

To: CT AFG INC
Board of Directors
Area World Service Committee

From: Ellie L, Chair

Date: May 9, 2014

Re: Thought Force: ***Study the Literature/Office/Storage Needs of the Fellowship, Providing Strategies to Meet These Needs***

Background

- November 2006 - The Area Assembly approved, on a three-year trial basis, the establishment of a Literature/Office/Storage space with oversight to be managed by the Board of Directors of Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc.
- June 2007 – The BOD interviewed several candidates and appointed a volunteer Manager and Assistant Manager to serve for an indefinite period of time.
- June 2007 - the Literature Distribution Center/Office/Storage space opened at 477 Main Street in Hartford. South Congregational Church rented 2,400 sq. ft. to AFG, Inc. for \$500 per month.
- January – June 2007 - The area provided \$18,884.05 start up funds including \$6,000 initial literature purchase from WSO.
- November 2009 – The three-year trial period expired. The area assembly voted to “extend for the foreseeable future unless and until conditions suggest closing”.
- 2012 – Per the BOD’s understanding of a previous BOD motion in September 2010, it was determined by the BOD that the Manager and Assistant Manager positions rotate after six years.
- June 2013 - The Manager’s position expired. The Assistant Manager resigned.
- July 2013 – The LDC was closed pending the appointment of new staff.
- August 2013 – The LDC reopened with newly appointed Manager and Assistant
- October 2013, - The BOD asked that a Thought Force be formed to look at the future of the LDC/Office/Storage space. Some of the concerns are:
 - Although the LDC has shown a slight profit of 3%-9% (except 2013 when the office was temporarily closed), this may not continue
 - In 2012 rent was increased to \$600/month and is likely to increase in the future
 - The church may wish to use the space for other purposes (although they have not indicated this)
 - Increased postage rates
 - Increased WSO literature costs
 - Future Impact of e-books on hard cover sales
 - Staff mileage reimbursement increases
- November 2013 - The BOD Chair asked the current Delegate to form a Thought Force and this was announced to the fellowship in the BOD Chair’s report to the Assembly
- December 2013 - The Thought Force chair appointment was confirmed by the AWSC,

- in consultation with a variety of AFG members with current knowledge of the Knowledge Based Decision Making (KBDM) and Thought Force processes, the charge was determined: ***Study the Literature/Office/Storage Needs of the Fellowship, Providing Strategies to Meet These Needs.***
- The chair contacted members who have wide experience in AI-Anon service and/or financial expertise. Members are: Ellie L.chair; Mary Ann R., John M., Gail L., Pat S., Terry C., and Rita C.
- January – March 2014 – The Thought Force members worked through the Knowledge-Based Decision Making (KBDM) questions, responding by email. The chair prepared a summary of the responses.
- March 23, 2014 – The Thought Force finalized six possible strategies.

The following is a brief synopsis of our KBDM responses. (Full background documents are available)

KBDM Question #1 “*What do we know about our members’ or prospective members’ needs that is relevant to this discussion?*”

- We obtained the results of a BOD Survey conducted in November and December 2013.
 - Members need to have literature readily available for as reasonable cost and as convenient as possible
 - Reported perceptions of members’ need for a centralized office were not clear (20%-60%, depending on phrasing of question)
 - Centralized storage of equipment and archives was deemed highly desirable (up to 79% of responders to BOD survey).
- A three year report of LDC sales by group was provided.
 - Sales records show an increase of 30 more groups ordering from the LDC in 2013 over 2011.
 - 87% of the registered groups in CT ordered from the LDC in 2013.

KBDM Question #2 “*What do we know about the resources and our vision for the organization that is relevant to this discussion?*”

- CT LDC is a resource with ample quality products to sell, a reliable supplier and an efficient system in place
- As a resource, literature keeps us focused on the spiritual principles of the program
- Our most valuable resources are the AI-Anon/Alateen members with the attitude of abundant thinking
- When members are well-informed and invited to participate, members continue to support AFG financially, spiritually and as volunteers
- It is feasible to expand the functional resources provided by the office if members so desire.

KBDM Question #3 ***“What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship that are relevant to this discussion? What are the pros and cons?”***

- On-line ordering and payment is efficient and desired by many members
- Group literature purchases have declined due, in part, to changes in the job market, less available money for donations and significant rent increases
- Electronic literature (e-books) may impact LDC sales in the future but there is no impact at present
- Rent at the current location will increase at some point in the future
- Smaller space with or without walk-in sales is a viable option
- Informal surveys of other areas in the US and Canada by 4 members indicate that LDC's that are financially viable do not rely on sales alone but rely heavily on fundraisers and/or donations. (Northern and Southern California were excluded because there are so many LDC's and their clientele is so much larger than other areas)
 - 51% of LDC's surveyed rely on fundraisers
 - 49% rely on donations from individuals, groups, districts and/or the area
 - 27% rely on both fundraisers and donations
 - 8% have closed their LDC's due to lack of funds (none had fundraisers or sought donations)
 - 13% did not reply to these two questions
- Massachusetts LDC already services 475 groups and is reluctant to add CT groups to their workload.

KBDM QUESTION #4 ***“What don't we know but we wish we did?”***

- We do not know what terms the church will offer for 2015.
- We do not know whether a less expensive location can be found that meets the needs of the fellowship
- If we discontinue a central office, what address will be used for incorporation with the State of CT?
- Will members continue to support purchase of hard-copy CAL as e-book usage expands?
- What is the break-even point of sales volume/donations/fundraisers needed to make the LDC self-supporting using volunteers?
- What is the break-even point of sales volume/donations/fundraisers needed to make the LDC financially viable to support paying the LDC manager a fair and reasonable compensation?
- Are members willing to support fundraisers and or donations to the LDC in order to maintain financial viability?

KBDM Question #5 **“Will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles?”**
(e.g. the Traditions)

We believe the following Strategies are consistent with the Traditions. However, as the discussion continues we need to keep this question uppermost in our minds.

Six Strategies to Meet the Literature/Office/Storage Needs of the Fellowship

1. Formulate a Task Force to seek possible alternate locations for a CT Literature Distribution Center/Office/Storage Area.
2. Make no changes to current operations of the LDC/Office.
3. Operate a mail-order only LDC, with no onsite sales and providing no other office functions.
4. Form a Task Force to discontinue literature distribution in Connecticut.
5. Form a Task Force to plan an annual fundraiser to financially support the LDC/office.
6. Ask the Area to annually budget financial support for the LDC/office.

Moving Forward

1. Which strategies presented do you believe to be appropriate?
2. How do you wish to proceed following this presentation?

Thank you to the Thought Force members, Mary Ann, Rita, John, Gail, Terry, and Pat for their patience with the process and their serious consideration of all issues presented. I also am very grateful to all long-time service people who have offered helpful input. In gratitude for the opportunity to serve...

Ellie L.
Chair