

AS1 FINANCIAL AID COMMITTEE REPORT OCTOBER 26, 2013

HISTORY AND AMOUNTS OF FINANCIAL AID AND RECIPIENTS

The AS1 Financial Aid Committee has been successful in two major areas in the past five years. These were in filling beds by helping our conferees to afford the rising costs of a week on Star, and also in maintaining the economic diversity of our attendees to this conference. The following figures show the history of awards over the past five years. Note that in 2009, after the Island’s shutdown, the AS1 FAC committee contributed \$4,899 and the rest was a grant from a generous donor to the corporation that enabled us to supplement fees to a total of \$13,500 that year to encourage the feasibility of “You will come back” for our disappointed shoalers who had to cancel that previous year. Deb Walton took it upon herself that year to recruit younger families—a group that had often stopped coming because of the difficulty of juggling the cost of growing families, beginning salaries in new jobs and the cost of a week’s vacation for a whole family on Star. We have been fortunate in seeing that age group continue to attend and grow over the past five years.

2009	\$13,500	55 conferees helped
2010	11,740	49
2011	8,182	31
2012	8,456	24
2013	8,960	21
TOTAL	\$50,838	180 people filling beds over the past five years.

These figures are rounded very slightly (just dollars and no cents) and probably don’t include those who are age two or under, but it averages out to be about \$282 per aid recipient for our conference. It may take only a small amount of money (about 50% or less) in order to keep a family from “dropping out” of our community or not being able to join us because of financial pressures. We believe that AS1’s filling beds to the maximum number permitted by the Island management helps the Star Island Corporation’s finances significantly. Also, we are pleased to say that we have had sufficient funding that we have never had to refuse an aid request by an applicant—a group including old or new shoalers.

**PAST MODIFICATIONS
FLEXIBILITY**

In adding our commitment to economic diversity in our conference’s population which is now written into the financial aid policy, we’ve recognized that we have a number of AS1 shoalers who belong to such professions as the arts, teaching and social sciences that often may pay lower salaries. The presence of these people appears to have enhanced the Star experience for everyone.

In 2011 the FAC petitioned the Executive Committee, and after a vote by the chairs, permission was granted, to be able to treat our “rules” as “guidelines” in some cases—for example, when it became clear that some families might need to receive financial aid for more than three years. It’s also worth noting that some past recipients have contributed to the financial aid fund in later years as their financial position improved. So far, responsibly exercising more flexibility in following the guidelines has worked out to be an “everybody wins” situation.

FUTURE POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS FUNDING

We are aware that there may be a certain amount of solicitation fatigue due to the needs of the annual fund, requests for donations to the recent capital campaign, and the need to have money for financial aid to our AS1 families. Our original seed money raised for the financial aid fund was raised by solicitation letters from a group including Laurie and Kim Powsner (who wrote and sent letters and thank you reply notes), Bill Clegg, Jane Trudeau and Jim Prochaska—a group who informally invented their whole approach over lunch one day. We are grateful to them for this start up help. Financial Aid is also funded by some of the money collected as a part of the AS1’s registration fees...

Although a very small number of our conferees have received a small amount from the SIC corporate scholarship fund, that fund’s purpose appears to be somewhat different from ours. The SIC’s budget of about \$20,000 in previous years was for the funding of *all* conferences during a season. That fund’s purpose appears to be to build up attendance in conferences that don’t fill up, while we in AS1 are trying to maintain our All Star 1 community and keep the opportunity for people to attend, even in years when they have suffered financial reversals. In bringing in income, both funds are helpful to the Island’s success.

We’ve been assured by our Treasurer that AS1’s financial aid budget will be \$12,500 for the next several years. However, in prior years we have benefited from the individual generosity of AS 1 conferees, as well as the on and off-island covered dish parties, poker games, the sale of AS1 T shirts that have been generously designed and produced by David and Suzanne Cook and marketed by Gabrielle Prochaska. We are concerned that the recent use of VISA payments directly to the Island for registration may have eliminated extra checks that in the past were included with applications and allocated to AS1’s Financial Aid Budget. Our thanks go out to all who have given generously in the past through whatever mechanism, and we hope for the continuing support of funding for the AS 1 community on a going forward basis.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Because of the FAC’s small membership we are able to operate by consensus after frank discussions. We purposely do not keep written minutes, but the convener keeps the applications (which later are listed by name and awarded

amount only), reports, and relevant written communications with the Executive Committee, Treasurer and Registrar(s). All this is done with confidentiality in mind. In our decision-making conference calls we include views of the non-voting Treasurer and Registrar(s) ex officio, since they are already aware of who has sent in an application for aid. Each year's chairs make their blind decisions on admission to the conference completely independent of knowing whether an applying family has asked for aid. Tricia Coleman has been and continues to be our very capable liaison with the Executive Committee, and neither she nor the chairs are aware of identities of who has requested aid.

Over the years, requests for aid have contained such sensitive subjects as financial need caused by loss of jobs, divorces, illnesses, mortgage instability, non-payment of support or alimony and other highly personal reasons. We have deliberately kept the committee small because we believe that the comfort level of applicants is due in part to their appreciation of knowing that only a small group receives and holds this information closely.

We feel strongly that sensitive and personal information on individual financial applications should be highly restricted to as few individuals as possible and that increased membership may not be appropriate for this committee. We hope that in weighing the values of increased participation and the need for confidentiality, the importance of confidentiality will not be overlooked and that there may be instances where a member may be asked to serve more than two terms. The FAC serves a useful function, but is not a committee that has decision making powers over conference governance in which a more restrictive set of requirements might be more appropriate. The FAC members appointed in 2009 were Joy Close (1 year), Shelley Powsner and Holly Hunnicutt (2 years – re-elected in 2011) and Elizabeth Yermack (3 years).

NEW MEMBERSHIP

A member exiting the FAC should be replaced at that time by appointment of a new member. It is hoped that in proposing new members, the Executive Committee and Governance Committee will take into account economic diversity, generational age diversity, with some representation of the young family group. We feel that the committee is and will continue to be running well.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Yermack, Convener