

April 2021

Corporate Board Report: AA Grapevine, Inc.
Kathi Fowler, Chairperson

AA Grapevine, Inc. is one of two affiliate corporations of the General Service Board and the multimedia publisher of Grapevine magazine content, available on various platforms and in a variety of formats. AA Grapevine, Inc. also publishes Spanish-language content in La Viña magazine and its related books, e-books, CD and audio formats.

By charter, the AA Grapevine Board consists of seven to 10 directors. Currently there are nine directors: two general service trustees; two regional trustees; three non-trustee directors; one Class A trustee; and the AA Grapevine publisher.

The purpose of the Grapevine Corporate Board is to serve the A.A. Fellowship in the following ways:

- To oversee the publishing operations of AA Grapevine, Inc.
- To provide sound financial management of the corporation.
- To establish corporate policies and set corporate priorities.
- To engage in the ongoing process of strategic planning.
- To operate in accordance with the principles of A.A. as expressed in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.

The board strives to engage the Fellowship, to ensure members' awareness of the international journals of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grapevine and La Viña, as tools to help carry the message.

The AA Grapevine Board met on a virtual platform eight times since the last Conference. The Board has three standing committees. The Nominating and Governance Committee, chaired by Ginger Rhoades-Bell, is responsible for facilitating all facets in the selection of candidates for board openings and selecting general service trustees. General service trustee and nontrustee director candidates were sought and interviewed. A nominee for general service trustee and a nontrustee director were selected and forwarded to the General Service Board trustees' Nominating Committee. The Grapevine Nominating Committee also focused on updates to the AA Grapevine Bylaws. The Finance and Budget Committee, chaired by Josh Eggleston, provided oversight for the budget process and for presenting the board with financial statements throughout the year. The Strategic Planning ad hoc committee, chaired by Nancy McCarthy, was responsible for driving the development and providing oversight to the implementation of the AA Grapevine strategic plan. This year the Strategic Planning Committee included several staff members as well as board members.

Grapevine's Editorial Advisory Board, consisting of members with expertise in media, met five times in 2020-2021, using virtual technology, and the La Viña Editorial Advisory Board

met three times by virtual technology during the same period.

Since the last Conference, AA Grapevine, Inc. has produced 12 issues of Grapevine, six issues of La Viña, an annual wall calendar and pocket planner, and three new books: *Free on the Inside*, *Mujeres en AA*, and *Prayer & Meditation* (to be released this fall). We also reintroduced the set *Best of the Grapevine, Volumes 1, 2 and 3*.

In 2020 new websites for AAGV and AALV were launched and the La Viña Story Archive Project was completed, the first digital archive of original stories of recovery written by members of the Hispanic A.A. community and published in La Viña magazine. Additionally, a new La Viña store was added to the website, usable in English and Spanish.

Grapevine's average monthly print circulation was 63,397 in fiscal year 2020 (this is less than budget by 4,406 and less than 2019 by 2,979). Grapevine Online (GVO) averaged 3,558 subscribers in 2020 and 1,617 ePub subscribers. The average bimonthly circulation of La Viña was 6,435 (this is 3,665 less than budget and 3,715 less than 2019 levels). This major decline in La Viña subscriptions is attributed to not having in-person events, where most subscriptions are purchased.

Complete and audited financial details for 2020 are included in the Conference Manual and Conference *Final Report*. Here is an overview:

- Grapevine ended 2020 with a net loss of \$373,963 against budgeted net gain of \$4,612.
- Total income was \$1,358,481 compared to a budget of \$2,029,498 due to lower than budgeted circulation, a 60% drop in book sales and the cancellation of the International Convention.
- Total expenses of \$1,732,443 were \$292,442 below budget and \$274,027 below 2019.

La Viña is published by AA Grapevine, Inc., with the shortfall between revenue and expenses made up by the General Service Board as a service to the Fellowship. Gross profit for the magazine for 2020 was \$34,256 with expenses at \$426,881. The net difference between revenue and expenses for 2020 was \$392,625.

AA Grapevine maintains a balance in the Reserve Fund to fund its unfulfilled subscription liability. The subscription liability fund is maintained so that, in the event the magazine discontinued publication, subscribers could be repaid for those portions of their subscriptions left unfulfilled. At the end of 2020, the subscription liability fund was over 87% funded. Most magazine companies do not maintain a subscription liability fund or at least one that is much lower. We do this out of prudence and service to the members.

The aagrapevine.org and aalavina.org websites were redesigned and premiered in 2020 to better serve the Fellowship and to engage a wider and more diverse audience.

The 2020 Carry the Message outreach effort encouraged the Fellowship, through groups, districts, areas, and individuals to support those in need of a Twelfth Step call like our inside members, by purchasing subscriptions, with a combined Grapevine and La Viña subscription count of 4,808 in 2020.

This past year brought many challenges because of the worldwide pandemic. Since March all the staff worked from home; some of our vendors were purchased or went bankrupt and we needed to renegotiate new contracts; our publisher, Albin Zezula, has been on medical leave since September 2020; the International Convention was cancelled, which would have produced large sales; the board had to meet virtually and groups not meeting in person caused sales to be lower. This new world also brought opportunities: the ability to attend virtual events around the world; the AAGV board being able to meet more often virtually and do more work; tons of media stories about A.A. and how we were dealing with the pandemic; and lower expenses.

From March 23, 2020 through June 30, 2020, AAGV and AALV offered free online access to the magazines to help people get through the beginning of the shutdown. There were over 270,000 page views during that time.

In 2020 we introduced the ePub for both AAGV and AALV. Using the ePub you can read the magazine on your device and all the stories are in audio as well. This is available in not only yearly subscriptions, but also monthly with automatic renewal options.

During and after the 69th General Service Conference several requests were made for Conference agenda items. One of these was that *Language of the Heart* be produced in a Spanish audio version. That was completed and is available on La Viña store pages on the website. We also produced this in a French audio version in 2020. Another request was to reprint the *Best of Grapevine* Volumes 1, 2 & 3. These were available as a set in 2020 and 1,616 copies of the set were sold at \$23 each.

2021 is the 25th anniversary of La Viña. We're getting ready for numerous celebrations throughout the Fellowship as well as a special edition of the La Viña magazine.

The Grapevine Daily Quote commemorative book, available in English, Spanish and French, was completed for the International Convention and has been available since then.

YouTube continues to increase subscribers and views. We went from 1.3K subscribers in 2019 to over 6,000 in 2020. Your stories in your voices are on our YouTube Channel. We have now begun accepting more audio stories.

Through sales on more than 30 platforms, those seeking books from A.A. in all formats have purchased over \$45,000 in AAGV and AALV literature through February. This was only started in October and is increasing every month.

This year we introduced new subscription packages: Print magazine, ePub or Grapevine/

La Viña Complete (includes print, online and archives). These are available monthly or in one-, two- and three-year subscriptions.

We have put contracts into place for tablet companies working with prisons so that local committees can get A.A. material onto these tablets for the inside members.

The AA Grapevine Board and management team are committed to self-support and to AA Grapevine, Inc.'s continued financial vitality. The board's focus on financial health as demonstrated throughout 2020 will continue in 2021. To this end the board will:

- Expand Outreach*** To expand paths of communication, dialogue, and outreach to the fellowship about Grapevine and La Viña.
- Self Supporting*** To explore and expand all possible revenue streams.
- Expand Digital Presence*** To expand the AAGV digital presence to serve the fellowship and professional community.
- Simplify Pricing and Delivery*** To update multi-media pricing and delivery platforms to ensure that Grapevine and La Viña are easy to find, subscribe and use.
- Content Driven*** To update Grapevine and La Viña editorial and other content to generate more interest in participation, subscriptions, and product awareness.

Coming in 2021-2022: SMS texting beginning with Spanish-speaking members and then expanding to English-speaking members. Also coming is an Instagram Account, Podcasts, and *Prayer & Meditation* book.

Our continued focus in 2021 is Carry the Message outreach. You can find out how to be of service on aagrapevine.org and aalavina.org. Just look for the Carry the Message tab!

As a mirror of the membership, Grapevine both reflects and belongs to the Fellowship. For 76 years Grapevine has conveyed the "Voices of A.A." as a tool for many in recovery, evolving over time and reliably carrying the message to anyone who reaches out for the hand of A.A. With the ongoing support of the Fellowship, it will continue to do so well into the future.

