

## Our Freedom, Our Responsibility

# Conventions and Events

Narcotics Anonymous world conventions provide members with a chance to celebrate recovery with one another in a unique way. A broad range of topics are covered in workshops; main meetings highlight our unity and diversity; and the first-class entertainment at comedy shows, concerts, coffee-houses, dances, and so much more demonstrate the wide range of joys we experience living clean. The convention itself lasts just four short days. The planning process for each world convention spans as many as seven years, but the memories created last a lifetime. In the beginning of this fiscal year, the Thirty-Second World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous took place in San Antonio, Texas. In the words of some members, it was “the best world convention yet... that nobody went to!”



### WCNA 32, San Antonio, Texas

The single largest surprise in this fiscal year was the low attendance at WCNA 32 and the financial loss that came with it. The 2006–2008 NAWS budget projected an income of roughly \$3 million, but actual income was closer to \$1.5 million. Numerous changes were made to the WCNA 32 budget after it was adopted in April 2006. We were able to reduce expenses by approximately \$263,000 as late as June 2007, once we saw what our pre-registration figures were. Unfortunately, there were contracts and agreements already in place that we were not able to cancel at such a late date. Ultimately, WCNA 32 resulted in a loss of \$596,000.

About 9,400 people attended the convention in San Antonio, approximately 8,500 fewer people than past experience indicated, based on the more than 16,000 in attendance at WCNA 29 in Atlanta, Georgia. The total number of registered members at the convention, including 8,434 paid registrations, was about



9,000. The original budget for WCNA 32 was based on almost twice that number at about 18,000 people. While the numbers were much lower than anticipated in 2006, it was also the highest percentage of registered attendees that we have seen at a world convention.

As has been reported in many places, the world convention is operated on a “break-even” financial planning philosophy. The world convention does sometimes generate income, but the NAWS budget is not dependent on it. This break-even philosophy, and the effort to be prepared for those who choose not to pre-register, left us vulnerable to the drastic reduction in the number of attendees and registrants. The opposite happened at WCNA 31 in Hawaii—the approximately 9,000 attendees there were far more than expected. We tried to avoid being unprepared at WCNA 32 by signing with the Alamodome and preparing for a large convention. Little did we know the convention would be more like Hawaii than Atlanta. We can only conjecture about the reason for the low turnout—poor economic conditions in parts of the United States, lack of interest in the convention site, members saving money for Barcelona, and so on.

All of that said, we have received a great deal of very positive feedback about the quality of the convention in San Antonio. Many members who had been to numerous world conventions in the past described WCNA 32 as the best they had ever experienced. Our hope is that we will be able to go forward into future conventions taking the best attributes of WCNA 32 along with the lessons learned. The most important of those lessons

is that it is no longer prudent for NA World Services to attempt to plan a world convention for those who choose not to pre-register or to not register at all. Looking into the future, we will make sure there is space at a world convention for everyone who pre-registers, provide a designated and limited number of onsite registrations, and possibly make main meetings badge-required for attendance.

## WCNA 33, Barcelona, Spain

In preparation for the first convention in Europe since 1995, we will be implementing some of the changes that came as a result of WCNA 32 for WCNA 33 in Barcelona. For starters, pre-registration for this convention began earlier than for any other world convention, opening on 17 October 2008. In an effort to more accurately plan for the actual number of attendees, the number of onsite registrations that will be available at WCNA 33 is limited. Once those registrations sell out, onsite registration will close. In opening pre-registration earlier to allow adequate time for the planning and preparation,



WCNA 33

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our hope is that most members who choose to attend will also choose to pre-register. This will give us a better idea of how many people to expect, allowing us to plan the best event possible for everyone.

Event tickets will also be handled a bit differently for WCNA 33. In past years we sold tickets to events as soon as pre-registration opened. For WCNA 33 we will wait until each particular act is booked before we begin selling tickets to that event. This will allow members to have a better idea of what they're paying for when they purchase event tickets. Additionally, there will be opportunities for pre- and post-convention NA events, such as a European cruise, or events sponsored by local NA communities around Europe.

### Future WCNA locations:

**2009 WCNA 33**  
**Barcelona, Spain**

**2011 WCNA 34**  
**San Diego, California**

**2013 WCNA 35**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**2015 WCNA 36**  
**Central or South America**

We expect the next world convention to be a bit smaller and more intimate than WCNA 32. Fewer members from around the United States will be able to attend, but members from many other parts of the world who wouldn't otherwise have the chance to experience the world convention will have that chance in Barcelona. Start saving now, and we'll see you there!

