

1st International ABA Conference
August 28 – 31, 2008
Final Report to GSA Board
September 10, 2008

The Conference achieved its goal of building unity in Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous through an international sharing of our experience, strength and hope. From reports of those attending it was a resounding success. This report is compiled with input from most of the organizing committee.

There were approximately 65 registrants for the full weekend, and about one-third of those traveled to attend the Conference. They came from places as distant as Iceland, New Zealand, Luxembourg and various places in Canada and the United States. An additional six attended on Saturday, Family Day. Meal support was provided for between 25 and 30 newly-sober members.

A final accounting of the budget is not yet available. We estimate that revenue is very close to our expenses. The committee was successful at significantly reducing costs. Several generous donations allowed 6 people to be subsidized for one half of the registration fee.

The weekend was service work in action. Although many volunteer needs were filled with Edmontonians before the Conference began, openings were purposely left. These were filled easily once people began to arrive. Often, someone would arrive from the airport and immediately accept a request for help. Everyone volunteered in some way or other, from the registration desk, to setting out snacks to chairing meetings, and that kept the weekend going.

The Providence Centre provided outstanding facilities and meals and the staff were supportive. Most registrants took advantage of the beautiful gardens and the outside labyrinth.

A press release was developed by a subcommittee with the help of a volunteer outside consultant and sent out about one week before the Conference. It attracted a lot of media attention. Articles appeared in the Edmonton Sun and Edmonton Journal and interviews on CTV and CHQR radio in Calgary. Additional coverage would have been possible, but was hindered by lack of time/manpower. There have been newcomers at several Edmonton meetings and one late registrant at the Conference due to the press coverage.

Upon registering, participants received a bag imprinted with the ABA logo and containing a printed program for the weekend, a bookmark commemorating the 15th anniversary of ABA designed by an ABA member and various other goodies and bits of information. The weekend began with a meal on Thursday evening and went until midday on Sunday. The program was strong and the speakers were wonderful. And one session that included a discussion received positive feedback. Eight ABA meetings were held and were an essential part of the weekend.

The Soiree on Friday night was a time of warm fellowship. The first half was a sharing of 'indigenous' talent and the second half of the evening we were treated to professional musician, Maria Dunn. ABA's 15th Anniversary was celebrated on Saturday evening with dinner and an audio/visual presentation.

Audio recordings were made of 10 sessions, with a total of 13 speakers. These will be edited and reproduced for sale as in previous years. This year the sets will come in improved packaging. The Literature and Outreach committee is considering packaging 3 of the sessions in set designed as support for family and friends. Literature and CDs from previous retreats was sold on site.

The concurrent sessions on Saturday aimed at family and friends were very well attended. One of the sessions was an AB-Anon meeting with discussion on how to start a meeting. We hear that as a result of that session, an AB-Anon meeting may start again in Edmonton and connect to Calgary by phone.

Feedback forms were distributed at the end of the weekend. Response was generous, no doubt lured by entry into draw for a set of CDs of the weekend for one fortunate soul.

The committee will make a booking for a retreat next year at Rundle's Mission on Pigeon Lake in late September or early October. This booking is put in place for next year's organizing committee and may be changed if the committee chooses a different venue.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the GSA Board for its support of this Conference.

In service,
Katherine R, co-chair
Kim O, co-chair
Conference Organizing Committee