



**TWELFTH
INTERNATIONAL
AL-ANON
GENERAL SERVICES
MEETING**

*Building Al-Anon's Future On
Our Spiritual Foundation—The Warranties*

October 6–9, 2004
Hotel Eldorado Higienópolis
São Paulo SP Brazil

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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 2004 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting:

Argentina	Haydée R. Mauricio R.	UK & Eire	Ann W. Emily S.
Australia	Lois A. Lorraine S.	Uruguay	Graciela B. Lylia C.
Belgium (Flemish)	Linda S. Patricia R.	USA & Canada	Judy P. Gen B.
Brazil	Maria A.		
Costa Rica	Marjorie G.	International Coordination Committee	
Finland	Auli P. Pirjo K.	Mary G. Colleen R. Mirta S. Ric B. Mary Ann K. Marsha W.	
France	Jacqueline C.		
Germany	Andreas H. Hartmut G.		
Iceland	Ragnheidur T. Gudrun J.		
Mexico	María del Carmen R. Aramburo Gema C.	The following structures were not able to send representation:	
Netherlands	Riet D. Adriana V.	Belgium (French-speaking)	
New Zealand	Helen A. Jenny H.	Colombia	
Norway	Jorun H.	Denmark	
Peru	Monica S.	El Salvador	
Spain	Margarita G. María Carmen C.	Guatemala	
Switzerland (French)	Violeine D. Jean Louis B.	Italy	
Switzerland (German)	Maria M. Liselotte R.	Japan	
		Korea	
		Nicaragua	
		Paraguay	
		Poland	
		Portugal	
		South Africa	
		Sweden	
		Venezuela	



OPENING SESSION

Roll Call and Flag Ceremony

Mary G., Chairperson, International Coordination Committee

Roll call was accompanied by the flag ceremony. Each Delegate came to the front of the room with a flag representing their country, placed the flag in a holder on the Chairperson's table, and then placed a marker on a world map to indicate their General Service Office location.

The IAGSM, whose stated purpose "is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through its Delegates," is held every two years. The site alternates between Virginia Beach, Virginia, where the World Service Office is located, and a city outside the United States and Canada structure, chosen by the IAGSM Delegates.

São Paulo, Brazil, was the beautiful setting of the Twelfth International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM). Thirty-

seven Delegates from 21 countries and six members of the International Coordination Committee (ICC) were able to share their experience, strength, and hope on a global level.

At each general session, one of the Delegates opened with the Serenity Prayer in his or her own language, reinforcing the atmosphere of universality.



Voting Procedures

Mary G., Chairperson of the IAGSM, made all feel welcomed with her guidance. The participants decided to vote by open ballot, using a show of hands, with a two-thirds majority needed to establish substantial unanimity. It was also explained that if requested, a vote could be made using closed ballots.

She also explained that motions would be presented in a written format, read by the Chairperson, and the floor would be open for discussion. Following discussion, the motion then would be re-read by the motion recorder, and voting members would vote by a show of hands.

Admission Committee Reportback

Margarita G., Spain

The Admissions Committee met prior to the meeting to consider the admission of the structures from Peru and Uruguay to the 2004 IAGSM. As each structure was attending for the first time, it was determined that both structures had met all requirements necessary for attendance and that admission could be recommended for each. A motion for each structure was presented to the floor, seconded, and unanimous approval was given to admit both structures. There was no further business conducted by the Committee.

Keynote Speaker

Jacqueline C., France

It will be difficult for me to express my feelings with my limited words. But I'm certainly going to try! We are going to have three wonderful days, wonderful sharing, wonderful friendship. I have often thought that it is quite impossible to measure what Al-Anon/Alateen really is without experiencing these very special moments.

About 15 years ago, I was told by my husband that there was a special association for the families of alcoholics and so I went to my first Al-Anon meeting. At that moment, I couldn't imagine the journey I would make. I was miles away from thinking about the future of Al-Anon.

Here I am today, so my Higher Power probably had some plans for me. Even during the period of my husband's active alcoholism I was able to pray to my God. At that time, I was convinced that God asked me to be "His arm"—to do everything in His place because He was somewhere else. That was my spiritual foundation.

In Al-Anon, I discovered I was powerless. But I also discovered that God was not somewhere else. He was within me. I could ask Him to help me. To my surprise and joy, He answered my call. Then everything became easier—even serving in Al-Anon and Alateen. One of the first things I heard in Al-Anon was that we have a spiritual program. Indeed, when reading the Twelve Steps, I often came across the word God.

Nowadays, I realize that many people mix up the spiritual and the religious. They are two different things, and not understanding that is the source of great difficulties for us in France, and therefore for the future of Al-Anon in our country. Let me tell you about a recent example. In August 2002, we prepared a great file and project with plans for getting Al-Anon recognized as a Public Utility Association. This recognition would have permitted our members to introduce Al-Anon in the schools and in public administration. Actually, the Home Ministry rejected our project because Al-Anon is considered religious, with prayers and so on. Although we explained at length that "spiritual" means "of the spirit," we are still having great difficulties being heard because the government is very wary of sects in general.

Yet how can we possibly imagine a life devoid of a spiritual program? How can we imagine a life without a Higher Power even if we don't call it God, but if it is God, as we understand Him? I



think that members who have had a long experience in Al-Anon have discovered, sometimes quickly, sometimes after a long time, that we all need a spiritual life; that we have a great task to fulfil. It is a long path to follow—I dare say to the end of our lives.

Now what about the people who come knocking at the door of Al-Anon with their pain and anguish, expecting immediate help and immediate relief? Many of them never come back and each time we wonder why. What did we do wrong? I'll be delighted to share with you all later, to find out if you have the same problem in your own country.

The world we live in is full of pain. Our world needs spiritual values; they are central to the happiness of all. Perhaps if people could see that the aim of our spiritual program is their own happiness, first and foremost, they would be more attracted by this result. Today's world is crying out for love. Hear all the love songs and look at those millions of caps with love written all over them. See all the writings on our walls calling for love, peace, and justice.

But can men "as they are" find in themselves the strength to love? Man learns love from love. Man will not be able to love as long as he will not turn himself towards love that is God. In the past, ordaining, ordering, and prescribing was the rule and man submitted to that. Now times have changed. People want to be informed about the positive, practical consequences that any program we suggest will have on their personal lives.

Have you noticed that on TV most of the debates about drugs or alcoholism are made and controlled by persons who do not intend to transmit spiritual values? However, perhaps TV is not the solution for

the future of Al-Anon. I believe the real question we have to answer for the future is this:

Do we prefer to help a few persons who accept our spiritual program and help from a Higher Power? Or do we prefer to stretch a helping hand to educate more and more people about alcoholism—people who are suffering and who don't understand that life is not only about "métro boulot, dodo"? That means taking the subway, going to work, and then back home to sleep.

Personally, I would like to mix the two propositions, but I have noticed that in our country the men and women who choose to attend Al-Anon meetings are getting younger and younger. They are often 25 to 35 years old, with a job and young children to look after. Sometimes they can not attend a face-to-face meeting every week. Another characteristic of our membership is that two-thirds of the couples tend to divorce when there is alcoholism at home. These are real concerns.

Al-Anon asked me to change. Why did I decide to change? Because I loved my husband and had a dream: to live with him without alcohol. Also I received a spiritual education by my parents and I think, in this case, it was easy to accept the Al-Anon program. For AA members, going to meetings is a question of life or death, and so even if they don't believe in God, they start working the AA program and progressively they discover their Higher Power. Some of them go on to attend meetings, but have reservations on the subject of God.

In Al-Anon, things are trickier. Some people who don't have a spiritual life hear that they are powerless over alcohol and don't come back, even though they are suffering. What is our duty towards these people? Personally I think it is important to preserve our program as it is. But we must be careful about the way we welcome a new member. Perhaps it is necessary to present Al-Anon at first, only as a possibility to recover mental health by sharing our stories. My experience is that if we present the Al-Anon program roughly it may not be attractive and may even be rejected.

In the same way, when we present Al-Anon to the public (I had the opportunity for several years to do this in a university) it is so important to explain the length that we are powerless over alcohol, but also that we can find some help from Al-Anon friends or—if we so wish—from God as we understand Him. We must also explain again and again that Al-Anon is for Catholics, Protestants, Jewish people, Muslims, agnostics, or atheists and that we never discuss religion. If we don't take the time to explain this, people think we are a sect.

We have a responsibility towards future members. For me, this implies a great deal of courage and humility. We have to test new ideas, to take initiatives, to have imagination to get over obstacles. In our literature it is said there are three main obstacles in Al-Anon: first the temptation of the abuse of power (I refer to the case of a person who refuses to let go of the key of the meeting room, for instance, or to those who keep all service jobs to themselves). Then there is the temptation of gossip. The third obstacle is that of discussing religion. I must stress this is our responsibility.

The current Al-Anon members have to build Al-Anon's future. If we want to preserve our spiritual program, we have to be extremely rigorous. Our way of life has changed. The new technologies give us new ways of communication—new ways to present Al-Anon and to offer help to people who need it. Is this what we truly wish?

Perhaps selfishness pushes me—pushes us—to take from Al-Anon what is necessary to our recovery. I don't want to be a passive Al-Anon. Sometimes I become frightened that Al-Anon might die. But immediately I ask myself, "Who am I to think that way?" Our Higher Power will never leave us.

The only solution I have found in my heart is to ask my Higher Power for help to build Al-Anon's future. I believe we all have to do the same. This will be the strength, the tremendous strength, that will help us to take some service, to take a share in the responsibilities. Alone I can't do much, but so many Al-Anon members throughout the world deciding to pray and to serve would surely enable us to develop Al-Anon. I have noticed that when a member is enthusiastic with his group, when he transmits his faith in Al-Anon to the others, it is easier to find people to serve. I have the responsibility to transmit my faith in Al-Anon. We all have this responsibility.

When I read the topic of this Conference again, I saw the word *foundation* and immediately I thought of my home in the south of France. Why is it solid? Because it is not built on sand, it is built on concrete. For Al-Anon, that concrete is our spiritual program. I am sure that if money and power were the foundation of Al-Anon, everything would collapse. It is so beautiful to observe that poor or rich people receive the same love, the same help, the same friendship. Powerful as well as simple people are welcomed with the same love. So if we are able to continue in the same way, the way laid out by Lois and Ann fighting against selfishness, Al-Anon's future will be indestructible.

In the topic of this Conference, I read the word

“warranties,” too. My first impulse was to open my book and to read our General Warranties again. Was there a link between what I was reading and our spiritual program as the foundation of Al-Anon’s future? I can tell you that I was at a loss. I was reading some very important rules that govern our fellowship, but these rules were practical ones and I had to read them several times to find that if we do not abide by them, then we can be certain that Al-Anon’s foundation will not survive and that Al-Anon will die. When I served Al-Anon France during the past three years, this was a constant guide.

Our General Warranties aside, it stands to reason that our spiritual program exists as a security for the future members. Our pioneers have taught us how to work the Twelfth Step. But many friends of the first and second generation have disappeared and Al-Anon has survived with their successors. It is our turn. We are the pioneers for the future generation.

I am personally convinced that Al-Anon’s future must go on to be built on our spiritual program. But we must fit it to the new generations with care, keeping in mind that outlooks have changed. The only way to go forward is to give more and more love to the new members, and to show them through our example that Al-Anon/Alateen is good for us too. It is the way in which God, as I understand Him, asks me to work.



GENERAL SESSIONS

Cooperating and Keeping Our Focus: Working with AA and Outside Organizations

Ragnheidur T., Iceland

The title of this talk is based on part of Tradition Six: “...Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Alcoholics Anonymous.” Yet it is precisely this, keeping the focus on ourselves that often seems so difficult for those of us who have been affected by another person’s drinking, particularly when it comes to the alcoholic.

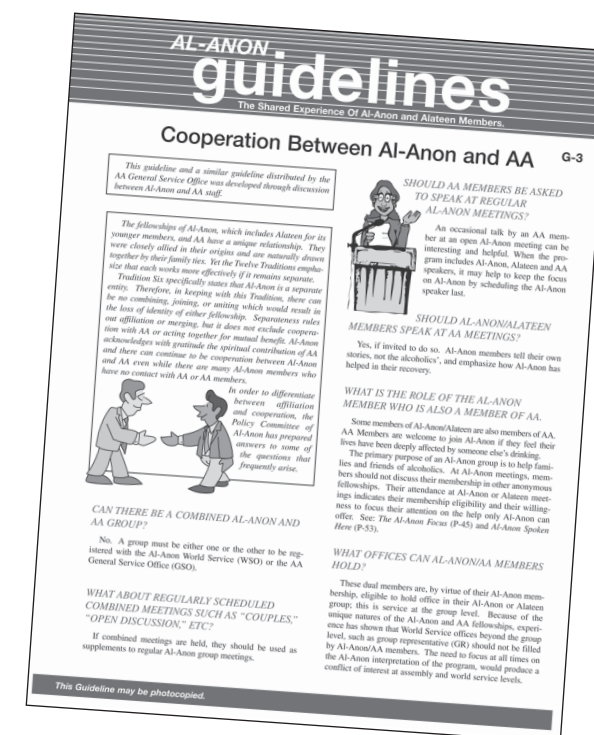
When the International Coordination Committee (ICC) asked me to talk on this subject, it included three main questions that I will try to answer from the perspective of the Icelandic Al-Anon structure. These questions are: How shall we cooperate with AA? What is the difference in cooperation with AA and outside organizations? What can we do with AA but cannot do with outside organizations? It was also suggested that I talk about the history and experience of Al-Anon in Iceland as it relates to these topics.

The unique relationship between AA and Al-Anon

As our history reveals, the relationship between Al-Anon and AA is unique. The roots of the two organizations lie with their founders and their family ties; Lois W., one of the cofounders of Al-Anon, was the wife of Bill W., one of the cofounders of AA. Al-Anon adopted the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions almost unchanged from AA. We have the same ideological foundation and we are both are dealing with the disease of alcoholism and its effect on our lives.

Al-Anon in Iceland

The roots of Al-Anon and AA are also very closely bound in Iceland. The first Icelandic Al-Anon Family Group, which was founded in 1969, grew out of an open AA meeting to which many alcoholics brought their spouses. Those who attended the open meetings often responded to requests to go and visit couples that were in trouble due to the disease of alcoholism. Vilhjálmur, the AA member who founded the open meeting, and his wife Valgerður, realized how important it was for friends and relatives of alcoholics to get help



for themselves. They approached an AA member who had a good command of English and asked him to write a letter on Valgerður’s behalf to the World Service Office. They subsequently received a warm response, with information about Al-Anon and how they could start a family group meeting in Iceland.

I met with Valgerður in July when I was preparing this talk. She is now in her eighties and lives at a home for the aged near Reykjavik. She still attends an Al-Anon meeting weekly. She told me that the first Al-Anon meeting in Iceland consisted of twelve wives of AA members who normally attended the open AA meeting with their husbands. This first family group meeting was founded in November 1972 and the second one began three years after that.

In the early years of the fellowship, there was close cooperation between the first Al-Anon group meeting and an AA meeting that was held in the same location at the same time. This was before an Intergroup was formed. At that time only a few Al-Anon groups existed. Members from the

Al-Anon and AA groups jointly carried out Twelfth Step work in treatment centers and hospitals. They also toured the country and introduced the two fellowships. AA members talked about AA and spoke about their experience, while Al-Anon members talked about how Al-Anon helped the families and friends of alcoholics.

How shall we cooperate with AA?

Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. All cooperation with other organizations should focus on achieving that goal. Even though today there are many people in the fellowship who are not in direct contact with AA or AA members, cooperation with AA is important for the Al-Anon fellowship. AA members who are familiar with Al-Anon are likely to tell their families and friends about Al-Anon. Also many AA members have been affected by someone else's drinking.

The second part of Tradition Six specifically mentions cooperation with AA: "Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Alcoholics Anonymous". I think the answer to the question: "How shall we cooperate with AA?" is to be found in the words "separate entity" and "cooperation".

Cooperation: To define more closely what is referred to as "cooperation" I looked to the *2002-2004 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*. On page 88 it states that in 1966 the World Service Conference concluded that cooperation was the "joint operation or action of two or more people who come together to work towards a common goal or benefit, or on a common problem."

Separate entity: The guideline *Cooperation Between Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous* (G-3) issued by the WSO deals with how we can cooperate with the AA fellowship. These guidelines are prepared in cooperation with the AA General Service Office.

The guidelines focus specifically on Al-Anon and AA being separate entities and emphasize that they should operate as such. Meetings should be either AA or Al-Anon. Al-Anon should not offer or use AA literature at its meetings. As for Al-Anon members who are also AA members, the guidelines stress the importance of keeping the focus on helping friends and families and alcoholics, and members should not discuss their membership in other anonymous fellowships.

Cooperation between Al-Anon and AA in Iceland

There is not a great deal of formal cooperation between AA and Al-Anon in Iceland. There is no tradition of holding Al-Anon conventions with the participation of AA members, as is done in many other countries. However, a tradition has developed to have an Al-Anon member as one of the five speakers at an annual AA anniversary meeting in Iceland. Conversely, an AA member is one of the speakers at the annual Al-Anon anniversary meeting. In that way we are reminded of the unique relationship that the two fellowships share and are able to express our gratitude for it.

The AA central office in Reykjavik has a list of Al-Anon members who have volunteered to take Twelfth Step telephone calls from friends or relatives of alcoholics. AA can pass on those names to people who contact the office asking for help. This is in effect the only formal cooperation between AA and Al-Anon in Iceland.

New trend in Al-Anon in Iceland

In October 2000, some members of Twelve Step fellowships opened a clubhouse in Reykjavik. Soon very large and active Al-Anon groups were meeting in the clubhouse, in which young people and men were more visible than they had traditionally been. The vitality and the very active work of these groups have had an effect on the rest of the fellowship. These groups have brought fresh new trends, yet members in some of the more established groups are concerned that the Al-Anon program is not being kept separate from the AA program at the new meetings.

An increasing number of Al-Anon members in Iceland are also members of AA, and there have been instances of AA literature being used at Al-Anon meetings and members introducing themselves as recovering alcoholics.

We at the General Service Office are aware of members' concern that Al-Anon may change into AA/Al-Anon if this trend continues, and that it will thereby lose its focus and its ability to be a source of help for the families of alcoholics.

How shall we work with AA? In my opinion we should work with AA by using the Traditions as guidelines, remaining faithful to our main purpose: to help families and friends of alcoholics. We should do this by keeping Al-Anon well separate and always taking full responsibility for our share.

What is the difference in cooperation with AA and outside organizations?

Again, Al-Anon and AA share a special relationship, which is maintained through Tradition Six. AA and Al-Anon members are often bound together through their families and as such share a common interest. We can therefore work more closely with AA than with outside organizations.

Cooperation with outside organizations in Iceland

Al-Anon in Iceland has for a long time been cooperating with community organizations and treatment centers that treat alcoholics and their families. That cooperation has been in the form of regular Twelfth Step work, where two or three members go into treatment centers and hospitals and share their personal experiences. There are weekly visits to treatment centers and almost all family courses offered by those treatment centers will have Al-Anon members come in to introduce the fellowship.

What can we do with AA but cannot do with outside organizations?

Since cooperation between Al-Anon and AA has been limited in Iceland throughout the years, I could not think of a good response to this question, so I looked to the *Service Manual* for guidelines. It contains a chapter about cooperation between Al-Anon and AA.

The *Service Manual* states that where the Al-Anon fellowship is not strong enough to maintain its own information service office, it can make use of AA facilities. It is important, however, that Al-Anon members deal with their own Twelfth Step telephone calls and they should always be financially self-supporting. Al-Anon service centers can provide the name(s) of one or two members to liaise with AA and can provide a list of volunteers for Twelve Step phone calls. Al-Anon service offices can provide AA with a list of Al-Anon meetings upon request for inclusion in AA's local meetings list.

The *Manual* also states that where Al-Anon is relatively new, it may accept offers from AA to include an Al-Anon page in its newsletter. Al-Anon can also participate in AA conventions if invited. In such cases, Al-Anon members plan the part of the program that relates to Al-Anon and choose their own speakers. A special guideline, *Participation in an Area AA Convention* (G-7) exists for such conventions. Al-Anon can also invite AA to participate in Al-Anon conventions. Al-Anon looks after its own Twelfth Step work

(for example, in treatment centers and hospitals). Experience has shown that cooperation with AA can be mutually beneficial.

Some thoughts

Why is there not more cooperation between Al-Anon and AA, and Al-Anon and other organizations and institutions in Iceland?

It is my view that the Al-Anon fellowship in Iceland is unnecessarily isolated and that there is a sort of fear of being more visible. Anonymity has become like the rules of a secret society, which may account for the fact that we have not been working much outside the fellowship.

I have a tendency to abandon myself to care for others, which usually means that my own needs and wants are ignored. It is easier to keep clear boundaries if we are not attempting to cooperate. Where are the boundaries between others and myself? If I'm to keep the focus on myself, can I work closely with others?

Maybe I can pretend to be an island, but Al-Anon cannot survive without newcomers. The primary purpose of Al-Anon is to help the families and friends of alcoholics. How are they supposed to find the Al-Anon fellowship if it is barely visible in the community?

Discussion

This presentation stimulated discussions surrounding the ways Al-Anon can maintain their focus when cooperating with AA and other Twelve Step groups. Additionally, there was discussion about how Al-Anon can strengthen within in order to attract members to the fellowship.

A Delegate related that they use open meetings in their country as an opportunity to share the purpose of Al-Anon with AA members. In their country there has been a misconception that the purpose of Al-Anon is to talk badly about the AA members. They also make it a point, when invited, to participate in AA conventions and share the Al-Anon message.

In citing the World Service Office experience, an International Coordination Committee (ICC) member shared that there were a lot of problems reported when the Alano clubs first started in the US and Al-Anon was meeting in them. But eventually these problems resolved as an Alano club became just another place to meet like a church or a hospital. By putting it in this context, members' attitudes began to change. They realized the group could give a good example of what an Al-Anon meeting is like as long as they maintained their

separateness, just as any group would keep itself separate from the religious teaching if the meeting was held in a church or keep itself separate from the staff psychologist if meeting in a hospital. It has now become a good experience for people to model the idea that we can be separate and yet friendly. Through these experiences they were able to determine that the treasurer should be separate and the Al-Anon groups should pay rent. To advise a group to just leave and not consider meeting in the club may not be the best solution. It is an opportunity for the two entities to talk to each other and reason things out.

Another Delegate related a practical experience from his structure through a personal illustration. After participating in a Twelve Step treatment program a woman called the GSO asking questions. After participating in a variety of Twelve Step meetings, she could not identify with any. After she shared with the Delegate, it was apparent to him that she could benefit from the Al-Anon program. However, he stated that no one had mentioned anything to her about Al-Anon in the treatment facility. As an opportunity to educate those in other Twelve Step programs, Al-Anon has open meetings once a month, and invites members of other programs to come. Some who attend these open meetings have found the Al-Anon focus is what they were seeking.

Another ICC member shared that at the World Service Office we cooperate. We have a meeting annually with the AA General Service Office in New York as well as the National Association of Alcohol and Drug Dependency to share what each organization is doing. NCADD is the organization that was founded to be an advocate for alcoholics. As a result, AA now uses the company that makes Al-Anon's public service announcements. AA put a public service announcement in Times Square (New York city) in 2003. As a result of their positive experience, we had a public service announcement air in Times Square last September. It has been very helpful for us to cooperate with AA in your countries at the national level. This is an area in which GSOs can make the approach and discuss what each of you are doing regarding public information. This can be an invitation from the GSO to AA to meet and talk about how we can cooperate. Each message is separate, so it's not AA's message mixed with the Al-Anon message. In summarizing, the member stated, "We can cooperate—we don't have to give up who we are."

In addressing the problem of groups that combine AA and Al-Anon literature, an ICC mem-

ber shared that in the WSO's experience this has been a problem in every structure since the beginning of Al-Anon. In our first book, *Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-5), there are stories by alcoholics that came to Al-Anon to recover from the effects of someone else's drinking. As a suggestion, we can tell AA members that want to bring the Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book" to our meetings that Bill helped Lois edit *The Al-Anon Family Groups*. If the "Big Book" was enough for Al-Anon, Lois would not have written *The Al-Anon Family Groups*. She knew in 1955 that it was important that we have our own text written from our own point of view. Since the World Service Conference in 1962 when the Conference voted that only Conference Approved Literature would be used in Al-Anon meetings, this has been our focus. We can say to members who come in from other fellowships that this is the group conscience of worldwide Al-Anon. In Al-Anon meetings, so that we do not lose our focus, we ask that you only use Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature. In addition to this explanation, there are two pamphlets that are good resources to pass on. *The Al-Anon Focus* (P-45) is written by AA members that share why they need Al-Anon meetings to remain Al-Anon. *Al-Anon Spoken Here* (P-53) is another resource that addresses Al-Anon and outside focuses, indicating that in Al-Anon meetings our primary focus is to help families and friends of alcoholics.

Final comments made by one Delegate indicated their process of cooperation with AA has evolved over the years. They plan together some of their public information work. They have found it wise to work with AA. They have found it necessary in both fellowships to develop guidelines for cooperation between the fellowships concerning conventions. This has helped concerning who is financially responsible for what. When a group in one district wanted to use literature other than Al-Anon, District Representatives talked with the group. After many conversations, the group decided they still wanted to use other literature. The district let them know it was the group's choice, but that if they did so they should not call themselves an Al-Anon adult children group. The group agreed. The bottom line of this message is that it is the responsibility of Al-Anon members to insure Al-Anon literature is used in Al-Anon meetings.

The Value of a Regional Service Seminar, Conference, Districts—Unity is Not Uniformity

Haydée R., Argentina

I am a thirteen-year Al-Anon member. It was the end of summer (beginning of the spring for the United States) when I received the letter from the IAGSM asking me to write about this topic.

What a subject, I thought! We were just about to celebrate our sixth RSS in the Center Region and it looked to be very successful because many people had enrolled.

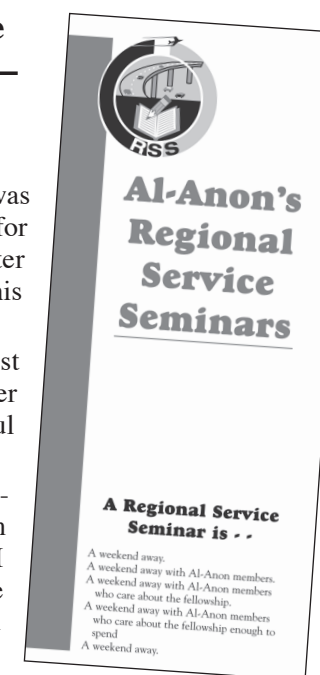
First of all I would like to tell you my experience about the RSS. I was doing service in our GSO for nine years at that moment, so I was able to be at the very beginning of the first RSS. It took place in Córdoba, an inland province of Argentina which is very beautiful, full of hills and rivers—the ideal peaceful environment for it. This first meeting was really successful and we could see service in all its levels, how it was prepared, how many people participated. It was good to take the GSO there. We were able to share experience and to put the Traditions into action.

Although Al-Anon has been in our country for 38 years, our structure does not have Areas yet. There are only three regions—North, Central, and South. Each one holds a seminar per year, the Center Region has the most districts, groups, and, of course, members.

The South Region has the least amount of districts and groups. Even though it's the biggest part of our country, unfortunately it is the least populated. The North Region is formed by sixteen provinces which have meetings during the year in order to keep in touch. Some of them invite the GSO and the Regional Trustee to participate.

Last year after the RSS in the South Region, we received a list of members willing to do service. I think that there was a time before and after the RSS when indifference was put aside and participation sprang up. The Conferences look different since then. Members are engaged in service with more knowledge about it, and there is more participation, with members showing interest in analyzing the Traditions and Concepts of Service.

This year there have been some changes in our Bylaws which affected the schedule of the Conference and Seminars. The Conference is celebrated in April and the Seminar in October. More districts have been created and others are about to



be created. Remember that in our country we are just starting to study the creation of areas. At the moment there are 20 Districts and 310 Groups. We are still undergoing registration of them. During the year we meet three or four times with our Delegates and members who are interested in service. Sometimes, we are invited to groups or districts where we talk about our experiences as Trustees, and tell them how we are working. In addition, a Select Committee is invited to these meetings to discuss any subjects they think is important. All these districts are working to make Al-Anon be more visible.

Being an Al-Anon member for such a long time, I was able to see that everything in Al-Anon is a circle. You give and get; you give the message and you get the feedback (love, experience, maturity, hope and happiness). The circle inside the triangle is closed in unity but not in uniformity. When we analyze our First and Fourth Traditions, we can find the answer to these questions.

In Tradition One it is said that progress depends on unity. Tradition Four talks about autonomy—autonomy that gives us the opportunity to have different meeting times, to start or to end with the Serenity Prayer, or use our personal recovery books like *Courage to Change*, *Hope for Today* or all those pieces of Conference Approved Literature that are so helpful to us.

When I visit groups where different languages are spoken, it doesn't matter if I am able to understand them. Being in Al-Anon gives me the opportunity to feel the unity, to feel like "HOME" as I usually say, with my siblings in Al-Anon, my family in Al-Anon, my "PLACE." I feel that I am part of that chain that goes around the world, helping other people as I was helped.

Discussion

The regional service seminars were considered by some structures as leadership training, while other structures did not see the difference between RSSs and their area meetings.

One Delegate shared that their structure found that it makes a tremendous difference when members on the area level have an opportunity to meet staff from the national office and members of the

Board of Trustees. The RSS is focused on service. An area meeting is usually focused on business. The average member who attends finds out that Al-Anon is bigger than their group or area.

Many Delegates shared that their countries hold regional service seminars. They were all unique yet common in many ways. Highlights of commonalities included:

- Having a planned seminar at least one to three times a year. One had a RSS every 12-18 months and another structure has one every two years.
- Having staff and Trustees on the program to share their expertise.
- Having the Executive Director or General Secretary participating in all the seminars.
- Showing slides of the staff. All commented this was an opportunity for the attendees to put a name to a face and this was usually the most enjoyable part of the RSS.
- Having service related workshops on the agenda. All agreed that workshops give members an opportunity to explore topics further.
- Having areas bid to host the event. This is an opportunity for service in action.
- An increased interest of the membership in service as a result of the RSSs.

Some commented that because of financial presentations at the RSS, contributions increased as members found out from the presentation how the money was being spent.

Many who spoke shared that although different areas took the responsibility to host the event, it was still considered an event of the general service office. As a result, the RSS is self-supporting and participants pay a registration fee.

One representative from a small structure advised they do not have a RSS but could see the value. The structure's Board of Trustees is discussing the idea of having one in the future. To introduce service ideas in the structure they now have service related workshops during their annual Conference.

Another small structure shared that they have a RSS. However, when registrations have been low they have reduced the seminar from a full weekend to a single day.

In sharing thoughts from a district or area perspective, comments were made that scholarships were made available to local members who were not able to afford to attend an RSS. These could be awarded in a variety of creative ways, including random drawings.

In response to the question, "What do you tell people in service that think they should not have

to pay for the RSS?" An ICC member shared that the WSO also experienced this situation. "It is true that we are never charged a fee to attend a meeting, but the RSS is an event we must pay to attend." To attend the RSS in the US or Canada, even the Host Committee members must pay. Because the Host Committee also pays their way, this keeps everything even, as there are no special people attending the RSS. Unlike some local districts or areas, the WSO does not give scholarships.

Another ICC member shared the experience of a small structure that was not present at the 2004 IAGSM. The structure calls their seminars, "Regional Forums." They chose not to use the word service in their title as their experience shows that people shied away when the word service was mentioned and they wouldn't come. Being creative and calling them "Regional Forums" seemed more inviting. In addition, on the agenda they include recovery as well as service.

As a final thought in response to an earlier comment, an ICC member mentioned that sometimes when we have been in Al-Anon for a long time, we repeat misconceptions. One misconception is that Al-Anon meetings are free. This is not correct. Our Tradition Seven says that "every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions". We should not tell people that Al-Anon is free. It is not free. We have paid dearly to come to Al-Anon. We also must pay to keep Al-Anon going. It is true that we have no dues and we do not make anyone pay. But Al-Anon is not free and we want to be sure to let everyone know we must each pay what we can.

Relationships within the Role of IAGSM Delegate and the Structures

Helen A., New Zealand

What is the role of the IAGSM Delegate? What is the relationship with the GSO in our country, with their Board, with the members in our country? These were some of the questions that sprang to mind when I first looked at the title of this topic. So I started at the beginning and looked at the documents that have been sent out to us all during the organizing of this meeting.

First there was the Statement of Purpose, which reads,

"The purpose of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through their 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."

I then looked at the guidelines for a country's admission to the IAGSM that the Admissions Committee uses to consider if a structure is eligible to attend this meeting. One of the headings that struck me as important was the Requirements for Structure Participation in the IAGSM, which states the following,

"A structure is defined by having at least two of the following.

1. A committee that provides services to the groups.
2. Permission from the WSO to reprint CAL.
3. A paid volunteer staff.
4. A Board of Trustees."

So this means it must be a structure that is working towards the purposes outlined above in our Statement of Purpose and has already created some form that is working in its country to get out the message of Al-Anon.

Then there are the Qualifications of a Delegate. The points that impressed me were:

1. Have a working knowledge of the English language.
2. Have a firsthand knowledge of the service structure.
3. Be knowledgeable of the GSO's current activities.

This recommends that the Delegate also be appointed by the structure, and not be self-appointed. The point is made about how the costs should be covered by the structure and not by the individual. These are our Traditions in action. We are in service. We are not just having a nice trip because we have done a lot of work for Al-Anon.

Next I looked at the New Zealand (NZ) structure, and in our *NZ Service Handbook*, where we have guidelines for electing a NZ Delegate. We have outlined almost word for word the requirements from these qualifications, except we have made the requirements five years in Al-Anon and three years on the Board. Then we have a section on responsibilities on returning from one of these wonderful trips. They are to give a full report to the Board

and to the Conference, and to answer any question arising from those reports. These reports are then printed in *The NZ Conference Summary*. A copy of the *Summary* is sent out to every group in NZ and members are encouraged to read them. I looked through a number of the past reports, going back to 1988. These reports are sometimes all that members know of what we do at these meetings. Many wonder if it is worth the expense. They were interesting, but has anything come out of them other than having a nice trip?

Then I looked at some of the changes that we have made to our structure over the last few years, which were influenced by Delegates returning from the IAGSM.

One Delegate reported back from the 1999 meeting about a presentation by a Delegate on changes being made by the GSO to the procedure for organizing the sponsoring of Alateen groups. This had a big impact on all of us. It was my first Conference, and at the time I was involved with the Literature Committee. We were then charged with looking at ways we could implement some changes that had come out of the discussion. We came up with a profile form that asked for details to be held at the GSO of all Sponsors that had been approved by the home group of the Sponsor. The Conference also voted for a policy of always having two Sponsors at Alateen meetings. This was a change that we are pleased with. We have now made further changes to our policy in line with the WSO and put more responsibility on the areas to approve the Sponsors. The way that Delegate was able to explain what she had heard at the IAGSM and obviously the discussions she had with us made a big impact on us all.

A smaller change that I have noticed was from one year when our IAGSM Delegate was also the Conference Committee Chairperson. The NZ Conference following that IAGSM took on a much more professional look. Seeing how the IAGSM worked with things like the seating arrangements, the use of a microphone, and the control of speaking time, this Delegate was prepared to try some of these ideas out. This would not have happened from just talking about it. It was always said "that's the way we do it in Al-Anon." The feeling was that because it was Al-Anon that we didn't have to be organized or business-like. The changes have given us a pride in our Conference and real growth.

Another issue that we looked at is the one of a missing layer of our structure—that of areas. We had districts and DRs at our Conference. It was said that this was because we were small. We did have one district that was spread geographically over a

large part of the country. With a lot of discussion, this area was given approval to break up into districts on a trial basis. Through the contact with other small structures like ours, at meetings such as this IAGSM, we will work out how we can overcome problems and come up with something that suits us, but still maintains the principle of following the WSO guidelines.

I have also reread all the history of the structures that was sent out to all Delegates. I looked at them with a different approach. Prior to thinking about this presentation, I had found them interesting, but this time I was looking at things so differently. I saw the similarities and noted the differences and wondered with an open mind if there was something we could learn from this.

We still always need to remember that the purpose of the IAGSM is to share our experiences and encourage the growth of a sound service structure in each of the structures around the world. We also seek the best way to carry the Al-Anon message to families and friends of alcoholics amidst cultural and language differences.

This reminds me of Tradition Five. Our purpose is to help families and friends of alcoholics. The three examples I have given are just that: one stimulated a major change in our policy, one brought about some small but useful organizational changes, and the other is in progress and who knows where it will lead. More importantly, any changes can be done gradually and IAGSM Delegates can help this process. This is not accomplished by coming back and saying that things have to be done, or by being arrogant and closed-minded and thinking we are alright and don't need to change. It is done by coming here and sharing what we have, by listening and having an open mind and then going back and sharing what we have seen, and by encouraging some changes if they are needed. It is also done by constantly looking at the examples that have already been set by the WSO, which has had the experience of making necessary changes, while always keeping in mind what our cofounders gave us.

We have a responsibility to develop our leadership skills, Concept Nine outlines this and I find Bill's speech on leadership very helpful. We do need dedication, tolerance, flexibility, vision, and enthusiasm, which I think are good guidelines. It is at meetings like this we can grow and help our structure to grow and carry out the aims of our Statement of Purpose, always keeping in mind our responsibility as an IAGSM Delegate to our structure.

Discussion

All that commented on this topic were grateful for the benefits they and their structures received as a result of participation in the IAGSM. Most see the attendance of this meeting as a wonderful resource for shared ideas and experiences that have helped strengthen their structures.

One Delegate said she was impressed with the enthusiasm of a previous IAGSM Delegate from her structure who came back with useful and sound ideas. As a result of attendance at previous IAGSMs, her structure now has a newsletter, better communication from the Board of Trustees to the groups, has begun plans to start an internet system, and is making plans to start a regional service seminar.

Another Delegate stated that one thing you may have to put up with is a lot of people thinking that you are on a paid holiday while attending an IAGSM. However, she shared that she makes it clear when speaking to anyone who thinks this way that anyone who travels for 18 hours, arrives the day before the meeting starts, and has to get up for the start of the meeting the next day at 8:45am is not on holiday! The benefit of the IAGSM is the same way we feel about a Regional Service Seminar. We have an opportunity to meet all the people that form the International Coordination Committee. They have become faces to us now, not just distant people. This might seem to be a small benefit but it takes away the feeling that they are on some pedestal. Now we know them and we know what makes them laugh and cry and that they are people like us. The greatest value of attending an IAGSM comes from speaking with others. Because you can go to the person who knows what your problem is, whose structure is the same size as yours, and who has the same kind of problems. If we do not go back from here with enthusiasm and ideas for changes to make things better, then we are not doing our job as IAGSM Delegates.

Another shared that as a result of discussions within the structure about the benefits of participating in an IAGSM, members of the National Conference began to reconsider sending a Delegate to this meeting. Through discussions between the Board of Trustees and Conference members, an agreement was reached unanimously, using the Warranties as a guide, to elect an International Delegate and an alternate. The role of the IAGSM Delegate is now seen as an asset to the structure.

Two Delegates from neighboring structures commented that attending the meeting helped strengthen relationships within their respective structures, and also helped the structures relate better to each other.

In response to one Delegate's suggestion that the IAGSM Delegates stay in contact with each other for ideas, another Delegate responded that she believed that the Delegates must be careful. Their conversations about their structure should remain with their General Service Office and/or the World Service Office on behalf of their General Service Office. Her concern was if the Delegates are just communicating with each other about their structures, they would be leaving their GSO and the WSO out of the conversation and limiting the experience they are seeking.

An International Coordination Committee member commented that Al-Anon is about relationships, discussion, and balance. Concept Ten says "service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided." We have to think about the difference between our service responsibility and authority as IAGSM Delegates or International Coordination Committee members and the service responsibility of the structure we represent. Some of us are members of the Board of Trustees and some of us are not. The responsibility of managing our structure and solving the structure's problem is not ours. We are the communication link from our structure to this meeting and from this meeting to our structure. If our structures have problems, the link of communication to the World Service Office is through the General Service Office. This is not our job. If we try to get between the World Service Office and the General Service Office, we won't have good relationships. No one is saying that Delegates cannot exchange personal types of information. We are not trying to stop communication. We just want to be sure that the links are clear and thus communication is clear.

Relationships within the Structure and Understanding the Value— Board to Areas, Areas to Districts

By Auli P., Finland

You don't know how grateful I was to have been asked to make this presentation, or—maybe you do know. Seven years ago, when I came first time to Al-Anon, I was so shy that I was afraid to make coffee in my home group. I could never think how my life could change and how many new friends I could have everywhere.

Relationships in Al-Anon are very important. First it was the home group and its people, but step by step the circle extended. The longer I have been in Al-Anon, the better I understand the meaning of

communication and relationships. We are not alone, and by keeping in touch with others, we encourage each other.

In Finland's structure, it has been agreed that the communication channels are Group Representatives (GR) and District Representatives (DR). We have no areas in Finland. We have 15 Districts. So for us communication goes: Board to Districts, Districts to Groups. Group Representatives (GR) represent their groups in District meetings and District Representatives (DR) represent their districts in General Service Conference (GSC) and in the meetings of District Representatives. The District Representatives also have to visit the groups—to help the groups understand and apply the Traditions, which guide us in our fellowship to activities.

So information from the Board of Trustees and General Service Conference goes through that link to the groups and in the same direction back. The post from Board of Trustees will be sent to the Group Representatives.

Our General Service Office (GSO) is also very central in communication. Groups, individual members, and districts contact the office to ask more information, to give new information from groups, to order literature, to give stories to *Tietoavain* (our magazine), and so on. Our GSO also gives a separate office report to the Board of Trustees at certain times a year.

The chain is perfect—if it works. One weakness for us is that we have not specified any clear duty for the Board of Trustees to make contacts to the districts. Communication exists during General Service Conference, during meetings of District Representatives, and through mailings concerning these meetings, as well as other occasional mailings. In the *Tietoavain* magazine there is sometimes information for districts and groups.

Our Board of Trustees has wondered how to encourage our district activities and how to contact our districts. Finland is a big country and part of it is very sparsely populated. Distances are long, groups are far away, and there are especially long distances to District meetings. Fortunately in many Districts, the cooperation with AA groups has improved the situation. Both fellowships organize district meetings at the same time and location. This way it is easier to go to the meetings together.

Board of Trustees should personally contact District Representatives as has happened in some countries. Although the information goes by mail, we don't always know how they take it and if it is understood when the information is passed on to the groups through the Group Representatives.

The role of District Representatives and Group Representatives in communication is very important so that the groups and districts feel that they really belong to this fellowship and understand their own very important roles. The groups are pillars in the whole system.

People don't quite understand the value of district service, so it is not very easy to encourage them to do service. In my own district in Helsinki, the capital of Finland, there are about 20 groups, and only about half are active. There are also problems because of the "age structure"—how do the young people in Al-Anon adjust with the older ones, which are majority in the meetings. We also need young people in service, but how do we keep them interested if they think the district meeting is boring, like one Al-Anon member told me some months ago? What can we do?

Our District meetings are organized by separate groups in the district. Some districts have sent letters to the groups that have not been to meetings for a long time. The letter explained that the Group Representative (GR) is a vital link in the continuing function, growth, and unity of the district and asked the group to send a representative.

We have also discovered that there are some groups without a Group Representative. The group does not get information from outside and it does not pass on information to the district. The group has no one to pass on information to the newcomers about the district, service, or the General Service Office. There are no business meetings in the group and they very seldom read the Traditions. Although all the groups are autonomous, the Traditions are very essential for every group.

We have just started an English-speaking group in Helsinki. There are also two other English-speaking groups in Finland. In the first business meeting, we decided to read the Steps and also the Traditions in every meeting. It is very difficult to start a new group and get people to do service. That's why the Traditions and speaking of them is vital. There was a need for this group, but before starting a group, I was praying to my Higher Power for help to do this job. Suddenly one Al-Anon called to tell me she was willing to come with me and take part in service. So once again relationships work.

The Al-Anon guideline *District Meetings* (G-15) states:

"The District Representative (DR) is the link in the service chain that connects the groups within a geographical boundary. One of the primary means of communication from the groups is the district meeting. Good district

meetings can improve the health of the groups within its boundaries and lead to the growth of Al-Anon and Alateen as a whole".

Because the roles of District Representative and Group Representative are so important in communication in Al-Anon, they have to also get enough information to know how to function. We have organized once-a-year District Representatives' meetings where there is "service education"—or changing experiences—because education is not a good word for Al-Anon.

Group Representatives are given an opportunity to tell of their own district's concerns. We have also shared about the Twelve Concepts of Service in these meetings because they are so seldom discussed.

Sponsorship is our theme in this year, and also the Service Sponsor. People are spending a short time in service, and part of the knowledge goes away when people end their service. In every service job we serve only a two year term. It seems to be too short. People attending a committee for the first time come from the other side of Finland. They might not have had any contact with the old committee. By the time they learn the new job, the term is over. Service Sponsors are now the link between people in service. New members can contact them in unsure situations when they begin their service. Also Service Sponsors themselves can contact new members, tell them how they work, and what can possibly be done.

We have also set up a Structure Committee (or working team) to make suggestions on how to improve our structure. The most important thing is to have a longer service period—maybe three years instead of two. The Committee is just making suggestions to the Board of Trustees and District Representatives, who will bring it to districts and groups. We hope we will have it on the agenda of the next General Service Conference in 2005.

Also regarding better contact with the groups, the Board of Trustees has made a proposal to update the information of our groups: address, meeting-time, contact persons (do we need one or two names?) and their actual telephone numbers. From Alateen groups we also need the names of Alateen Sponsors (do we need one or two names?).

This year we are translating the guidelines *Starting an Al-Anon Group* and *Group Representative*. They will be sent to the districts and to new groups.

Nowadays e-mail is a very common tool for communication. Last year was Al-Anon's 50th Anniversary celebration in Finland. A big part of communication was made by e-mail. Our Public

Information Committee worked all over the Finland contacting members, districts, and groups. We had a big press campaign and there were also interviews on the radio. Relationships were especially important and they worked in this situation. Because our groups and districts don't own e-mail addresses, the information went through Al-Anon members as an e-mail contact, by mail to our General Service Office, and also through *Tietoavain*, the magazine.

We are also considering having e-mail addresses for all our districts and maybe all our groups in the future. It would be interesting to hear your experiences.

The value of relationships in Al-Anon seems to grow. We have to trust each other, to respect each other, and to communicate with each other. The fellowship needs us. Relationships will work if we work. Call your Al-Anon friend in your group, in your District, in your Area. Have a cup of coffee sometime. Take time after the meetings. Keep it fun and make it interesting.

Discussion

All shared that communication is key in insuring that information is passed on in a timely way. One-on-one contact is still seen as favored communication in developing relationships with each other.

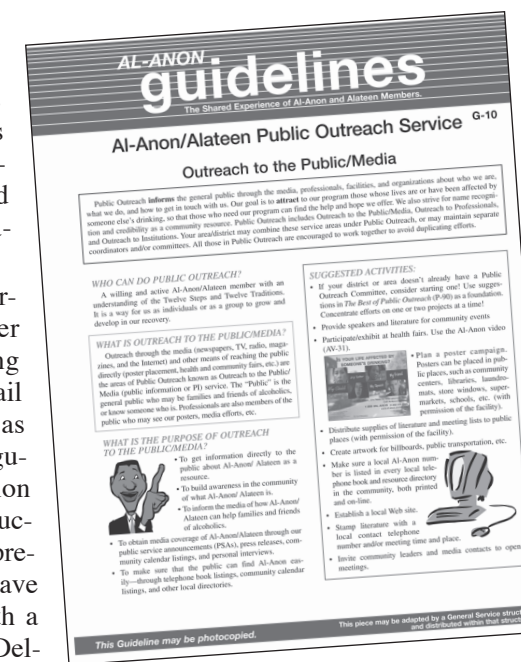
In the WSO structure, the Chairperson of the Board writes a letter after each quarterly Board meeting that summarizes highlights. An e-mail is sent to all Conference members as well as correspondence through regular mail to insure the communication is received. This has proved to be successful, as the Delegates seem to appreciate the contact. All the Trustees have the responsibility to follow up with a phone call to four or five assigned Delegates to see if they have any questions. The Trustees also conduct a session at Conference called, "Talking with the Delegates." The Delegates are divided into small groups with at least one Trustee in each group. This is an opportunity for the Trustees to hear what the Delegates think about a certain topic. All their comments are compiled in one document and discussed at the next Board meeting.

How communication is passed on is also important. We should try to keep the information fresh and not boring. Communication is seen as an important key in attracting people to service, especially young

people. It helps to be creative in passing on information. At Conferences, some members use skits to educate and pass on information.

When trying to attract new members to service, it is important that we support each other. Service sponsorship was cited as an important way to give support. Additionally, to help members understand their roles it is a good idea to have a written description of their duties. Service makes us feel a part of Al-Anon, not as owners or creators but participants.

To insure that the lines of communication remain open from structure to structure, the WSO has a process to keep a GSO informed when there is a complaint received from someone within their structure. The WSO will respond to the correspondence received and send a copy of that response to the GSO. The goal is to keep communication open so that the GSO is kept informed. This is a way the WSO can give help and support to the GSO.



Cooperating with Other Groups/ Special Focus Groups— Reaching Out

Maria M., Switzerland

When I first joined Al-Anon in the USA in 1971, I was told that I did not cause my husband's drinking, that alcoholism is a sickness, and that I was not alone. I wanted to learn how to live without fear and learn how to "Let Go and Let God".

Most important, I noticed that the group

I had joined was not only a group of 26 people; those people were very special people. I felt very close to them at that very first meeting. They understood me, they knew how I was feeling. The fact that everyone with a different personality and from different walks of life could work together for the same cause—towards recovery for themselves and to help the newcomers—to me that was cooperation.

When I came to the mountainous part of German-speaking Switzerland in 1972 without knowing the language, I wanted to cooperate with the German-speaking people in the very small group available

at that time. And so I joined the group, holding my German/English dictionary in one hand and my English version of the *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* book in the other hand. They only had one small pamphlet. It was difficult but the others cooperated with me and asked me questions on how the groups work in USA. Little by little more groups were born in our region.

Then I moved to another village where one more group had just started. People came in and out. I was persistent and stayed. We were again two and our Higher Power gave us the strength to go on. At times it was just one of us with the Higher Power. Thank God that gave us the patience to endure. With the cooperation of others willing to come, the group has now grown.

We have some special focus groups that also need help. We try and reach out to them through visits and assembly officers' meetings.

There was one instance when I felt self-pity and said to an Al-Anon friend: "What am I doing here? Our groups are too small and I am home sick for the USA". She answered me and said: "The Higher Power sent you here to cooperate with us and give us some help." At that moment I realized that I helped myself most by trying to help others.

Reaching out to other groups in need is most helpful to each group and to ourselves. Reaching out to and working together with AA at Public Information meetings, at schools, treatment centers, and other facilities benefits everyone involved.

When a group I was helping said to me, "That's of no use, we must close down, we are only three people and we cannot come all the time," I shared with them my experience. Once when I was alone, I read and answered letters written by lonely people to our group. This way I had my meeting, in writing with others throughout the world, from a very small town. I was not feeling lonely anymore. I did not want to become discouraged. The Higher Power works; I must have patience. I then went home and prayed for the group in need. The groups received their help when newcomers joined.

This is how it all worked for me.

1. First of all, I work the Twelve Steps, understand the Traditions and Concepts of Service for myself, go to meetings, and work with others.
2. I cooperate with the group. I do that by serving as Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, or cleaning the table.
3. I reach out to other groups by visiting or being a District Representative. For me it was a very good start to go out to many other groups, visit, and cooperate with them. By being a

District Representative, I was able to get into a committee and become a Chairperson for the Conference. I also made other friends this way.

Discussion

Many shared that their structure had special focus groups. Some groups indicated in their listing that they were special focus groups and some did not. One structure's Board of Trustees believed this would cause a division within Al-Anon.

Some Delegates shared that their structures indicated that they did not list groups in the past, but have begun doing so, as they now see the value. Most came to understand that Al-Anon is Al-Anon. Regardless of a special focus, any Al-Anon member should be welcome to the group.

The purpose of special focus groups is not to make Al-Anon different or separate. The purpose is to open Al-Anon's arms to welcome as many people as we can. Two new Public Outreach pieces from the WSO are *Al-Anon's Path to Recovery-Al-Anon Is for Native Americans/Aboriginals* (S-67) and *Al-Anon Is for People of Color* (S-68). There is a possibility that these may be offered to the GSOs to adapt as public outreach tools.

Simultaneous Translation

Colleen R., International Coordination Committee Co-Chairperson

Background Information

In 2002 the IAGSM Delegates made a recommendation "that the Board of Trustees of AFG, Inc. study the practicality and feasibility and impact of Spanish/English simultaneous translations at the general session/workshops at future IAGSMs." The Delegates also recommended "that the International Coordination Committee explore other options of translation services other than simultaneous translation for the next IAGSM, aiming to solve the Spanish/English language problem in a low cost diplomatic way." In anticipation of the issues surrounding this topic and the time necessary to have an informed discussion, simultaneous translation was not approved for the 2004 IAGSM.

We are enclosing the full report sent to the Board of Trustees by the International Coordination Committee. As a result of this report, the Board made the following motion in support of the Committee's findings:

MOTION was made, seconded and carried that the Board recommends to the IAGSM the following three options as options of translation services other than simultaneous translations: (unanimous)

Allow the Spanish structures the opportunity to bring a translator for whisper translation in addition to their two Delegates. The total cost for the translator would be the expense of the General Service Office for three trial meetings.

Allow whisper translation for three trial meetings, using volunteers provided by the Host Committee, for the Spanish structures with no equipment rental. The room, board, and travel expense, if any, for the volunteer translator would be factored into the equalized expense.

Allow whisper translation for Spanish-speaking structures by giving them the option to send a translator as the second Delegate from the structure for three trial meetings.

Background memorandum that produced the above motion

To: The Board of Trustees

From: International Coordination Committee

Re: Report concerning Simultaneous Translation for Spanish to English and English to Spanish for future International Al-Anon General Services Meeting

"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."

This report is a culmination of our discussions over the past year concerning simultaneous translation from Spanish to English and English to Spanish. Our dilemma is that we want the most people to attend an IAGSM and not raise the cost so high that this is not an achievable goal.

As a part of the bidding process to host the 2004 IAGSM, structures submitting bids were asked to include the estimated costs for simultaneous translation as a follow-up to this idea that began as a discussion during the 2000 IAGSM. Of the six bids submitted, only two included simultaneous translation as a part of their bid. Of the two, only one, Brazil, actually submitted estimated costs that indicated fees of \$4,180.00 for simultaneous translation that included professional services and equipment. The other bid had no cost estimations but only gave a suggestion of the possibility of using volunteers. To give an idea of costs if the meeting were held in Virginia Beach, the WSO presented an estimate of costs that totaled \$29,350.00 for simultaneous

translation. The WSO quote included charges for professional services and equipment. Both projections from Brazil and the WSO were quotes for the translation of the general session meetings only. The discrepancy in the difference of the projected costs has to do with the location, availability of equipment, and conversion of currency.

After a lengthy discussion, the 2002 Delegates made a recommendation that the Board of Trustees of AFG, Inc. study the practicality, feasibility and impact of Spanish/English simultaneous translations at the general session/workshops at future IAGSMs. The Delegates also recommended that the International Coordination Committee explore other options of translation services other than simultaneous translation for the next IAGSM, aiming to solve the Spanish/English language problem in a low cost diplomatic way.

In anticipation of the Board requesting feedback from the International Coordination Committee, the Committee did a preliminary discussion at their October 2002 meeting. One suggested option was to allow the Spanish-speaking structures to send a translator as a second IAGSM Delegate since the Admissions Committee Guidelines for the IAGSM (see attached) allows each structure to send two Delegates. It was recognized this option would still require a change in the guideline, specifically the section titled "Qualifications of a Delegate".

Other options discussed included whisper translation using a volunteer and simultaneous translation by using a volunteer or professional. It was agreed that both of these options would also require a change of policy as motion #6 from the July 7, 1980 Trial General Service Meeting indicates that Delegates who attend the next International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (Trial) should be Al-Anon members who know English and are knowledgeable about their national General Service Structure.

During research about translation techniques, the Associate Director—International discovered the two basic translation types are whisper and simultaneous. Whisper translation can be done without equipment and may not require a professional. Using this technique, the individual can have the translator sitting directly next to him or her and the translator would give a summary of text during the meeting. This technique can be distracting to others in close proximity. A way to minimize the distraction caused by whisper translation is to use equipment. The equipment is a microphone for the translator and a headset for the listener.

For simultaneous translation, the person doing the translation is usually a professional. This technique includes the translation of written text and

using a professional as an interpreter to translate speech orally. Soliciting these services through a vendor would also include the cost of equipment.

In preparation for the Committee's January 2003 discussion, the Associate Director—International spoke with the AA International Administrator to find out their experience using simultaneous translation at their World Service Meeting. She was advised that they use two professional translators during the general session portion of the meeting, which includes simultaneous translation from Spanish to English and English to Spanish only. None of the workshops are translated professionally. Their costs for these services in 2002 was \$17,000.

With the above information as background, the International Coordination Committee focused their discussions towards defining the pros and cons of the two basic translation techniques.

Translation Technique:

Whisper Translation (volunteer)

Pro

Allows structures that do not have English-speaking experienced members to send representation

If GSO provides the translator, cost could be limited to the responsibility of that GSO

Cost could be limited to room, meals, and local transportation

Con

Can be a noise distraction

Finding volunteers with this skill is difficult

The previous motion of the IAGSM must be changed

Interaction with other Delegates is limited

Nature of the meeting would change

Translation technique:

Simultaneous Translation

Pro

Allow structures that do not have English-speaking experienced members to send representation

Encourages more Spanish-speaking experienced members to send representation

Con

High costs

Would significantly increase Equalized Expense

Interaction with other Delegates is limited

Nature of the meeting would change

The previous motion of the IAGSM must be changed

It is a benefit only to the Spanish-speaking structures

As stated in the beginning of our report, one of the purposes of the IAGSM is to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through its Delegates. It would be unfortunate if all structures eligible to attend an IAGSM could not primarily because of the language barrier. On the other hand we recognize the translation of Spanish-English and English-Spanish only would change the nature of the meeting as correspondence and materials for the meeting would be prepared only in these languages. Additionally, this could cause the Delegates attending the meeting that do not speak English or Spanish as their primary language to not feel as comfortable in expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Under the Admission Guidelines for the IAGSM, each structure can send up to two Delegates to represent their structure. The total costs to send a Delegate is calculated based on the projected number of attendees in order to determine the Equalized Expense. In addition, as a result of an IAGSM motion passed in 1992, the Equalized Expense is being gradually increased with the ultimate goal of the structures paying the full costs. In order to reach this goal, there has been an increase of 5% for each meeting. For 2002 we reached 55%.

Over the past few years, many General Service Offices have cited financial costs as a reason for not sending a representative to the meeting. It will cause a significant financial increase for all if the meeting is professionally translated from Spanish-English and English-Spanish. For example, if we were to consider the WSO cost projections quoted for simultaneous translation services (\$29,350.00) for the 2002 meeting, the Equalized Expense, which was \$900.00 per delegate would have been approximately an additional \$815 or \$1,715.00 per Delegate. A significant increase in the Equalized Expense would defeat the World Service Offices' goal of increasing attendance to this meeting especially our goal of encouraging those General Service Offices that have never sent representation to this meeting.

As a result, as a way to make the 2002 recommendation financially feasible, the International Coordination Committee recommends that the percentage of costs paid by the structures be frozen to 60% and that the following options on translations be considered by the General Service Offices at the next meeting rather than the World Service Office making the decision:

1. Allow the Spanish structures the opportunity to bring a translator for whisper translation in

addition to their two Delegates. The total cost for the translator would be the expense of the General Service Office for three trial meetings.

2. Allow whisper translation, using volunteers provided by the Host Committee, for the Spanish structures with no equipment rental. The room, board and travel expense, if any, for the volunteer translator would be factored in the Equalized Expense.

3. Allow whisper translation for Spanish-speaking structures by giving them the option to send a translator as the second Delegate from their structure.

If the Board agrees, the International Coordination Committee suggests that the above report be presented to the 2004 IAGSM Delegates to let the structures make the final recommendation from the choices given.

Discussion

The options presented to the 2004 IAGSM Delegates started an emotional discussion.

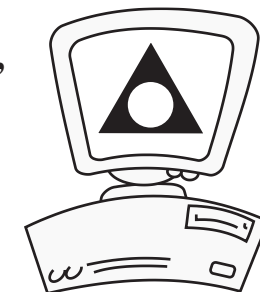
It was apparent from all who shared that there were concerns about costs. Many recognized that expense was one of the reasons 11 of the 33 general service offices were not present. All who spoke were sympathetic and empathetic and agreed that the goal was to have more participation, including the Spanish-speaking structures, and not have language be a barrier.

The request was made by several of the Spanish-speaking Delegates that instead of the Delegates making a decision and voting on the options presented, that the Spanish-speaking Delegates be given the opportunity to have further discussions with their structures. Most of the Spanish-speaking Delegates that spoke agreed that they could possibly present an alternative suggestion, but they wanted more time for further discussions with their structures.

One final comment was that it is important to recognize that big ideas do not have to be rushed when making a decision. It was mentioned that the WSO Board of Trustees discussed the Alateen decision for two hours at each meeting for two years before they presented the minimum requirements for an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service to the fellowship.

Since the WSO Board of Trustees and International Coordination Committee completed their charge given by the 2002 IAGSM, it was agreed that all further discussion at this time would remain with the structures. No further changes regarding simultaneous translations were considered or suggested at this time.

Technology— Use of the Internet, Web site (Getting Al-Anon's Name on the Databases of Community Helping Agencies)



By Andreas H., Germany

Introduction

What has technology to do with Al-Anon? When I search through our Legacies to look for technology references, I find exactly one place. The Eleventh Tradition, talking about public relations and anonymity, mentions, "press, radio, films and TV". Where is the Internet?

The Traditions were established in the middle of the last century (1955), at a time where the Cold War led intelligence activities to develop the technical foundation of the Internet, still far away from what this new technology would be able to provide to the worldwide public 50 years later.

Al-Anon is a part of an ever-changing world. The wisdom referred to in our Serenity Prayer can guide us to accept that we cannot hold up changes in technology, and use our courage to utilize the changing technology to support the purpose of Al-Anon.

I see at least two conclusions. One is to consider amending the wording of Tradition Eleven, replacing the words "press, radio, films and TV" with a more generic term like "all media" or "all public media," which would include in scope the Internet and other possible future technology not yet thought of. The other conclusion is to look into implications, opportunities, and challenges we may be faced with because of new technology. Some of these aspects will be dealt with in the following talk to you.

Internet History

How did the German GSO get to its own website? As with many other things in our personal experiences, the path to arrive at today's Web site was not perfect, but full of progress.

It started with a new PC under my Christmas tree at the end of 1995. Surfing the Internet in the following weeks led me to a privately owned Web site full of information about

Al-Anon in several languages. It was maintained by members of the first registered English speaking on-line Al-Anon meeting. Later in 1995, a German version of basic Al-Anon information

was added to this site. This was my first exciting experience of working together in Al-Anon on a worldwide scale.

In February 1997, a presentation was made to our Policy Committee to develop an official GSO homepage, and have it located on this private Web site. Our Board of Trustees (BOT) agreed to this approach in October 1997, and a newly developed homepage was launched in July 1998. At the end of 1998, the first registered German speaking on-line Al-Anon meeting was launched (Family & Friends). These on-line meetings were initially hosted at the Web servers of the German-speaking on-line AA meetings. In February 2000, another presentation was made to our Policy Committee, this time describing how on-line meetings work, and asking to have the GSO sign the provider contract for the first own server for our on-line meetings. The BOT agreed, and the on-line groups moved to the new server in April 2000.

Coincidentally at the same time, the private Web site which hosted our homepage was suddenly discontinued. We took the opportunity and moved our Web site to the new server used by the on-line groups. Since then, we launched a major redesign of our Web site in 2003.

Internet vs. Public Outreach

As you can see from the history outline, the development of our homepage was embedded into the existing GSO internal decision processes. Detailed work to further develop the Web site was done by an ad hoc Internet Committee, consisting of the Web Master and the General Secretary, the latter being the link to the Executive Committee and the BOT.

At one point, we ran into a conflict with the Public Outreach (or as we call it in Germany, Public Information) Committee, which strongly suggested that it should manage the developments of the Web site. During the discussion it became evident that the Web site not only supported Public Outreach but equally allowed new ways of Membership Outreach, Fellowship Communication, and Group Services.

This discussion, in conjunction with a new Web Master, who developed the redesigned Web site last year and presented it at our annual Conference, helped us arrive at the decision this year to commence a new Internet Committee, with the Web Master as the Speaker and as a new member of our Policy Committee. We had the “courage to change” our internal Al-Anon structure, driven by technology, but well thought through and discussed, hence

consuming the time it took. This was a perfect example of applying the Third General Warranty while building the future of Al-Anon (“that all decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible by unanimity”).

Internet Unlimited?

We see manifold opportunities offered by the Internet. The Web site helps us to reach out with general information about Al-Anon in Germany to the public and to professionals.

The Web site provides group services. It lists all German groups and their meeting places, and it allows a search for the geographically closest groups from any location in Germany. The published group records are maintained directly by the GSO and loaded from our central database, not through manual updates by the Web Master as it happened at the beginning of our journey.

The Web site allows us to pass group record update information from the groups directly to the GSO. It supports information flow in both directions.

All this has been the initial focus of our Web site. At the moment we are working to further enhance the functionality. We want to introduce a protected membership area, allowing us to share information among members of the fellowship, and collaborate on all levels of our structure, hence supporting Membership Outreach and Fellowship Communication.

One key principle of our Web site always has been that the only other Web sites we link to are those from Al-Anon and AA, following the guidance as expressed in Tradition Six. How can people find our resources in the Internet? How can the Internet help us to “let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there”?

From the beginning of our journey through the Internet, our GSO included the address of our Web site, www.al-anon.de, in any external and internal communication in addition to postal address and phone numbers. But it is a slow process to get Al-Anon’s name into the Web site of other organizations. This summer, we have suggested to our members in Germany to approach local communities and professional helping agencies and ask them to include links to our Web site on their homepages. As with many other Public Outreach (PO) initiatives, we believe that local contacts through regional PO coordinators or group members should work out most efficiently. To support this, we provide printouts with our logo and both addresses,

www.al-anon.de as well as www.alateen.de, in several variations in size and color from our Web site literature section.

As with many things in life, the strength of the Internet, which is the ability to simply link from one Web site to another anywhere in the world without asking for permission, comes with a flip side. We need to ensure that nobody is misusing our name. We might consider validating each Web site linking to Al-Anon and Alateen to ensure proper use of the link, even though this is not a traditional approach in the Internet, and there is no way to systematically scan the Internet to identify all references to our Web site. To find the right criteria that balances the ease to find Al-Anon through the Internet with the need to protect the name of Al-Anon and Alateen from misuse, poses one of the challenges created by the technical capabilities of the Internet.

Outlook

I have focused on using the Internet through our Web site. There are several other facets of the Internet, which I did not elaborate on in the interest of time. E-mail is a prominent example. It is used for all sorts of communication, including on-line Al-Anon meetings. There are more challenges in providing help to our kids, who certainly learned the Internet from the cradle, in contrast to their parents’ or grandparents’ generation. We should as soon as possible provide secure ways to host on-line Alateen meetings, which currently are not allowed for security reasons.

Using the Internet for the purpose of Al-Anon provides opportunities and challenges. But I am sure that with the help of our worldwide group conscience our fellowship will become familiar with the Internet as a normal tool, as we have been familiar with other communication tools like letters and telephones. Perhaps one day, after applying the principles of the Third General Warranty, we will find the Internet and all media included in a revised working of Al-Anon’s Eleventh Tradition.

Discussion

This General Session topic started conversations about the various stages of Web site development and implementation.

One structure indicated they had joined the WSO International site by purchasing the templates since the last IAGSM.

Some members shared that meeting information was listed on their structure site. There were comments that having meetings listed on-line sometime

became time consuming as it is necessary to be sure the meeting information listed is current.

Because of the high volume of meetings in their database, the WSO indicated they do not list meeting information on-line. However, in addition to Al-Anon information services and literature distribution centers listed, there is a listing of the countries with general service offices (GSOs) on the Public Outreach site, www.al-anon.org. Additionally, when there is a Web site address provided by the entities listed, the WSO will hyperlink to the site.

The WSO also has a Member site, which contains information primarily of interest to members such as guidelines, and the current *World Service Conference Summary*. This site can be accessed using the address www.al-anon.org/members/. To log in, type in the name of your group and the letters “afg.”

All structures shared that literature could not be purchased on-line at this time. The WSO has an order form that can be downloaded. However this form must be submitted by fax or sent by regular mail. The WSO will not sell Spanish or French literature on-line because it may divert from the GSO sales in other countries, and the WSO wants to support them.

A member cautioned that on-line meetings need to be careful that they are within the Seventh Tradition and are fully self-supporting.

Everyone who shared found that a Web site is a good public outreach/information tool.

Finances— Self-Supporting at all Service Levels

By Lois A., Australia

Why Self-Supporting?

In order to fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message of hope and recovery to families of alcoholics, our fellowship needs to be adequately financed. Even though many members seem to dislike discussing—or even thinking about—money, it is a fact of life that is necessary for our fellowship to exist now, and to continue into the future.

I think our founders, Lois W. and Anne B., were so wise in choosing to follow AA’s lead in embracing the idea that our fellowship needs to be fully self-supporting. The words in our book, *Al-Anon’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (B-8), explain the philosophy so well. In talking about Tradition Seven (“Every group ought to be fully self-sup-

porting, declining outside contributions”), it states, “In the simplest terms this Tradition points out one of the cornerstones of the Al-Anon program of recovery. When individual members and individual groups understand that they are responsible for their own survival and progress, a great spiritual strength flows into each part as well as the whole. If I do my part and others do theirs, we do it together, and we don’t need to ask someone else to do it for us.”

Outside financial help would mean loss of our independence. We would naturally feel obliged to please donors other than our own members and interests could be conflicting.

We, as the members of Al-Anon, are more likely to care much deeper, and with greater passion, about something for which we are solely responsible and for which we have to work very hard to support. The strength of the whole fellowship relies on the strength of its parts—the groups and the various levels of their service arms. Providing the necessary finances for all these parts and the structure as a whole to operate is vitally important.

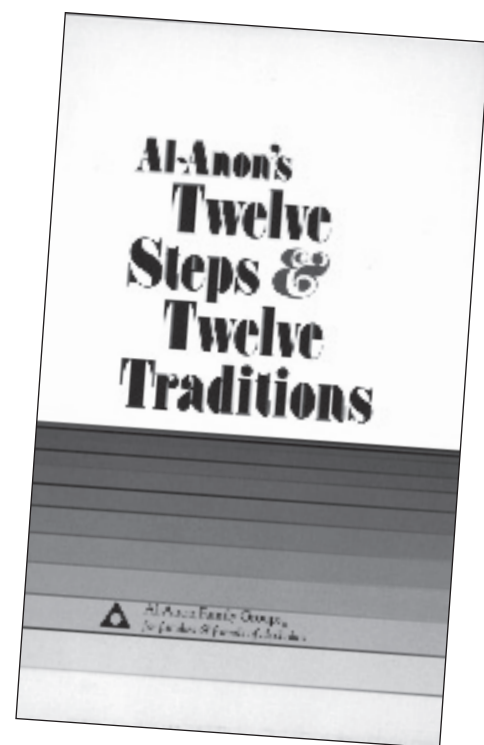
Another important point is also found in this book, explaining the benefit of groups being responsible financially for their service structure. “When groups support the work of their service arms, the members can expect them to be responsible to the groups’ needs. This mutual interdependence is a wholesome and sustaining condition preserving all Al-Anon in unity and equality.”

As the districts, areas, national structures, and the World Service Office have to rely on the groups for their finances, they can never get too far away from serving their groups’ needs or they would risk losing this support.

How to be Self-Supporting

The key to getting and maintaining the financial support of our groups is to educate our members in how much money is needed to carry out Al-Anon’s work of carrying the message to families and friends of alcoholics. If they understand how the money is used and the benefits the fellowship receives from it, they will be more willing to find ways of raising it.

Getting members involved in service is one of the best means of education. Knowledge of Al-Anon’s financial needs comes from being involved in working for the fellowship at district, area, and national levels. Through service at all levels, members become aware of the fellowship’s needs and pass this message back to the members at their groups. I learned of what was happening in the wider picture



from members at my meetings who were involved in service, sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Historical Development

Looking at our experience in Australia, it seems that early on in the development of Al-Anon, the groups and individual members were well aware of their responsibility to support the structure which supported them. The early groups relied very heavily on the World Service Office for guidance in establishing their meetings and for the supply of literature. It was a simple idea to understand then that they had an obligation to provide some financial support to the WSO so that this guidance they were receiving could continue for groups starting off in places all around the world.

The costs for the early groups in Australia in the 1950s and early '60s to be self-supporting were not high. They rented small church or community meeting rooms for minimal amounts. (No excessive demands for extra money to cover Public Liability insurance in those days!) They had to find money to purchase literature—not many pieces available then—and then find some money to send to the WSO in America to contribute to the worldwide task of carrying the Al-Anon message.

By 1960 there were 37 Australian groups registered and, as the number grew, a service structure in five of the states was established to unify the groups to provide services which the groups could

not provide for themselves. This included having a roster of members to answer calls for help; to provide literature more easily and cheaply than the previous procedure of individual groups ordering from America and waiting months for its delivery; to establish means of communication between the groups (newsletters, and service meetings of representatives of the groups to share experience); to inform the public of the existence of Al-Anon as a support for families of alcoholics.

This all took money to establish and maintain. The groups now had to ask their members to contribute a little more to cover these extra expenses. During this decade most states established a Central Service Office. This was usually only a small, single room, but rent had to be paid, office equipment bought (or most often “scrounged”—an Australian term for finding items in creative ways at very little or no cost!), telephone, heating, and lighting costs covered, and volunteer workers sought to carry out all the tasks.

The supply of literature to the groups was improved when two state Central Service Committees were given reprint permission to produce some pamphlets and later, the daily reader, *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon*. But this meant that money had to be found to cover the cost of printing and extra storage space for stock was needed. As sales of this locally produced literature progressed, however, a small surplus from sales helped to boost the income of the Central Service offices. This income from literature has continued to be an important part of funding our service structure in Australia.

We have little written information on how groups found the extra money to provide for the extra levels of service structure that were established to support them. Members who were around then have shared that little extra fundraising was necessary. The amounts donated by members in the basket collections at each meeting provided the necessary funds. Members were informed of the extra needs through the newsletters and reports from their Delegates to Central Service meetings. It was wonderful that Al-Anon members responded generously when they were informed of the need.

Costs were much lower in those days as rents for meeting places and office space were cheaper. There were plenty of volunteers—grateful members who were free to carry out the various office tasks, as not as many people were working full time then. These days, some of our service centers have to employ paid workers as there is such a shortage of volunteers. Also, the sale of literature brought in a good supply of funds. There were fewer items of literature compared to now, but

members were very keen to buy every item they could to enhance their recovery. It seems a shame that these days members are not as keen to buy as much literature as they were then. Other means of providing income for the Central Service structures were plans for individual donations such as the “Birthday Club” (members contributing a set amount on their Al-Anon “birthday” each year), and “Operation Gratitude” (members donating amounts of their own choice at regular intervals through the year).

As we moved into the '70s, large gatherings of Al-Anon members, such as anniversary meetings, holiday parties, social functions, etc., often included raffles to help raise funds. Al-Anon members’ talents were sometimes shared, such as artistic displays and lessons in craft-making, which resulted in funds being donated. Later, such events as fetes, film afternoons or evenings (one such event was the screening of the film, *Lois’ Story* when it became available), auctions, dances, etc were some of the means of raising funds. These have continued today at district and area level. Smaller fund raising ventures at the group level have included lunch or dinner before or after meetings, trading tables, mini lotto games, and movie nights.

During the 1970s, when the present service structure was developing much more money had to be found. Of course the number of Al-Anon groups and the number of members had also increased by this time. The need for a more effective way of hearing the group conscience across the country and of linking the whole of the Australian fellowship was discussed by Al-Anon members from around the country at gatherings at National AA Conventions. This resulted in the establishment of the first Australian Trial Conference in 1970. The Australian General Service Committee was then formed to work towards the development of a General Service Office. In 1975 it was decided that the GSO would be established in Melbourne. A visit to the World Service Office, the GSO in the UK and Eire, and the World Service Conference by an Australian member was of great value in this process of forming a service structure as close to WSO’s model as possible.

A New Level of Service to Support

From 1970 to '76, the Australian Trial Conferences discussed the financial support which would be necessary for the functioning of this new national service structure. The Central Service Committees of Victoria and New South Wales agreed to hand over the printing of literature to the new Australian office when it was established. We needed an

office capable of storing larger amounts of literature, facilities for making up orders and distributing them, office equipment, and staff. All of these would need to be on a scale much bigger than before, as this would be serving the whole of Australia. The groups and members were informed of the costs involved and were asked to support the development of this new structure. The Central Service Committees were dismantled. Districts and areas took over their services.

We are very lucky in Australia that we had members with vision who were able to see that when the areas and districts were established, the CSCs would need to be phased out. The financial burden on the groups would be too heavy to support both structures. They were able to convince members that, for the benefit of the whole fellowship, some sacrifice of the familiar way of doing things was necessary. We are grateful that we had faith in our trusted servants to act for the good of the whole. Education of our members was important then as it still is now, to see the need and to then work out ways of meeting that need.

Much effort and great generosity went into providing the necessary financial support for the establishment of what we have today. Since 1977 the task of supporting the Australian GSO and all its services has been added to the group's and the individual member's responsibility. This is an ongoing responsibility and, overall, our Australian groups have done a marvelous job of supplying the funds to take care of their own group expenses, as well as to ensure that their district, area, and national service arms function effectively. They have also sent funds to the WSO on a regular basis as part of their responsibility to support the worldwide fellowship.

Small Groups, Large Groups—All Contribute What They Can Afford

Australia is a very large country with its population spread very sparsely in some places and concentrated quite densely in others, such as the capital cities around the coast. This means the variation of numbers in groups is immense. It is relatively easy for a group with 20 to 25 members to find enough money to support their group needs, to have some to give to their district for public information literature or other district services, to contribute to the area office and the GSO and to send some to WSO as well. But the small country group which may only have two or three members has a much more difficult time finding enough money to take care of its own expenses, let alone find some to send to the dis-

trict, area, and GSO. Some of our Areas have only approximately 20 groups and have to work extremely hard to be self-supporting at all levels. These same small areas have large distances to travel to district meetings, area committee meetings, and assemblies, so travel costs are high. Yet, somehow they manage to be self-supporting at all levels and have continued to do so for nearly 30 years. The groups pay for their GRs to attend district meetings, for the districts to send their DR to Area Committee meetings (this may involve hundreds of kilometers travel distance), and for the Area Delegate to attend the Australian Service Conference each year. Some of these small areas have had to modify the frequency and timing of service meetings. For example, they hold area assemblies at the same time and venue as an AA roundup or rally to save on travel costs, and district meetings in the same town as an AA service meeting, allowing transport costs to be reduced. (Al-Anon members always pay their share of costs, of course, but four people traveling in one car is cheaper than one or two.)

Other areas have larger numbers of groups. The largest has 120, and three others have around 70. Within these areas there are many very small groups but they also have the large groups of the big cities. These larger areas have more members to provide funds, but also have higher costs such as high rents for inner city offices, more newsletters to print, more meeting lists to supply, etc. Most of our large city groups give generously to their areas and to our Australian GSO. They support their districts by sending their GRs to district meetings and financing local public information ventures helping to carry the Al-Anon message to the community. The funds generated by these larger groups keep all levels of our service structure functioning. We just have to keep the members of these large groups informed that their donations have more to do than just take care of their own local expenses. They play a vital role in supporting the whole fellowship. I think that this is where danger can occur today—in neglecting to educate our newer members about their financial responsibilities to the fellowship as a whole.

The Present and the Future

Over the years the need has arisen to find ways of raising funds above the level of that provided in the basket collection at the meetings. Our Australian GSO appeals to the groups and individual members three times a year asking for direct donations to help cover such costs as the printing, purchasing, and distribution literature, the provision of

nationwide public liability insurance cover for the groups, accident insurance for volunteers at our service centers, public information ventures such as a nationally screened TV public service announcements, the staffing of the GSO, participation by GSO members in national service seminars and conventions, and in international meetings of the worldwide fellowship, such as the IAGSM. Groups are encouraged to hold special events to raise funds for these appeals. We have even asked groups to share their fundraising ideas in newsletters and in district and area reports.

Districts and areas provide financial support for the Australian GSO by keeping only sufficient funds for their own needs and passing on any excess. As the areas' costs have increased, however, it is becoming increasingly necessary for them to work, at area and district level, at raising extra funds to support their General Service Office. Each year the area organizing Al-Anon and Alateen participation in AA's National Convention held in different states around the country, raises a large amount which is donated to the GSO. Areas also encourage their groups to buy literature, which helps generate revenue.

The falling number of groups in Australia is a concern. Since 2000 the number of groups has fallen from over 500 to less than 470 at the present time. This means more financial responsibility falls on fewer people and is certainly a challenge.

All areas contribute their share to the Conference Equalization fund which pays the travel and accommodation expenses of Area Delegates to attend the Australian Service Conference in Melbourne annually. Some of our areas use this same system to fund travel and accommodation expenses for their GRs to attend the area assemblies.

Hopefully this wonderful record of our groups always answering the call for financial support at every level will continue into the future. Our early members said that we just need to show the need and our members will find a way to provide for that need.

Self-Supporting at Worldwide Level

Our Australian General Service office makes an annual donation to WSO as well as sending on, each month, the donations from Australian members, groups, districts, and areas. In this way we are contributing our share to the task of extending Al-Anon's presence to more countries where families are suffering from the effects of alcoholism.

Since the first trial IAGSM in New Orleans in 1980, we have taken part in contributing to the welfare and development of the worldwide fellowship. Our structure values this opportunity to share experience, strength, and hope with our worldwide family.

Discussion

Fundraising seems to be a common way many structures cover expenses and remain self-supporting. There were a variety of creative ways described including the raffling of Conference Approved Literature.

One structure sends thank you letters of acknowledgement in the middle of the year to all groups that have contributed to the General Service Office.

Telling members why contributions are needed was a positive experience for many. One member commented that when the membership understood the need, it was willing to contribute.

Posting district contributions in a newsletter was a positive experience for another office. Once this practice was started, contributions increased.

An experience concerning the Seventh Tradition for an on-line meeting was shared. The meeting has a Treasurer and an account. The Treasurer sends a monthly e-mail to remind members of the need to maintain the group server. All excess money is sent to the WSO.

WORKSHOP REPORTBACKS

The Role of Trustees within the Structure

Facilitator: Maria L. A., Brazil
Reporter: Mary G., International Coordination Committee

- The difference between Regional Trustees and Trustees-at-Large
- The relationship between the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees
- Board of Trustees—legal responsibilities

Questions asked prior to the discussion were:

How are Trustees elected?

What is the responsibility of a Trustee within your structure?

Once elected, Trustees become representatives of the national structure. How does the office support this idea?

Rotation of service: How can the General Service Office find experienced candidates?

The Difference between Regional Trustees and Trustees-At-Large

Regional Trustees are nominated by the region and selected by the Conference Committee for Trustee Selection. This decision is ratified by the General Service Board. Regional Trustees are responsible to the GSB and not to the region. Their value is in bringing awareness of cultural differences within the structure. There is a risk that Regional Trustees feel they must demonstrate responsibility to the areas within their region to ensure that they will be re-elected. Not all structures have regions or RTs.

Trustees-at-Large are appointed by the Board of Trustees from candidates who have been evaluated by the Nominating Committee. These appointments are usually ratified by Conference.

Some suggestions to encourage volunteering were made, such as approaching suitable candidates personally, finding your own replacement, and inviting observers to Board meetings, with the idea of encouraging them to apply for Trustee jobs.

Trustees usually have the responsibility of chairing the Select Committees. Their responsibility to the General Service Board means that, once a decision has been made by a substantial majority

of Trustees, the Board speaks with one voice and presents a united front.

Volunteers are often in short supply and it is the responsibility of Conference to find and encourage new service members. Each structure has the autonomy to decide how long a Trustee can be in office, how long a period out of office should be, and whether a past Trustee can return to the GSB. In case of difficulty, it is wise to use the recommendations in the *Service Manual*. The GSB should always include the Conference in decisions involving the use of this autonomy.

Ideas for helping new Trustees included Trustee training, sponsorship by third-year Trustees, and talent spotting so that people with qualities of leadership and management skills can be recognized and encouraged. This is part of the important task of long-term planning that is needed if we are to prepare positively for future happenings, and not just react to them.

It was interesting to hear the many differences between structures. We saw how each one had developed according to its size and financial situation.

Services within the GSO/WSO

Facilitator: Reit D., Netherlands

Reporter: Marsha W., International Coordination Committee

- Lone Member Service
- Newsletters
- Public Outreach tools
- Meetings on-line

We recognized through sharings in this workshop that communication from the GSO/WSO is essential to the groups and communication from the groups is essential to GSO/WSO. This is the only way we can be sure that services provided are fulfilling the intended need.

How can services help increase membership?

The number of groups and members are falling. It was suggested to share with groups through correspondence such as newsletters and flyers, the benefits of registering with the WSO/GSO. It was pointed out that some groups never take the time to register. Therefore there is no connection between the group and the GSO/WSO. In most structures the Delegate is the link in the service chain and he or she has the responsibility of passing on the updates in group changes. We could also educate the Delegates about the benefits of registration so they can pass this information on as well.

The more accurate information we have in our files, the more efficient we will be giving services to the membership. This may help with the problem of falling numbers in our fellowship.

Isolated groups: What can we do about them?

Several creative ways to connect with them were considered. Services such as a Web sites, public outreach campaigns, and invitations to submit sharings are some ways to get members from isolated groups involved in the structure.

Does your structure have a need for an outreach service such as Lone Members?

Most shared that they have this need. Some structures indicated they have isolated pockets where there are no meetings in close proximity and where members do not have access to a computer. Some structures include a subscription to their magazine with the Lone Member letter, and others send a newsletter as a part of their service to this membership population.

The WSO pointed out that the philosophy behind this service is that hopefully the lone member will start a group. All structures agreed this is a valuable service for those that seek AI-Anon and cannot attend a meeting.

Why are electronic meetings registered only with the WSO?

At this time, the WSO is still studying on-line meetings and how they may fit in the structure. Because of CAL use in on-line meetings, the WSO licenses each on-line group. No on-line meeting has permission to translate literature. According to the license, the on-line meeting can only use translations approved by the GSO/WSO.

Because of safety concerns, at this time there are no Alateen on-line meetings registered. Other options for Alateen are being explored.

How can service tools such as newsletters be used to share information with the fellowship?

Newsletters can be used to pass on services that are available, communication updates, changes, and other information to help the groups stay connected to the GSO/WSO. Members can also be invited to write in and share happenings from their areas or districts. Personal sharings about service can also be included. Newsletters can also be public outreach tools for the professional. Structures that have Web sites indicate that contacts from professionals have increased.

Unity through the Twelve Traditions

Facilitator – Margarita G., Spain

Reporter – Gen B., US & Canada

- The work of districts within our structures
- How to deal with personalities, conflicts, experiences—tools of the program
- How to deal with the tensions between Delegates and Trustees
- Traditions and special focus groups within AI-Anon

Questions asked prior to the discussion were:

Poor communication—What ways can this be addressed?

How can we use the Traditions to keep our structure healthy?

Do we let outside issues influence our interpretation of the Traditions?

Many scenarios were presented as problematic, and although none were unique, all participants felt that a healthy area or structure is one that uses the Traditions and Concepts of Service in all its affairs. Members shared the following experiences and related how problems are being resolved by suggested solutions arising from application of our Traditions:

Dominance and Control

Each member has a responsibility to speak up when we feel the Traditions are being violated. Have a group inventory. Out of group inventories grow meeting topics about the Traditions—self-support, principles above personalities, group conscience decisions, etc. Group inventories keep people talking to each other and reasoning things

out. It is impossible to grow without making mistakes and everything doesn't always go smooth. Keep an open mind, ask "what do you think?" and listen to others' opinions. Keep the lines of communication open.

Special Focus Groups

One structure shared that they register all groups as Al-Anon and make note of any special focus in case that information is required. No special focus is included in any group name thus allowing all groups to be open to all. Young family members are a part of the family groups and may be welcomed at any Al-Anon meeting.

Diversity

Our principle of anonymity has made members feel welcome and "a part of" even though there is much diversity in the membership. Anonymity is equality and every member in a group/area/conference is worthwhile and has something to offer. If we focus on why we are here, our unity of purpose, we will all feel comfortable and share our feelings openly.

Relationship between Delegates/Trustees

A member shared how mistrust and tension that developed between Delegates and Trustees resulted in confusion and disunity at their Conference. When the situation was approached with open, honest discussion, each group was given time and attention to speak their concerns and "be heard." Tensions are gradually lessening and the structure has grown. Two-way communication with the focus on unity has renewed harmony in the structure.

It was also emphasized that after a Trustee is affirmed by the Conference and elected by the Board, they no longer represent an area or region, but Al-Anon worldwide. When decisions are the result of a Board group conscience, members must be aware that a healthy board speaks with one voice.

Members of Other Twelve-Step Groups in Al-Anon

A member stated that working the Traditions is hard, but becomes easier with practice. It was felt that healthy groups are those that read our Traditions at every meeting. Solutions to problems can be found if we familiarize ourselves with these guidelines. When voiced openly, they remind us and members of other Twelve-Step groups who visit and want to talk about their program in our

meetings, that here the focus is on Al-Anon—helping families and friends of alcoholics.

Finally, members also felt that to keep a balance between recovery, unity, and service, it is necessary to be knowledgeable about the Concepts of Service. Here we apply the spiritual principles of our program to work relationships in our structure. Introduce them gradually, be well prepared and keep it simple. As one member summed up our discussion, "The Steps teach us how to love ourselves, the Traditions show us how to love others, and the Concepts show us how to love the world we live in." With this philosophy, how can we go wrong?

Building Al-Anon's Future on Our Spiritual Foundation—The Warranties

Facilitator: Lorraine S., Australia

Reporter: Lisolette R., Switzerland (German-speaking)

- Concept Two
- Fifth Warranty

What is the role of the Conference within your service structure?

The purpose of the Conference is evolving in the various structures as they grow and mature. For some there is a change from making every decision to learning to be a sharing forum which acts as the group conscience of the structure. The work of the Conference seems to be business, but must guide and direct the services and uphold the Traditions. Concept Two and the Fifth Warranty set the foundation. The Conference Charter clarifies the purpose of the Conference and defines the important relationships and work of the Board and the Conference.

Delegates approve reports and budget, and discuss topics of importance in an atmosphere of openness and respect.

As Conferences mature and respectful listening and sharing occurs, fighting lessens and harmony is restored through time and education.

The spiritual path follows the links of authority found in the Warranties and Charter

The Conference should be future focused. Groups must understand that their voice is transferred to the Conference through their elected representatives.

How are the participants chosen to attend the Conference?

Participants are chosen by districts, areas, and regions to be Delegates. Regional and at-Large Trustees are generally selected by a nominating committee and approved by the Conference and Board in most structures.

How does your Conference support the ideas within your service structure?

Some Conferences ask for topics or questions to be submitted by way of the Delegates.

Some topics or questions are raised on the floor and voted on by the Delegates to discuss.

Some topics are submitted by the Delegates—three are selected. In one structure, any Al-Anon member can bring an issue to the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee discusses it and may send it to the Conference for discussion. The Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees can also submit topics.

The IAGSM can also bring issues through the International Coordination Committee to the World Service Conference.

Structures can also submit questions or issues to WSO committees.

Sponsorship

Facilitator: Judy P., US & Canada

Reporter: Jenny H., New Zealand

- Sponsorship in Al-Anon/Alateen
- Value of a Service Sponsor
- Tool for growth

Questions asked prior to the discussion were:

How can a service Sponsor be valuable?

How can we encourage those in service roles to seek a Service Sponsor or become a Service Sponsor?

Can a leadership pool for service be developed through service sponsorship?

Having a Sponsor means that there is always somebody to help me. We speak about a personal Sponsor, Service Sponsor, Alateen Sponsor, and Sponsor for several different services and other levels.

The Service Sponsor helps us to find out what our responsibility is and what we need in order to

grow in service and to make it good and better. The Service Sponsors open their hearts and help us see the value of service. They let us know that it is possible to have good experiences in service.

In some countries it isn't common to have a personal or Service Sponsor like in North America, but it is a good idea. Having several experienced members to draw from is important.

In the GSO, it's good to have a list of willing Service Sponsors to contact. It's good to have orientation meetings for new Trustees and ask experienced Board members to sponsor newer members. Also it is common to have more than one Sponsor.

How can we encourage those in service roles to seek a Service Sponsor or become a Service Sponsor?

We can show people that what we do can be fun and joyful. Members can then follow that pattern to attract those who will follow us in service.

Sponsoring others is a way to serve.

The Twelve Steps are our principles and guides for sponsoring.

It's good to have topics about sponsorship in the meetings.

Also it's important to speak and encourage the newcomers and to share about service sponsorship in newsletters and magazines.

Can a leadership pool for service be developed through service sponsorship?

We find: "This is a good idea, it is possible, it would be great! It is a resort..."

A leadership pool for service can begin in the group.

From the beginning it is important to be an active Sponsor in Al-Anon, to have a strong sponsorship in our home group, to give love in Al-Anon, and to share love in Al-Anon.

A good Sponsor leads the person to a decision, but doesn't take credit for someone's growth.

A personal Sponsor can be similar to a Service Sponsor.

It's easier to ask for the Service Sponsor than for the personal Sponsor.

Sometimes we need to change Sponsors, to hear the message in a new way.

We can share our experiences with the newcomers in our groups!

Alateen

Facilitator – Emily S., UK & Eire
Reporter - Jenny H., New Zealand

- Concept One
- Starting a Group
- Activities outside of meetings

Questions asked prior to the discussion were:

Does your structure have any safety guidelines for Alateens?

Who are the Sponsors? Is there any selection criteria used by the GSO or area?

Why is it necessary for an Alateen group to be connected with an Al-Anon group?

Concept One: The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon World Services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.

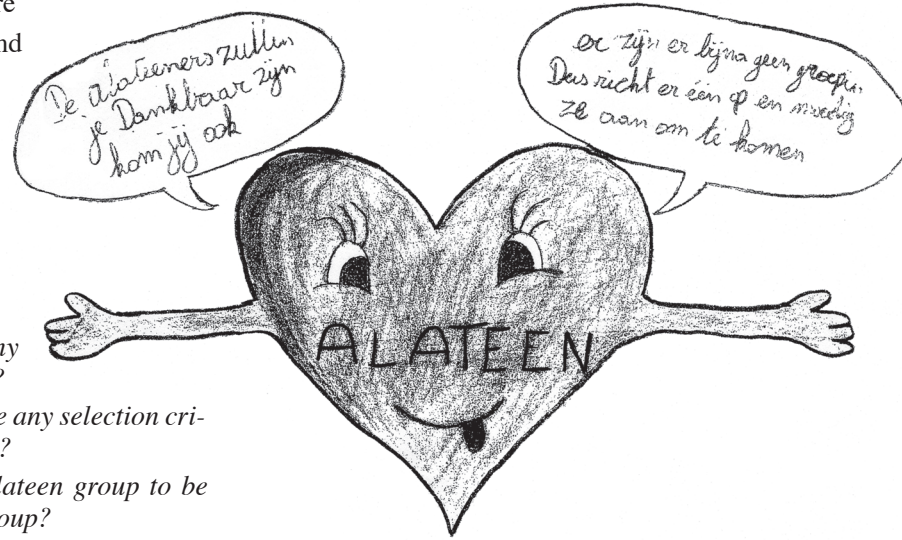
Overall, the number of Alateen groups is dropping. There are two extremes of behavior in the membership: one is the lack of commitment for Sponsors of Alateen and the other is an excess of Sponsors and no Alateens.

Some practical ideas were shared on how to interest Alateens: a table card attractively decorated and simplified with service positions. An Alateen “made” table card with a big heart with long arms stretched out, with the words to encourage Alateen attendance.

All structures hold Sponsor meetings to share experiences and support each other. In some places Alateens are welcome to attend, in other places these meetings are restricted to adults.

Everyone agreed that Alateen Sponsors need to attend their own Al-Anon meetings and get a Service Sponsor preferably a member who has been an Alateen Sponsor.

Many structures are adapting and adopting minimum safety and behavior guidelines to come into line with the WSO ideas. Some areas of the US/Canada have requirements in addition to the minimum ones set down by the Board of Trustees. Areas were free to add to the minimums and some ideas added were: having background checks, requiring two Sponsors at each Alateen meeting and having each Alateen group connected with an Al-Anon group. Once the area determined their requirements, a local attorney was to review



to ensure compliance with the local laws. These measures were taken by the WSO to protect the Alateens, the Sponsors and the Alateen name.

After meeting the WSO safety and behavior minimum requirements, the areas were encouraged to set up their own process for sending information to the WSO. The WSO wanted to partner with the areas to implement the process decided on in the areas. A form titled *Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service* is for any member who will have responsibility for Alateens during an Alateen or Al-Anon event. It may be a Sponsor, substitute group Sponsor or a chaperone at a conference or convention. This form is to be signed by a member designated by the area, acknowledging this Al-Anon member involved in Alateen service is known to the area. This form will be certified each year by the area. Each Alateen group is to be re-registered by the end of this year to insure that all groups are in compliance with the area’s safety and behavior requirements. Detailed information can be found in several pages of the *2004 World Service Conference Summary* or by writing the WSO.

Having an Alateen group connected to an Al-Anon group was the ideal stated by many Delegates, but not always possible in some places. The Al-Anon groups can then take responsibility for being available and checking that the Alateen guidelines are being followed.

MOTIONS

MOTION #1

That Peru be admitted to the IAGSM as they satisfied the criteria for admission.

Votes: Unanimous motion carried.

MOTION #2

That Uruguay be admitted to the IAGSM as they satisfied the criteria for admission.

Votes: Unanimous motion carried.

DELEGATE’S CHOICE

Moderators – Mirta S. and Ric B., International Coordination Committee members

World Service Conference

This topic generated an interesting discussion when one Delegate read two questions she received from members:

1. *Why is the World Service Conference not represented by the world?*
2. *Why does Canada not have a General Service Office?*

It was explained that history reveals the name World Service Office (WSO) and World Service Conference (WSC) were chosen by our cofounder Lois W. to differentiate Al-Anon from Alcoholics Anonymous’ General Service Conference and AA General Service Office.

The World Service Conference is the senior Conference. It is the oldest Conference and is the largest Conference with 97 participants. Many of the structures accept the actions of the WSC as group conscience for their structures. Many outside the US and Canada use the *WSO Service Manual* as a guide. Other structures have their own Conferences and their own *Service Manuals*. Structures outside the US and Canada can come to the WSC with voice but not vote. The reason for this is that under the Al-Anon structure each group

has one vote. To allow a group to vote in more than one structure would give it multiple votes.

The IAGSM is an opportunity for structures to meet and discuss with each other. However, no decisions are made at the IAGSM that are binding on the individual structures, as the IAGSM is not a governing body. Additionally, the WSC is not considered the governing body for worldwide Al-Anon. The only decision that the WSC makes that has an absolute impact on the world is what Conference Approved Literature will be produced. In the past, on two occasions, a discussion on the creation of literature within the structures took place at the IAGSM. Both discussions ended with the recommendation that structures would not produce original literature, as the majority of Delegates agreed they wanted the literature to remain uniform throughout the world. The World Service Conference holds the copyright for Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature and approves translation and reprint permission in other countries.

In responding to the question about why Canada does not have a General Service Office, history also indicates this comes from Lois. When the

AI-Anon Conference structure was formed, this was also modeled after AA. To date, the US and Canada structure also includes Bermuda and Puerto Rico.

Future publications will no longer indicate that the US and Canada structure covers North America. After 51 years it was recognized that although Mexico is in North America, it is not a part of the WSC.

International Delegates On-line (IDOLS)

IDOLS was founded immediately after the 2000 IAGSM in Essen, Germany. It was started at the suggestion of an IAGSM Delegate as a way of staying connected between the IAGSMs. It is recognized by the participants that this system has limitations because only Delegates that have access to computers are able to participate.

During the discussion, one Delegate advised there were no clear purposes established for IDOLS and this may be a part of the confusion for old and new participants. In the past, some topics discussed were questions about the individual structures. However, after the 2002 IAGSM it was recognized that IDOLS should not be used in this manner. Questions about structure should be discussed within the General Service Office or sent to the World Service Office.

In the last two years there has been informative and personal information shared. For example, for the upcoming IAGSM, a list of what to expect while visiting Brazil was sent. In addition, new Delegates used IDOLS as a way to send their greetings to worldwide AI-Anon.

After the meeting in São Paulo, it was suggested maybe a re-evaluation of IDOLS was in order to determine the following:

- Is it a useful tool?
- What are the limitations?
- What do we need to watch out for?
- What are the stumbling blocks?

What service jobs can dual members have at the group level?

Examples mentioned included: Secretary, Chairperson, Treasurer, coffee maker, Literature Representative, and Greeter (to welcome the newcomers).

In the 2002 –2004 AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, pages 67-68, it states:

“AI-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA are eligible to hold office

within their AI-Anon or Alateen groups. Active members of AI-Anon who are also AAs may serve as the Sponsor of Alateen groups by virtue of their AI-Anon membership. These are vital groups services, and at all times emphasis should be placed on the AI-Anon interpretation of the program.

“Because of the unique nature of both programs, AI-Anon/Alateen members who are also AA members do not hold office beyond the group level, as these positions could lead to membership in the World Service Conference (WSC). The need to focus on the AI-Anon program and the possibility of a conflict of interest at assembly and world service levels led the WSC to its decision not to seat AI-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA. For these reasons AA members do not serve as Group Representatives (GRs), District Representatives (DRs), Area Coordinators, Newsletter Editors, Delegates and /or any of their alternates, nor do they sit on the WSO in-town or standing committees, whose Chairpersons can be Conference members.”

How does group conscience work in your group?

One Delegate explained her experience. In addition to business and group inventory meetings, the group has a special group conscience meeting that may be a result of a topic that came out of the other meetings. When the decision is made that a group conscience meeting is necessary, the topic is announced during the regular meeting giving a two-week notice. Others explained that decisions at business or group inventory meetings are considered their group conscience.

Whatever the name, this time at a meeting is an opportunity for the group to discuss problems within the group. It should be encouraged as a sign of a healthy group.

Can we get the talks from the WSO for Delegates sooner so that we have more time to read and study them?

A member from the International Coordination Committee explained that we try to get the information out as soon as possible. However, sometimes, as in the case this year, those selected to give talks were unable to do so or deadlines to submit the written talks had to be extended. In addition to getting the talks out early, another goal is to get all the talks out at the same time.

Public Outreach

Because AI-Anon/Alateen is perceived as a religious program in one country by professionals in schools, the question was asked how others dealt with it. In addition, it was the opinion that the Serenity Prayer, used in our Conference Approved Literature confused a spiritual program with a religious program. The question was asked if the Serenity Prayer could be changed.

The response from a member of the International Coordination Committee was no; because the Serenity Prayer is in the public domain and does not belong to AI-Anon, it cannot be changed. However, it is within the autonomy of each structure or group to decide what information to present in its Public Outreach/Public Information material for professionals. As stated in the 2002-2004 AI-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, page 90, fourth paragraph:

“Each general service structure working in countries outside the United States and Canada may reprint WSO material and is not limited to printing one PI piece. There are public information needs based on cultural differences and tradition. The WSO also reserves the right to review such items before publication.”

Can the word God be changed when translating literature?

Because the literature has gone through the Conference Approved Literature process and is copyrighted it can't be changed. God in our literature is defined as being a Higher Power or a God of each individual's understanding.

Translation of the term policy

In Spanish the term “policy” is translated to mean “guide.” How do we differentiate what is a guide and what is actual policy?

In responding to this question, an ICC member pointed out that guidelines are shared experience. However, at this time, the WSO Policy Committee realized it needed to define this very same question. Through a review, it was discovered that in the “Digest of

AI-Anon/Alateen Policies” section of the Service Manual, the word “policy” sometimes means shared experience, sometimes a rule, or sometimes a law. The WSO Policy Committee started reviewing the issue a year ago and expects this review to go on for sometime. Meanwhile, it is recommended that any challenges received by the General Service Offices, regarding current policy, can be forwarded to the WSO for a response.

How do you find your Chairperson of the Board and Committees?

How long do the people serve?

In the WSO structure, all Board office positions are elected for three one-year terms. In October, all eligible Board of Trustee members have an opportunity to submit their names or, after asking the person, submit a name for the positions of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Treasurer to the Nominating Committee. In January, the Nominating Committee reviews all the submitted names and makes their recommendations to the Board.

The current Trustees holding office, if recommended by the Nominating Committee, can be selected by the Board, or the Board may decide not to accept the Nominating Committee recommendations and can hold an election. Formal announcements of the nominees are made to all Conference members. The nominees receive affirmation during Conference.

The Board Chairperson has as one of his or her responsibilities to appoint each committee Chairperson for a one-year term. They can be re-appointed. At the Annual Board Meeting, after the Conference, the Board ratifies the election of the officers as well as the appointments of all committee Chairpersons.

SPIRITUAL SPEAKER

Linda S., Belgium (Flemish-speaking)

When Marsha asked me to be the Spiritual Speaker, I didn't sleep well for about 2 nights. I wasn't sure I could write something down. I felt like I had a million things to do before the meeting and thought writing text takes a lot of time. So after two restless nights I woke up and said to myself "One Day at a Time." There suddenly was my topic, the Slogans! So I said to myself I'm going to do "First Things First" and I took a deep breath.

One of my favorite Slogans is "One Day at a Time." It helps me when things aren't going the way I would like them to go and I even think of it when things are going the way I like. When everything goes just fine, I sometimes stop for a moment and say to myself, enjoy it!

I am the oldest of four children and my father is an alcoholic. My brother and my husband are also alcoholics. Sometimes I call myself an expert on people who drink too much. For many years I had only bad memories about my youth. Now I realize that there were good things too but for a long time I couldn't remember them.

Because I was not allowed to study, I resented my parents for a long time. Later when I came to Al-Anon, I started to go to school and I learned several languages. I never thought I would have the opportunity to use my English and come here and speak in front of you.

Very often I thought about running away from home, but I didn't. I could not leave because my brother and sisters needed me and I felt like I had to take care of them. I blamed my mother it was her fault my father drank so much. I thought that if she had been friendlier to him, he would come home and be sober. At that time I had no idea my father was ill, that he had a disease and that the name of that disease was alcoholism. I learned this when I came to Al-Anon.

One day after we discussed Step Eight, in my group, I got insight and decided to go see my mother. I told her I felt very sorry for the hurt I caused. But she did not accept my apology she said it was much too late for that. Some things we just have to accept.... When I became an Alateen Sponsor, working with the younger members helped me to heal from some of the past hurts of my youth.

I married when I was 20. I left home with only one purpose, to do things differently than my Mom. At that time, my husband was the most important person in my life and I would have done anything to please him. Soon we were blessed with two wonderful kids, two boys. Unfortunately, my husband was an alcoholic too and all my dreams of being a good mother and wife fell apart. I tried to handle situations we faced as a result of the disease, and the more I tried the worse it got. Again I felt like running away but again I couldn't because my children needed me.

After about 10 years of marriage I felt desperate and depressed and I knew I did not want to live like that anymore. I searched and I found help! I called an emergency number, listed in our directory, and a friendly voice asked me if I needed some help for myself and I said yes and she gave me the telephone number for Al-Anon.

From my first meeting I knew I belonged. I held on to the program real tight. Some people in my group said they had never met a person who learned the program as quickly as I did. I began to change and after one year my husband found his way to AA (he sometimes says "it was Al-Anon who made me stop drinking.") I still see it as a miracle. My children went to Alateen and for a while everything went fine and I felt like I finally had my life back on track again. We still had a long way to go but we were going in the right direction.

I had always been afraid that one of my children would start drinking and unfortunately it happened. My oldest son was about 16 when he started to drink, and from the beginning he came home drunk. Each time he went out he got drunk; he got in trouble with the police. And later he had a few car accidents and so on... Again it was a very difficult period for me and my family. My husband, my youngest son and I, kept going to our meetings, but still it was difficult and very often I was worried something worse might happen. It became more difficult to practice my Al-Anon program. I thought I knew what was best for him and it was not easy to let go.

I would talk to him for hours and hours... I wanted so badly to make him understand that he could not go on like this. At night when he came

home, I could hear by the way he came up the stairs how drunk he was. I would say the Serenity Prayer a thousand times a day.

Especially the part of "To accept the things I can not change." He was such a nice boy, if only I could...

I remember one evening, it was winter and it had been snowing the whole day (that's rather unusual in Belgium) and I felt like taking a walk. Everyone was watching TV and I said "I'm going to go out for a walk, does anyone want to join me?" and suddenly my son said yes. It was a wonderful evening, the sky was bright and full of stars and everything was so beautiful and peaceful. And there we were my son and I, he's a lot taller than I am and as we were walking there side by side he began to talk. He talked about his friends, he told me about his plans and he kept on talking and talking... I didn't dare to speak a word because I didn't want to disturb this special moment. Suddenly I realized that all the time I had been talking to him, I hadn't been listening and I hadn't practiced my program the way I should have. I prayed to my Higher Power and said "Please God, whatever will happen, don't let me forget this beautiful moment and please take care of this child." "Listen and Learn" another slogan I used here and the most important one I remembered for me to use was "Let Go and Let God." That was all I could do. I never lost faith, I knew he was a good boy and I knew my Higher Power would take care of him. Slowly things for him began to change and his situation got better.

Now my son is 24 and he has since married a nice girl; they seem to do quite well. They have a little girl, she's 10 months, and you have no idea how much I love this child and it is a pleasure to see how much my son loves his little princess, he's a good Dad! Again I am reminded to take "One Day at a Time," I don't think about tomorrow or what might happen, I'd rather enjoy today and "Let Go and Let God."

My sister is also an Al-Anon member. We went together to Al-Anon and we have the same group. She also has two boys. The youngest one is 17, he doesn't drink but suffers with depression. There is no joy in his life. They are seeing a psychologist but I'm not sure it helps. Again we are worried something might happen and my sister also talks to him a lot. For a while she stopped going to her meetings because his problem had nothing to do with alcoholism and she was very busy with her job. I asked her many times to come back and now she's back to meetings. I try to be there for her as much as she needs me. We both now understand, we have to "Let Go and Let God."

"Together We Can Make It" and "Keep It Simple" are the Slogans I use in service. The first time I went to an Area Meeting, it was because a nice person in my home group, who was sitting next to me, asked me and I didn't dare say no. But when I came to that meeting I didn't understand what they were talking about, I thought you should study to be there. It was like they spoke Chinese. It took me several meetings before I began to understand what it was all about.

In 1999 I was elected to be the Chairperson of Alateen, and I started using "Keep It Simple" and not only did I use it in the meetings but when I wrote a summary of our business meeting I wanted it to be clear so that people who didn't attend the meeting would know what we discussed. Now I'm on the Board of Trustees and I use "Together We Can Make It." We can't do it alone; we need each other, in our groups and in services. Knowing that we are not alone, gives us the strength to go on and helps us search for solutions when there are problems.

In our Alateen group we like using the little card "Just for Today." It's easy and it helps. In the book "Hope For Children of Alcoholics" the following is written:

Here are some things that help to make each day a good one:

- A positive attitude
- Time for ourselves
- Time for others
- A program
- Self-discipline

"If we live each day to the best of our ability, we will soon find we don't have time to worry about the future or regret the past. We will be too busy enjoying life."

I am very grateful today. For all the changes that have happened because of Al-Anon and for meeting all the wonderful people. I am grateful for being an Alateen Sponsor, for having a great group and for being a grandmother.

To end this I would like to say that I still like to run, but it's no longer running away from something. It's a sport. I run two or three times a week for at least one hour. I've started with a beginner program, from zero up to now; it gives me a positive attitude. I make time for myself and believe me, it takes a lot of self-discipline "One Day at a Time"!

Thank you.

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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, 86-2000	<i>Amistad (Friendship)</i>	1978
Australia	1952	1970	1980-2000	<i>Austra-Link</i>	1974
Belgium (Flemish)	1961	1982	1988-2000	<i>Keerpunt</i>	1981
Belgium (French)	1965	1981	1980-2000	<i>Sérénité</i>	1976
Brazil	1966	1979	1980-2000	<i>Boletín Al-Anon Informativo Nacional</i>	1983
Colombia	1960	1992	---	<i>Renacimiento</i>	1978
Costa Rica	1960	1992	---	<i>Compartamo</i>	1979
Denmark	1980	1985	1986	<i>Perspektiv</i>	1988
El Salvador	---	---	---	---	---
Finland	1953	1970	1980-2000	<i>Tietovain</i>	1968
France	1960	1978	1980, 82, 86, 90-2000	<i>La Chaîne</i>	1967
Germany	1967	1986	1980-2000	<i>Intern</i>	1981
Guatemala	---	---	---	---	---
Iceland	1972	1982	1984-2000	<i>Hlekkurinn (The Link)</i>	1987
Italy	1976	---	1986, 1992-2000	<i>Incontro (Meet Together)</i>	1988
Japan	1979	1992	1982, 84, 88, 90, 92, 97	<i>Hiroba (Inside Al-Anon)</i>	1981
Korea	1984	---	1997	---	---
Mexico	1965	1973	1980-90, 97	<i>Delta</i>	1976
Netherlands	1975	---	1980-2000	<i>Stapsgewijs</i>	1980
New Zealand	1954	1970	1980-2000	<i>N.Z. Al-Anon Messenger</i>	1963
Norway	1960	1982	1982-2000	<i>Trinn For Trinn</i>	1981
Paraguay	---	---	---	---	---
Peru	1965	2001	---	---	---
Portugal	---	---	---	---	---
Poland	---	---	1994-2000	---	---
South Africa	1974	1976	1980, 82, 84, 88-2000	<i>Unitas</i>	1980
Spain	1972	1988	1988-2000	<i>Serenidad</i>	1987
Sweden	1970	1991	1988, 92-94	<i>Al-Anon Kontakt</i>	1975
Switzerland (French)	1963	1973	1997-2000	<i>Sunray</i>	1967
Switzerland (German)	1964	1973	1982-2000	<i>M & F</i>	1967
U.K. & Eire	1952	1970	1980-2000	<i>News & Views</i>	1963
Uruguay	---	---	---	---	---
Venezuela	---	---	---	---	---
US & Canada	1951	1960	1980-2000	<i>The FORUM, Inside Al-Anon</i>	1978

Al-Anon meetings are held in over 110 countries. There are a total of 22,221 Al-Anon groups and 2,421 Alateen groups worldwide

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