished that no therapy be taken out of the room and repeated...'

It would also seem clear that this is being ignored in this instance.

Perhaps the group representative, if there is one, would be able to assist in having the group examine some of these issues.

These are just suggestions in reply to your questions, it's a difficult situation for you to be put in and I wish you the best with it.

Not to speak for anyone else but I would also not hesitate to affirm the viewpoint that it should be stopped immediately as it affects the fellowship as a whole and therefore does not come under the umbrella of each group being self governing etc.

I would also applaud the member who left, as much for the fact that they subsequently dealt with it in the spirit of the fellowship by bringing it to the attention of a trustee, perhaps the laptop scenario meant they could not approach the trusted servants in this case, they will hopefully not be put off attending meetings.

Personally, if I go on holidays I miss my meetings, that should not affect anyone else's right to attend in good faith.

Again, I wish you the best and salute your courage in bringing it up.

Odie B. - Trustee, Area 36, Republic of Ireland, South-east.

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<b>Step 3 Wording</b>
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7/13/12 - 11:48 AM

Sorry to rehash topic from May 2012, we think.

If the wording of step three is changed to "...desire not to gamble" will this mean automatic or otherwise right to membership for any concerned person, relative or friend of a compulsive gambler, if that person has a desire not to gamble because of what happened to someone else?

Will someone who never gambled in their life and heretofore could not answer yes to the requirement of having a desire to stop gambling now have membership opened up to them?

Would my wife then be entitled to become a member of Gamblers Anonymous if she had a desire not to gamble because she saw where it led me?

Would some members be forced to start a new Fellowship called Gamblers who used to gamble anonymous?

Hello from area 36, I have been asked to mention that, unfortunately to date, we have more questions than answers but we have been enjoying the trusteline for several years now, great forum for expression and sharing information, should get more support, we think.

Better the devil you know is the overwhelming consensus from participating groups in area 36 on this issue, but never say never.

Odie B. Area 36 - South Eastern Section of the Republic of Ireland

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7/15/12 - 3:13 PM

Thanks for bringing this up Odie, this is also a concern of mine for many of the same reasons you stated.

The concern I've heard from other members when I brought this up was that not only would the proposed change in wording allow anyone with a "desire not to gamble" potential membership in the fellowship but also would destroy the purpose of closed meetings if this were to be submitted and passed.

For me personally, everyday I wake up with a desire to stop gambling. How long it has been since that last bet doesn't matter. I'm in recovery, not recovered.

Kent C. - Area 7C, Oklahoma

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7/15/12 - 5:07 PM

Whoa everyone...

I don't mind opposing view points, but do we really think changing the definition is going to open the flood gates with people who don't generally come to GA meetings? Maybe we need to get a bit more granular about what really happens at a GA meeting.

New people who come to GA meetings have to answer the 20 questions. In my home room, we then give the person the ability to give therapy. After which, the attending membership is allowed to give up to 5 comments (3 for regular members), all meant to help the new person feel more comfortable after making the admission that he/she is a compulsive gambler. Should no such admission take place, the regular members are alerted to the fact that maybe this new person really has not commitment to no longer gamble.

The fact is, that new people have been coming into the rooms for 55 years, most likely without the knowledge of what is required for membership. People who attend do not have to admit to being a compulsive gambler. GA members are very sharp when it comes to outsiders coming into the rooms under false pretenses. Aside from the fact that those new members are not motivated to follow the program and will also most likely not attend a 2nd meeting.

Changing the step is not about throwing out the welcome sign to everyone who has just thought about gambling. I know my home room brothers and sisters would easily be able impress upon these intruders that maybe they need to attend an open meeting. I also have faith in the rest of my brothers and sisters through the world that they would act equally as responsible.

The real issue is that anyone who is gambling and wants to stop, probably has that desire to stop. Great, so they can attend a GA meeting. Does that mean they are in for life? What about those who are in the program and haven't gambled? Take me, for example. September will mark 24 years of abstinence for me. I have never had a relapse, but I have a strong desire not to gamble. I have absolutely no desire to stop gambling, because I am not gambling - period.

If the steps are so relevant for all of use in every day of our lives, why not make them all relevant to us every day. Changing a desire to stop gambling to a desire not to gamble makes it personal. With the change, now it's not just about the day I came to my first meeting 23+ years ago. Now its something that resonates in my soul every day I open my eyes, because I have a desire not to gamble. Having a current desire every day not to gamble is about a work in progress, called recovery.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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7/17/12 - 1:55 PM

Hmm?

It seems that the wording of Unity Step 3 is becoming quite an issue. I read with great interest the reasoning David M. articulately used for changing the wording. It gave me a lot to consider.

I also read with equal interest the posting by Odie. He brought up some interesting thoughts on this change. I have to say, although I think some of Odie's scenarios are dramatic, there is some merit to some of his questions.

So I guess I fall into the category of "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". We, as compulsive gamblers, are a very astute group of people. As we have seen at the BOT meetings, we can nitpick things until there is nothing left. I'm not saying that this is nitpicking, I just don't see a great need for a change in a step that has been around for many years, and I have never heard a member question the meaning, other than when addressing the new member (of which I will write about in a different post).

David and Odie bring up great points, but in the end, we have to ask is this really something we need, and will it help the fellowship as a whole. My opinion is no.

Thanks for the forum to express my ideas. And, it is great to hear from one of our overseas brothers chime in.

Your Brother in Recovery,

Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

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7/17/12 - 11:09 PM

Kent, the issue of the affect on the purpose of the closed meeting had not come into our thinking, thank you for highlighting that vitally important aspect.

Levi, interesting points, the second question from our members may seem one of the most dramatic but it is one we faced wherein the Unity program and the IRC were asked serious questions by us and both came up with outstanding credit, for which we are extremely grateful. We believe the purpose of this is to examine whether an item is likely to get support and thereby save a lot of time

for the BOT meetings, kinda the opposite of nitpicking, but I get your point and I can, sadly, nitpick with the best. The questions were, as you say, with merit, in fact they were the questions of the members of our area and therefore are deserving of a merit score of 100%, I know you agree.

David, I would like to thank you for taking the trouble of testing this item for support before putting it on the agenda, not everyone does that it seems, it does seem like a great idea to so test an item, particularly with items of as serious a nature as changing any of the steps, recovery or unity, so thank you again.

Odie. B. - Trustee, Area 36, Republic of Ireland, South-East

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7/18/12 - 2:48 PM

Reading the Trustee Line postings regarding Unity Step 3, I do like David M's post and I believe if we just add the word, AGAIN, it would answer all the question. Unity Step 3 would read: The only requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire not to gamble again.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

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7/18/12 - 5:45 PM

Good afternoon to all my GA Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to tell a story that relates to Unity step 3. While the story does not directly address the current discussions regarding the wording of Unity Step 3, I believe the story illustrates just how important these steps can be. It does actually fold into one of the questions Odie and Kent both commented on: Closed meetings. This happened around 10 years ago, and this person is no longer attending meetings in our area, but I think the story of how this person saw GA is quite pertinent to this discussion. I will call this person "he" for the purpose of this discussion.

He came to our meeting, and in our area at the time, all meetings were closed. He was "vetted", for lack of a better term, by a member prior to the start of the meeting. The question asked was "do you have a desire to stop gambling?", as that is the only criteria for membership as per Unity step 3. He said yes, and was welcomed in to the meeting. It is the format of our meeting that the newcomer hears the twenty questions read aloud near the end of the meeting, after others have shared, in order for the newcomer to perhaps feel more comfortable with being honest. So, the questions were read, and the vast majority of the answers were no. However, when he shared, he shared a very emotional story. His very good friend, which happened to be a she, had gambled for many years. They would often go to the casino together, and she (the friend) would gamble the entire time (he never used the word compulsively), while he played a machine here and there, but mostly just watched or visited with people he knew, or had a meal, whatever. Gambling was not his primary reason for being there. Then one night the friend lost all her money, including her rent and insurance money. Apparently, it wasn't the first time. She was distraught and went into a deep depression. He watched his friend slip into this depression and tried to help. Alas, one morning he went to her house to find her dead from a self-inflicted bullet wound to the head. There was a note indicating that she could not stop gambling and she needed to end the pain. Of course, he was devastated, and vowed he never wanted to be in her situation. He came from a family with addictive tendencies, and he himself had battled alcohol years earlier. He decided to come to GA, because of his prior experience with AA, he felt it was the only way he could keep from becoming addicted to gambling. A member and close friend of mine was incensed. He felt this person was being deceitful and did not belong at our meeting, and wasn't a compulsive gambler. I made the argument that nowhere in our literature does it say that only compulsive gamblers can be members. My understanding was that if the person met the criteria for our Unity Step 3 "The ONLY requirement for Gamblers Anonymous membership is a desire to stop gambling", then they had every right to be there, closed meeting or not. He certainly met that requirement, so who were we to say he didn't belong. He continued to come to meetings for many years and never gambled during that time. He gave service to the group in many ways and always participated in therapy and our various social events. He made many close friends in the



fellowship. He has not attended meetings for a few years now, and I believe he moved to another part of the country. So, my question would be, suppose after hearing him answer no to almost all the questions, and after hearing his story, the group decided he did not belong. What next? Do we tell him not to come back? If this person does not admit to being a compulsive gambler, the wording in David's post was "the regular members are alerted to the fact that maybe this new person really has not committed to no longer gamble". Where does this leave us? Do we not give the person help, not pass along what has been so freely given to us, just because we don't believe they belong there? Seems like judgment to me, and I don't know about you, but I believe judging another member is one of worst things we can do. I have great respect for David, and I'm not implying he would sit in judgment for another member. Neither am I trying to put words into David's mouth, I'm just wondering where this could all lead. What if, because of our rejection, the subject of this story did become a compulsive gambler? Do we really think he would come back for help to a group of people who told him no the first time? I know each of us is responsible for our own decisions, but I feel this is a valid question.

I think it is a very important issue for closed meetings and how we define them. I believe I have made my position clear, and I would appreciate some feedback, whether or you agree with me or not.

As always, thank you for the forum to express my thoughts.

Your Brother in Recovery,  
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

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7/20/12 - 2:06 PM

My belief is that Unity Step Three is built upon the principles of freedom and choice. The Key principle of Unity Step Three is the freedom to meet this requirement "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling." I stand for Unity Step Three as written and that it not be changed for the following reasons.

The idea of a requirement for membership being a desire "not to gamble" whether that is presented as "again" or "today" is to make most new members liars. This idea would a promise to do something that could be interpreted as willpower. This idea in my opinion would affect Gamblers Anonymous as a whole and therefore every Gamblers Anonymous Group should have a voice or vote to agree or disagree with this proposed change. That would be the right way to address this proposed change to Unity Step Three.

Many new members come to Gamblers Anonymous with great pain, misery, and suffering. Many new members are battered, fearful, confused, and have unmanageable debts. Many don't know which way is up or how to get up! They need help! They need acceptance! They need no barriers to membership.

We all know members who attended meetings for weeks, months, and years before they stopped gambling by finally finding the desire necessary to stop gambling. We did not expel them from meetings because they still gambled. No fellow member shouted "remove yourself from this meeting you sick compulsive gambler." We encouraged that confused member who was having difficulty finding the desire to stop gambling to keep coming to meetings, and to not give up the battle for recovery. Last but not least who among us (Trustee or individual member) has the right to sit in judgment of a fellow member's desire to stop gambling? This is an illness we are dealing with, not a bad habit.

In truth, many new members come to our program with zero desire to stop gambling. They are sick and we understand their sickness. We don't give up on them! We encourage them to keep coming to meetings—they are not intruders! We are all part of a Spiritual Fellowship based on democratic and spiritual principles. As individual members we have no rulers or superiors, but we may elect members (trustees) to represent us and our rights within the Fellowship. No one is more important than the individual member. Those principles can be found in the Guidance Code of Gamblers Anonymous.

Who among us would not have run out the door of our first meeting if we were told that membership required us to desire "not to gamble" or "not to gamble again!" We are talking about people buried in the quicksand of

compulsive gambling and really very sick people as stated in our GA literature.

I believe that "not to gamble" or "not to gamble again" or "not to gamble today" are worthy principles built on a "desire to stop gambling." We have to desire to stop gambling first before we reach any other goal. It just takes some members longer to grow that desire and the only way to do that is to work the Twelve Steps of Recovery on a daily basis to the best of one's abilities.

Yours in recovery,  
George W. - Area 16, Upstate NY  
Past Trustee, Area 12

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<b>Funding US Trustees For Conferences</b>
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7/18/12 - 10:20 PM

Good morning fellow Trustees and Former Trustees:

I have been asked to inquire how other groups provide funds for their Trustees to travel to conferences. As new Trustees, the 2 new Oklahoma trustees are seeking suggestions as how to request financial assistance in order to travel to and participate in the upcoming conferences. What does your area do to help fund local area trustee travel? Any help, advice, or suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Thank you. We all look forward to your replies and responses.

With love, faith, hope and trust in our Fellowship,  
Linda S. - Area 7C, Oklahoma  
Former Trustee, Area 3A, San Diego

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7/22/12 - 3:45 PM

Hi Linda,

In Area I, we do a number of fundraisers for our Intergroup to help send our Trustees to the conferences. We hold an annual Bowlathon, and ask for pledges, we also have Walkathons, and just last night, we had a Karaoke Night, which is more of a social event, but it's a great way to bring people together for fellowship and try and raise money for our Intergroup.

I hope this helps and look forward to seeing you in San Diego.

Very grateful to be a compulsive gambler today!

Steve F. - Past Trustee, Area I, Los Angeles

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