



**Fourteenth International  
Al-Anon  
General Services Meeting**

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**Communication:  
Our Key  
to Understanding**

October 1-5, 2008  
Hanasaari — Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre  
Espoo, Finland

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# Twelve Concepts of Service

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.
2. The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The right of decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of Al-Anon Headquarters to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of selected committees, executives and staff members.
12. The spiritual foundation for Al-Anon’s world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

# General Warranties of the Conference

In all proceedings the World Service Conference of Al-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions:

1. that only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
2. that no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
3. that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity;
4. that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;
5. that though the Conference serves Al-Anon it shall never perform any act of government; and that like the fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

# Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through its delegates. It will attempt to encourage the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It can also represent an expression of a worldwide group conscience.

Ultimately, this leads to the primary purpose of Al-Anon as a whole – to seek the best way to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery to families and friends of alcoholics amidst cultural and language differences.

# Attendance

The following structures were represented at the 2008 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting:

## Australia

Helen G.  
Cheryl C.

## Brazil

Nilce R.

## Denmark

Dorte P.  
Dina V.

## Finland

Paivi K.  
Mirja M.

## Germany

Inga V.  
Sebastian M.

## Iceland

Sigurlin Bjarney G.  
Arnar K.

## Italy

Nadia M.

## Mexico

Nydia Julia M.

## New Zealand

Peter A.  
Rosa A.

## Poland

Jolanta C.  
Isabela B.

## South Africa

Jennifer P.  
Pamela C.

## Spain

Alejandra A.  
Ma. Rosario R.

## Switzerland (German)

Elizabeth R.  
Madeleine B.

## UK & Eire

Miriam M.  
Anne Marie W.

## USA & Canada

Mary Ann R.  
Judy A.

## International Coordination Committee

Zelda R.  
Doris W.  
Ric B.  
Barbara O.  
Marsha W.

The following structures were not able to send representation:

Argentina

Belgium (Flemish-speaking)

Belgium (French-Speaking)

Colombia

Costa Rica

France

Guatemala

Japan

Korea

Nicaragua

Netherlands

Paraguay

Peru

Portugal

Switzerland (French-speaking)

Sweden

Uruguay

Venezuela

# Opening

The Chairperson, Zelda R., opened the fourteenth International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) in Espoo, Finland with a warm welcome to all Delegates. "Amid language and cultural differences, we come together to share our service experiences to ensure the success of our meeting and fulfill our spiritual needs. The theme "Communication: Our Key to Understanding" is an invitation to each of us to share our service experience, strength, and hope to encourage the growth of service structures and gain a deeper understanding of the best way to carry the Al-Anon message to families and friends of alcoholics.

"I have been a member of Al-Anon for thirty-one years. Service to our fellowship has been and continues to be a source of my recovery. I am extremely grateful that my service experience has given me the opportunity to serve as your IAGSM Chairperson.

At the completion of our meeting I am sure we will have realized through our discussions that the spirit of Al-Anon is alive and well in this world of ours. May we all leave with new ideas, a renewed commitment to Al-Anon, and an increased enthusiasm for service."

## Roll Call and Flag Ceremony

The Roll Call on the first day of the IAGSM is done in a very unique way. Delegates and participants introduce themselves at the microphone. A small flag representing the country was placed in a table stand and a colorful pin was used to mark the country on the map depicting a worldwide view of Al-Anon Family Groups. The flags of the countries who were unable to attend were also displayed to demonstrate our unity with them even though they were not able to attend.

## Voting Procedures

Doris W., International Coordination Committee Co-Chair, explained the voting procedures to be used at this international meeting. By a show of hands, the members provided a consensus to use written ballots for all motions presented during this meeting. A two-thirds majority was determined to be the substantial unanimity required to pass a motion.



## Keynote Speaker

Nydia Julia Marcos D., Mexico

When I was a child, I was very happy; I was born into a happy family. My parents loved each other and loved my two older sisters and me. While expecting with real excitement the birth of my younger sister; suddenly my father died I was four years old. My grandmother said that my eyes became sad; I was a quiet and sad girl because I missed the love of my father.

Time passed and when I was 15 years old, I met a very handsome guy. He was 19 years old, tall, intelligent, and he studied medicine at the University. There was much joy in my heart. Five years after we were married, I was still very much in love, with many hopes and dreams. But I realized my marriage was not as I expected. Again I became sad and silent, without someone to share my problems with; my home became sad because he drank too much.

Before I found out about Al-Anon Family Groups and its wonderful spiritual program, I spoke with God and asked him: "I can no longer carry this weight, my Lord, where can I lay down my burden? My burden is very heavy, help me lay it down and just give me peace. Help me, my Lord, I can not take this anymore, I ask that you please help my husband quit drinking."

I remember when I went to my group for the first time I received a warm welcome. I smiled, but inside I felt very sad. Through time, communication, and an exchange of experiences with the group members, I came to understand that alcoholism is a disease. I also understood that the alcoholic was a son of God who deserved my respect and understanding. I realized I was not the only person in the world who had an alcoholic loved one. Going to Al-Anon helped me realize that there were many people who shared the same problem. I felt that my burden had become lighter.

I understood that by gradually practicing the Twelve Steps in Al-Anon, I began the path to my recovery. So what is it that we recover in Al-Anon? From my perspective I recognized it is our own lives. This is how I could begin to cultivate a beautiful garden in the garden of my soul, as Lois taught us. In Al-Anon I learned I should know, forgive, and love myself to understand how to forgive and love others.

I learned who I was through the Fourth Step... "made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves" ...I understood that I had both qualities and flaws; flaws to phase out one by one, and qualities upon which I could build and build. I learned to communicate with God through the Second Step by asking my Higher Power to restore me to sanity. The Third Step helped me to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, through my own understanding of Him and by using the Eleventh Step I turned over my will and life through prayer and meditation. I learned to communicate



with others. One of the greatest satisfactions in life is having a family united and full of love. Why is this not always the case? I think it is because we do not know how to communicate and therefore we do not know how to communicate love.

In Al-Anon we come to realize that a large part of our unhappiness comes from our attitudes (from the pamphlet, *Al-Anon Spoken Here*, P-53). The quality of human relations depends largely on the way we communicate. It is not only what we say, but also the way we say it. Little by little, I learned to implement the five guidelines for communication found in the book, *The Dilemma of Alcoholic Marriage*, B-4. In the chapter titled "What Manner of Communications Are These?" it gives the following suggestions: Discuss, don't attack; keep a soft and pleasant voice; stay on topic; listen to their complaints; and do not make demands. These are all summarized in two good tools for communication—courtesy and respect.

In Al-Anon I have also learned to trust someone special, my Sponsor. I share with her my thoughts and my fears, especially when I am going through difficult situations. She has listened to me with affection, offering a different perspective. She has guided me along the path of the Al-Anon principles. Through the process of my recovery, I thought that attending meetings was enough to feel good and happy. Later I realized that through service I could reach new and unexplored horizons. I felt that my Higher Power led me by his hand, because I discovered it was service that I needed to increase my self-esteem and confidence in myself that I so much desired.

When I was elected GR I was hugged by the members of my group who said: "Julia, you can do it and we trust you." Their confidence gave me the courage to accept this service responsibility. I began to study, attend Assemblies, and learn more about our spiritual principles. I learned that the Twelve Traditions help us to maintain unity and that the Twelve Concepts of Service explain the wisdom and the why of our service structure. Being DR was fantastic. I began to attend Area Committee Meetings and I became aware of all of the service needs that are required in an Area and to receive constant information from our GSO. I felt that God had chosen me to guide the GRs in my district with love. I began to attend other groups and I met more Al-Anon members. All this gave me the strength to overcome my difficulties and move forward.

Later I was elected Delegate and I attended a National Conference. This broadened my vision with a vast range of experiences and knowledge. I attended with immense joy three consecutive National Conferences and spent time with

Delegates from across the country, Trustees, and GSO staff members. Also with the help and support of our Higher Power, I learned about the Board of Trustees at the GSO, the work done by several committees including finance. I began to understand their desire to strengthen Al-Anon Family Groups by spreading our message of hope. Through this service role I realized I could be the bridge of communication through which information flows between the GSO and groups in my Area.

After that I became Area Coordinator. This service was the most difficult one I have had. With the help of my Higher Power, I learned to use a very valuable tool in our program, open communication. I learned that as members, we say what we have to say with courage and honesty. I continued on the path of service without even realizing that my Higher Power was preparing me for something very special.

One day during my service as Area Coordinator, I was busy studying for a Sociology exam at the University. I received a phone call with an invitation to send in my resume for Trustee-at-Large on the Board of Trustees. I believe my Higher Power gave me the insight to make this decision.

Serving as Trustee has been wonderful. During my first meetings at the GSO, I felt that Concept Eleven came alive, because it was now not only a description on paper of the committees described but each one of the committees now became a reality. The text and purpose after Concepts Two and Eight ceased to be just words in our *Service Manual* and came to life for me. I enjoyed working with enthusiasm and joy with my fellow Trustees in each of our roles along with the staff members at the GSO, despite our difference in opinions and points of view. This is a service that God has given me and I have enjoyed it very much step-by-step. I understood that in order for my service on the Board of Trustees to succeed, I must be diligent concerning the following: constant communication, honesty, discipline, humility, love, and goodwill.

Mexico's Board of Trustees has elected me three times as an International Representative to attend the World Service Conferences in 2006, 2007 and 2008. I attended each with great excitement and was joyful about representing my beloved country. At the Conferences I participated with 67 Delegates from the US and Canada, the WSO Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and WSO staff.

I also had the opportunity to participate in different sessions on topics presented on The Warranties, the Twelve Concepts of Service, and the effectiveness and benefits of the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process (KBDM). I learned that KBDM is very important to open communication, dialogue before deliberation, and creating a universal culture of trust so that all have access to the same information. There was also a session on Conflict Resolution which was a highlight for me.

This year I have had great experiences. In two of them I had a spiritual connection. Without words, I only needed to see, hear, and feel in my heart what has connected with the history of the Al-Anon Family Groups.

First, during the World Service Conference, with great joy and enthusiasm we went to visit Stepping Stones. In this beautiful house, the home of Lois and Bill W., co-founders of Al-Anon and A.A., we saw the desktop of Lois W. on the second floor. This is where she and her friend, Anne B., worked to launch the first Al-Anon Service Office, called the Clearing House, in 1951. We saw the table with its flowers and chairs, surrounded by a lovely garden, where Lois liked to receive her visitors. We also had the opportunity to visit Bill W.'s studio where God inspired him to write the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. I felt that the spirits of Lois and Bill W. were still alive at Stepping Stones.

The second highlight for me, this year, was the opportunity to attend Al-Anon's 4th International Convention in the beautiful city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Even more than the beauty of the city was the beauty of all the members of Al-Anon and Alateen united from around the world.

Before the start of the Convention, I visited Akron, Ohio and had the chance to see another beautiful part of history, the home of Dr. Bob (co-founder of A. A.) and his wife Annie S. who worked with great enthusiasm before the beginning of Al-Anon helping families and friends of alcoholics. These were two spiritual experiences that filled my heart with joy.

During the Convention, I participated in the "Language of Love Parade" and I enjoyed all the Big Meetings. There were wonderful speakers from different countries around the world. I also attended workshops, the "Pioneer Luncheon" and participated as coordinator of a Spanish-language meeting.

My family has received many blessings. My husband is sober through the program of A.A. We live happily and enjoy each moment that God has given us. We have very full lives now. We love each other again as boyfriend and girlfriend. He is happy for me because I am able to attend the International Al-Anon Service Meeting here in Helsinki, Finland. Our children and grandchildren enjoy the benefits of the wonderful spiritual programs of A.A. and Al-Anon.

Two years ago when I attended the Thirteenth International Al-Anon General Services Meeting in Virginia Beach VA, I experienced an unforgettable moment at the farewell dinner. We had a circle of love where we held hands and each member said the Serenity Prayer in their own language. I felt the unity and love of Al-Anon Family Groups from around the world.

I thank God for letting me attend again this "MEETING OF LOVE" where different people from different places in the world are joined with great joy, the same hope, and the same purpose of helping families and friends of alcoholics around the world.

# General Sessions

## Responsibility, Communication, Leadership

Peter A., New Zealand

### Leadership.

Leadership is something I am learning about in my service work in Al-Anon, as a present Board member in New Zealand. I should really say re-learning, as I had ideas about leadership before I came to Al-Anon that I am now learning were often mistaken.

### Responsibility.

One of the aspects of leadership I am learning about is responsibility. My previous ideas about responsibility were mostly about being responsible for the job, i.e. getting things done on time. My ideas have changed. Now for me my responsibility, as a leader, is mostly about the attitude I bring to the occasions where I am being a leader. How am I presenting myself and my role? The phrase I am using quite a lot for myself at present is “How can I be helpful?” Also “What will be best for the common welfare?” How can I give the welcome and comfort our Tradition talks about, and can I assist those who aren’t doing so well?

I certainly don’t live up to all this perfectly. When everything is going my way it is usually OK, but not so easy when someone is upset and especially when the attack is directed at me. As a result of the disease of alcoholism, my pattern is to react defensively, aggressively, and especially fearfully. Fear grips my mind in a terrible paralysis; I feel upset and say things that make the situation worse.

I am recovering from these reactions, mainly as a result of my service work. Now I am finding in more and more situations my mind can remain calm; I can continue to “Think” as the slogan says. To me, this is the “restored to sanity” that Step Two talks about, and it is such a wonderful thing to be experiencing.

To do these things takes more than learning. As much as I would like to be able to be a good leader by learning about the service structure, reading about communication techniques, and conflict resolution, it won’t work by itself. I can only gain freedom from the old ways by practicing my personal recovery. That’s why, no matter how far I go in service, my personal recovery comes first, as, without it, I am not likely to be any good to anyone.

As a Board, we made an effort to make the Conference a good experience and a safe place for our Delegates. They were welcomed, and told how important they were. We tried to practice this over the days of the Conference.

I was so happy to hear our local Delegate return from her

first Conference and present a report to the Area Assembly. She spoke excitedly about the welcome and friendship, and what a great experience it was. I hardly heard the rest about what decisions were made. It was not always so at our Conference. I still have memories of when I was quite new in Al-Anon, when I didn’t know much Al-Anon existed beyond my home group, and seeing our Delegate, at that time, come back in tears and talk about how stressful it was to attend Conference.

Another aspect of being responsible in my leadership is how I leave the job I am doing. Am I leaving the job in a state that seems exciting and attractive to those coming after me? I have heard people, even at higher levels of service, when giving their leaving comments talk about how stressful and difficult it was. Others have been so busy and done so much that it makes the job seem completely overwhelming for someone who might think of following. How would I like to leave it? I want to express thanks for the opportunity to serve, and say how much I have got out of it, and I can’t wait to do more.

### Communication.

One of my important responsibilities in my service work is communication.

Communication is a leadership tool I am learning to use. Good communication is difficult and takes practice.

Last year at the Conference, we voted to make police checks a requirement for Alateen Sponsors. It seemed like a good decision at the time, but one of the Alateen meetings didn’t think so. There were several things they were unhappy about. They felt they were not consulted, that they were being told what to do by a top-down leadership, and didn’t like some of the things about the approval process. There was quite a lot of unhappiness in the Area about it. I read the e-mails, and talked to their representatives. I thought they made some good points. We discussed it again at a Board meeting and at Conference this year. Some changes were made.

I wanted to have a face-to-face meeting with the Alateen Sponsors. It happened recently, I went with the local Delegate. What a great experience. They shared about the things they were upset about. I apologized for the things we



had done poorly, especially the communication. I shared about how their issues were important and had been discussed with the Board and Conference. I also shared about the outcomes and thanked them for their input. I said that no Conference decision, no matter how correct, is worth anything unless it can be taken back to the groups in a way that they can understand and want to support. We all left the meeting with that lovely feeling of unity.

E-mail is a useful communication tool. It is great for distributing reports and announcements. But it is not good for dealing with problems. It is very easy for the “them and us” attitude to be created or maintained by e-mail. Something happens when we come together to communicate, there is unity created that is difficult to achieve when communication is at a distance by phone or e-mail, no matter how carefully the words are chosen.

As a leader, I am learning about responsibility in a new way. The Al-Anon program has given me the tool of communication that I can see working as I practice leadership and responsibility in my service work.

### Discussion:

A Delegate shared, “when I went to the group it was communication that really appealed to me. I was amazed how open the people were sharing their stories, even very personal details. They were not ashamed. They didn’t have restrictions. They lived what they talked about. Al-Anon could be a way for me to free myself and grow. Because I had boundaries, I had to be perfect and please other people, I didn’t feel loved if I did not please others all the time. I couldn’t be myself. That’s why communication is important... to hear, to understand, and to learn.”

Another Delegate explained, that there was disharmony on their Board of Trustees and Conference as a result of not communicating properly. They sought legal opinion regarding the GSO’s responsibility towards Alateen. As a result there was a lot of discussion, anxiety, and anger among the Conference members and also the Board of Trustees. They learned a lesson that we have to communicate well. They have managed to bring forward their policies for Alateen positively.

Another Delegate indicated, we must look for new leaders – find, coach, and motivate them. Communication has to be clear throughout this process. Leaders need to know what is expected from them: responsibility, tolerance, flexibility and vision. An example that was mentioned was when asking for a volunteer in the group to become a Group Representative, the job description usually includes the words “you don’t have to do anything in the position.” Why do we sometimes act ashamed to ask for service volunteers?

It was pointed out the translation of the word “Delegate”

sometimes has a different meaning for some cultures and the word may be too official or too rigid to be used in Al-Anon language. The substance and the meaning of the word was discussed to help clarify understanding.

Another Delegate shared that at their recent conference, one of the topics was clarifying the role of the conference. That was a very useful experience for the conference to actually think about. “Why are we here at the conference?” It improved the communication at the conference, to clarify the purpose. In my own life, in my group, and in my Area, too, sometimes I need clarity of purpose.

Communication works two ways: listening and speaking. A Delegate reported that the Areas and Assemblies don’t necessarily understand what they are trying to do. Members are willing to support their own groups, maybe the districts and Areas, but they forget the national service structure also needs support for the work they do. As a solution the Chairperson of the Board started having planned gatherings at Regional Service Seminars inviting the former Delegates in attendance to give them up-to-date information on board activities. Another suggestion to reach out to the fellowship is to encourage the Areas to invite a Trustee or staff member to visit the Area.

There was sort of ‘them and us’ between the GSO and the Areas. We have a very big geographical area to cover and it was really hard for us to feel connected to the fellowship although we have a Conference that Delegates attend. We still felt that there was not enough closeness between us. We didn’t feel that we were doing work for them, rather than the other way round. We’ve developed a few things. One is the buddy system. We have a buddy for every Delegate, a buddy on the Board, one person they know they can contact consistently. A lot of the areas have been inviting Board members to come and visit. We have quite a lot of our GSO members apart from the Board – Chairpersons of standing committees – visit Area Assemblies and give presentations. We also have buddies for Board members. They may contact them before Board meetings to make sure they are OK, have received all the papers, if they have any questions.

In terms of presentations, our Chairman of the Board gave some copies of some presentations she had done on leadership. I think we saw these at the last IAGSM along with some other presentations that our structure has since adopted. We did a fund raiser and bought a LCD that can be connected to a laptop. We did a presentation on the GSO. We take this presentation to different Areas and we also show it at our Conference. We find it helps dispel some of the myths about the GSO. We also have presentations we developed for Public Information and Finance. These are not complicated, they are very simple, but they help the communication. The difference that I have seen is a more relaxed nature between the Delegates and GSO staff.



Another Delegate shared, that a decision was made some years ago at the at the General Service Board level, that after every Board meeting they would send an update letter from the Chairman of the Board to every group in the country. The letter has been favorably accepted. Also they made the decision not to let any of their Delegates leave service at the end of their three-year-term without a pep talk. This is a very informal talk about what they are going to do next, and their role in leadership. They are asked to think about how they can bring people into service roles and sponsor people into service. It's proving to be very useful and we are getting new members into standing committees. Just validating the efforts that people have made at Conference sometimes gives them confidence to say that maybe they can do that job. They might see somebody who is doing something in the Conference that they would like to do as well. So we are hanging onto our Conference members writing them a little letter each January to say: "Do you remember the conversation we had in September? Are you going to do something or do you know somebody who might do something?" We've been making great efforts with every level of service, from the group to the Delegates, as they finish their term to keep everybody in this family and not lose precious talents.

One Delegate mentioned a lot of the things we do come either from the IAGSM or World Service Office (WSO). In

terms of communication this changed some of the format we had in our Board meetings to focus more on discussions, clarifying, asking questions and not just reading reports and minutes. Our Board members have to have e-mail. If they don't have e-mail they have to have an "e-mail buddy" so that they can receive all reports at least a week before for the meeting.

Finally one Delegate closed with the thought that we are an orchestra and we all have a purpose. In order to make music everybody has to work together and everybody is equally important. It's never the right tone. There is always someone playing wrong. But then I remember, we are practicing. What is the connection to this meeting? I am learning and listening to you to hear what techniques you use to practice leadership in your structure. The groups are there for everybody, for long-time members and newcomers.

Another Delegate shared, "Delegation is much more than the division of tasks, it involves improved understanding. Understanding the Concepts improves the quality of our work." We shift from a culture of confrontation to a culture of consensus.

Finally one Delegate concluded "we have the responsibility to ask a question if we don't understand something. One way is to have a Service Sponsor."

## Our Communication 'Highways' – General Service Office, Service Conference, Groups

Miriam M., United Kingdom & Ireland

Our first Groups in the UK & Eire became active in the 1950s. Major decisions were made by them until the 1970s when there were approximately 100 groups. A General Service Office was opened and the structure was basically formed as it is today by dividing into districts and Regions. Various tweaking has taken place over the years and we now have districts, Areas and Regions. In May 1970 the first General Service Board (GSB) meeting was held and in October of that year the first Annual Service Conference took place. At that time Family Groups Ltd. was incorporated and we became a registered charity. There are now 31 Areas, and approximately 800 groups.

Throughout the years we have received help and guidance from the WSO. We adapted our structure to comply with the geography of our countries. Lois described our Concepts as Al-Anon's greatest secret and Concept One reminds us that it is the groups that hold the ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services. Each member is a vital part of our structure. Each member has been affected by someone else's drinking. Through sharing our problems and following the Al-Anon principles, we learn to help ourselves and find contentment and serenity in our lives. At first our understanding of our service structure comes slowly and can appear confusing. What happens at the Area, Conference, or Board meetings seems irrelevant at the group level. Yet this part of our growth is also important for our recovery.

Our Regional Service Seminars are held in rotation throughout the UK & Eire. In this way the members are given an opportunity to learn of the service roles that keep our structure functioning. Members who have service experience at group, district and Area levels share how their Service role has affected them. The General Secretary, Treasurer, and a selected Chairman of a standing committee also give presentations. Our General Secretary gives a talk about our structure and also a Power Point presentation of the GSO. In the evaluation forms this is mentioned as the most interesting part of the seminar. This is also an opportunity to report on the IAGSM and European Talk meetings.

Within our service structure, a well-loved metaphor of a tree is used to help clear the confusion. The blossom on the tree represents the groups, the branches - districts and Areas, and the trunk the Annual Service Conference. The roots of the tree represent the committees and the General Service Board (GSB). Each Area sends a Delegate to Conference and they serve a three-year term. The Area Delegates bring matters of concern to Conference from their



Areas and also hold a meeting before the formal opening. Following Conference they give an in depth report to their Area Assemblies and in this way the communication highway is open for discussion; policy changes often result.

In 1995 we sought legal opinion regarding our responsibility towards Alateen. Since then each Conference has discussed in depth a means to comply with the law and provide a safe meeting place for Alateens. We now have relatively sound policies for our Alateen meetings.

The GSB is found among the roots of the tree. Each member is a Trustee of Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire and may have a service role as a Chairman of a standing committee or as a Regional Trustee. There are six Regional Trustees whose purpose is to bring regional diversity to the Board. The General Secretary is also a Trustee, but is not a Director of Al-Anon Family Groups, Limited.

Our standing committees work hard. The Conference, Public Information, and Finance Committees all meet at GSO. The Editorial Committee, which produces our monthly magazine *News & Views*, meets within their editorial area.

*News & Views* is our communication highway and includes spiritual sharings, future events, and information from the GSO. For the past three years we have had a special

edition of *News & Views* specifically for the general public and professionals. In this issue we don't include upcoming dates or telephone numbers.

The GSB meets three times a year, it discusses matters arising from the standing committees and prepares items for information and discussion at Conference. We start on Friday evening and finish on Sunday morning. We have managed to reduce the time for Board meetings by circulating the minutes by e-mail and making any correction before the Board meeting. During these weekends the Nominating Committee and Regional Service Seminar Committee also meet. The Nominating Committee, with input from a group of Area Delegates, is responsible for the selection of Trustees at Large. Following Board approval the names are brought to the Conference for traditional approval.

Following each GSB meeting we send out a letter of information to all groups. Our General Service Office is the hub of all activity in our structure; it is a clearing house but it is much more than that. Committee meetings are mostly held on weekends and there is a huge amount of work generated by the organization of Conference and Regional Service Seminars. The Literature and Public Information desks also require full-time staff. Alateen membership continues to decline but the paperwork increases with the continuing responsibility of our duty of care to Alateen members. In UK & Eire there are approximately 60 Alateen members.

Volunteers are an important part of the day-to-day running of GSO, answering the distress calls, helping with mail distribution, and being general do-good bodies.

The Executive Committee is not a standing committee. Ideally it is composed of past Trustees and the Chairman of the Finance Committee. Its responsibility is to work in close co-operation with the General Secretary and review new projects generated by the standing committees before presentation to the Board. At the present time its major project is creating a new Web site to be used as a public information tool and also to be a source for members to access group locations and purchase literature.

There are a number of principles written into the Concepts that ensure that our structure functions in the best possible way for Al-Anon. The Right of Decision, the Right of Participation, the Right of Appeal, and the Right of Petition are all there, so that as members of Al-Anon we can fulfill our primary purpose - to offer help to those whose lives have been affected by someone else's alcoholism.

### **Discussion:**

After this presentation an energetic discussion followed. "I grew up in an alcoholic home and I am so vulnerable. I easily get into 'them and us' feeling and believe that I am not part of the team; that there is a distance. The answer to

that is communication. It's about doing it differently to get it working."

One Delegate raised a question about whether paid office staff is allowed to vote. "Our Executive Director is a sustaining member of the Board of Trustees by virtue of the office of Executive Director. When that member no longer holds office, he is not any longer a Sustaining Trustee. The Sustaining Trustee is the person serving as the current Executive Director. If you read the Concepts, you will find that staff members may participate at the level at which they are working. If someone is a paid worker in an information service, that person can vote at the board level of the information service, but cannot vote at the Assembly for the World Service Conference. Employees are not allowed to hold regular volunteer jobs, such as GR, DR, or Delegate."

One of the ways we communicate, is that the Chair of the Board and Executive Director of the WSO talk frequently. We discuss all issues and we may not always agree, but we have agreed to work things out. It's not about the position, it's what Al-Anon is for, what it means. It's when you make a commitment, like when I made this commitment, it was to improve Al-Anon worldwide, and it's not about the person. Even though we don't know everything in Al-Anon, everything we do affects the fellowship, it doesn't benefit us individually. Those of us who have been in service a while, can try to understand new people need to make the transition from what is good for me or my group to what is good for Al-Anon worldwide. We can help people coming into service to take our place at service meetings to understand, and we can encourage them. We can do that through mentoring programs and through calls to our Delegates. Communication in all respects is important.

It was also shared before Al-Anon I lived in a world of black and white. Everything was so rigid, so I would hear this word and I would say: "That's what that means" and I could not see anything else. Someone earlier talked about the idea that we are all equals and therefore people cannot have special talents and people cannot be respected for special skills; since we are all equals and we must all be equal and we must all be alike. That is a misunderstanding of what the spiritual principle is. It says in the *Service Manual*: "We share as equals." We don't care what your profession is, when you share. We share as equals. But it doesn't mean that we all have to take a vow of poverty or to have a salary of 50,000 euros to be able to participate in service. In the meetings we share as equals from our common understanding and we share a combined vision of recovery. On a recovery level, we want to share as equals. In service, we pick people for their skills, for what they can bring to Al-Anon.

The Delegate from Finland said that this year they had a special effort. Members made hand-made love gifts for the IAGSM Delegates. That differs a lot from the skills

that are usually needed in service - writing, talking, using computers, speaking foreign languages etc. Our members were so enthusiastic about this new possibility to serve that they made three times more love gifts than was needed. Immediately there was a great debate about fund raising and whether to sell the excess items. Is selling handmade items against some policy?

The WSO responded citing the *Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual* policy on page 87, avoiding commercialism. We should be careful with selling outside materials like mugs etc. Using members' creative efforts for fundraising is OK. In the States members make blankets, wall hangings, bookmarks etc. and in the Areas they make money selling these little pieces of handicraft. In addressing a question "Can we sell handicraft items at an A.A. convention?" Yes, because the member is selling their crafts and then donating the money received to Al-Anon.

Another member, from a small structure, shared it can be confusing to the groups about what happens at different levels of service. In a very small structure there are usually only a few people doing service at the national level. After attending the IAGSM two years ago, the Delegate became a sort of expert. It's exhausting. We try to get more people into service and spread the knowledge. It is a slow way, but it is the only way to insure the service structure remains healthy.

In sharing more insight on this topic the Delegate from US and Canada stated. "When a new Trustee comes on, they are given a Trustee mentor. As a mentor I was in touch with my new Trustee by e-mail and by telephone several times before she came to her first Board meetings. The goal is to be a resource to her and share what is expected.

Each Trustee draws Delegate names to call each year. I have five Delegates and I call them four times a year after each Board meeting. The Chairman of the Board writes a letter to the Delegates following the quarterly Board meetings. We wait for a week so that they have had time to read the letter and then we follow up with a phone call. There are questions for Delegates in the Board letters and we ask for feedback. It gives them a little bit of time to talk to people in their Area. We try to use the links of service and hope they will speak to some members in their Area for feedback

before the call. On the Board we speak with one voice. When you are asked questions, you don't try to find an answer if you really don't know. You can say: 'I am not sure right now, but I can get back to you.' We can reach out to ask someone, who has the answer."

WSO shared our Board has realized that Delegates must be leaders and giving them no skills to be leaders is setting people up for failure. Last year at the Conference we had a series of leadership workshops to share information with the Delegates so that they could take ideas back to their Areas and put them into practice. We had a session on "How to Use the Concepts at the Area level? How do you make that work at your service meetings?" We had a session on "How to Give a Delegate's Report?" We also had a workshop on this decision-making process called Knowledge-Based Decision-Making. It's a process for having an informed group conscience.

A question arose during the discussion: What sort of forum is created for the concerns of the Areas which the Delegates bring to the Conference? The WSO shared that we encourage our Areas to put forward questions of current concern to the Conference. These questions can come from Areas or from Trustees or Committees. This year we had about ten, and we choose three to be discussed on the floor during the Conference. The remaining questions are discussed in a committee break-out on Saturday morning. On Sunday morning we have feedback from the committees and a little bit further discussion. Solutions aren't given, but during the year we look into the current concerns, research them, and bring them back to the next conference. It is vital to have input from the members.

Another Delegate advised that at the Conference we have two ways of handling Delegate concerns. 1) Any member either through the Area or directly can put forward an agenda item for the Conference. They need to provide background information for the agenda item. There is a time limit so the same agenda item cannot come up every year. 2) We also have an "ask-it-basket" where any questions or concerns can be put in. We have a deadline for submitting concerns and ask-it-basket questions so that we have time to research the answers.



## Expanding our Understanding Concerning Finance, Seventh Tradition /Self Support

Pam C., South Africa

2008 has been an incredible year for me and Al-Anon South Africa. I had the opportunity of attending my first Al-Anon International Convention in Pittsburgh. I was overwhelmed being among 4,000 Al-Anons from all over the world. I was also given an opportunity to share my story. Thank you to the ICC for trusting me with this task. My primary purpose today is to pass a message of hope to you. This Tradition is very pertinent to me and our structure.

Financially our Structure could not afford to send Delegates to the 2002 and 2004 IAGSMs. In 2004 the WSO Executive Director visited South Africa; I met Ric for the first time at our Executive Meeting. I was infused by his energy and passion for Al-Anon. He mentioned abundance frequently and encouraged us to believe in it. I certainly believe that there is abundance out there.

Our Structure invited the Executive Director to our National Conference in 2005. Once again Ric shared his service experience with us and brought us closer to the Concepts of Service. We realized that by not attending the previous IAGSMs, our structure was deprived of new information and ideas from the other structures. Ric encouraged us to propose sending one Delegate to the meeting in 2006; Gillian represented South Africa in 2006 in Virginia Beach, VA. She came back with an inspiring report, and imparted her experiences and knowledge gained from her attendance at the IAGSM with our country.

In 2005 we translated Al-Anon literature in Zulu. That's one of our big communities that we try to reach. We have quite a big population, but to get to the Zulu communities is quite difficult. A.A. is having meetings there, but there are no Al-Anon groups. That year we also received a bequest from a grateful member. Well so much for not having funds for our projects. The Board was now handed the task of managing the finances as a result of the bequest. It was a difficult time for us as we had to work very closely together making sure to discuss all options.

We earmarked the following special projects: In 2007 Our General Service Office was relocated to N1 City Mews Cape Town. All Area offices were upgraded with the necessary technology to perform their duties more efficiently. We discounted our literature prices by 20% to the Areas—this is reviewed annually. We launched an extensive campaign with TV, radio, and cinema advertisements. We are now in the process of upgrading our Web site, and are working on a Members' services page with password access.

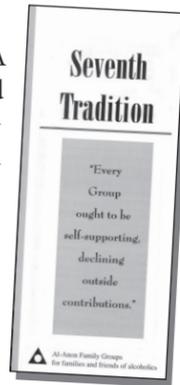
In November 2006, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and SA Delegates had a special meeting and

decided that we should register Al-Anon SA as a Trust – in this way Al-Anon SA could become a legal entity. SA Al-Anon AFG registered as a charitable trust: Al-Anon Family Group Trust South Africa. We wrote the SA Bylaws. We registered the GSO as a Voluntary Association with members, an Executive Committee, and Board of Trustees. We obtained an importers' code (as required) to enable us to import literature from WSO.

In 2008: The SA AFG registered as a Public Benefit Organization which was granted Tax Exempt status. The Areas registered as a Voluntary Association with the Groups as members. Personally I believe that Al-Anon is a self-help program. During the 26 years I have been in Al-Anon I've learned that being self-supporting was not only financial, it is about serving at all levels, from my home group to national level. My time is precious and using that time to carry the message of hope to the still suffering will always be my purpose. I found by practicing these principles honestly in all my affairs, all my personal goals were achieved in my career, my family, and Al-Anon.

My contributions towards my physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being attributed to my overall balance. I have to focus on myself all the time. After I lost my son seven years ago, I battled to live again. I just existed and was becoming sick, I had to take responsibility for myself; it had to begin with me. I also got busy in my program and I got better. Today the key to my joy is my relationship between my Higher Power and myself, by trusting my Higher Power with my will and my life, all my other relationships work well. This is my responsibility, I cannot depend on my family members or friends to make me happy. My happiness comes from within me by practicing the steps of recovery. It compliments the application of the Traditions in my life thus making me self-supporting.

I have learned to love our Traditions, the backbone of our program. I heard a member talk about the code of conduct being used in the corporate world at the Convention. She said we had those ethics in Al-Anon for many years when we wrote The Twelve Traditions; we should look at the Traditions as our code of conduct and practice them in all our affairs. Today I enjoy having financial security, that is important to me. I also live a fulfilled life. I do not let opportunities pass me. I am constantly aware of what and where my Higher Power wants me to be and do. I don't question him.



Thank you for allowing me to be generous with my past, I will always be grateful to my Service Sponsors for nurturing me when I came into the program. I also want to thank the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee of SA for trusting and affording me the privilege of attending the 2008 IAGSM. I am honored indeed to represent South Africa.

### Discussion

On the topic of finance one Delegate commented it is necessary for our primary purpose to support the work on all service levels. To help with this awareness, in her structure, there is a finance seminar every year.

Another explained money seems always an issue for the groups in her country. This year the General Service Office did a seminar on the Seventh Tradition to help raise awareness on this topic. It was also determined from a survey by the GSO that sending written correspondence to the groups about the importance of the Seventh Tradition was an opportunity to raise awareness.

A Delegate indicated their structure had experienced financial difficulty. They made their Delegates aware of the need and asked that they go back and share not only the need but why. They found this to be a very successful idea as the fellowship responded well and their financial difficulty no longer exists.

Another Delegate advised that her structure is trying to use the term "abundance" and look at it in respect to their resources. She explained we can think in terms of finance and we can think in terms of our abundant resources, that every member is a resource. We all have different skills, we all have different talents that we bring to the fellowship. We have so many people out there that are willing to participate. We need to educate people with the message of abundance.

What we try to do now, is to state what we need, ask what do we need to do to get there, and where do we want to be. And then have the blind faith and use our resources and know that the funds will follow. We send out an appeal letter three times a year educating members to where their funds are used, (Seventh Tradition).

As the discussion continued, Delegates seemed interested in how Public Outreach work was funded. One Delegate asked how other structures were able to financially do public service ads because her structure believed they could not afford to do this type of campaign. One member advised when her structure investigated the costs for a media campaign, it was not high as they thought.

The World Service Office explained we use our Public Outreach site now to do podcasts which were created on telephone conference calls. We invited four or five people to participate, past Delegates and members. We gave them a topic to talk about. A conference call company recorded

the discussion. We have uploaded it on our web site as a podcast. Anyone can go there any time day or night and get the 20 minute discussion on "Why should I go to Al-Anon," "Am I responsible for my loved one's drinking," etc. "So we are looking for other ways to pass the message as well. And it's not that expensive."

Another explained that they had a very exciting time developing radio announcements and television ads and they had no money! Within their country there are companies offering their services to non-profit organizations. After adapting an ad from New Zealand, they asked for actors from the fellowship. They also did voice-overs to WSO ads and they used members who volunteered to distribute the ads. She reiterated that although they had no funds to work with all enthusiastically participated.

The World Service Office advised that they have been doing public service ads since the early 70s. They did their own distribution in those days. In the United States there is a law that requires television stations to air public service announcements for not-for-profit as a part of their public programming. Beginning in 1997, the WSO started an annual campaign to produce Public Service Announcements (PSAs) every year. A company was hired to mail the PSAs to 1,000 stations in the US and Canada. So that they would have some knowledge of who was likely to play the ads the stations were also sent a card asking for some evaluation. In 1997-1998-1999 WSO started putting the ad on their Public Outreach Web site. So even if they didn't get played on the television, newcomers go to the Web site and view the ad.

This year for the first time, WSO has produced specific PSAs for the radio which are relatively inexpensive. A company was hired to create them based on ideas provided by the WSO. The company writes the script and the Public Outreach (PO) committee reviews the script to be sure it's Al-Anon in content and feel. As a part of the process, the script also has to go through policy review and the Executive Director for final approval. Its goal is to target different audiences by using these different types of methods. WSO has sent a certain number of the radio PSAs to the radio stations directly, and is also selling them so that members can buy them and take to radio stations within their communities.

It was suggested that for structures doing this for the first time, to start small. For example with radio create, two or three ads and ask the fellowship to distribute.

The reason to have a public outreach campaign is not only to get new members but to create awareness of the Al-Anon Family Group name. We are more than willing to share our experience. Write to the Associate Director Member Services—International for statistics, background information, and sample scripts from previous campaigns.

## The Value of a Strategic Plan

Judy A., USA and Canada

It's a privilege today to be talking to all of you as members of the International Al-Anon General Service Meeting. We've all come from different countries. As we began planning our trips to Finland, we knew where we were starting from and we mapped out the plan to reach our destination.

What a gift to know where we were starting from, what our destination was, the reason for the trip, the resources needed to make the trip, who was responsible for the planning, and knowing our completion date. That is our strategic planning. We've all experienced the value of a strategic plan.

A strategic plan is the blueprint or map which connects us to our spiritual quest. It takes us from where we are today to where we want to be in the future.

In Concept Nine, Bill W.'s essay on leadership tells us that that the all-important attribute of leadership is vision. He goes on to say that ... "yes as a fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the job of planning for tomorrow onto a fatuous idea of Providence. God has endowed human beings with considerable capability for foresight and evidently expects us to use it." Page 188 *2006 – 2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*.

Our leaders have always had foresight. Lois demonstrated this in 1955 during a discussion that the work at Headquarters had become so involved that it was more work than a few volunteers could manage. She suggested committees be formed to handle publicity, literature, and finances. Lois recognized when change was needed and embraced new ideas. At times, she had difficulties convincing others to seek help with their tasks. Slowly changes were made and our pioneers began to recognize the benefit of having a variety of ideas exchanged rather than one person's thoughts. The value of developing a plan for the future became evident.

For many years, there was a Long Range Planning Committee made up of Trustee members. In 2002, the Long Range Planning Committee Chair started facilitating sessions for the Board to come up with Vision and Mission Statements. The Committee felt that the discussions were exciting and visionary. They began to identify that long term planning was not just a small part of the Board's work. It was the work of the Board.

After developing Vision and Mission Statements, the Board realized that to function in the leadership role for Al-Anon Family Groups, there was a need for a strategic plan. As a group any Board has to have an idea of the direction in which they want to head, and know that there is a plan for success. Bill W.'s essay on leadership makes that very

clear. As he said, "good leaders originate plans and policies for the improvement of the fellowship." The Strategic Plan was developed in an effort to give the Board a clear direction to succeed in its mission and to have accountability for and evaluation of its work. The job of the Board is to serve and preserve the organization, and this requires having a plan for the future.

Early in 2004, the Board members met with a consultant for a working weekend. The members started by listing the strengths and weaknesses in Al-Anon at that time. Then they talked about big ideas to strengthen Al-Anon in the future and divided the ideas into three categories which became the themes in the Strategic Plan: "Everyone, Everywhere," "Unlimited Abundant Resources," and "Universal Understanding of Recovery." In 2006 a fourth category, "Support and Strengthen our Structure" was added.

As the plan developed, the Board's focus changed from being a receiver of reports to a Board which was setting the pace for the development of world services. A neutral consultant trained in group process was essential in developing a Strategic Plan for Al-Anon Family Groups. She helped the Board put principles above personalities.

From the beginning, Board members were enthusiastic about the Strategic Plan. They began to think without barriers – unlimited, abundant thinking. Over the past few years, committees, task and thought forces have worked on each theme and developed goals, objectives, and activities. When the goals were written down they were BIG ideas, but there needed to be a rationale for the ideas. Why do we want to do this? What is the benefit to the organization? What is the desired outcome?

Objectives were written under each goal. Objectives must be measurable. They are our commitment to action. Each objective has an action plan. The action plan lists activities required to fulfill the objective. We try to work on a five year plan, so we have a realistic date for completion of the work. The Plan names the person responsible for each action and gives a method to evaluate our work.

One of the objectives from the Plan is to annually have Trustees attend 15 Area service events. The measurement is the number of invitations for Trustees to visit Areas. The evaluation is done on feedback forms that were created; one for the Trustee and another for the Area. The feedback is charted by a staff member and is then evaluated for the success of the objective. This objective comes under "Support and Strengthen our Structure" and the goal is to strengthen the communication between the Areas and the World



Service Office and to help in their areas with presentations and workshops.

Another objective is to restructure our selected committees, rendering them dynamic and nimble. During the past few years the transition has been taking place. Some committees revamped their guidelines and several others have disbanded on a three-year trial basis. These committees were deemed to no longer be effective, needed, or necessary in their current format. Work, which formerly was done by a committee, is now done by a short-term task force. They do a specific job and then disband. An added benefit is that it gives our Trustees the opportunity to have a broader knowledge of our work as they serve on several varied task forces during their term.

Delegates now have the choice of being on a committee or a short-term task or thought force.

This is part of our Strategic Plan. At the World Service Conference in 2008, some Delegates met with their assigned committees while others chose to be part of a task or thought force. One thought force discussed the possibilities for reaching out with our ever-changing technology. Our Board of Trustees has recognized the need to reach people in new ways. There are now pod casts for newcomers on our

World Service Web site. Facebook and Youtube offer possibilities for members to post Al-Anon information to a new and ever-growing audience.

As committees are being restructured, the ability to participate has improved. More Al-Anon and Alateen members throughout the structure are able to participate on a short-term basis, utilizing e-mail and conference calls. With our rapidly changing technology, many new options are open to us. Some who were previously not able to be on committees are now able to take part through technology, and others by meeting at Assemblies or Regional Service Seminars. Looking at new technology to meet our current needs is part of our Strategic Plan.

Some committees, such as Public Outreach, are using short-term task oriented groups for specific projects and are able to have professionals participate. As the Strategic Plan moves ahead, the Board sets priorities for the year and task and thought forces are appointed to carry out the activities. In 2007, a review system was approved which includes a process for quarterly and annual evaluation of the activities. The first Strategic Plan Update was presented to the World Service Conference members. Quarterly reports are now being done by the Strategic Plan Oversight.

The Strategic Plan gives us a focus on the direction the Board is going in order to fulfill its Vision and Mission Statements. It takes us from old thinking to strategic thinking. It gives us the reasons we are doing any given activity, and knowledge of what we are trying to accomplish with the activity. There is a measure for success and a time frame which we try to keep. The Board now spends 80% of its time on forward-thinking and 20% on evaluation.

Over the past five years, the Board has worked at developing a Plan that would connect people – our members, potential members, and partners who can help us to reach our potential members. The Strategic Plan takes us from the starting point to the destination. The journey may take many turns on the way, but the Strategic Plan is a valuable and flexible tool which gives us the necessary goals, objectives, and activities to move forward.

It is the map or blueprint that connects the Board's activities with the fellowship and the world outside our fellowship. It helps us to fulfill our Vision Statement – "That all people affected by someone else's drinking will find help and recovery in every community" and the Mission to "Anticipate the future and Al-Anon's place in it and ensure that the necessary resources are available".

As Bill W. said, "Thank God that so many of our service leaders at all levels of operation are blessed with the attributes of tolerance, responsibility, flexibility and vision. We, as good leaders, need to "...originate plans and policies for the improvement for the fellowship." (Page 186 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*.)

As we share our ideas this week; together we can envision a vibrant future for Al-Anon Family Groups throughout the world. Strategic planning will give us the map to reach our goals.

### Discussion:

The meeting participants agreed this was a timely topic for their service structures. Highlights of comments made are:

- Strategic planning is about having a vision and building the steps to get us to that goal; it provides focus so we are not wasting our energy.
- Strategic planning is a business approach to recovery; members think being organized is not what we do in Al-Anon.
- It is an opportunity to keep people engaged in shorter tasks that do not require lengthy commitments. Now too few people do all the work and then leave.
- Strategic Plan breaks down the barriers of age, distance, etc. and gives members a tool for participating. In alcoholic homes we were expected to do things and never taught how to do them.

- New ideas break down barriers and allow people to participate.
- There is a misunderstanding of Tradition Nine in our fellowship. We believe that there is no organization and we cannot be well-organized.
- Our board became problem-solvers, not visionaries. We reacted to what was happening to us, not planning where we wanted to go.
- The board must function for the Al-Anon organization in a way that the organization supports the growth of the fellowship.

A WSO comment in response to a request for a template of the WSO Board of Trustees Strategic Plan was that the WSO is ready to share the materials–templates, Power Point presentations. However, it was pointed out that Judy's presentation is probably more useful than forms.

The example was given that when you sit in your group and you talk about the Steps and Traditions, the world seems very lovely. But when you go home, and you have to take what you heard in the meeting and make that work with your family, it's not always so great. That's what happens to us in service. We take what we learned in the meeting, and in the service meeting we act like we are in our family. And sometimes that is good, if we use the principles, but when we don't, it's just like it is at home – chaos. And then we wonder: "Why don't people want to come back?"

It was suggested that we should think how we can move out of this culture of conflict into a culture of trust. Part of the necessity to be able to think strategically is to be able to believe that everyone is competent. You have to have confidence in the competence of your partners.

When you give someone a job, you tell them what the expectations for the job are. And then you let them figure out the details about how to get there. And you let go, but you still ask for periodic reports of the progress, not of the steps, but where they are in the work. That's the Board's role in evaluation and oversight. The hardest part of this as you move from a problem-solving board is the idea to look at what the goal is, look at the method you are going to evaluate, whether you achieve the goal and keep the focus on are we making progress.

This is a process. Remember TTT (Things Take Time). When we invite people to do service, we need to have a conversation about the limits–give them a check list.

## Strengthening Our Understanding at Every Level of Service

*Päivi K., Finland*

My dear Al-Anon/Alateen Family, my name is Päivi and I am a family member of several alcoholics. Thank you for sharing your lives which give me the opportunity to live mine. My topic is "Strengthening Our Understanding at Every Level of Service."

### IAGSM and the Group Level

We are people blessed with great love. First we have loved and understood ourselves and our relatives so greatly that we have come to Al-Anon/Alateen. Secondly our love and understanding of our fellowship has been so deep that we have decided to serve it for a long time. We have had the opportunity to receive the message of Al-Anon/Alateen. As part of Al-Anon's mutual help, we shall never lose the fact of having loved, no matter how great losses we may experience. Being part of the fellowship was first-help and comfort in the beginning.

Later on, the recovery and the love of the fellowship have made us more tolerant. Tolerance is the key to accept things which you cannot change. The loving and understanding person does not condemn. Alcoholism is a disease and should be treated as such. With the wonderful power greater than alcoholism, there are things we can courageously change and others which we just have to accept with serenity. In time, we shall get the wisdom to know the difference. By attending the meetings and using the Steps, Traditions, Concepts of Service, slogans, and Conference Approved Literature, we have the chance to live our lives as serenely as we can. We may have problems, but we are never alone. We are more powerful than we think. We may cry, but in our tears we shall at least not be mean.

One old ironic and metaphorical Finnish expression of Al-Anon's (and A.A.'s) character is referring to it as a secret society or even secret army working under ground level. When I attended the IAGSM in Virginia Beach in 2006, it certainly did not look like a secret army with the sun shining and 52 people doing their daily work at the WSO. Having all these warm and loving people around me, I thought how easy it would be to live forever in a servant's paradise, like I felt there.

Back at home, it is possible for me to be strong in service by using the Al-Anon tools. It is essential to keep coming back to the meetings because it is not a secret society. Even if it is a rainy evening in December, and only a few of us show up. Seeing what's going on and meeting all the people gives me the feeling of belonging to my group. Others have problems like mine and they are here to share them with me. That way I shall not lose my powerlessness from the First

Step. Isn't it strange that I should not lose my powerlessness? Being part of the group gives me the chance of being part of the reasonable decisions made by the group, like keeping business meetings, gently sharing the service jobs with new people, or using the clock, or having new interesting ideas for a meeting topic.

When keeping myself interested and involved in the group, it is sure that somebody else feels the same. When sharing my courage, strength, and hope, I can speak from my heart about problems and dark days as well in a fresh way which may help others as well. It helps a lot to know that the outcome of my service is not my business, but God's. My part is to welcome newcomers as warmly as I can and enjoy their company just for today. Showing that you care about people is very important in Al-Anon—it does not always take a lot of time and effort. And even if it does, it is worth doing. For as long as I care there is always somebody else who cares as well, even in the smallest group. Being part of the group and attending the meetings gives me the chance to communicate as well. I learn how to talk with people, how they react, and how people are like colorful flowers with personal beauty, gifts, and talents. Yes, all people are beautiful and talented, that's what I have learned in Al-Anon. If I don't underestimate myself, I shall not underestimate others or the Al-Anon fellowship as a whole.

### The Area Level

In Finland we don't have the Al-Anon district level at all. There is only Area level with 16 areas, the Service Conference, and the General Service Office with the Secretary. My Area is small with seven groups. Even with short driving distances, it often seems that the Area servants need great strengthening as well. "Let go and let God" might be the best slogan for this purpose. Doing just my share, I can wait for what other humans and the Higher Power will do. When I wait patiently and try not to do too much, I shall see the new servants showing up in time. Maybe the too busy older members will finally give them a chance. If somebody is too dominant, I try at least to see the beautiful part in her behavior—understanding that in her time she will stop.

Anyway there is always somebody with brilliant new and fresh ideas. Even when I am not taking care of everything, my presence may be very important to others. This year I was very worried to know that just this autumn, my small Area will organize one of Finland's national Al-Anon



Conventions together with A.A. Because I was busy with the international meeting, I was worried about leaving my Area friends too alone with the preparations for the convention. I would not have had to worry! A long-time member started organizing the convention. Later on she shared she had been lucky to get so much to do. Now she understands many things that I have been talking about for so many years.

### **Area Representatives and the Conference Level**

Our long-time problem of the Areas and groups being too distant from the Board and Committees has now been solved in a new way inspired by IAGSM. Our Conference will now be held separately from the national convention. The convention is too busy for the Conference because there are actually too many interesting things going on. Even with all the immeasurable serenity the servants have achieved in Al-Anon, we would not actually want the A.A. spouses hanging around and waiting for us somewhere in the convention area. It is fascinating, but sad to see that we really tend to vanish strangely into the wallpaper when there are alcoholics even somewhere nearby. The Conference is now organized in a totally separate place.

This year it took place in a charming meeting house on a lakeside. Because the Delegates' accommodations were there, we were first worried about the costs. But it was not expensive because people traveled mostly together by car instead of by train which is expensive. The Delegates were delighted to attend a new kind of Conference. The occasion was definitely more compact and serene with us staying more close together in one small place learning to know one another without any disturbance. As a new idea, we have started workshops with Area Representatives working together with Committee Chairpersons. We are trying to change the Conference into an experience of recovery as far as we can to attract new servants. The key to attract them is with love and tolerance and faces to watch out that there is no such big boss living in our hearts that might scare the new people away.

### **The European Talk Meeting and the IAGSM**

This year has been special one because of the preparations of IAGSM and the zonal meeting, European Talk (ET) in Finland as well. The ET process started in Germany last summer. Since then there has been a lot of ET talking through the computer, almost like talking with real extra-terrestrial creatures. Having the European Talk meeting in Finland and being the Chairperson was not something I had really wanted. Rather it was a frightening idea. As I write this, it's July. I have just had my first nightmare of the Meeting. Last night I dreamed I was organizing some

kind of a beauty contest. Anyway, if we Finnish members help one another as a strong team, have something to give to the European structures—then me being the Chairperson might be worth some nightmares. They don't kill me after all. Maybe this is what's called leadership.

The organizing of the IAGSM in Finland has been a great experience of recovery. We have really put our faithful Al-Anon horses in front of the carriage and not behind it. It is amazing that there are even some new fresh ones in the good old stable! Because there are only a few of the earlier IAGSM delegates around, we have had to talk about it a lot. Now all of us know much more about IAGSM. With more knowledge about the IAGSM, there is more knowledge about the World Service Conference and the WSO, too. That means more knowledge about our Finnish Structure as well.

Al-Anon in Finland is part of an international fellowship and not the baby sister of Finnish A.A. Living close to alcoholics makes us easily think of ourselves as the center of the universe. Realizing and enjoying our freedom in certain limits makes new fruitful ideas get through little-by-little. Like fund-raising for example. Unless your structure has "Dagobert Duck's" [Scrooge McDuck] richness you have to discuss money when it is needed. Critical opinions are vital, but never trying anything new means you need neither money nor talking. Shortly, if you don't change anything, then nothing changes. Without this process we would have lost an important lesson of recovery.

### **Discussion**

One Delegate shared the talk was very inspiring because she saw how one can broaden one's perspective and vision. "I sometimes lack courage. When my shortcomings are connected with fear, my perspective is shortened. However when I put aside the fear, my perspective broadens and I get a greater vision. This sharing is an important contribution to translate."

To me the key words here are "at every level". For me it's easy when I am in the group, in the district, in the Area. The more I commit to service, the more experience I have to widen my understanding and my willingness to communicate and to make others feel part of something.

The comment was made that the function of the Nominating Committee was not clear for their structure. I understand that it works mainly for Trustees. We would like to know if in other structures, the Nominating Committee is used for asking about the skills of the members. If the Nominating Committee can be used for searching for trusted servants other than Trustees.

A Delegate shared how their Nominating Committee works. "We have three Board meetings a year and the

Nominating Committee consisting of Trustee members meets as well. At the Conference, the Nominating Committee meets with selected Area Delegates to get input from the Areas. We use Nominating forms and ask for service records (what service people have done, like GR, and how long they held the position etc.). There is also an area for work outside of Al-Anon. So we get information about the other skills that they have. When these forms come in, we send them out with a grading sheet to the members of the Nominating Committee and Area Delegates. They grade them according to the skills they listed that might be useful. When the Nominating Committee receives the forms back, they are discussed and the recommended nominees are passed on to the Board. Ideally the Board accepts and takes the Nominating Committee's recommendations. Then the Conference gives the traditional approval."

I want to share an experience about not having a process in place. In 2005, one member almost nominated herself as a Chairperson of a Committee. We had to say: "No, thanks." Many people were very angry and we had to explain that it is the job of the Board of Trustees to nominate the chairperson. People were not happy about that because they felt that the Board had too much power. So we decided to establish a Nominating Committee and create a guideline. In the guideline, we described what skills a Chairperson needs.

We have a wonderful Nominating Committee and process. We have very few applicants, often only one. We have a lot of discussion at our Board, why aren't people coming forward. We have made it an unwritten duty of the Trustees to "talent-spot" the Conference and really look for the Delegates who would be suited for the Board. We do approach people and try to get them to apply for jobs. We have to be very proactive. Since we have the Nominating Process in place, if we have only one applicant and that person is not the right fit, we ask a Trustee already in place to stand until we find the right person.

We send out a notice to the Delegates, with a résumé form. We ask that they are returned to us by a certain date. We do it with Regional Trustee and Trustees at-Large positions. On the back of the résumé form we list some requirements. We let them know to be prepared to give 21-60 days a year of time (going out to Areas, Board time, coming to IAGSM, International Convention, WSO, etc).

In our résumé form we ask for time and service. We have a requirement that you must have 10 years in the program and service work above the group level; in other words Group Representative and above. Then we have questions that we ask. One of them is about your interpretation of a Concept. Another is what kind of things have you done in your personal life that would be useful as a Board member. Every year we come up with a new question and we send

that out to the potential candidates as well.

We are trying to discover new ways to go out and seek qualified people. We are talking about going out to Assemblies looking for people face-to-face. There we will mention that we are looking for people and what kind of candidates we are looking for. Maybe at the Assembly we can ask the Chairperson, or at any kind of gathering we ask the person who is in charge, if he could gather people for a tea or something. There we could tell them what we are looking for and tell them how exciting it is to be a Trustee. We tell about the work, commitment, enthusiasm, and personal growth.

We are talking about understanding service at all levels. I was in Al-Anon for 12 years before I was a Group Representative, because it was not appealing to me at all. The reports in our group didn't sound appealing. This wasn't for me, but by accident I got there. At my first Assembly I thought the Area Officers and Coordinators were untouchable. It was not appealing either. But then our Alternate Delegate invited District Representatives to come and join her for lunch. We sat at a round table and we could ask questions and talk to her. Suddenly a new world broadened for me.

When sharing as a leader you should share how you started. When people see you in your current service position as Trustee, they don't realize that you started in the group at that little table and you have applied all the principles in your life and gone through many service positions. They always feel frightened of applying for any position, because they feel they cannot do it. But if you tell where you started, they get encouragement.

We recently changed a few things about trying to strengthen our structure and improve understanding. One of them was an event that used to happen on the first night of our Conference. On the Friday night we used to have an open meeting where Delegates shared about their service history. Unfortunately they told horror stories. No wonder we have no volunteers. So we changed it. At the last Conference we did a short presentation explaining what our GSO does. We talked about balancing business with spirituality and explained a lot. We also introduced the Delegates. It was very basic and fundamental, but people understood. We had a few people speak and we asked them to share about their personal story more than their service history. At Board we try to do succession planning. When someone is leaving, we look for the person who is going to take that position next. We have made the mistake a couple of times, thinking that having somebody there is better than nobody, but that's not wise. We try to get people to understand more about their roles. We don't assume things. We give guidelines to encourage rotation of service.

# Anonymity – Al-Anon is Not a Secret

Elisabeth R., Switzerland (German-speaking)

I am Al-Anon member from Switzerland and second term IAGSM Delegate.

When I got the lovely invitation to write my thoughts and experiences about the topic “Anonymity – Al-Anon is Not a Secret” I first got a wide range of synonyms whose meanings cannot be used in connection with our fellowship at all. Our concept of anonymity does not correspond to any kind of terms like mystery, occultism, enigma, or even a cell of an underground. Our community shall not be hidden or cryptic. On the contrary, it is important that those who need what Al-Anon has to offer have the opportunity to find that information. We all are urged to perform our only and main purpose: to help families of alcoholics.

In performing these tasks, the Eleventh Tradition reminds us, “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all A.A. members.” However, to reach more families of alcoholics, our understanding of Al-Anon and public goodwill towards Al-Anon, the fellowship must go on growing everywhere. Al-Anon necessitates remaining visible and available to those who seek our help. We need to be on better terms with representatives of medicine, religion, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all enterprises in the alcoholism prevention field. We need the increasing support of editors, writers, TV, and radio channels. So we carry Al-Anon’s message of hope with the help of the press and through public service announcements. These publicity outlets need to be opened ever wider. Nothing matters more to Al-Anon than the manner in which we use modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination. Since it is only at the public level that anonymity is expected, such communications best would be taken over by the Trustees of our fellowship.

Nevertheless, there is not the slightest objection to groups who wish to remain strictly anonymous, or to people who think they would not like their membership in Al-Anon known at all. That is their business, and is a very natural reaction. We are able to attend Al-Anon meetings whenever and wherever we choose because we know that our privacy will be respected. Anyhow, most people find that anonymity to this degree is not necessary or even desirable. Once we are fairly sure, there seems no reason for failing to talk about Al-Anon membership in the right places. Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semi-public gatherings. This has a tendency to bring in other people—many new men and

women come along to Al-Anon because of such conversations. Verbal propaganda is one of our most important communications. Sometimes the best advertisement is a good example. By becoming more serene, we demonstrate that something marvelous is happening in our lives. When we handle problems with a new clarity and decisiveness the change in us becomes apparent.

We realize that one hundred per cent personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV is just as vital to the life of Al-Anon as one hundred per cent avoiding troubles is to the life of each and every member. This is not the counsel of fear; it is the prudent voice of long experience. As a result of our recovery, others may be attracted to Al-Anon because they want what we have. This is what we mean when we speak of attraction rather than promotion. In conclusion, we shall not hide our fellowship as “a secret” but admit that we are Al-Anons and that alcoholism is a family illness; we no longer fear to discuss our problems with anyone.

## Discussion

You can go to the professionals and ask them to talk about us, advised one Delegate.

Another advised, at our Conference an agenda item was put forward by one of our Areas asking if we could recruit a media profile person, someone who is known in the public, to act as a spokesperson on behalf of Al-Anon. A.A. has nonalcoholic Trustees who can appear in the press. We have had a couple of opportunities with TV stations who have been interested in doing a profile on Al-Anon, but as soon as we tell that we cannot show full faces etc., they aren’t interested any more. One professional made a video for A.A. He has shown interest in doing a video on Al-Anon. We really like the idea of having someone who does not need to think about anonymity. Some Delegates think it is promotion rather than attraction. And how could a person who is not a member describe what Al-Anon is about. We also try to find professionals to speak about Al-Anon.

As a part of my responsibility at the GSO, my job is to do a certain amount of public relations. I will go to a TV station and speak about our fellowship. I show my face and speak about our fellowship, but I don’t say that I am an Al-Anon member. It is very important in my country to make Al-Anon known, because A.A. is well-known, but Al-Anon is a secret. I think that my anonymity is broken



when people see me and start yelling: “Oh, I know her. She is our General Secretary.” I have been seen three times on the TV stations on a national level in my country.

“Al-Anon is Not a Secret” is a beautiful title. And it is very clear that Al-Anon is not anonymous, but our members are anonymous. In Mexico, we have organized the second national symposium for professionals in December 2008 and we hope for a beautiful session where we can inform the directors of different institutions about Al-Anon Family Groups.

Page 99 of the 2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual explains the policy regarding being on television. It says that if you go and identify yourself as an Al-Anon member, you take precautions, like sitting with your back to the camera. When I am talking, I talk with my hands, so there is some visual. I can express my emotions with my hands. You can appear on a TV program as a relative of an alcoholic and you can face the camera and give your full name, but you just cannot say that you are an Al-Anon member. It really takes a certain amount of skill to do this. It also says if you are professional, you can write an article in a professional magazine telling how you use

Al-Anon with your clients. *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2009* includes articles where professionals explain how they use Al-Anon in their professions. Some of these articles are written by Al-Anon members, but they don’t mention it in the article.

Last year we hired an Information Analyst. She is trained as a surveyor and her job is to survey, collect data, and analyze the results. She took the membership survey and compiled the data into a series of Power Point presentations. These can be downloaded from the Members’ Web site and adapted for your specific audience.

In my town when we started to do public information work for Al-Anon, we asked someone from another town to come and speak. I am teacher and the parents of some students are professionals. My anonymity would have been broken. We went to a school for the Catholic priests and talked a few times. First one person explained why she is in Al-Anon and how it has helped. Another explained what Al-Anon is and what it is not, and how they as priests could help people to find Al-Anon groups. We also explained what anonymity is in Al-Anon. During the break, some of priests explained that they had the same problems in their own family.

We have a talk show very similar to Oprah. She was having members tell their stories and they were sitting with their backs toward the camera. Then she turned to the audience and the people in the audience were introduced as friends of Al-Anon. Then she asked them what were their favorite slogans. They were all Al-Anon members. One of



the friends had the book *One Day At a Time* and she said it was her favorite Al-Anon book. So it was pretty obvious that the audience members were Al-Anon members. This was maybe not the right approach.

My first lesson about anonymity was when I was translating an article on anonymity. Later on, I was asked by some people who were supposed to speak to policemen in our country. A.A. was going to speak about recovery to them and we were asked to speak about Al-Anon. So I was prepared because I had thought about anonymity. I had nothing against showing my face and sharing my story with the policemen. Quite recently one of them called me to help another individual. So it was clear to me that for the purpose of our common good, I should not be afraid of showing my face and giving my name, because I am in service.

The World Service Conference adopted a new language regarding anonymity. There is a lot of information about anonymity within the fellowship and outside the fellowship. We wanted to give more clarity to our members on what you can say and what you cannot say. So that we all can be confident. To find this information you can go to the WSO Members’ website [www.al-anon.alateen.org/members](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/members) and there is a little icon. You can download this information.

# Alateen – A Safe Place for Younger Members

Helen G., Australia

Feeling safe is a basic human need and is something everyone deserves. Growing up with two alcoholic parents, there was a lot about my childhood that was not ideal, but physically I did feel safe. It probably had a lot to do with the fact I had four older brothers who were very protective of their little sister. I lived in a small town with a large extended family and mostly felt shielded from any physical danger. However my emotional, spiritual, and psychological well being was more at risk of being damaged because of the family disease.

One of the fundamental elements of the Alateen fellowship has always been to provide a place for Alateen members to feel safe. Safe to talk about issues at home, safe to share their feelings and safe to express their emotions without judgment, ridicule, or criticism. Safety from broken promises, dashed hopes, and unfulfilled expectations. Unfortunately in more recent times, we have also needed to ensure the physical safety of our younger members and in doing so also guard the safety of the Al-Anon and Alateen fellowship as a whole. Although we would all like to believe that Al-Anon and Alateen is somehow divinely protected and our members are “trusted servants” in all senses of the term, in reality we need to take practical steps to protect our younger members.

In the late 1990s, the Australian Government introduced laws referred to as “Mandatory Reporting.” This made it a legal requirement for some professions and occupations to report cases of actual or suspected child abuse. As members of the community, we all have a moral obligation to take action if we know a child is being harmed. These laws turned that moral obligation into a legal responsibility. Al-Anon has always taken seriously the issue of child abuse, however the introduction of these laws presented a potential conflict with the principle of anonymity of Alateen and Al-Anon members.

Several aspects about these laws offered challenges to the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship and those members involved in Alateen service.

First, the types of occupations mandated to report abuse varies from state to state. And, although in most cases, those mandated are required to do so only in the course of their paid work, some occupations were defined as being “on duty” 24 hours a day. Unfortunately for Alateen, some of our Sponsors were employed in those professions which are mandated to report, even when not at work. Therefore even the “volunteer” work they did as an Alateen Sponsor meant that they were legally required to report any case where a child disclosed an incident of abuse or where abuse

was suspected. As a result some of our Sponsors withdrew their service to Alateen because it was thought their legal obligation was a conflict of interest to the principle of anonymity and confidentiality.

In Australia, our response to Mandatory Reporting was to develop a guideline to assist members in abiding by the law of the land and also protect the anonymity of the child involved. Compromising the anonymity of one member potentially puts at risk the ability to protect the anonymity of all other Alateen and Al-Anon members as well as A.A. members. The guideline essentially advised any Al-Anon member who became aware of an issue of abuse to encourage the Alateen member to disclose the issue to another professional who is mandated to report i.e. a teacher, doctor, etc. This effectively removed the Alateen and Al-Anon program from being involved in the process of disclosure and the legal consequences of doing so. The Al-Anon member involved in this event can choose to accompany the Alateen member at any stage, as an individual, but not as an Al-Anon member so as not to bring the Al-Anon and Alateen fellowship into controversy. We had no sooner implemented this guideline when the WSO updated G-34, which we adapted to include reference to our local laws.

The next significant policy change for Alateen in Australia was in 2000 with the introduction of police checks for all our Sponsors. Although the fellowship was under no legal obligation to implement this requirement, it was seen as an appropriate step to help ensure the safety of our Alateen members. The new policy required every Sponsor and Co-Sponsor to complete a form which allowed the Police Department to check for a criminal history – specifically any conviction of a violent, sexual or drug-related offence. A clear check resulted in the Sponsor being issued a card by their Al-Anon Area office that was recognized as validation of their status as a Sponsor. Again the process had its challenges with variations in procedures from the various State Government departments and also the police check was only current at the time the check was done. If a crime was committed after the check was completed, there was no notification until another check was initiated. During this time the various Areas throughout Australia were developing their own processes for appointing Alateen Sponsors which may have included some form of interview or service history validation but there was no national consistency.

In 2004, the WSO introduced the Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements which our 2004 Conference agreed to adopt. Our minimum requirements were a direct

reflection of those developed by WSO, namely:

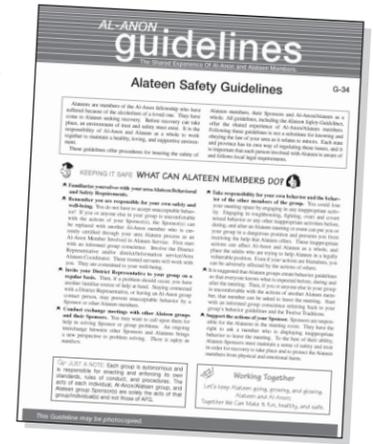
1. Every Al-Anon member involved in Alateen service must:
  - a. be an Al-Anon member regularly attending Al-Anon meetings.
  - b. be at least 21 years old.
  - c. have at least two years in Al-Anon in addition to any time spent in Alateen.
  - d. not have been convicted of a felony, and not have been charged with child abuse or any other inappropriate sexual behavior, and not have demonstrated emotional problems which could result in harm to Alateen members.
2. There must be at least one Alateen Sponsor at every Alateen meeting.
3. The Area requirements must prohibit overt or covert sexual interaction between any adult and Alateen member.
4. The Area requirements must prohibit conduct contrary to applicable laws.
5. The Area requirements must contain procedures for parental permission and medical care when applicable.
6. The Area requirements must be reviewed by legal counsel. (i.e. Legal opinion must be sought)

Two additional motions were passed at the Australian 2004 Conference relating to the development and implementation of the Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements. The first was for the Australian General Services Office to develop a model document to assist Areas in the formulation of their minimum requirements, which was done in 2005. The other was an agreement that the Area Safety and Behavioral requirements be ratified by the Australian General Services Office. Each of our nine Areas then set about to develop their own requirements – some of whom chose to exceed the minimum standards i.e. two Sponsors be present at every Alateen meeting and that where possible the Alateen meeting be held at the same time and venue as an Al-Anon meeting.

The Australian process also includes a requirement that all Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) be registered with the Australian General Services Office through their Area process, and be renewed each year. The Australian General Services Office keeps a database of registered AMIAS whom are allocated a unique identification number which is used by the Area when producing a laminated card for identification purposes.

The Australian fellowship initially had mixed feelings about this new process – especially the fact that the selection of prospective Sponsors included a formal evaluation of suitability. The development and implementation

phase included many teething problems and lessons learned. However we believe that the result is a process which not only ensures we have done all that is reasonably possible for us to protect our younger members but also helps instill confidence from the wider fellowship about the steps Al-Anon will take to attain that protection.



Recently several State Governments have introduced a new requirement for all people involved in working with children (paid or voluntary work) called “Working with Children Checks” (WWCC). It is thought this will become a national requirement. These are very similar to the earlier Police checks however the check is linked to the Justice Department so that any relevant future conviction is automatically reported to the organization you are registered with for the work you do with children. Alateen Sponsors are now required to obtain a WWCC and this process is being implemented as part of the Area Alateen Safety and Behavior Requirements.

The primary principle which has remained is our absolute commitment to keeping our Alateen members safe – in all senses of the word. This commitment is also driven by the knowledge that our Al-Anon program also needs protection from the potential controversy and legal implications that could arise if a young member’s safety was compromised.

We can’t control what will happen in the home of an Alateen member, but we can do everything possible to ensure they are safe in their Alateen meeting. Alateen deserves to have a protective “big brother” to help them feel safe too.

## Discussion

The question was asked if having a safety guideline has led to a decrease among those coming forward to become Alateen Group Sponsors and a decrease in the number of Alateen groups.

In Australia our Alateen membership declined quite rapidly. But since we have done this, probably in the last twelve months Alateen members are coming up again. In one year we have about 20 AMIAS checked and ready to go, but no Alateens. But we are getting more Alateen meetings now. Most of our Alateens come from homes of A.A. and Al-Anon. There was quite a significant decrease but it is slowly coming back now. We certainly had a lot of Sponsors and members who said: “Why do we have to do this? Don’t we trust them?” Talking lots and lots of the process has

helped. Every chance we have had a convention or Assembly, we have spoken about Alateen, we have had workshops. Most of the issues were about fear and people not understanding what was required. There were rumors going around that some child had been abused by an Al-Anon member and that's why we had to do this. It was not true. We suggest just to keep talking about it; be open about it.

When we started this process in the UK and finalized practices, policies, documents and set in place some requirements for Alateen Sponsors, what we actually got was a reality check. The numbers went down, but those numbers were false. There had been no teenagers for years. When we heard about the safety guidelines of WSO, we started to use them and some people didn't fulfill the requirements (age, Al-Anon years etc). The guideline also says that you need to have a clean criminal record. So we just asked about it, as we felt a bit shy to mention it. We haven't done anything more. We have at least one requirement: There must be two Alateen Group Sponsors at an Alateen meeting. At least there are two Al-Anon members. For the next Conference we have a new motion on the guidelines of the Alateen committee. Now we ask the Alateen Group Sponsors to prove that they have a clean criminal record (a certificate from the police). We are worried that this will stop sponsoring. As an option we have a separate paper (a transfer of rights) where the person who wants to become an Alateen Group Sponsor permits the chairperson of the Alateen committee to get the certificate.

In Iceland we too have mandatory reporting. We discussed that in our Alateen Committee and our solution is that in the beginning of each Alateen meeting we read a sentence: "We are obliged to comply with the law. The law says that if we know about a child being harmed we have to report it." So they know that there is anonymity, but we also have to comply with the law. We have also talked about what we will do if we hear about child abuse in the meeting. We have decided that after the meeting we would talk to the teenager and say that we have to report this, and then do it as an individual, not as an Alateen Group Sponsor. When we tell people about this, they think that it is a good thing.

We have put forward the requirements as a recommendation in 2004. At our last Conference we passed a motion, but we are still in a process of getting more legal requirements. In our country there is a children's act which is going to the parliament. Once that is a law, we have to comply with it. We have been educating our members about these requirements. Currently we are implementing the use of an indemnity form.

We are also very sad in our structure, because we have had quite a big drop in our Alateen numbers. In the whole country we have about ten Alateen groups. I really think that people will trust us more when they know that we are taking

all these precautions to create a safe place for our children. I am sure it will be a very positive thing globally.

I have to confess that when you started to talk about making checks to Alateen Group Sponsors, I thought why do you make it so complicated. We have a slogan "Easy does it." But after your report I started to think about something that makes me worry. In my country they don't check criminal records. We cannot check our Alateen Group Sponsors. Every Al-Anon member can become Alateen Group Sponsor. We don't have enough people in this service. I am not worried about their criminal records but about their behavior.

We had problems in Connecticut and we felt that we had to protect our children. The Alateen membership declined, some Alateen Group Sponsors didn't want any part of it. Now the membership has gone back up. We have also noticed a natural decline, because the children grow up, go to college, or move on to something else. Our requirements are pretty strict. We do more than just a criminal check. We require that the potential Sponsor fill out an application, go to two district meetings, and be approved by their district. Then they have to go to two Alateen Group Sponsor meetings. Then the Area Secretary does the criminal check and finally the Alateen Coordinator of the Area sends the name – if you are certified – to the WSO and you are legal. It's quite a process, but Connecticut has very strict laws. I am certified; because I am a Trustee, I went through the process.

About Alateen requirements in the US and Canada: We have 67 areas and each of them has their own Alateen requirements based on the minimum requirements (given in Helen's list). In addition to that, all of our Alateen groups had to re-register in 2004 with Sponsors that had gone through the Area certification process. At the end of 2003, there were zero Alateen groups in our database. They had to be added back in and re-registered. When we started, we had 1,200 Alateen groups in total. We found out that about 400 of them were no longer meeting. It means that we had been giving incorrect meeting information as we were sending teenagers to meetings that were not even there. When we finished re-registration we had about 1,000 groups.

We had a lot of complaints, it was very controversial in our structure. However, most of the Sponsors wanted to remain Sponsors so they went through the background check and certification process. In 2008, we still have the same amount of Alateen groups. We haven't been doing any publicity until just recently. We were trying to rebuild our foundation: getting the Sponsors certified and getting the groups registered. Now we are providing materials for Sponsor and coordinator training and we revised the *Alateen Safety Guidelines* (G-34). We have about 5,000 people in the USA & Canada certified to provide service to Alateen. It is amazing support from our fellowship. People can see that we have benefited. Our requirements two through six apply to Alateens as well

as to Alateen Group Sponsors. Alateens themselves have to obey the local laws. They have to take responsibility for their own behavior as well.

Our Area requirements are very similar with those of the USA and Canada. We have nine areas in Australia. The Board developed a model document for the Areas. That model document has requirements such as: how many Alateen meetings the Sponsor must attend. They also have to agree and sign an agreement that they will attend Sponsors' meetings, they have to get support from the district and to get other Al-Anon members from their home group to sign "Yes, we believe that this person is suitable for being Alateen Group Sponsor." There is a whole list of things. We also did not do a lot of promotion. We focused on getting the process right. We will start doing more promotion of Alateen as we feel safer. We also re-registered all Alateen meetings. We were approached by the school to have school meetings. We meet there at lunch time. The school counselor sends the kids. Another school has asked us to do the same. It's a challenge because they meet during the day. In New South Wales, a school group went for years.

UK & Eire advised they have given responsibility for Sponsor training and record keeping to their Areas. Within our structure we have four different countries. England and Wales work with the same laws, Scotland has a separate law, Northern Ireland has some of their own and some of the English law and Ireland has a totally different law. In UK & Ireland, they change the laws all the time. It has meant a lot of work for us and we have used a lot of money for the process. All the Alateen Group Sponsors are screened under the same procedures, but for the actual monitoring, training, and updating of the Sponsors each Area has to come with their own plan how they are going to do it. That plan has to go to the General Service Board. In our Area we have screened Alateen Group Sponsors, but our Area chose not to put forward a plan for monitoring, training, and record-keeping, because there are no Alateen groups in the Area.

In Italy we have about 30 Alateen groups and in some groups we have very young members. Alateens have each year their own national seminar. They participate in the national A.A./Al-Anon convention. One Alateen member is permanently invited to our Service Conference. So they take an active part. We must have at least two Sponsors at each Alateen meeting, but we don't have any certification program. There are transportation problems for the children. We think it is risky for Sponsors to drive with children even if they have permission from the parents. At the last Conference, there was a proposal from the Alateen Committee to include into the Suggested Al-Anon Preamble to the Twelve Steps an extension with a reference to Alateen. This reference is composed of parts from the Alateen Preamble from the *Service Manual* and from the



*Guide for Alateen Sponsorship An Unforgettable Adventure* (P-86). Because it is CAL literature, the Italian conference could not accept it, but decided to forward the proposal to WSO. The proposal will be considered by the International Coordination Committee and sent to the appropriate Committee for consideration.

A Delegate expressed safety concerns regarding an on-line Alateen meeting. The GSO not aware of any restriction had listed a meeting. The WSO responded that at this time, due to safety concerns, there are no on-line Alateen meetings and asked the GSO to work with WSO while we researched safety options. Other GSO's were asked to cooperate and not to start on-line Alateen meetings until WSO provided safety procedures.

# Reforming and Restructuring Our Committees to Increase Communication

Mary Ann R., U.S.A. and Canada

Several years ago the Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. created Mission and Vision Statements, that describe the purpose of the organization and its future. In order to reach the future outcomes that would support the Mission and Vision Statements the Board developed a Strategic Plan. The Board wanted to define and achieve those goals and objectives they felt were important to the organization. One of the goals of the plan was to develop criteria that could be used to evaluate the existing committees and redefine their current purpose and operation. In this way we could be sure the committees met the ongoing needs of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

We began by requesting information from the WSO Archivist on the background of committees. We wanted to know how committees began and how they may have changed over the years. We discovered that volunteer committees were formed because the few existing office staff and volunteers were overwhelmed with the incoming requests for information. The first committees were composed of staff members and volunteers. Trustees joined committees at a later time and Delegates were assigned to committees prior to their first Conference. We also learned that the World Service Office committee structures changed over the years. Sometimes there was reluctance to change; but as the benefits from the changes became apparent, there was a positive response.

During the past few years, more change has been taking place at the World Service Office. After much discussion, several committees were disbanded on a three-year trial basis. As we considered the effectiveness and necessity of certain committees, we devised the following questions to assist in this evaluation process.

- What is the purpose of the committee?
- What work is actually accomplished at each meeting?
- Who does the work serve?
- What are the specific outcomes of the committee?
- How does the committee relate to the department under which it falls?

For example, a request originated from the Canadian Public Outreach Subcommittee to disband that group for a three-year trial period because they felt their work overlapped that of the Public Outreach Committee. As an alternative they asked and requested Canadian representation on the Public Outreach Committee. We also recognized that some committees need to remain intact. The Finance, Executive, and

Policy Committees are examples of committees that respond positively to the five questions mentioned above.

As the Board of Trustees looked at working in new ways we discovered that we could use a variety of groups to accomplish our goals. In addition to the idea of working in committees or work groups we could use the terms "Thought Force" and "Task Force." We defined a Thought Force as a "Thinking Group" and a Task Force as a "Doing Group." We further defined committees and work groups as originating bodies. Originating bodies may assign work to a Thought Force or Task Force who in turn report back to the originating body. The Board of Trustees is also considered an originating body. A work group is a larger body that can give tasks to a Thought Force. It is not quite the same as a committee. A work group can be short-term, whereas a committee goes on for years. Thought Forces and Task Forces are ideal for short-term projects. A Thought Force may be organized to present ideas for changing the method in which an event could be held. For example, in the United States we have traditionally held Regional Service Seminars that are weekend service events planned and operated by the World Service Office. Last year a Thought Force was organized to come up with suggestions that would make this event more dynamic. Those suggestions were passed on to a Task Force, appointed in June 2008, whose charge is to develop more than one scenario for such an event.

You can see from the above example that the Thought Force suggested ideas while the Task Force plan the implementation of the ideas. Both groups were assigned a singular task and were given a date for completion. For these groups to be successful the charge must be very clear, and include background information, a timeline, a reporting system, and the desired outcome. The charge defines exactly what you want the Task Force to do. Prior to the 2008 World Service Conference, the Delegates were given a choice between being on a Committee or being assigned to a Task Force. Many held steadfast to their Committees and about one-third of the Delegate population chose to join a Thought or Task Force. How have the evaluation process of Committees and the implementation of Work Groups, Thought Forces and Task Forces benefited the WSO and the Al-Anon membership? Thought Forces or Task Forces with Delegate participation are used to move the activities of the Strategic Plan forward.

The following are some examples of issues, these groups might deal with: making recommendations on how technology will be used to engage resources in the completion of

tasks and projects; preparing a presentation on anonymity for the groups and Areas; preparing a presentation to educate the fellowship on the interpretation of Tradition Six and Warranty One. By using the three-year trial method to implement the change we force ourselves to re-evaluate at the end of that period and if we find there is no benefit, we can adapt the change, reconsider the change, request another three-year trial, or decide to abandon the effort.

With the formation of Thought and Task Forces and the use of e-mail and conference calls, we can complete tasks in a short amount of time thus maximizing our efficiency. For example, a Task Force was convened to produce the *Reserve Fund Guideline* (G-41) that would be a tool to educate the groups, Districts, and Areas in the use of their contributions. This group was comprised of Trustees, staff, and Delegate members who developed the narrative text. The design was delegated to the WSO staff. The project was completed within six months from the time it began and the completed product handed out to members at the Conference.

The Alateen Advisory Committee is currently operating on a three – year trial basis. Instead of having the same Alateens meet at the WSO two times a year, the Committee meets in three different regions of the United States and Canada each year. Alateens from the Area where the meeting is held are asked to submit their resumes to join the Committee. This is another good example of reaching out and giving more members an opportunity to participate.

Another action that has increased membership participation and opened the door to communication is the use of conference calling between the staff member of the WSO Committee and the Coordinators in the Areas. For example, the Associate Director of Fellowship Communication periodically holds a conference call for one hour with all of the Area Literature Coordinators. An agenda is e-mailed to the participants prior to the call so they have an opportunity to prepare for a discussion.

We know that our members are our most valuable resource and that their lifestyles today are very different from the early days of Al-Anon. We also know members wish to give service to Al-Anon to help others recover from the effects of alcoholism and by doing so improve their own personal growth. In contrast to the early days of Al-Anon, today most members work. As the world moves at a faster

## **Board Vision Statement**

**All people affected by someone else's drinking will find help and recovery in every community.**

## **Board Mission Statement**

**Anticipate the future and Al-Anon's place in it and ensure that the necessary resources are available.**

pace members are unwilling to take on long-term commitments and prefer short-term tasks. They need to find ways to serve that can be easily managed in their busy lives. By using technology, we can accommodate more members and increase our pool of resources.

As we restructure the committees, we can broaden the geographic areas of participation. Using our available technology we are able to utilize the talents of members from all over the United States and Canada for these short-term projects. A quarterly trip to the World Service Office for at-large members serving one-year terms is no longer required. We are able to have professionals on committees, when indicated, and may utilize the experience of Past Trustees and Delegates as well as members who have expertise and talents needed for special projects.

In December of 2007, a Selected Committee Task Force was appointed to compile background material on the 14 Selected Committees. From this information a brief history was written and presented to the 2008 WSC. After the historical presentation the Committees went into breakout sessions and responded to a questionnaire designed to address the relevancy of their work, how best it could be accomplished in the future, what members were best suited for this work and how technology could benefit the Committee. Delegate members of the Committees that meet at the World Service Conference agreed that by using technology, they could communicate more often, and as Delegates have a more active role. Frequent communication during the year would improve the preparation of information being brought to the Conference resulting in a reduction of time needed for the Committee to meet and allowing more time at the Conference for training workshops.

Our research has shown that over the years Al-Anon has changed the way it operates as we continually look for ways to reach those people who are affected by someone else's drinking. Technology allows us to include volunteer members with the necessary expertise that, because of travel distance, might otherwise not be able to participate in Committees, Work Groups, Thought Forces, and Task Forces. We are able to communicate more directly with members of the fellowship allowing a greater exchange of information to occur. When information is communicated directly to the concerned parties, such as what occurs in Area Coordinator conference calls, it is more accurate.

As we move forward, we ask ourselves whether our activities are strategic in thinking or old thinking? Have we held the doors to communication open by utilizing our vast resource of members? Does our thinking support our Mission and Vision Statements and do our actions accurately communicate this message to the members of the fellowship and those still suffering who have yet to find us?

### Discussion

Two questions asked at the start of the discussion were:

In my service structure the Board adopted a Vision and Mission Statement. It was before I arrived on Board. I don't feel attached to it, because it is somebody else's idea. How is the attachment and commitment maintained? How do new board members develop attachment?

In my service structure, the Delegates are on panels as part of the Literature Committee or the Magazine Committee. I have been a Delegate and a panel member and also the Literature Committee Chair having Delegates in panel. Delegates' participation is not very active. What suggestions can you give to increase the participation?

When I came on the Board, they already had their Mission and Vision Statements. I had a Board member as my mentor, who told me before my first Board meeting: "Before you come, empty your head from all pre-conceived ideas". You are now looking at the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon." It was very important to me, because I did have pre-conceived ideas. I was open to listening to the background information, and particularly to when they said that the Board speaks with one voice.

Another Delegate advised we have made changes to some of our committees. We had CPC, Institutions, and PI committees, but we decided to have one PI committee. We do operate in a similar way as the Thought Force and Task Force concept described. But we do have sub-committees. We have one looking into purchasing property, another for developing a membership survey, and one looking into introducing an out-of-town Trustee on the Board.

How to make participation a successful experience?

WSO shared service must be about people feeling successful. What we are trying to do is find a way to say: "You are important, and we are not going to waste your time on meaningless tasks." These Task Forces, Work Groups, and Thought Forces have allowed the Delegates to focus on one very tightly framed question that can be solved. The Task Forces and Thought Forces can move us away from a structure that worked when we first grew but no longer fits what we are doing today. For example, our Literature Committee is going to change its focus. We are going to focus on how do we make the membership aware what's in the literature that we already have. We are trying to move people away from the idea that you need personal recognition for what you have done, toward more about how we can bring the knowledge of what is in our literature to the groups. We have tried to re-align our resources in a way that people see value in their work. If you only have one job to do in a committee for the entire year, then have a Task Force do it.

Our Board is currently restructuring our whole process. We found that people from the GSO visiting the Areas is the only way we can get to the Areas. We also have Delegates assigned to selected committees. It has been working for us for six years. We found that our districts were not working properly. So now we have our Delegates and District Representatives working together. Also we now have a service meeting before our Area Meeting.

We have not sent any one to the World Service Conference (WSC) since 1977. It would be interesting to visit the WSC, because then we could better understand what you talk about. We have only a few Committees, and then we have Work Groups. It tends to be so that people disappear from the Work Groups, and finally one person is the Work Group. The Editorial Committee works pretty well because they know what to do. The Alateen Committee has a clear focus. In our structure, the Committee members think and also do the work.

We changed our Conference structure a few years ago. We started to minimize the reporting time. We have a summary of reports as a result this gives us more time for a discussion. The change made the Conference much more vital and exciting. We do workshops and use time to get to know each other. There was a mindset of a hierarchy, but people learned that we (at the GSO) are just ordinary Al-Anon members just like them, dealing with alcoholism. We had more and more Areas wanting Chairmen of the Standing Committees to come visit and do presentations. It has opened up a completely new direction for us.

Nowadays we have workshops at our Conference, e.g. on Finance and the Board, and the role of the International Delegate, etc. I showed photos from the IAGSM and European Talk. People could see the real faces of those I spoke about in my report.

## A Shared Experience – The Value of the 2007 Trial Zonal Meeting

Inga V.E., Germany

My name is Inga and I am one of the IAGSM Delegates of the German structure. Before I was asked to give a report about the Trial European 2007 Zonal Meeting. I was curious, if I would be asked to give a report about an important topic. When Marsha's e-mail came in, I felt very honored. And I still do. Beside the honor, it is a pleasure to me to speak about this topic.

How did the European structures come about the idea of having a Trial Zonal Meeting? The German Board of Trustees had the discussion and agreed we should ask the European structures if they would be interested in a common meeting. The Board wasn't sure, if the WSO would appreciate this and first wanted to make sure that there wouldn't be any problem. These thoughts were discussed in 2006 before the last IAGSM took place. During the IAGSM, we learned that the WSO would support us.

Because of the 40 Year Anniversary of Al-Anon in Germany, we decided to invite the European structures for a trial meeting. We would pay for food and lodging. The participants had to pay for the travel expenses. The meeting was to take place in Essen. This is the town where our GSO is located and where we have a very nice facility where our Service Conference is held every year. It is a former seminary. It offers food and lodging and rooms for meetings and conferences. Last but not least, you can reach Essen quite comfortably by plane, train, and car. So we started to get in contact with all known European structures. Soon we had the first answers. In the end, nine structures attended the meeting with the support of two members of the WSO:

AFG Austria	AFG Netherlands
AFG Belgium	AFG Poland
AFG Finland	AFG Switzerland
AFG Germany	AFG UK & Eire
AFG Iceland	

Some more structures contacted our GSO. They were very interested and asked for the meeting minutes, because they couldn't attend the meeting. Some structures just couldn't attend because of the lack of money. Nothing was known about the structures in the Baltic States; Sweden was not able to attend because of change in service. The Italian Delegate could not attend due to personal reasons, but gave the information to the Italian structure. Some structures didn't respond. Being Al-Anons, we would have liked to get them all on board as well. We were very sorry about this lack of reaction and do not yet know the reasons why.

That's how it began. And by the way, when we met, we did not call our meeting European Zonal Meeting. This

was what we wanted to establish. Since we were just talking, we called our meeting European Talk, in short ET. This name was adopted at once.

What was the motivation to start another meeting? We already have the IAGSM and there is no intention to establish a competition to the IAGSM. Of course this was one of the first things we were talking about. Besides the first and most important reason, to carry the message and share experience, strength and hope, we found a lot of reasons to keep talking.

One matter of interest was the communication between the European structures. One member visited the Service Conference of the German structure. She found it very stimulating to be able to bring back new ideas. While sharing our experiences, we learn about the problems in different structures, the solutions, and how much the other European structures depend on the WSO *Service Manual*. Many structures have lots of problems finding volunteers, who want to do service. The pace of development in various countries is different. It could be useful to share ideas; e.g. difficulties in setting up Alateen groups; telephone service. Outreach work – how is it done in other structures?

In this area, another very important point was: to strengthen the contacts between the GSOs. The General Secretaries usually do not rotate. So it is good to know each other. To have a face belonging to a name. One member of a GSO shared she was so glad to be there, because she never had the opportunity to visit an IAGSM. Another example is a non-Al-Anon conference held in Helsinki which the Secretary of the German structure attended. The Finnish structure didn't even know that this conference took place in Helsinki. Just because both the German and the Finnish Secretary knew each other and corresponded by e-mail, they shared the information. So the Finnish Board started a discussion, shouldn't the paid General Secretary be the person to attend such a conference? As you see, the exchange of information on European level is very important.

We also talked about money. Small structures sometimes do not have the financial resources to go to IAGSM. So it is a



good idea to have a zonal meeting, where they could get the information after the IAGSM report is sent. Communication is important for this reason also. While talking with other structures, you can find solutions. Attitudes can be changed. We can learn how people make efficient use of resources. The question is not how much money do we need. The question is how important is it?

Communication again will help us get in contact with those structures that did not attend our European Talk. For example, structures in Eastern Europe and the French-speaking structures. We wouldn't be Al-Anon if we did not try to bring more structures to the European zonal meeting. So several participants of ET agreed to try to get in contact with the "missing" structures. Our discussion resulted in the following Mission Statement: To improve cooperation between the European structures in order to support the growth of Al-Anon and Alateen in Europe.

This brings me to Alateen. Alateen was the only topic we discussed at length as if we had already had a European zonal meeting before. We shared how many groups exist in the different structures. From my point of view there are quite similar situations. There are Alateen groups with Sponsors looking for Sponsors or in other areas, Alateen Group Sponsors without groups. And, of course, sometimes there are single Alateen members without a group or Group Sponsor. In such cases we have to remember, that Alateen is Al-Anon. So the Alateens may visit any Al-Anon meeting, given the judicial frame allows it. Because we learned, that in Scotland for example, nobody under 18 can attend an Al-Anon meeting without a responsible adult. On behalf of Alateen, there was another very important question. Can we install a safe on-line meeting for Alateen?

This is in short an overview of what we have done that weekend in August last year. So, what is the value of this meeting? We came together not knowing what to expect. Of course there was hope that in the end of this weekend we would be ready to give the Trial zonal meeting a chance. And so we did. We arranged to meet again in Helsinki 2008 before the IAGSM. We arranged also to meet in 2009. The meeting will be held in Essen again, because of the central European location and the traffic connections. Of course, all these arrangements were made under the condition that the different structures would agree to our proposals. They did. We were successful in getting in contact with other European structures:

Croatia	Norway
Denmark	Portugal
Estonia	Spain
Greece	Sweden
Italy	Turkey

Already the communication within the European structures has improved and an Internet forum was established to further simplify contact. Al-Anon is a "WE" program and this is true for single members and for whole structures. While doing service, I come into contact with more members. We share our experiences. When we talk to each other, we become more and more acquainted with our structures. Talking about our problems, we find solutions – sometimes just because of talking about it. That is why communication is the most important tool of recovery. And this goes perfectly with our IAGSM topic. We can only understand each other if we communicate!

As you probably know we had our second European Talk meeting. We shared a lot. We talked about money, equalized expenses, and Delegates. But we did not make any decisions about these topics. We decided to meet in Essen next year and then we will decide. It is a slow process. We are working as if we already have a European zonal meeting.

### Discussion

We thank the German structure for holding the ET meeting last year. We found it extremely interesting and there were so many benefits that have come of it. Through the year now quite a lot of progress has been made. Our General Secretary was enthusiastic about it. We have put it on our Web site and we want to get e-mail addressees of all GSOs. Hopefully our General Secretary will attend again, whether she is the IAGSM Delegate or not.

This is my first IAGSM and it was also my first ET meeting. I was nervous on Wednesday morning when we started the ET, but it gave me an advantage for this meeting. It was really interesting and humbling in a way to appreciate that we get the literature so easily and we can speak our mother tongue (English) here. How hard it is for smaller structures that have to translate and deal with the lack of funds. One of the ideas I will take back to the UK is just stop mourning and stop complaining.

This year it has been a very big step for us: the International Convention, the ET and the IAGSM. Our structure is proud to be here. I appreciated the ET very much. I appreciate the flexibility and the potential for sharing our resources. It is also a wonderful way of introducing new servants into international tasks without scaring too much or giving too many responsibilities. It is a sort of training that does not require too much money. And you don't need to be an IAGSM Delegate, so more people can attend.

An ICC member stated, "I felt honored to have participated in the first ET meeting. To give a little background: we talked about the idea of a zonal meeting sometime ago. The Latin countries were the first to explore this idea with the first Ibero-American meeting in 1998. This meeting

was a front-runner to the Zonal meeting. The WSO experiences the benefits of this type of meeting further when the Executive Director and a Trustee had the opportunity to attend an A.A. zonal meeting. I also had an opportunity to travel with A.A. to Africa and attend a newly formed zonal meeting there. I learned how information could be disseminated to countries that are evolving structures that could not attend a meeting such as a IAGSM. Our hope is that as you organize these meetings more – and we also hope that the Ibero-American meeting also will continue – we will continue the growth of Al-Anon worldwide which will enhance the growth of the IAGSM. We appreciate Germany taking the lead and we appreciate the benefit and the efforts of the Ibero-American meeting. As more structures see attendance to this meeting as a growth opportunity, we hope that New Zealand and Australia may then be able to form meetings to include countries such as Japan and Korea."

I have to admit that I was against it in the beginning. I was worried about the workload that would come to the International Delegates. But the discussion in Essen just woke me up. I understood that if we wanted to go home from Essen and not stay there, we had to take the next meeting to Helsinki. We had to say 'Yes', we are going to take it to Helsinki. Our Board thought: "The more we can have things going on, the happier we are." We also understood that we cannot just ask "how are we going to benefit?" When you are in your structure and you have been there for a long time, you are accustomed to the things there, e.g. we have a good General Secretary and GSO. I realized I should not take for granted what we have in Finland (books, translating, employee, office, etc.) After the ET in Essen, I have a much better capacity to protect our structure. I thank all European structures who took it so seriously and that all participants paid for their participation.

I am quite new in Al-Anon. I wanted to save the world and the old ones said you cannot do it. I can help making a change. In our service structure we have reached a dead-end. We haven't been capable of going anywhere. When I came home last time from the IAGSM and tried to pass the message, nobody wanted to listen. This time there are two of us here. At our last service committee conference we started talking about an employee. The old ones were against the idea. Here I have heard that most of you have hired employees. Now I can go home and share this experience. I really like also what you said: "You can always make a mistake and try again." I won't go home and teach other Al-Anon members, but I can share what I have learned.

Ric B. stated "I want to thank Inga for the report, but more importantly I want to congratulate all of you for being the pioneers that Lois and Ann were. Many of you have been the pioneers in your country. Now you are becoming the pioneers of Al-Anon's expansion in Europe. Those of you

in the Ibero-American meeting were the pioneers to help expand Al-Anon in the Spanish-speaking structures. Two new structures developed since the Ibero-American meeting and five more are developing. I hope to be invited to the Ibero-American meeting in 2009, so that we can talk about the Mission and the Purpose of that meeting.

"All of us live in countries, so we think about national boundaries and nationalism. We are all proud of the countries we live in. But Al-Anon teaches us that it is an outside issue. We don't want to become involved in political models. Al-Anon is not a political structure. Usually the people who believe that it is a hierarchical structure don't understand the structure. It is easy to stand outside, but those are the people who don't have the experience. It's our job always to share the experience. In 2004, I went to India to help them to start a structure after 40 years. They had never become a structure. We talked about what was a group, what was a district, and what would be the advantage of a national structure. I used a chalkboard and chalk. They have now had their third national trial meeting. They have 12 national languages and 780 dialects and one billion people. It's easy to get overwhelmed, but they are doing well. We have talked to them about creating a plan. That's the goal of the zonal meeting within Europe and the benefit of having a Mission Statement."

I want to say something about big structures and small structures. I am not sure how many of you are aware of that Finland is the third oldest structure in the world. They have been involved in Al-Anon from the beginning. With the small number of groups that Finland has they have been able to attend every IAGSM and have two Delegates. So they make a commitment every year that this is important for their structure and they carry that message back to the groups and they do what they have to do to get the money to be there. And that's the model that all of us want to follow. We talk to the GSOs as our partners. We are not their parent and they are not our children, but we are partners. But when we come to the IAGSM, I like to think of us as the members of a family, I really see you as my brothers and sisters.

The Delegate from Australia stated the idea of an Asia-Pacific meeting is fantastic. The pins on the map show why we are not part of the European Talk. There have been discussions about an Asia-Pacific zonal meeting. We already provide some connections with some of the Southeast Asian countries. It is not much. In the initial conversation, the fear was raised that, if there were a zonal meeting, would we then have no IAGSM. We have made a commitment to have IAGSM included in our budget. For me it has been very interesting to see the similarities of the countries that are not close neighbors. There are cultural differences, but a lot of similarities. This encourages the discussion about a zonal meeting for us.

# Workshop Report backs

## Communication: Our Key to Understanding

Nadia M., Italy – Facilitator  
Jolanta C., Poland – Reporter

**First we discussed problems with communication on every level of service. Highlights include the following:**

- Many members feel a distance between them and their GSO.
- The groups say that GSO only asks for money.
- Sometimes they say that GSO doesn't understand us.
- Some Delegates are the weak part of the service chain.
- They have problems reporting main issues from the service meeting or they don't feel part of the Conference.
- Some of the members are afraid of any changes.
- They think that information from the Conference and service meeting is boring and does not really relate to their own lives.
- Some people in service are really "trouble makers."

**What are examples of good communication?**

- We can use our Conference, our magazines, and newsletters.
- We should train our Delegates on how to report information from the service meeting and make it interesting.
- People in service could support new members in the service (sponsorship in service).

- When people start service they should hear: "We will help you, we will support you, we will tell you how to do it."
- GSO can directly ask people: "Would you like to do this job for us?" Asking directly is a good way of communication.
- GSO can send letters or e-mail letters to Delegates and committees and ask how they use all information from the service meeting, what were the results, and what kind of experiences they had.
- This is the way to receive information from the Area and group level.
- In some countries, conference calls are very successful, people are excited about them, and they are very inexpensive.
- Information is passed on to the local service entities during seminars, workshops. There is time to explain the reality of doing service.
- Give description of service jobs: what kind of jobs must be done on every level of service; encourage members to study Concepts of Service; give them tools, frames, and projects, guidelines, and be proactive. Reward Areas' activities.
- Small things can change the whole fellowship. If we want change, we should change first.

## Finance – Communicating Our Concerns to the Fellowship

Dorte P., Denmark – Facilitator  
Arnar K., Iceland – Reporter

We discussed the questions:

**How is the financial information of the service structure communicated to the fellowship?**

**What strategy does your service structure use to convey financial needs to the fellowship?**

Every structure makes an audit or a financial report for their National Service Conference/World Service Conference. The financial report contains detailed financial information about Al-Anon business, for Al-Anon members to review. Some structures send out a summary report which is easy for members to understand when communicating financial information to the fellowship. For some,

this summary report is included in the Conference report or sent to the Area and groups.

Al-Anon business is funded with contributions from Area, group and members, and from the income from sale of literature. To receive contributions from the Area, group, and members, many structures send an appeal letter to the Area and/or groups. The letter varies from being a common, Seventh Tradition letter or request for a special Al-Anon project like new literature, public outreach, Alateen etc.

We have to educate our Al-Anon members of the financial needs and where the money goes. Everyone agree, Easy does it – But do it!

## Strengthening Our Service Structure

Bjarney G., Iceland – Facilitator  
Cheryl C., Australia – Reporter

**Within the fellowship, a goal we could all work towards is:**

- To make the Al-Anon Family Groups name as familiar to the wider community as A.A.
- We could start developing a habit of using our full name when referring to Al-Anon. Alateen is often thought of as a teen drinkers group, by using the Al-Anon Family Group name, it encompasses all the fellowship.
- Be proud that you do service work for your favorite charity.
- Members say they are seldom asked who the alcoholic is in their lives, when saying they do charity work for Al-Anon Family Groups.
- Use our most valuable resource to carry the message – our membership.
- Open the dialogue to the community at large that we have a valuable service to offer.
- Generally, the membership seems to be aging. WSO is trying to find ways to target members between the ages of 25 and 35 years.
- It is being discussed that dual members could become liaison officers between A.A. and Al-Anon which could be a role only for the dual member.

**How do we strengthen our groups and empower members to be confident, enthusiastic service participants?**

- When giving service positions to members, inform them of the 'how to' process.
- UK has a desk guide which is a simple to do list to help them stay on track.
- Tap into skills members have learned from outside the fellowship and encourage them to adapt these skills to spread the word.
- We also need to be mindful of the members that think they should know it all (as our disease tells us so often) and continue to empower them with the skills so they can do the tasks they are so willing to do.
- Encourage the enthusiasm.
- Public service information
- South Africa uses "piggy backing" (joining other organizations) with other community organizations to get the message out to the community. This is both effective and economical.
- Australia has developed a Public Information calendar which has been distributed to every group so Australia can have a monthly focus starting from group level. It's very easy to do for any group.

- Focus on what we have in our abundant unlimited resources.
- Our founders have given us enormous information to tap into. Refer to the Guidelines... it's all been done before; we seldom need to recreate the wheel.
- All guidelines and standard letters can be translated into any language with a footnote regarding permission from WSO.
- Plan public outreach tasks in groups making it less time-consuming and fellowship-orientated with lots of fun, i.e. poster distribution day.
- Continue to develop and encourage a strong relationship with A.A.
- Local seminars/Panels.
- Do presentations to professionals.
- Get training if the GSO needs more skilled people.
- Talk about how other not-for-profit organizations work.

**How do they get volunteers? How do they resolve conflict?**

- Encourage professionals to talk to other professionals about Al-Anon. Access information from various community leaders, i.e.: clergy to find out how we develop a process to reach these communities. Ask them to write something for us to target these groups.

### Alateen

WSO is at the present time in a three-year trial where the Alateen Advisory Committee (AAC) meets at three Area Assembly meetings in the US and Canada instead of meeting twice at the WSO. These AAC Meetings are made up of Alateen members, Alateen Group Sponsors, and members from WSO. (General Service Offices could use Alateen Coordinators, Sponsors, Alateen members, and GSO staff) Each AAC Meeting has local committee members. All three meetings have the same agenda. More members participate and there is less travel for Alateens and Alateen Group Sponsors.

What are we saying to A.A. and Al-Anon members to encourage them to take their children to Alateen? If your kids are sick you take them to the doctor. They may not want to go but you still take them because you are the parent and it's a responsibility you accept. After some medicine they begin to feel better even if initially it tastes awful. Alateen is the same process. Continue to develop a strong relationship with A.A., we aren't the enemy.

## Reaching out to Diverse Communities

Madeleine B., Switzerland (German) – Facilitator  
Izabela B., Poland – Reporter

We discussed the existence of diverse communities in Brazil, Finland, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland, and the United States. We found that in many cases those diversities present a challenge to Al-Anon. Different factors are involved. Some people pointed out the differences of ethnic or national origin, as well as different historic experience, accompanied by language and cultural differences. Let me quote “America is a mixed bundle of people.” Even the Native community itself is not uniform.

In Finland, some people of Finnish origin were re-settled from the former Soviet Union territory and continue to maintain their strong identity. Even a separate Al-Anon group was formed. In Switzerland, people are coming from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, and Eastern Europe; they increasingly form their own communities and they maintain stronger linguistic and cultural identities. They tend to be isolated and they are hard to reach by Al-Anon.

In Poland, the people from the East, especially Ukraine and even Vietnam, form communities with a lot of temporary migrants. The migrants of Slavonic origin sometimes appear in Al-Anon groups. In Brazil and Mexico, vast cultural differences were pointed out.

In some areas (Mexico), Al-Anon structures strongly differ as far as the number of groups is concerned.

Urban – rural disparities were pointed out with differences in economic position and educational status. For example in Brazil, South Africa, and Poland, different literacy levels should be taken into account. Membership surveys directed to rural populations in Poland may help identify their needs. Geographic isolation of some communities makes it hard to reach them physically.

In Brazil long distance travel sometimes had to take place to reach those communities which are distant from the population centers. Specific beliefs and attitudes related to tolerance of drinking are other barriers. In some communities people believe that excessive drinking by hardworking men can be tolerated. It is in a way acceptable. This is the case in South Africa and Poland.

Other differences were pointed out refer to sex and sexual orientation. For example, teenagers and children in most cases prove to be harder to reach than adults. Men are harder to reach than female populations. In some countries, reaching sexual minorities is hard, because generally little is known about them, for example, in Poland. Frequently observed adverse tendencies concerning Alateen are not universal. For example in South Africa, some positive tendencies have been recorded. Men begin to appear in



Al-Anon Family Groups, but it was felt that, in general, they should not be treated in an extraordinary way. We tried to identify resources at our disposal – These are people who are Al-Anon members that know the languages and cultures of different minorities. Especially the members who have the experience of being brought up in a multi-cultural environment.

Money resources are important for translating literature into minority languages, and for financing long-distance travels to distant communities. The long-term approach to diffusing information about Al-Anon is also a resource. In a way sometimes the information diffused maybe very basic, just the name of our community, and the patience to wait for it to become effective.

Another resource which seems very important is finding the right channels for passing information to minorities. For example reaching wives who can speak English and Zulu through A.A. – that was an example from South Africa. Other examples: visiting local ethnic communities by an Al-Anon Delegate, in the case of the Indian communities in Mexico; through the church reaching to the wives of migrant workers; in the US, the target was the Spanish-speaking community of migrant workers. Reaching teenagers through parents and grandparents often through A.A. Another channel concerns passing the information making use of national minorities, customs and habits, for example festivals, in which they are ready to open and show their culture, their food, and their clothes might be good occasions to offer some of our ideas. And the typical patterns of social life in villages may be used just to pass that information. Other channels which were mentioned were TV ads and magazine ads. For example, reaching people in similar situations than we are, or distributing flyers through A.A.

We found that there is an enormous field to be addressed.

## Are We Meeting the Needs of Our Groups?

Jennifer P., South Africa – Facilitator  
Anne Marie W., UK & Ireland – Reporter

We were a large group, covering the smallest to the largest structures. Each member in turn gave information about their own structure and how they deal with the three questions posed:

**How are service materials provided to the groups?**

**Are groups given an opportunity to give feedback about services they receive? If yes, so how?**

**How could the service committee or Board use this information to help with planning?**

These questions, as always, raised more questions, which included:

Do we ask what their needs are/do they know?

What do they do with the information/do we have too much?

Do we try to take over?

We established that all structures provide starter packs for new groups – some with many leaflets and recovery material, some with just a little, but all had a copy of *Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work*.

One structure makes contact with new groups after six months and again after one year, sending letters of encouragement and an evaluation form to continue in a two way flow of communication. This communication varied with other structures, from once a year to every month, regular evaluation forms, and everything in between – whatever funds will allow. Some of this is generated from GSO, others by the groups themselves.

We again established that newsletters are a good form of passing on information and, of course, articles and announcements in our magazines.

Treasurers' reports are always received with “interest”; then, of course, serving our groups through Regional Service Seminars.

One method of communication that kept coming to the forefront was our Web sites and the Internet. More and more structures are putting information on their Members' pages, from announcing new literature, posting minutes, guidelines, Conference reports, to even local Al-Anon social events. One word of caution: Not everyone is comfortable or has access to this method and so some of our old fundamental methods need still to be used.

As with all communication, once you have information “the best practice” would be to “use it.”

Concerns registered by groups are dealt with through districts, Areas, and General Service Boards, in some cases the Conferences. Area reports can indicate problems that

can then be dealt with by consultation between GSB, GSO, and Delegates.

Often new guidelines and workshop models are generated from problems and concerns brought to the attention of our service committees, examples being: group finance, Alateen procedures, dual members.

### Conclusions:

We came up with a few simple thoughts all under the heading – feedback, feedback, feedback. Ask often for it and give it often.

Remember our job is to serve the groups, be inclusive.

Take the lead – get personal – get out there. Use the phone (they do in Spain) (Many members spoke of GSB members going to assemblies, etc.) We know much of our material finds its way into those special places – box, suitcase, bag, cupboard. Those places are called “Never Read Heaven”.

### Discussion

The WSO explained the following procedure of how the Trustees go to Areas or how WSO visits other structures: Each year at Conference our Delegates are told that there is a process for them to invite Trustees or staff. We actually have a written form to be submitted. We ask them how much they are able to pay. Originally unless you paid the whole amount, we didn't come. Several years ago when the Board adopted its Vision Statement, they realized that to make that vision a reality we needed to go outside the WSO. So we have set aside a certain amount of money each year to allow the Trustees to take these trips. If the Area can pay the cost, then we can go to more places. If they can't, we let them pay in a traditional self-support what they can and we pay the rest. In some cases they will say: “We are very small, our finances are very tight, we can't pay.” But usually what happens is that after we have visited they take up a collection and give us some money back to help to pay the costs. The Trustees and staff ask that as a part of the visit they be allowed to tell their personal stories. We let the Area decide how long that is. Then we also ask for at least an hour on the agenda to make a presentation. We think it is important that if we are going to go that members get something. We try to raise the level of understanding and consciousness of the membership. Our leadership presentation says that being a leader is not a bad word. We do conflict resolution, the Concepts in Our Personal Lives, or how to develop training programs for the Alateen Group Sponsors. In the next

couple of weeks, we will be looking at the Budget for 2009 to plan trips to various parts of the world. Some of you, in the past, have actually paid for us to come.

If you decide to do this within your Structures, the purpose for going is to support the Structure. WSO doesn't go to criticize a structure. Many times when we arrive, the local boards will say to us: "What did we do wrong?" That's not our job. Our job is to make every member in service a success. We work with the boards and help where they are struggling. We try to give them new skills and tools to make them more successful and to give them new techniques or new ways of accomplishing old problems. We have all learned that you can't have your Sponsor's program, you have to learn how to have your own program. It is the same thing with the structures. We can't live in each other's structures, we have to build our own structures in a way that it works. We don't report your dirty laundry. We don't tell other Delegates what is happening in your structure. If you decide to go out, make sure that the board understands the reasoning. It is because you will support the areas, not because you are going to be Mrs. Al-Anon, Mr. Al-Anon, or King Al-Anon.

Another Delegate shared our Committees and Conference work very efficiently. We have general sessions and workshops. Difficulty in involving Area Delegates in committees is strong. But we have lots of tools for reporting and informing members of the committees, and the Board's activities. The Literature Committee is working in quite a strategic way. We submit to our Conference the choice for the next translations in order to involve the groups and not simply decide but really involve them. Because printings are very expensive the last Alateen book was presented to the Conference. We have asked our Conference and the groups, if they would buy the Alateen book. We have asked Districts and Areas to send out how many and what kind of CAL literature they have. Sometimes we hurry to reprint literature without knowing that the Areas and groups might have plenty of literature in storage. Some strategic thinking is going on. But there are "buts." At the Area level, we are seeing that the representatives of the Committee are not very active. It is hard to make the Literature Area Representatives understand that they are not just in charge of carrying the books to the Area Assemblies, but we have to make our literature visible.

## Understanding the Role of Committees in Supporting Service Work

Rosa A., New Zealand – Facilitator

Sebastian M., Germany – Reporter

- **What do we know about the fellowship within our country that is relevant to this discussion?**
- **What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion?**
- **What do we know about our resources that is relevant to this discussion?**
- **What do we wish we knew but don't?**

This seems to be an obstacle for getting them into service. The result of this fact is, that most of the work is done by just a few members. Most structures are thinking about how to optimize communication between the Board, Committees, and the group members or trying to find a way to make the service-work more flexible. One Delegate shared, that they have many small working groups with alternate members. To work for half a year in some kind of Task Force may not be so frightening as to be on a Committee for three years.

At least, the main consent was, that we need a realistic job description of the service work sought and that we, the people in service, have to share our experiences in an authentic way.

Additionally, we talked about how to activate the resources in our local communities. Many members in Al-Anon have special skills that would be very helpful to in the Al-Anon service work. We have been talking about sending a questionnaire to the meetings to ask the members to complete and return to the service offices to build a database with competent people willing to do service. Of course, we discussed, if building a database, would form classes of Al-Anon membership. In the meeting we are all equal – in service we are doing the business work for Al-Anon. As we all know, a list with addresses of people with special resources would not break in any way the personal anonymity (check the 2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, page 84).

Finally we have to make clear for ourselves, what we expect from the Committees' to give them a clear mission.

## Spiritual Meeting

### The principles above personalities

Nilce R., Brazil

I am Nilce, International Delegate from Brazil. My home group is in Sao Paulo, and is called "Live and Let Live."

I chose the subject "Principles above personalities, because I believe this concept is a consequence of living Al-Anon's program. Our program, for me, is a gift from our Higher Power, who I call God. I understand that I have to share my discoveries with regard to the Al-Anon program, because I want to share their power with other people. So I am very happy, very moved, very honored, and of course, a little nervous to be here.

I am the eldest daughter of an alcoholic father. I was Daddy's little girl, Mommy's little puppet, and Granny's little flower. My granny brought me up, because both my parents had to work and were always busy. In the alcoholic home where I grew up, I was unable to develop a healthy emotional life. My character defects grew stronger with time, and became very active, especially after I got married to an alcoholic.

In April 2007, my grief was immense when my marriage came to an end. For the first time, I had to face life in a real way. That is when I looked for support in Al-Anon's principles, and I found out that our Three Legacies – Seps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service were the basis for my ongoing struggle for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

I placed myself inside Al-Anon's triangle and looked at myself. The left side of the triangle was on my left hand side – where my heart is. This is where I put Al-Anon's Concepts of Service, because service has brought me here, and I do it with all my love. On the lower side of the triangle I placed the Traditions under my feet, so that they could offer me support whenever I lose my emotional balance, and then I can help to build the unity that our fellowship requires. Last but not least, I placed the Steps on the right side of the triangle, because they offer me the recovery I need. Since I use my right hand to perform most of my acts, I sensed that having the Steps on my right side would help me recover in all my affairs. I closed the triangle over my head to reach a special connection with my Higher Power. From then on, I have been grateful for every moment of my life, I have become filled with hope, and have been learning how to love unconditionally. Moreover, armed with courage, love, and hope I made a list of 12 personality traits that Al-Anon's principles helped me to understand and improve.



#### **Step, Tradition, Concept One: Pride - Humility**

We are not gods, and there will always be something bigger than us to show us what size we really are.

#### **Step, Tradition, Concept Two: Disbelief - Trust**

The basis of the program is to recover the trust that the disease of alcoholism has stolen; we must delegate work and grant others the right to do their best.

#### **Step, Tradition, Concept Three: Control - Responsibility**

We can exchange controlling other people's lives for communication and acceptance. We can decide, choose, and be responsible only for ourselves.

#### **Step, Tradition, Concept Four: Manipulation - Participation**

Manipulating is something an alcoholic's family members have in common. We can choose self-awareness and assertiveness instead. Since manipulation is very subtle, we must face them and live our lives with freedom and responsibility.

#### **Step, Tradition, Concept Five: Dishonesty - Honesty**

We must talk about ourselves with courage, love, and acceptance to live Al-Anon's purpose. We must be honest to share what we have learned, and figure out what is still hard to change.

#### **Step, Tradition, Concept Six: Impatience - Patience**

Being ready to change does not happen as fast as we want. This is a process of experiencing situations that will test our power to do without three words: money, property, and prestige. Only the Higher Power can manage our lives, and He wants only what is best for us.

**Step, Tradition, Concept Seven: Arrogance - Humility**

Humility is here once more to make us understand what balance means. And we need balance to be better, so that Al-Anon can attain its purpose. Also, self-awareness is about not being arrogant but recognizing the potential of every moment. We are not perfect and we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings. Therefore, we have to admit that we have shortcomings in the first place.

**Step, Tradition, Concept Eight: Envy - Gratitude**

We tend to look away from our lives because other people's lives seem so much better than ours; we become jealous and selfish. We may be willing to make a list of the people we have harmed, but we also have to admit there are people who can do our job better than us. Only then will gratitude pour out of us with all its might.

**Step, Tradition, Concept Nine: Grudge - Serenity**

The grudges we hold for years make us bitter and ugly. We must change our attitudes and work together with the Higher Power to become leaders of ourselves, so that we can lead others. We should exchange what is negative for what is positive. Let's remember that God has little use for people who think all the time: "What will others think about me?" If Bill W., Lois W., Bob S., Anne B., and Annie S. had considered stopping to discuss what they felt was the right thing, would we be here now?

**Step, Tradition, Concept Ten: Selfish - Selfless**

We must exchange old habits for attitudes of gratefulness, honesty, love, and become ready to live. We should avoid clashes between our old SELF and the new being we want to become.

**Step, Tradition, Concept Eleven: Fear - Faith**

Fear is part of the family member's life. It is what fosters their insecurity. We must listen to our Higher Power, find out what "HE" wants from us and ask for strength to do "HIS" will. In our prayers we ask, and in our meditations we listen. We are part of a whole, and therefore we must do our part. We know we can do it.

**Step, Tradition, Concept Twelve: Depression - Enthusiasm**

We are now ready. We were born again to share and motivate others with strength and hope, to live with happiness in our faces and eyes, which are mirrors of our souls.

In order to keep it going, in order to keep up with the good work, we count on the Five General Warranties of the Conference. They give us the guidelines along our way, they offer the key to our communication and understanding with the world and with ourselves.

Prudence: We need a backup of happiness, friendship, and courage.

Authority: We can manage ourselves by living the program honestly.

Dialogue: Conflict, although necessary, should not lead to war.

Opposition: Is important. It tests our courage to strengthen our values.

Democracy: Should always come in the first place.

We should always show respect for others, and our actions should always be consistent.

In conclusion, these principles are all part of a way of life that is powerless to change those who are not willing to change themselves. All of us gathered here today, chose to carry the message to those still affected by the disease of alcoholism. We will always be able to do it effectively as long as we keep placing our principles above our personalities.

**A SUMMARY OF AL-ANON'S HISTORY**

Structure	Year Al-Anon Started	Year of First Conference	Which Years Attended IAGSM	Name of National Newsletter	Year First Published
Argentina	1961	1985	1980, 86-2004	Amistad (Friendship)	1978
Australia	1952	1970	1980-2008	Austra-Link	1974
Belgium (Flemish)	1961	1982	1980-2006	Keerpunt	1982
Belgium (French)	1965	1981	1980-2000	Sérénité	1976
Brazil	1966	1979	1980-2008	Boletín Al-Anon Informativo Nacional	1983
Colombia	1960	1992	2002	Renacimiento	1981
Costa Rica	1960	1997	1980-1988, 92, 2002, 2004	Compartamo	1979
Denmark	1974	1985	1986, 2006, 2008	Perspektiv	1988
Finland	1953	1968	1980-2008	Tietoavain	1967
France	1962	1979	1980, 82, 86, 90-2004	La Chaîne	1967
Germany	1967	1986	1980-2008	Intern	1981
Guatemala	---	---	---	---	---
Iceland	1972	1986	1984-2008	Hlekkurinn (The Link)	1987
Italy	1976	1995	1986, 1992-2002, 2008	Incontro (Meet Together)	1988
Japan	1979	1992	1982, 84, 88, 90, 92, 97	Hiroba (Inside Al-Anon)	1981
Korea	1982	1980	1997	---	---
Mexico	1965	1973	1980-90, 97, 2002-2008	Delta	1976
Netherlands	1976	1995	1980-2004	Stapsgewijs	1980
New Zealand	1954	1980	1980-2008	N.Z. Al-Anon Messenger	1963
Norway	1960	1987	1982-2006	Trinn For Trinn	1981
Paraguay	---	---	---	---	---
Peru	1965	2001	2004	---	1970
Portugal	---	---	---	---	---
Poland	1980	1997	1994-2000, 2006, 2008	Razem	1993
South Africa	1951	1963	1980, 82, 84, 88-2000, 2006, 2008	Unitas	1967
Spain	1972	1980	1980, 88, 90-97, 2000-2004	Serenidad	1980
Sweden	1976	1991	1988, 92-94	Al-Anon Kontakt	1986
Switzerland (French)	1963	1973	1997-2004	Sunray	1975
Switzerland (German)	1964	1973	1982-2008	M & F	1969
U.K. & Eire	1952	1970	1980-2008	News & Views	1963
Uruguay	1974	1997	2004	---	---
Venezuela	---	---	---	---	---
US & Canada	1951	1960	1980-2008	The Forum, Inside Al-Anon	1978

Al-Anon meetings are held in over 130 countries. There are a total of 24,552 Al-Anon groups and 1,843 Alateen groups worldwide

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RM 303 HYOUNDAE OFFICETEL  
98-16 GURO-DONG  
SEOUL 152-841  
KOREA  
027 521-808

## MEXICO

CENTRAL MEXICANA DE SERVICIOS  
GENERALES AL-ANON A C  
APDO. POSTAL 5-082, DEL.CUAUHTEMOC  
MEXICO D F 06500  
MEXICO  
52 208-2170

## NETHERLANDS

VERENIGING AL-ANON FAMILIEGROEPEN NEDER-  
LAND  
POSTBUS 3007  
2800 CC  
GOUDA -  
NETHERLANDS

## NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND AL-ANON GENERAL SERVICES  
PO Box 68124  
AUCKLAND 1145  
NEW ZEALAND  
09 309-4792

## NORWAY

AL-ANON SERVICE KONTOR  
POSTBOKS 186  
N-4302 SANDNES  
NORWAY  
475 162-9451

## PARAGUAY

OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES  
AL-ANON  
PARROQUIA DE CRISTO REY  
COLON c/IGATIMI  
ASUNCION -  
PARAGUAY  
595-21-640-065

## PERU

OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES  
AL-ANON/ALATEEN  
CALLE JOS+ DOMINGO CHOQUEHUANCA 451  
OF 201 MIRAFLORES  
LIMA 18 -  
PERU  
62-23-16

## POLAND

ASSOCIATION OF AL-ANON SERVICE  
PO BOX 14  
POZNAN 13 60-980  
POLAND  
48 61 8289307

**PORTUGAL**

ESCRITORIO DE SERVICIOS GERAIS (ESG)  
PRACETA RIBEIRO SANCHES  
NO 13 - R/C DTO  
BARREIRO 2830-146  
PORTUGAL  
3 512 1216 0397

**SOUTH AFRICA**

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS GENERAL SERVICE OF-  
FICE  
UNIT A11, N1 CITY MEWS  
CNR FRANS CONRADIE DR & MANUS  
GERBER ST  
GOODWOOD 7460  
SOUTH AFRICA  
27 021-595-4508

**SPAIN**

GRUPOS DE FAMILIA AL-ANON/ALATEEN  
OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES  
CALLE RECTOR UBACH, 24  
BARCELONA 08021  
SPAIN  
93 201-2124

**SWEDEN**

AL-ANON FAMILIEGRUPPER(AFG) i SVERIGE  
VASAV-GEN 51B  
J-RF-LLA -  
SWEDEN  
08 643-1393

**SWITZERLAND**

GROUPES FAMILIAUX AL-ANON  
S.G. AL-ANON DE SRI  
CASE POSTALE 123  
1001 LAUSANNE  
SWITZERLAND  
848 848 833

**SWITZERLAND – German-Speaking**

AL-ANON FAMILIENGRUPPEN DER  
DEUTSCHSPRACHIG  
DIENSTBURO  
POSTVACH 103  
CH-4601 OLTEN  
SWITZERLAND  
41-62 296 52 16

**URUGUAY**

OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES AL-ANON  
BUENOS AIRES 444-1ER. PISO OF 101  
CASILLA DE CORREO NO 431  
MONTEVIDEO -  
URUGUAY  
+598-2-9156360

**VENEZUELA**

OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES  
AL-ANON  
EDIFICIO SERENATA EN CALLE NORTE CINCO 5  
ENTRE ESQUINA PUNCERES A ESCALINATA  
CARACAS  
VENEZUELA