

---

Sixteenth  
International Al-Anon General Services Meeting

---



October 3 - 6, 2012  
Lagoon Beach Hotel  
Cape Town, South Africa

# Table of Contents

---

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Twelve Concepts of Service .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>General Warranties of the Conference .....</b>                                 | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Statement of Purpose .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Attendance .....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Opening Session .....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| Introductions .....   | 5         |
| Serenity Prayer .....   | 5         |
| Roll Call and Flag Ceremony .....   | 5         |
| Voting Procedures .....   | 5         |
| <b>Admission Committee Reportback .....</b>                                       | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Keynote Speaker .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>General Sessions .....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| Overcoming Tension in the Service Structure .....                                 | 11        |
| Understanding the Balance between Concepts Six and Seven .....                    | 15        |
| Public Outreach (ways to communicate at the public level within the community) .. | 18        |
| Inventory (Part 1) .....  | 22        |
| Inventory (Part 2) .....  | 25        |
| Building Bridges – between different Communities within the Al-Anon Structure ..  | 27        |
| Anonymity .....   | 30        |
| Alateen Sponsorship .....   | 33        |
| Adult Children and other specialized groups .....                                 | 36        |
| Central American Meeting .....  | 39        |
| European Zonal Meeting .....  | 39        |
| <b>Workshop Reportbacks .....</b>   | <b>40</b> |
| Staff and members (Track 1) .....   | 40        |
| Paid staff and members (Track 2) .....  | 42        |
| Conflict Resolution, attracting members in service (Track 1) .....                | 43        |
| Conflict Resolution, attracting members into service (Track 2) .....              | 44        |
| Finance .....   | 46        |
| Self support: Reprinting, Financially feasible? .....                             | 47        |
| <b>Unanswered Questions .....</b>   | <b>48</b> |
| <b>Spiritual Speaker .....</b>  | <b>49</b> |
| <b>A Summary of Al-Anon’s History .....</b>                                       | <b>51</b> |
| <b>General Service Offices .....</b>  | <b>52</b> |

## 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 2012 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting:

## **Argentina**

Silvina Hebe C.

## **Australia**

Lois A.  
Rosalind M.

## **Belgium (French-Speaking)**

Patricia D.

## **Brazil**

Nilce T.  
Maria Benedita dos S.

## **Denmark**

Anja Egede F.

## **Finland**

Eija M.  
Kira S.

## **Germany**

Silke S.  
Uschi von E.

## **Italy**

Luigi B.  
Federica S.

## **New Zealand**

Arnold H.  
Paula B.

## **Peru**

Clara de G.

## **Poland**

Malgorzata D.

## **South Africa**

Gillian G.  
Brenda A.

## **Sweden**

Monica H.

## **Switzerland (French-Speaking)**

Pierre C.

## **UK & EIRE**

Maureen M.

## **U.S. and Canada**

Karen R.  
Ann C.

## **International Coordination Committee (ICC)**

Roger C.  
J.P. M.  
Ric B.  
Barbara O.  
Marsha W.

---

The following structures were not able to send representation:

---

Austria

Belgium (Flemish-Speaking)

Colombia

Costa Rica

France

Guatemala

Iceland

Japan

Korea

Mexico

Netherlands

Norway

Paraguay

Portugal

Spain

Switzerland (German-Speaking)

Uruguay

Venezuela



# Opening Session

---

## Introductions

A reception took place on Wednesday evening October 3, 2012 at the Lagoon Beach Hotel in Cape Town South Africa. This is the first time for the IAGSM to be on the continent of Africa and representatives from 16 service structures and their guests were welcomed warmly by the Host Committee on behalf of the General Service Office in South Africa.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> J.P. M., Co-Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee (ICC), introduced the speaker, Lois A., Australia, to give her Delegate Keynote Address. Then, Roger C., Chairperson of the ICC, opened the meeting with a warm greeting and stated “I am sure that by the end of the meeting we will all have experienced great fellowship but more importantly we will leave with renewed enthusiasm and a determination to ensure that no structure is ever alone.”

As an illustration of worldwide unity, the Delegates from each country introduced themselves, placed the flags of their country on a table in front of the room, and marked on a

colorful world map where their General Service Office was located.

The Chairperson and Co-Chairperson of the ICC, demonstrated shared leadership as each chaired a portion of the meeting. The topics for discussion were presented by the Delegates on behalf of their service structures. After each topic was presented, the participants were invited to share experience, on behalf of their structure, during open discussions.

After the end of each general session, the Serenity Prayer was said by one of the Delegates in his or her language. This gave the meeting a true international feeling!

The Delegates voted to have closed balloting. A two-thirds majority was accepted as the established substantial unanimity. It was then explained by the Chairperson that motions would be presented in written format, read by the Co-Chairperson, and the floor would be opened for discussion.



# Admissions Committee Reportback

---

The Chairperson explained the Admissions Committee did not meet during this IAGSM as there were no new structures to admit. However the ICC did present to the Delegates an updated and clarified version of the “Admissions Committee Guideline for the IAGSM.” After a thorough review of the original guideline the ICC agreed that the document in the current format had too much information, as it contained both procedural and background information. The Committee decided that creating two separate documents would help communicate the content to the structures more effectively. The Committee submitted to the IAGSM the two documents; one titled “Admissions Committee Guideline for the IAGSM,” and the other “Facts and Procedures for the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM).”

There was discussion about both documents however no vote was taken as there was no new information introduced in either.





# Keynote Speaker

---

## No Structure is Ever Alone – IAGSM

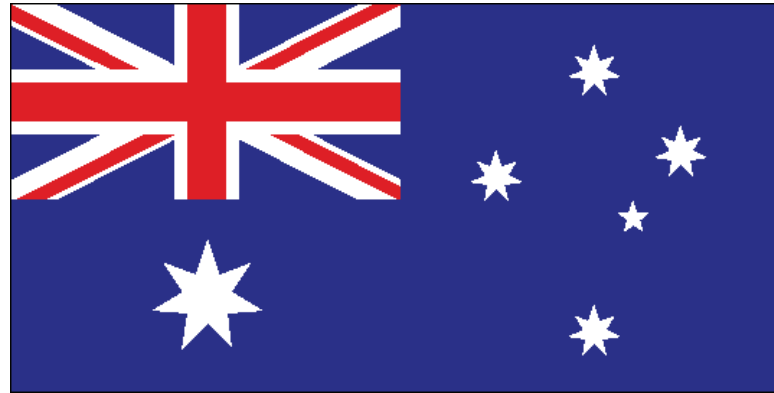
Lois A., Australia

I grew up in a family, which provided love and support, in which the principle “nobody ever needs to feel alone” was strong. This family was not affected by the alcoholism of one of its members. When circumstances arose where our basic family unit of mother, father, and three children needed support, the members of the extended family were always there to help; such as, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, close friends. Such support could involve simple things as babysitting, or more complex tasks such as building a garage and garden makeovers. Emotional support and sharing useful strategies for coping with life’s difficulties were provided by the united family unit.

However, when it became evident to me that alcohol problems, in the man I fell in love with and married, were destroying my dream of adding another happy little section to our larger family, I sank into a pit of despair that even those earlier years of belonging to a good supportive network could not prevent. The nature of the family disease of alcoholism is such that a terrible feeling of isolation, of being alone with this big problem, overtook me. Feelings of shame prevented me from seeking support from the family which had been my security growing up. How could I tell them of the things that happened in our house because of my husband’s alcoholism? They would never be able to understand and they would be angry with him because he hurt me. (It was OK for me to be angry with him but I hated it when other people were angry with him.) So I stood alone! Actually I didn’t do much standing before Al-Anon – I lay in bed and cried with the blankets pulled over my head.

Thank God I found Al-Anon after only a couple of years of standing alone! In Al-Anon I found another family in which the basic unit, the Al-Anon group, loved, supported, comforted me and gave me new direction. Gradually I was able to develop a new way of thinking that allowed me to find happiness whether my alcoholic was drinking or not and no matter what others in my life were, or were not doing. The Al-Anon program assured me that my happiness came from within me, that I had a choice on how I reacted to situations. So I was no longer standing alone.

I found that my Al-Anon group didn’t stand alone either. It had support from surrounding groups. My group was part of the wider fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups. If a problem came up, the group could call for support from the service network. In the days when I first came to Al-Anon in the mid 1970s, this was the state-wide Central Service Structure which in turn sought support from the World



Service Office in America. This changed in 1977 when our national service structure was established and a new system of support for groups was put in place.

At the time Australia was divided into nine Areas, each with varied numbers of districts which brought together groups in close geographic proximity for mutual support. Now nearby there was support for a group through District Meetings and visits from the District Representative (DR). From further away, this new support now came from the Area Assembly through information passed from the Area Committee and then the Area Delegate. Finally there was now an Australian General Service Office, Committees, and the Service Conference that became a valuable resource – and from even further away, the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups, (the World Service Office) rounded out our links of service. So no part of the Australia’s service structure ever needed to be alone.

It is interesting to read about the development of this worldwide system of support that today gives us the security of knowing that no structure, or part of the structure, is ever alone. Our newest book, *Many Voices, One Journey—Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-31), gives excellent information. Past World Service Conference Summaries and our own material from the archives at our General Service Office (GSO), also provided a picture of how the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) has evolved over the years to give, our national structures in countries outside the World Service Office service structure, such a great sense of security knowing that they never need to be alone with any problem.

The 1968 World Service Conference was asked to consider following Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) example of having an International Committee, to help countries outside the U.S. and Canada establish national service structures. Many countries, and in some cases, sections of coun-

tries, outside the U.S. and Canada were establishing their national structures, always well supported by the World Service Office in America, thus never having to feel completely alone. The communication system in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, however, was vastly different from what it is today with no instant answers to queries by e-mail, or access to relatively cheap international telephone calls. Answers to questions may have taken weeks to arrive. How could the support be improved?

In 1978 a staff position at the WSO was established to be responsible for encouraging growth of Al-Anon internationally and to maintain relationships between the World Service Office (WSO) and international service structures. To further enhance the idea that no service structure ever needed to feel alone, plans were made for the first World Service Meeting. It was cited in the book *Many Voices, One Journey—Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-31), “Its purpose was: to foster the development of Al-Anon overseas and to maintain unity amidst many languages and cultures. Representatives from every country with national structures will be encouraged to share their experiences in order to further carry the Al-Anon message of hope throughout the world.”

At the International A.A. Conventions held every 5 years there were large gatherings of Al-Anon members. It was suggested that after the 1980 A.A. International in New Orleans, Al-Anon could hold a meeting of representatives with all national service structures around the world together with representatives from the WSO. This first General Services Meeting took place with Delegates from 17 different countries present. I love the description of this meeting shared by the first Staff Secretary of the WSO International Coordination Committee quoted in the book, *Many Voices, One Journey—Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-31), where she talks about the challenges of understanding the conversations in English spoken in so many accents from all over the world, with so many trying to translate words back and forth from their native German, French, Finnish, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. She said “I picture 25 sets of ears standing at full attention straining to understand, to communicate. Yet we were all singing the same song and if we missed a word or two, we never missed the music. We brought the Al-Anon world of that time together.” What a fantastic and unique organization we belong to! This still same music continues today at these gatherings of our worldwide fellowship. We are bound together by a language of the heart, of mutual understanding, which transcends the usual limitations of national language differences. We can communicate even if we don’t know all the words, because we do understand the “music.”

That first meeting in 1980 voted to call the meeting the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) and to hold it regularly every two years. It was envisioned that two Delegates from each structure would attend and that only one would vote, but that was later changed to both

having a vote as it was thought that greater consensus would be obtained that way.

The story in *Many Voices, One Journey—Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-31), from one of Australia’s Delegates to that first IAGSM, shows how important it was to the early service members involved in our national service structure that our country took part in those efforts to unite the international service bodies. Despite the fact that the fellowship in Australia did not have sufficient funds to finance travel for our Delegates (the GSO had at first advised the WSO that it was impossible to send a representative), a way was soon discovered. Inspiration came and the desire to participate was such that two members offered to pay their own fares to attend that first IAGSM. Our General Secretary, who had not been in that position for long, and another member of the General Service Board, overcame all challenges to attend and begin this wonderfully helpful biennial tradition. The General Secretary shared that she used the money that she had put away for her husband’s funeral to finance her fare to attend the first IAGSM. (See how Al-Anon can change our thinking!) It was envisioned that the Delegates would talk about their structure’s problems and that solutions could be sought by the sharing of experience and ideas. All structures could share and celebrate their successes as well, which of course inspires others to try new ideas.

By 1988 the IAGSM agreed that each Al-Anon national service structure, eligible to send Delegates, would be responsible to pay those costs for their Delegate(s). It was also agreed that IAGSM Delegates should be endorsed by the General Service Board in their structure. An equalized expense was formulated to share the costs for all participating structures, whether the travel was long or short distances, and the WSO subsidized costs decreasing the amount of the subsidy over time. The Australian GSO has paid the travel expenses for two Delegates to attend the IAGSM since 1982. This has been achieved with full support of the membership; as they have been convinced of the importance of this meeting of Al-Anon structures, which gives us all a chance to strengthen and maintain this worldwide fellowship.

The second IAGSM in New York City in 1982 had 21 countries represented and some lessons were learned on how best to share experience between the WSO and the international structures. After this IAGSM, it was found that it was necessary to ensure that Delegates were not overloaded with information which was difficult to relate to as there is a vast variety of size, both in group numbers and in geographical situations, language and cultural differences and political differences.

In reading IAGSM Summaries and reports of the years between 1980 and this year, I discovered some interesting points that were discussed at times. It took several years to agree on the exact role of the IAGSM and its relationship to the World Service Conference (WSC). Questions of how

it was to provide an international group conscience at the WSC were discussed. It was resolved that the international structures had input to the WSC through the International Coordination Committee. The purpose of the IAGSM was then refined further:

“The purpose of the International General Services Meeting (IAGSM) is to share the experience of Al-Anon’s national services around the world through their Delegates. It will attempt to encourage growth of a sound service structure while maintaining a 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 would say that we are very lucky these days to be gaining the benefits of the refinement of the purpose of the IAGSM and of past experiments with the agenda which have shaped the format of the IAGSM today. The International Coordination Committee (ICC) has continued to consult with the national service structures so that the meeting can offer maximum benefit to all the participating countries.

The WSO, being the “keeper of the store of shared experience worldwide” can suggest topics for the IAGSM which pose common challenges to the international structures. In its role of supporting international Al-Anon, the WSO receives many queries and calls for help to cope with difficulties which come up from time to time. How to obtain and maintain an adequate amount of money each year for a structure to provide services to the groups and members, and how to carry the Al-Anon/Alateen message of hope to the community, are frequently occurring IAGSM topics. Another recurring topic concerns how we can maintain Al-Anon’s integrity of purpose amid the challenges thrown at us by the increasing influence of other 12 Step programs threatening to dilute the Al-Anon program. How to inspire more members to volunteer for the many service positions which keep our groups and members linked together has been a concern shared with other structures at the IAGSM. What a relief it was for us to know that most service structures also have this same problem that we had, and still have! At the IAGSM, we hear some ideas on what other structures have tried. And, as is true in our personal recovery, just knowing that others are facing similar dif-

ficulties to ours, but are persevering and striving to find solutions, gives us comfort and reassurance, and can also give us inspiration to “hang in there and keep trying!”

Other concerns and challenges that structures have shared at the IAGSM have been the difficulties for some structures to find IAGSM Delegates with full knowledge of the direction and thinking of their General Service Board; interpretations of the principle of anonymity acting as a barrier to carrying the Al-Anon message to the community; developing procedures to insure the safety of the Alateen in Al-Anon’s care; dealing with conflict between members; reaching an informed group conscience at all levels of service; and using technology to aid communication within and between service entities. The issues of on-line meetings for both Al-Anon and Alateen have been discussed and the problems associated with the use of the Al-Anon and Alateen name in social networking Web sites seem to be an ongoing concern. Issues regarding literature translation, literature reprint permission, copyright queries, literature shipping problems are all made more manageable when discussions can take place at the IAGSM. Our Australian GSO has been having some ongoing problems with the Australian Customs Department regarding our literature shipments from the WSO in the last nine months. The support we have received directly from the WSO has been very good and we have been informed that other countries are having similar experiences. A meeting such as the IAGSM gives us all a chance to discuss such problems and perhaps find ways that may make things easier.

The last ten or more years have shown that often many concerns discussed at the WSC each year have been the same concerns that Al-Anon’s international structures are also experiencing. The IAGSM, every two years, brings the knowledge discussed at the WSC to the various General Service Structures through their IAGSM Delegates. I know that I can read the reports from the WSC in *The Forum* magazine and in the *World Service Conference Summary*, but when I participate in discussions at the IAGSM, listening directly to people who were in attendance at those Conferences, the understanding and information that I gain is much more valuable. As an IAGSM Delegate I can then relay that information and understanding to my Australian structure through reports to our General Service Board, GSO Committees, and our Australian Service Conference.

Another analogy, showing the effectiveness of the IAGSM, is likening it to the help we offer to people who cannot physically attend group meetings. Just as our Lone Members gain a certain measure of support by mail from a distance but gain much more when attending face-to-face meetings, our national service structures benefit considerably more from the face-to-face conversations made possible by attendance at the IAGSM than by solely relying on written communications with the WSO and, on occasions, with each other.



The links that we establish with our fellow national service structures at the IAGSM, can be used to further develop opportunities for sharing experiences on a more local level. We were very happy to have two representatives from the New Zealand General Service Board at our Australian Service Conference this year. This was a great chance to share knowledge, ideas, and enthusiasm with our closest international neighbors and we hope to reciprocate by sending someone from our GSO to the New Zealand Conference perhaps next year. We were thinking about trying to organize an Asia Pacific Zonal Meeting but have found it too difficult so far for a variety of reasons. Just for now!

The success of the European Zonal Meeting (EZM) and the South American Zonal Meetings, which we have heard about at the IAGSMs, inspired us to try something similar in our region. Reaching out to include emerging structures as well as established structures seemed to be very desirable. These emerging structures cannot attend the IAGSM but they can attend Zonal Meetings so we thought we would extend the hand of help from a close neighbor. We have had some discussion with members of India's General Service Committee with a view to having a representative from there attend our Australian Conference.

It is a grave concern to us that the number of structures attending the IAGSM has fallen so much in the last few years. Economic conditions have been hard for many countries and it is always very difficult to assess our priorities, to make the best use of Al-Anon's financial resources. Let's hope that this IAGSM can explore this, and hopefully find some ways that participation can increase as the benefits of participating in the IAGSM are so important.

One other thought that I discovered somewhere, I'm not even sure where now, is that straws individually are not strong, but tied together they form a material that is extremely strong. Our worldwide national service structures, when bound together through the IAGSM, form a fellowship that is extremely strong and enduring.

As this 2012 IAGSM begins I am thinking how lucky each one of us is to be here in Cape Town, South Africa, sharing in this wonderful meeting of the worldwide fellowship. We see this theme, "No Structure is ever Alone – IAGSM," in action, being demonstrated in every discussion and interaction, whether in the formal sessions of this meeting or during the meals and breaks. Even if language seems to be a problem, if finding the right words is difficult, remember, we all understand the "music!" Even when we are separated by distance, just to know that you are all in this world means I never have to feel alone.



# General Session

## Overcoming Tension in the Service Structure

Federica S., Italy

First of all, I would like to thank my Higher Power, the WSO, and Al-Anon Family Groups in Italy for trusting me and giving me this great chance for personal growth. I am truly honored to be here with you and my heart is filled with gratitude.

I would like to begin by talking about our service structure. The Board of Trustees is composed of seven members. An additional traditional member of the Board of Trustees, that is a member having right of voice but no vote on legal matters, was elected at the 2011 Conference.

Our committees are as listed below:

- Executive and Finance Committee
- Policy Committee
- Public Outreach Committee
- Regional Service Seminar Committee
- Literature Committee (which includes the sub-committee “Incontro,” our bimonthly magazine)
- Nominating Committee
- Conference Committee (which has included the Admission/Handbook Committee since 2011)
- Alateen Committee

They are two employees at our General Service Office (GSO) in Italy.

Our structure is composed of 15 Areas and of a new Area, not included in a panel at the moment, as it was started as a result of a serious conflict. I will talk about that later. The 15 Areas are composed of 46 districts with a total of 422 groups composed of:

- 375 Al-Anon groups
- 29 Alateen groups
- 14 Al-Anon Adult Children groups
- Two Al-Anon English groups
- One Alateen English group
- One Al-Anon German group

We also have an on-line meeting “Vicini e Lontani.”

Overcoming tension in the service structure is an appropriate topic for our service structure because we have experienced some difficult moments in the last few years and we have tried to overcome them by using the *2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* and putting the Twelve Concepts of Service into practice. In this presentation I will describe two particular events that created critical situations for Al-Anon in Italy and share with you how we faced these situations, and were able to move towards resolving these.

### Event 1

In 2009, the Conference was due to approve the confirmation of a Trustee at-large chosen by the Board of Trustees. After a lot of discussion and requesting additional information, there were clear signs of distrust among the Delegates who then voted against the decision of the Board of Trustees to appoint, for a second term of office, that Trustee. Not having a clear separation between Al-Anon Family Groups “the fellowship” and Al-Anon Family Groups “the organization” within our service structure means that our Conference has been operating as both legal and traditional at the same time. The two legal aspects being that our Conference has the final authority to approve our budget and the election of the Trustees. Although voting took place twice, the Trustee chosen by the Board did not have the majority of votes, and there was a moment of crisis. During a past Conference, it had been decided that two terms were possible for the Trustees as stated in the *2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, but many Delegates thought a rotation was more helpful. At that point, two of the current Trustees interpreted the refusal by the Conference members to confirm the Trustee at-large candidate as a clear sign of mistrust towards the Board and expressed their intentions to resign.

Problems:

- The Delegates did not fully understand what could have been the outcome of their choice, which was in conflict with the Board of Trustees, thus demonstrating that they were not fully aware of their role at Conference.
- The decision put the Conference at a standstill.

During the above described situation, and related discussions, the Serenity Prayer was said many times so as to focus the attention of the participants on the basic principles of trust and the traditional aspects of the Conference.

Development of the discussions:

- We spoke about the concept of trust and the principle of delegated responsibility
- Trustees’ clarification that they cannot operate without delegated responsibility
- The Delegates were made aware of the fact that such an important choice would entail a new election of the Board of Trustees, as the resignation of two Trustees would mean that the quorum stated in our By-Laws could not be met.
- Reasons for such lack of trust: poor knowledge of the Twelve Traditions, the Concepts of Service, and in particular, of the duties and the responsibilities of the





Trustees as well as poor knowledge of our By-Laws.

Once these essential points were clarified, the Delegates asked the two resigning Trustees to leave the room so that the Delegates could decide if they would accept or refuse the resignations and then decide how the Conference should proceed. All the members of the Conference unanimously voted to refuse their resignations and asked the two Trustees to come back into the room to carry on with the work of the Conference. Having appealed to the traditional aspects of the Conference, all the participants voted again for the Trustee at-large and this time, the outcome was positive.

Although we overcame this crisis, the experience allowed us the opportunity to reflect on why it happened, and how similar situations can be avoided in the future.

#### Outcome:

- The Board of Trustees planned a meeting in March (for the purpose of meeting with the Delegates and the Area Chairpersons) to share concerns and thus be aware of any problems and be properly informed before the Conference in order to strengthen the mutual exchange between the Area Delegates and the Board of Trustees.
- During our annual Convention, there will be a specific meeting for the Delegates, the Area Chairpersons, and the Board of Trustees to discuss and share.

- It was decided to prepare guidelines that clearly state the roles and responsibilities of the trusted servants that attend the Conference.
- This experience motivated the members of the 2009 Conference to choose the theme for the following Conference: "Concept Ten: Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided."
- One of the proposals was to improve the Nominating Committee process (to make it more efficient with regard to our structure requirements) improving the résumé form for service volunteers and other necessary ongoing improvements.
- A strategic plan for Al-Anon Italy has been developed to distinguish Al-Anon Family Groups "the fellowship" from Al-Anon Family Groups "the organization," to move more towards using the model of the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. for our service structure.
- This particular experience caused a lot of reflection for many on the need of examining our structure and the need for better knowledge of the Twelve Concepts of Service at all service levels.



## Event 2

In this situation there were differences in an Area about the method on how to study the program. There were also different opinions about the management of finances and complaints from the membership about the lack of transparency. A chaotic election assembly and protests of some members regarding some of the elected servants led to a split of the Area into two opposing sides.

### Actions Undertaken

The two “opposing sides” asked the GSO for help. So, in August 2010 the Board of Trustees intervened and provided literature on the topic of conflict resolution and succeeded in obtaining a truce thanks to those willing to take on temporary leadership roles in the Area. Two longtime trusted servants who, in fact, represented the two opposing sides were put in charge of the Area until the next election. It was strongly suggested not to present the previously elected servants as candidates.

An election assembly followed, but one part of the Area did not participate, as they did not feel ready to resolve the conflict. As a result, some members of the old Committee in that Area were re-elected.

The dissident groups that did not take part in the election assembly met in a special assembly and elected the Delegate, Chairman, Secretary and a Treasurer. They informed the GSO, in compliance with standard procedure, requesting the registration of the new Area and the registration of the elected new servants.

The Board of Trustees suggested that this new Area should send a letter of petition to the members of the Conference.

### Outcome

As per the Service Manual, the Board of Trustees allowed this new non-panel Area to take part in the Conference and asked the Conference to decide upon the case.

The Delegates shared and then decided that it was not part of their responsibility to vote on the creation of the new Area for two reasons:

The Areas are autonomous

Not enough information was available

The Conference accepted that this new Area be represented at the 2012 Conference.

The Conference asked the Delegate of the previous Area where there was conflict to place principles above personalities, in order to proceed to the acceptance and the creation of the newly established Area which in fact had been created in harmony by using the principles.

The Conference underlined that our structure does not have a defined policy regarding the Areas and that, in the past, the Conference had erroneously voted on Area matters which are not a part of their responsibility.

There is an urgent need to create an Admission/ Handbook Committee to promptly translate the “Conference Procedure” sections in the 2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual. We then need to better study the history of our structure, from the beginning, and then revise the procedures for the creation and registration of the Areas to avoid division. There is also a need to establish precise guidelines - the same for all - to avoid confusing situations in the future.

We have not yet calculated the cost of the new Area. It is composed of only a few groups and we must consider if there could be any serious financial repercussions for Al-Anon Italy as a whole.

I will end my presentation with my thanks. I would like to thank the WSO for sending two of their representatives last year to the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Al-Anon Italy: their presence and their tireless sharing of experience, strength, and hope were extremely important to help us try to solve one of our main source of problems: the division between Al-Anon Family Groups “the fellowship” and Al-Anon Family Groups “the organization.”

I also would like to thank the WSO for all the books you have published and in particular, for the last book, *Many Voices, One Journey-Al-Anon Family Groups* (B-31) which has been a mine of information and experience. We have already started using it, even if it has yet not been translated into Italian. In particular, it encourages us not to be afraid of making mistakes as it is an unavoidable part of our growth. Facing the topic of tension is a bit like making an inventory: it was a moment to reflect upon our actions and recognize our mistakes, and to consider what can be done to improve our structure. With the help of our Higher Power, your help, and thanks to the sharing of experiences, we will try to carry on ONE DAY AT A TIME!

## Discussion

During the discussion it became clear that in many structures there is confusion about Al-Anon Family Groups “the fellowship” and Al-Anon Family Groups “the organization” and the responsibility of each of the service entities in their respective roles: in other words, What is the difference between the Board of Trustees and the General Service Office? Throughout this discussion, Delegates briefly described solutions to tensions encountered in their respective service structures:

Structures were often advised by a Board member or an IAGSM Delegate to resolve serious conflict. Improved communication and the exchange of information decreased the tension. Some structures experienced problems with personality clashes and were encouraged to use Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KDBM) by past IAGSM Delegates in their service structure.

It was suggested that at times it is helpful to send a representative to the World Service Conference. It is believed that attendance at this meeting and using some of the strategy found there is a good resource to help with the understanding of service roles.

Some structures use inventories at all levels of service to assist them if or when they have problems. One Delegate advised being pro-active helps divert problems before they grow; having the necessary information, lots of communication, and encouraging participation. Listening to other views is most important; all views need to be heard.

Another Delegate related that problems arose between their Conference and the Board over nominations. Through this experience, it was realized that background framing and reasons for specific acts need to be clarified and explained to their Conference members in order to avoid unnecessary confusion and conflict.

In many instances, the WSO proved a good resource in assisting a structure with overcoming the tensions in their structure. Our members learned that conflicts cannot be solved in the heat of the moment – emotions need to calm down first. It was stated that members in leadership positions need to be careful not to become too controlling.

The discussion was summarized by one Delegate who stated “members are reminded that making mistakes is part of growth.”



# Understanding the Balance between Concepts Six and Seven

Eija M., Finland



## Concept Six

*The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.*

## Concept Seven

*The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.*

I interviewed some previous International Coordinators (service title for IAGSM Delegate in this service structure) and members of the Board to get the information and experiences of the past and also the present. I had some written history too of the early years of Al-Anon in Finland and its structure. It was very interesting and I got new information and understanding.

In Finland our service structure is quite simple. We have 128 Groups, 16 districts, a General Service Conference, Al-Anon Keskuspalvelu ry with its Board of Trustees called “keskuspalvelu,” the Executive Committee, Standing Committees, and the office with a full-time employee who is the General Secretary.

Groups send their representatives to District Meetings. Some of the districts have a District Committee which does some preliminary work for the District Meeting. The districts are varied. Some are geographically large and the distances between the groups are long. There is more than one group only in some cities. For example, in one district there are five groups and the distances between the groups are measured in hundreds of kilometers (or miles). The activity in different districts varies significantly.

The districts elect and send two Delegates to the General Service Conference. There have often been one or two districts not participating. We try to encourage them and keep in contact with them. We have our Conference once a year, usually in late March, during a weekend. The Conference elects the Trustees among the candidates proposed by the districts and nominated by the Board of Trustees.

“Al-Anon Keskuspalvelu ry” is responsible for the management of Al-Anon services in Finland. It is a registered association with legal obligations and rights in Finland and it can make legal commitments. The eleven members of the Board of Trustees are the only members of the association. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, and one member of the Board of Trustees form the Executive Committee which is legally also the Board of the registered association. The Finnish By-Laws require that a registered association has a Board. The International Coordinators and the Chairpersons of the four Standing Committees (Literature, Public information, Alateen and *Tietoavain* (monthly magazine) editorial) are members of the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees takes care of the management of Al-Anon Services according to the Concepts of Service (Concept Six) and in the guidance of the General Service Conference. The Executive Committee takes care of the management of the office and the on-going business entrusted by the Conference and according to the Finnish By-Laws. The General Secretary of the office works in cooperation with the Executive Committee and the Board. She takes care of the daily businesses and group services, which is a lot of work. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee manages the General Secretary. The Standing Committees work independently in the framework of their plan which is accepted by the General Service Conference.

The Board of Trustees has four meetings annually. The Executive Committee meets monthly and nowadays usually via Skype and, if needed, it makes decisions also by e-mail.

Al-Anon came to Finland via Alcoholics Anonymous. During the first decade, A.A. had a very important role in Al-Anon services. A.A. published Al-Anon material and had a leading role in public information. Maybe that’s why Al-Anon adopted its first structure from the Finnish A.A. fellowship. Two separate service arms - Al-Anon Family Group Services and Al-Anon Publishing ry (registered association) - were established at the national level, which caused conflict between the service arms and double-headed management. There was no understanding of the group conscience or using delegation as a tool of management. Both service arms had their Annual General Meetings and all the groups could send a member to attend each of these meetings.

Little by little this created conflict. The need to re-organize the structure became obvious. The structure created a committee to propose and draft the necessary changes. The committee started to find out how the structures were built in other countries. Finland sent one member to observe the World Service Conference. Also, the Concepts of Service were translated into Finnish. In about ten years the fellowship was ready to change the existing structure and adopt the World Service Conference model. In addition, since the Concepts were now translated, the principles found in Concepts Six and Seven were clarified and the relationship became clear between the Board and the Conference. This change was brought to conclusion in 1984 when our ser-



vice structure finalized our present form; the Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees according to Concept Six and that the Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional according to Concept Seven.

The change in the structure was undoubtedly a great challenge. After the change our structure still had challenges partly due to the history previously mentioned. The first model had ten years of time to influence the thinking of the members. Even today, it is causing difficulty in understanding how the legal and traditional aspects can work together in the structure.

The coordination between the Conference and the Board of Trustees did not reach its balance all at once. There were no severe problems between them but the role of the Board was overemphasized. The working procedures were weak and varied in accordance to the members personal professional history. On the other hand, the Conference could not work effectively for various reasons. The working practices of those earlier Conferences did not leave room for the real participation of the Delegates. The agenda was rigid and a higher level of participation was necessary to take part in the conversations. A Delegate had to be really active to have a full understanding of the topics and the work of the Board and how that work related to the groups. The Conference is held during one weekend; during the time of this conflict, the Conference was even shorter as our Conferences were held during the A.A./Al-Anon Convention. Our earlier Conference model did not allow enough time for us to work the issues presented by the Board thoroughly or to understand the agenda based on using spiritual principles. The Conference members had only enough time to give their official approval to proposals they did not understand that were presented by the Board.

The problem peaked in the beginning of 2000. The structure was forced to face that there were communication problems and a lack of information was a consequence. The Board and the districts were distant with each other. Also, the idea of the Conference being a nationwide group conscience had slowly been adopted for decision-making and there were misunderstandings and distrust. Discussion about finance was a source of bad feelings.

The Board created a Work Group to find ways:

- To improve the understanding of the service structure among the new servants

- To improve the Board meeting procedures

- To improve the communication between all levels of service

- To facilitate the interaction between the Board of Trustees and the Delegates of the General Service Conference

The Work Group, as the Committee was now called, held a “Development Day” which produced many new ideas and improvements.

As a result of this work:

The Board began to arrange a “get acquainted” seminar for the new members of the Board after the Service Conference. The newly appointed members got information about their tasks and the work of the Board. They also got a Service Sponsor among the senior servants (Concept Nine).

The Board clarified the scope of its responsibilities in relation to the Executive Committee and other Standing Committees (Concept Ten). This included an improvement in the submission of agenda items for the Board meetings. Now the members are well informed beforehand. The Committees send their topics and draft resolutions early enough. All materials are available two weeks before the meeting. If during the meeting it appears that more information about the topic is necessary, that topic item is shifted to a later meeting. In this way the meetings can keep to their time schedules and not create chaos where members don't know what is being done and why.

The new technology of creating an internal Intranet for the members became a helpful and important tool of communication on the Board level and also in all levels of the service work.

Maybe the biggest change, which aroused emotions among the members, was the change in the arrangements of the General Service Conference. The Board decided to arrange it separately from the National A.A./Al-Anon Convention as a compact two-day weekend Conference. At first it was a trial period, because the old-style Conference had a status of a long-lasting heritage and older members were use to this custom. The goal was to get the Board Members and the Delegates to know each other better and to have more time to work together and discuss the topics. The procedure of the Conference was changed to include workshops around the topics of service. The participants could feel they were now included in the process and not only outside observers, who really didn't understand what was going on. After having experienced this new model, the Delegates prefer it. In spite of the worries, changing this

procedure has proven to be an important step into the spiritual growth of the structure.

From the beginning, our participation in the IAGSM has been important for the development of our structure. It has provided us with knowledge of Al-Anon principles and broadened our understanding of the Concepts of Service.

The renewed structure and the new procedures made spiritual growth possible, but it required work. Now, the Board is working more efficiently and systematically. The Conference and the Board members have the opportunity to work and learn together, the balance between those arms is improving. When members share their good experiences about doing service in Al-Anon meetings, it attracts new members and maybe we begin to believe also in the abundance of our mental resources.

When I first started as a member of the Literature Committee and then as an alternate International Coordinator, I could enjoy the fruits of this development work. But the new policies and habits need to be taken care of on a daily basis. In fact we had a second "Development Day" two years ago, it was very useful, especially for the Board.

### **Discussion**

During this discussion it was mentioned, by a member of the ICC, that understanding the service roles within Al-Anon Family Groups "the fellowship" and Al-Anon Family Groups "the organization" is most confusing for the fellowship.

When Lois created Al-Anon there was no World Service Conference, only groups. Al-Anon needed to have a legal voice which could protect copyright, and the business of Al-Anon, etc. She created a corporation. The Board of Trustees are the members of the corporation; not the fellowship. The Twelve Traditions guide the fellowship. The Board of Trustees is the legal arm of Al-Anon. The World Service Conference is the voice of the fellowship, and advises the Board of Trustees on matters. But the Conference cannot take legal action.

Structures often disregard the Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter. It is an important document. The Conference often does not understand the different roles of the Board of Trustees and the Conference. The WSC Charter is the spiritual agreement between the Board of Trustees and Conference. The membership is often afraid of giving power to the Board. Although the Conference can dissolve the Board of Trustees with a three-fourths vote, the Charter stipulates that the outgoing Board of Trustees must elect the next Board.

Most structures find that because of a lack of understanding, sometimes confusion is caused within the fellowship. If we go back to the history of Al-Anon, learn from the history and build on that history, slowly all will benefit from those past experiences. Although our fellowship is based on change, many of us have difficulty with change. One suggestion is to manage change by doing it on a trial basis.

Various views were expressed during this discussion following.

One Delegate suggested that structures can use Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) to help support discussions. This will improve insight for the membership about the different roles of the Board of Trustees.

Another Delegate mentioned that although the fellowship is in control of our primary purpose, carrying the message of Al-Anon, we need a legal entity to take care of legal affairs. Decisions should all be group conscious decisions. Even newer members should understand how a structure works. Members need to understand the structure and responsibility levels.

An ICC member mentioned that structures that do not follow the WSO model, find themselves in conflict and often have to change and adopt the model.

Another Delegate stated that in their experience they found that if the Board and GSO conduct themselves in such a way that the membership are happy with them, they will be trusted by the members.

It was shared by another Delegate that in their structure using the Concepts of Service as a foundation, they believe the Board of Trustees insures that the fellowship respects the laws of the land. Regular checks are necessary to ensure that GSO and the Board of Trustees are doing what the Conference asked them to do.

Another Delegate emphasized that trust is created between the Board of Trustees and Conference by keeping lines of communication open through Area and Assembly visits and using resources available from the WSO.

Most countries require that non for profit organizations be registered. Service structures should obey the law of the land.

An ICC member reminded the members that the duties of the Board of Trustees are described on pages 129 -131 in the 2010-2013 Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual.

A reminder for all was that the Service Manual is a resource to use in explaining the different roles to members of the fellowship.

# Public Outreach

## (ways to communicate at the public level within the community)

*Gillian G., South Africa*

Thank you to the International Coordination Committee (ICC) for giving me the opportunity and privilege of sharing my experience, strength, and hope with you at the 2012 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM), which we are honored to host in Cape Town, South Africa.

My introduction to service in Al-Anon, beyond the level of Group Representative (GR), was in Public Outreach (PO). I was elected to be the Cape Area PO Co-coordinator. I had no real understanding of the position and received no job description, as there was no predecessor to the job. South Africa's National PO Co-coordinator was based in another part of our country. To be trusted in this role was both humbling and elevating; this service was a real honor for me and I regarded it as a very serious responsibility. It was to become a pathway of personal recovery and growth for me.

It was nearing the time of our 50 years of Al-Anon Family Groups in South Africa, and we wanted to celebrate and use this significant opportunity to create awareness of what Al-Anon Family Groups is, what it does and how the public gets in touch with Al-Anon in South Africa. In those days there were no South African printed guidelines; my source of information and understanding came purely from Conference Approved Literature (CAL) and by material provided by the World Service Office (WSO). It was so good to rely on the accuracy and guidance of our literature. We formed what today we would call a Task Force, whose job was to brainstorm ideas and come up with a strategy. We ran these ideas past our General Service Office (GSO) office to make sure they were permissible within our Traditions. As an Area, we had no funds to support the ideas born from the strategies, so, we did some fundraising to cover the costs of our plans. The Area PO Committee understood and exercised our Seventh Tradition of self-support.

We printed the first South African PO posters, had our first print advertisement produced (Public Service Announcement), and designed a new letterhead including the 50-year logo. We wrote letters to all the churches (ministers and religious leaders) in the Area asking them to pray for Al-Anon in our 50<sup>th</sup> year. We also wrote to all the government ministers who were based in Cape Town, informing them that we are a credible resource across all communities in South Africa. This was an inexpensive way to carry our message - not by affiliating with anyone but rather by presenting a favorable picture of a good attractive account of Al-Anon South Africa.

As a relatively young one to service, I was granted permission to have voice, but no vote, at Conference 2000 where I wanted to request permission to launch a Web site for AFG in South Africa. This was viewed with a great deal of sus-

picion by the long-time and more experienced members. However, after much debate, it was approved. We proudly launched Al-Anon in South Africa into the technological age with [www.alanon.org.za](http://www.alanon.org.za) which went live in August 2001. In 2002 WSO included a link to our Web site on their PO Web site. By the end of 2003 the South African Web site had received 1518 visitors from various countries. At the following Conference in 2001, I was elected as the National PO Chair.

The National GSO for South Africa is the only national service structure in Africa and is situated in Cape Town. Our GSO is the operational arm of the Al-Anon Family Groups South African Service Conference, and is made up of a Chairperson and portfolio Chairpersons for Literature, Finance, Public Outreach & Media, Member Services, Policy and Planning including Archives, and members at-large who have specific skills or experience. Our Office Administrator is the only paid employee. We purchased our office in May 2009 and we operate from those premises while sub-letting a portion of them to the Cape Town Area office.

I held the role as the National Public Outreach Chairperson for two terms of office until I was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 2007 and then elected in 2009 as Chairperson of the GSO. The Board requested that I continue with the portfolio of Public Outreach Media because of my location in Cape Town and original involvement with the outside agencies that are also situated there. A new National PO chair was elected who lived in another Area of South Africa, KwaZulu Natal. Our team of three Area PO Co-coordinators and their Committees report monthly to the GSO on their achievements reached within the South African PO guidelines, which we have now developed.

At the 2007 Conference, a motion was passed approving a budget for a media campaign and so began our formal engagements with professional agencies. We wrote to many advertising agencies, describing Al-Anon Family Groups as an organization and describing our work and that we were looking for someone to partner with us. Of the many letters I wrote only one agency replied offering their services which we believe was a response from our Higher Power. They have proved time and again to be a very close partner who has as much passion for Al-Anon to succeed as we have.

The goal of the PO Committee was in keeping with the World Service Board of Trustees Vision and Mission statements:

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

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





The Twelve Traditions were our continual guide to maintain unity and protect Al-Anon as a whole from any breaches of anonymity and the dangers of property, power, and prestige. Our Committee had to be organized and well-prepared to ensure that our program was not altered or diluted by the agencies creative team throughout the process. It was an exciting process as the agency treated us like valued clients, sparing no expense, time, quality or expertise; and we came to understand that we are not a “poor or beholden relative.” It was confirmed over and again that we do indeed have credibility and offer a valuable public outreach resource to those seeking our help. They also brought in many of their own partners who were more than generous and gracious in assisting us to create material and achieve our campaign goals. Our Higher Power (HP) sent a carefully chosen ad agency which used our CAL as the collateral material to better understand the framework within which we carry out our activities. Every piece of material created by the agency was passed by our own PO team for approval, for screening, for compliance with our program and Traditions.

In return, our PO Media Team was a truly good example of the healing power of the program to all the outside agencies as they conducted themselves graciously in all their dealings with them. There were many opportunities during filming, recording, and at strategy meetings for the PO team to carry the Al-Anon message on a personal note to those involved with us. During this process we knew our HP carried our message to the models used, the sound studio’s engineers, cameramen, film crew, print houses, production teams, web designers, Ad and Public Relations agency staff, as they were learning about what we do and how to contact us. We carried our message throughout the development.

During this initial phase, we developed new print material, posters, radio and TV PSA’s, and a re-designed Web site. Members’ anonymity was protected and the agencies respected this position, as it was so clearly stated in our Traditions. Our television advertisement were entered into a social responsibility media competition and the surfing ad was awarded a prize; the result of which was free airing of the ad on satellite pay TV stations for a period of 12 months. Al-Anon Family Groups South Africa was really on the map in the public domain as we embarked on our mission to make Al-Anon a known resource for those who reached out for help. The outside agencies insured that we had as much exposure as possible as a Public Benefit Organization and we were aware of greater public awareness towards Al-Anon. The quality of the campaign resulted in many inquiries from print agencies and the compliments were high praise indeed. Many were keen to publish our attractive material but we were limited within budget constraints.

However change of this magnitude is never without its challenges and we certainly experienced some:

- We encountered resistance from some of the fellowship’s long-timers who thought that a media campaign might be construed as advertising/promotion of Al-Anon and not attraction and thereby going against the Traditions. It took patience, education, and experience for them to see the campaign in its completed form before they were convinced otherwise.
- It was a continual struggle to explain the difference of a brand name awareness campaign to an advertising one where we were promoting Al-Anon as a commodity.
- We also had a serious lack of skilled volunteers to assist and much of the work was outsourced.

- Working with the professionals who grappled with our principle of self-support and anonymity was challenging but as previously mentioned their constant referral to our literature gave them understanding and fortitude to deal with each of these and they happily complied.
- A minority group of members continually asked us to justify the expense and necessity for such an outlay of money by quantifying the success of the campaign. They needed proof or measurement of the results by requesting statistics of growing groups and new members.
- However, this request only started to appear well into the media awareness campaign and there were no starting statistics to work from. In an effort to satisfy the demand for proof of success it was discovered that obtaining credible group and membership statistics was not possible at that time. This opportunity led us to start keeping accurate records of groups and membership by the Member Services portfolio from 2005 on-wards. We are now able to measure the growth or shrinkage of our fellowship. These figures are monitored monthly.
- We also embarked on obtaining credible local statistics by conducting a National membership survey. All 12-Step calls to Al-Anon South African Area and GSO offices and volunteers are now surveyed, recorded, and used for comparative purposes year upon year.
- Graciously accepting the enormous time and effort of the outside agencies was a humbling experience for us all.

In 2010, the Board charged the GSO to embark on a 60<sup>th</sup> year campaign to celebrate this global milestone and the Conference agreed to an additional budget for PO Media for this purpose. Our ad agency recognized that our best advertisement would be to access the experience, strength, and hope of our diverse membership. Our membership “IS” the best public spokesperson of our fellowship and the agency, mindful of our principle of anonymity, developed an idea where our members could be heard in the public domain. In creative PR speak they questioned what are we selling and what is our commodity? It was agreed that it was “HOPE.” Based on this theme the idea of the collective experience, strength, and hope of the members was to be the message in our campaign to create and build on our brand recognition and awareness.

Task forces called for handwritten sharings of a few lines from our membership across the country and after a selection process of some 1000 sharings, suitable handwritten quotes were submitted to the agency. So was born the “HOPE” sculpture, which by now you will have seen for yourselves. It is a six-meter outdoor portable artwork containing those messages of “HOPE” which can be displayed at public parks, in shopping malls, hospitals, colleges, schools, churches, and at other public events. While this public art is intended to generally raise the profile of Al-Anon Family Groups, naturally it is hoped that the installation will call

out with “HOPE” to individuals whose lives are affected by a problem drinker and help them realize that they are not alone in this world. That if they just reached out they would find people who have travelled the same road as them. These messages have proved of great interest to passersby, shoppers, commuters, and strollers.

In addition, we printed complimentary hand out material with a selection of messages of “HOPE” on notepads, bookmarks, roller banners, and on our Web site. These have been used to supplement the campaign at outreach breakfasts, dinners, at public drug and alcohol forums, and wellness days.

This 60<sup>th</sup> campaign has proved a tremendous success and the benefit to our structure was immense. We have experienced buy-in and participation from all our members, who now have a vested interest in the success of PO initiatives. They have wanted to see if their share is inside one of the 1000’s of bottles on display! This has created unity and a sense of belonging in Al-Anon for members in South Africa. Keeping within our primary spiritual aim and singleness of purposes to help families of alcoholics, we have achieved our goal of letting it be known that there is help available for those who wish to pursue it. We have a visible, attractive, and consistent, message.

Our annual PO calendar now has greater meaning and purpose to a larger membership audience and created great excitement for the group member to be involved in the hosting of the sculpture at nearby events or venues whether it is helping with transportation, setting up, cleaning or perhaps even as volunteer members manning the site and handing out literature to the public.

The Board and GSO have presented a favorable attractive message of Al-Anon. We now hold regular professional breakfasts in all three Areas reaching across all fields of commerce and industry, religion, police and prison services, education, media, medical and treatment facilities. We have found these events to be particularly successful and many new outreach opportunities have arisen as a result. The material available to professionals at our breakfasts matches our message of “HOPE” and we have received many inquires via our Web site. For example Al-Anon has been asked to participate at Human Resource wellness events, to speak at schools, to provide material for treatment facilities among other requests.

There is a quote that resonates with me about the work we have done in the PO arena; “They may forget what you said but they will never forget how you made them feel.” To me this applies to those trusted servants charged with the organizing and planning, those members who carry the message, who shared their own personal message of “HOPE,” those with whom we have worked in the outside agencies, and those to whom we have carried the message in the professional or public arena. Our Higher Power has truly blessed us in our endeavors.



I remember so well our Conference in 2005 when the WSO Executive Director attended and suggested during a workshop that the Conference Delegates of South Africa not hold back – not let our ideas be confined to what we did not have, rather that we dreamed of what could be, the possibilities, the opportunities and the vision. We did not truly believe that it would be possible. So was born a vision to reach all those in all communities in South Africa and many of these ideas have now become a reality.

Prior to receiving a bequest from a grateful Al-Anon member, I know that we at the Conference 2005 had placed our trust in our Higher Power and had come to believe in the abundance available. This has led us to the common good and well-being of Al-Anon South Africa. So it is appropriate that I end with a message of hope, dream big, and trust that your Higher Power will guide and enable you, with abundance, to carry the message of our beloved program to those who need it in all communities.

### **Discussion**

In answer to a question on how long the “HOPE” sculpture can be used, the Delegate explained that no dates were used, the sculpture focuses on “HOPE.” The materials used can easily be replaced if necessary. Continual awareness can be created in different parts of the country. Volunteers help with the storing, moving, cleaning, and construction of the sculpture. The need for experience is minimal but they need more banners, more hand-out PO material. This project does not really date.

The Delegates asked for a further explanation about the professional breakfasts that the service structure holds regularly. The Delegate from South Africa explained that a small amount of money was given to the Areas to hold Public Outreach breakfasts. The funds come from the GSO budget or are fundraised by each Area. The interest from the bequest is only used for special projects. By doing the professional breakfasts in all the Areas, Al-Anon SA is building up a data base of organizations and people working in the same community forums. For example: life orientation, education on all levels, medical facilities, police forums, etc. The idea of having breakfasts came from the IAGSM in 2006: give people food before their day starts, then give them information before they leave.

The Delegate also explained the “Leave Hope” campaign is done annually early in March near Lois’s birthday: leaving pamphlets in public places (hospitals, day care centers, police stations, libraries, clinic, etc.) for anybody to pick up. She also explained that groups fundraise to buy pamphlets to leave. SA Al-Anon often fundraises by catering for A.A. rallies. Fundraising is done by selling unwanted stuff (white elephant table) at rallies, conventions, etc. SA has an ongoing culture of fundraising.

Members asked for an explanation of the statement that all incoming calls to the offices are recorded. The SA Delegate explained the system used in order for Member Services to know daily and monthly what is happening from the statistics of incoming calls received. Group attendance is monitored also by GRs’.

A Delegate asked about keeping anonymity while doing Public Outreach work. Various participants suggested using paid models instead of real members, using clever photography hiding faces, shadows, etc.

Additional ideas:

- Using service providers and paying for public outreach advertisements enables us to provide statistical information quicker.
- Using roller banners to reach the public and create awareness (buy them one by one as funds are available) insuring that any artwork used is of good quality.
- Operating an answering system manned by Al-Anon volunteers.
- Using new posters which can be pulled off the Al-Anon Web site.
- Using social media sites and technology.
- Taking part in community projects and surveys.

Many structures reported that their Public Outreach work is not dynamic and often unsuccessful. The presentation gave them hope that approaching Public Outreach in a different way can be successful.

Another Delegate explained about two WSO projects that were successful for that service structure. The Membership Survey, that the WSO has continued to do every three years since 1984, provides data for the WSO. This survey is available on-line to members within the WSO service structure. The Family Health Survey, a questionnaire created by researchers, was of value because of the WSO experience with the Membership Survey. The purpose for the survey was to find out if Al-Anon is seen as a credible viable resource for newcomers seeking Al-Anon Family Groups.

The WSO puts out new ads every year on radio and TV in the U.S. and Canada. In the United States radio and TV time is free to not-for-profit organizations.



# Inventory (Part 1)

Karen R., U.S. and Canada

There are currently 36 eligible structures who may attend the International Al-Anon General Service Meeting (IAGSM). In view of the declining attendance at IAGSM, the International Coordination Committee (ICC) decided that an inventory to explore why attendance is declining and ways to make the IAGSM more effective was in order. In order to establish the reasons for the lack of attendance, inventories were sent by the ICC and financial help was offered by the Board of Trustees. The response to the inventories, though, was mostly positive about the value of the IAGSM. However, to continue the conversation, we would like to take the time to explore with you by gathering more information.



## Framing

Since the first IAGSM meeting in 1980, the number of General Service Offices has more than doubled from 16 countries eligible to attend to 36. However, instead of increased attendance at this meeting, starting in 1997 attendance began fluctuating with a sharp drop beginning in 2006.

## Question 1

In view of the decline in attendance, what suggestions can you share to encourage more structures to attend the IAGSM?

## Discussion

The benefits gained by attending were voiced by the Delegates:

- Shared knowledge and experience is important and valuable.
- Structures recognized the mistakes made with the internal organization of their service structures and gained insight in how to make changes.
- This meeting can help a structure to create vision.
- Meeting creates enthusiasm and passion.
- Experience worldwide fellowship.
- Structures can reach out for help.
- Learn about the history of Al-Anon.
- Understand the basic Al-Anon structure (e.g. equalized expense, difference between the traditional and the legal roles).
- Understand why something went wrong in home structure.
- Learned at IAGSM how to introduce Committees into their structure.
- Learned how to manage conflict.
- Experience of attending is much better than reading a Summary or the Service Manual.
- Experience the use of workshops and how to run workshops.
- Having the ICC available to answer questions is so valuable.

## Why some structures do not attend IAGSM:

- Cannot afford to attend IAGSM.
- Structure cool about IAGSM.
- Ordinary member cannot see the advantages of attending.
- Some structures always have to travel to attend.
- IAGSM is seen as a replication of the Zonal Meetings.
- Many countries may have been here if there was a translator.
- Did not have enough money and cannot afford to send two Delegates.

## Some solutions offered

- Find another way to calculate equalized expense.
- Find a more central location.
- Suggest Europe as the out of country location.
- Find a less expensive venue.
- Next year at Zonal Meetings – encourage those that can to attend the IAGSM.
- Delegates should bring the enthusiasm gained at IAGSM to their own country.
- Get a technology platform to market IAGSM to make it more attractive.
- Send a strong, positive message to structures not here.
- Simplify e-Communities – members find it very hard to navigate.
- Many members don't like to read summaries. We need to modernize and upgrade some of our communication in the fellowship.

## Framing

In an attempt to meet the individual needs of each structure, workshop discussions are organized with those needs in mind. For example, two workshops on the topic of finance, one for service structures that do not have paid staff and the other with service structures that have paid staff.

## **Question 2**

It is important to the success of this meeting that the General Session topics and workshop discussions address the needs of each structure. What suggestions can you offer to help achieve this goal?

## **Discussion**

Many Delegates expressed their satisfaction with the topics chosen for IAGSM 2012. Some questions were asked and opinions given during the discussion included:

- It is essential that topics are relevant for the attending structures.
- The agenda should include topics to meet the major needs of structures.
- WSO/ structures should specify the reason why a specific topic is included in the program.
- More time should be given for topics to be sent to ICC.
- Choose topics repeated by many structures.
- Engage the GSO's not attending and ask them about topics. You can pull them into the meeting in this way.
- The use of more technology during sessions. It will make the general sessions more interesting.
- Extend the time for the workshops.

An ICC described the different ways the WSO tries to help structures. Some years ago WSO members started travelling to make personal contact with structures.

It was also explained that the topic/theme ideas come from the follow-up evaluations sent to the Delegates that attended the previous IAGSM and all General Service Offices. The ICC has the responsibility of expanding the final topics/theme.

## **Framing**

Feedback received from some General Service Offices that do not attend the IAGSM indicates that although they see the IAGSM as an important service meeting, they either lack the financial resources or a qualified member within the structure who is proficient in English.

## **Question 3**

What experience can you share to assist those structures that indicate they are not able to participate in the IAGSM because of financial and /or the language challenges in their service structures?

## **Discussion**

- Reach out to newer GSOs.
- Structures sponsor each other.
- WSO helps financially when possible.
- Prepare for international contact. Place IAGSM as an item line on your budget. Share the responsibility or raising funds for international travel.
- Convince your structure that you can benefit from both meetings (IAGSM and the Zonal Meeting).
- Getting to know WSO members is beneficial – they are not strangers. Structures start to feel connected to WSO.
- Use the platform of the Zonal Meetings as a good starting point.
- Often IAGSM Delegates have no specific role in their structure. Delegates should have an important role in the structure because they are knowledgeable members.
- A structure could adopt one of the absent structures, not financially but by communication.
- Often the report-back is not always enthusiastic. The report-back should illustrate the value of attending the IAGSM.
- One Delegate stated the importance of translation into Spanish. The people in her country are very poor. They lack knowledge and finances. Members cannot afford to buy the books. Al-Anon must be creative in how to provide materials for them.
- Have multi-language information on Web sites.
- It will help if WSO can give an indication of the cost of the next IAGSM well before the time. Structures will then have time to budget for the next meeting. That might encourage an absent structure to come along.

Discussion arose about the use of technology. Affordable international contact means using the Internet. Structures can be in contact and help each other using the Internet.

Some members wanted to know why Delegates are not allowed to use laptops in the meeting. It was stated by one “being on-line means you can be in contact.” One expressed an opinion that “Al-Anon is not using the technology that is available.”

Another Delegate expressed that she was “glad no laptops were allowed because we should be listening, not typing.” She also stated from her point of view that “structures want everything served up on a silver platter.” She felt that part of her job description, as Delegate, is to ensure that her structure regularly attends IAGSM; to get the information to the service structure as she believed that it's not solely the responsibility of the WSO to share this information.

Several members spoke about having a translation service at IAGSM meetings. Time was spent on discussing translating at international meetings. Examples were given of meet-

ings that used paid translators with success. The attending structures shared the costs. Other members felt that professional translators are too expensive and that the fellowship should be involved. Another view was that translating Al-Anon language is not that easy. Instant translations can be wrong and carry the wrong message.

Another viewpoint was that not all literature needed to be translated. A structure can translate pamphlets one by one. Members were reminded that the early Al-Anon groups did not have any literature. The fellowship is based on members and meetings, not on literature.

A member of the ICC spoke at length about translations. In 2002 several Delegates spoke about the idea of having translation available at the IAGSM. At the 2005 IAGSM the topic of translation was again discussed. Those interested asked for time to come up with a plan. However, to date no plan has been submitted. The ICC is reluctant to devise a solution for this problem. Structures must come up with solutions. Maybe whisper-translation can help. The WSO is not the source of all solutions. The solution for this meeting would come from the structures. It is important that this meeting grow, otherwise the isolation grows.

One idea shared is that the WSO is investigating the possibility of creating an international page on their Web site that will have information in all the languages with links to all structures.



# Inventory (Part 2)

Patricia D., Belgium

## Framing

Feedback received from some individual Delegates indicates they are limited in the amount of time and opportunities to share about information from the IAGSM within their service structure.

## Question 4

How do you share the value of the IAGSM to the members within your respective service structures?

What experience can you share as to the various ways your structure provides the opportunity to pass on information and ideas to the different links of service within your service structure?

## Discussion

Delegates described the different ways of sharing their experience at the IAGSM.

It was suggested that the reports should focus on the work done at the IAGSM. Delegates often report with much enthusiasm about the interesting aspects of the trip, the new places they saw, their personal experiences. This often leads the fellowship to view the IAGSM in a negative way – “we need to change the perception that this meeting is just a trip for pleasure.”

- In general, members write a report which is then communicated to the fellowship in various ways. Some submit the report directly to their conference. Others submit the report directly to the GSO or the Board of Trustees. Some indicate the report is passed on to the Policy Committee or shared at Regional Service Seminars, District Meetings, and/or Assemblies. Some Delegates post their reports on their structures' Web site.
- Some GSOs need to translate their reports as many of their members do not understand English.
- Some Delegates will also report to a Zonal Meeting.
- Some members reported that they create a slideshow or a PowerPoint presentation and include photographs. They will also display the gifts received.
- Some advised that they report to a group or an Area if invited to do so. A few felt that such visits energize the country.
- Several members said that they are not allocated more than an hour for the reportback.
- A few members told the meeting that they will choose some of the IAGSM topics and prepare workshops on these topics for their annual Service Meeting.

- One Delegate stressed that their IAGSM Delegates always include a section called, Lessons Learned, that is later used during Policy and structure discussions.

## Framing

Of the responses received, the majority advised that they would not change the format of the IAGSM.

## Question 5:

How could the current format be improved to insure the content shared during the meeting continues meeting the needs of your service structure?

## Discussion

When asked to report on the topics chosen for discussion, the workshops, and the interaction with ICC, the Delegates responded:

- Members would like more time for workshops. They found the workshops very helpful and enjoyable.
- Send the presentations earlier as some structures want to translate all the material before the IAGSM.
- A Delegate commented the question session with ICC should be longer, this is very helpful.
- Many members would like to see more PowerPoint presentations. They would like to see varied presentations – Different/creative styles. The sessions were too similar.
- A member reminded the meeting that people learn in different ways and that different formats should be used (drama, games, songs, role play, etc.).

Members congratulated the ICC team for an interesting program. Many felt that they learned a great deal. Much of what they heard can be implemented at home.

An ICC member explained the use of two tracks in the workshops. Some structures had said in the feedback after the previous IAGSM meetings, that the reason they don't attend the IAGSM is that the topics are too “basic.” As a result the workshops were devised for two tracks so that young structures can be in a basic workshop, while more developed structures attend the advance track that deals with more difficult problems. It will be helpful to the WSO if structures can focus in their feedback on whether it was helpful. Were you in the right track? An evaluation will be done to help with planning for the next IAGSM.

### **Framing**

All those responding to the inventory indicate that the IAGSM is a valuable resource for their service structures.

### **Question 6**

In looking at the future of the IAGSM what does your structure see as the next steps for this discussion?

### **Discussion**

One Delegate said that we must be prepared to use more technology. An ICC member responded that this inventory is the beginning of the discussion. Using technology is, for example one of the ways forward. The discussion will continue. The process is ongoing.

After this late night discussion, it was apparent that members were too tired to think any further. A member from the ICC suggested putting this question on a Discussion Board that will be launched at the end of October 2012 for GSOs and IAGSM Delegates on e-Communities. It was agreed that putting this question on the Discussion Board would give all structures (even those that could not attend) a chance to give input and be part of the future of the IAGSM. It was agreed it is important to include input from as many GSOs as possible.

# Building Bridges – between different Communities within the Al-Anon Structure

*Ann C., U.S. and Canada*

Hello everyone, bonjour à tous, Guten Morgen, madainn mhath, buon giorno, buenos días!

My name is Ann (Je m'appelle Ann) and I am presently the Regional Trustee for Canada East, in the U.S. and Canada service structure. I was formerly a World Service Conference Delegate for Québec-est. I am here to introduce the topic for this discussion: Building bridges between different communities within the Al-Anon structure.

First let us have a brief overview of the structure in U.S. and Canada. North America is divided into nine (9) Regions, with three (3) in Canada. They are Canada East, Canada Central, and Canada West. The Regions are divided into Areas (which mostly follow provincial or state boundaries) the next division is districts and the basic unit is the Al-Anon or Alateen group. The Areas that make up the Canada East Region are Newfoundland/Labrador, the Maritime Provinces, Quebec East, and Quebec West. Some bridges we need to have in Canada are because of great distances and travel costs.

In the United States, World Service Conference Delegates (past and present) meet once a year by Region. This has not been possible in Canada due to the distances. We meet once a year in Virginia Beach just before the World Service Conference. The Quebec East Area Assembly meets only once a year because of distance and winter road conditions. There is a fund to help those groups which need financial assistance to send a representative to the Assembly. This is similar to the equalized expenses for the Delegates at the World Service Conference. One adaptation Quebec East has made is that the Area Officers (Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Delegate and Alternate Delegate) meet eight (8) times a year. These meetings are all held in Quebec City which is the biggest city. The Maritime Provinces Assembly moves from place to place to spread out the cost of travel.

Some bridges we need to have in the Canada East Region are between two linguistic communities – English and French. Quebec East has 100% French meetings and all its business meetings are conducted in French. In Quebec West 90% of the groups are French-speaking, the rest are English-speaking. Their Assembly is held in French and English. The Maritime Provinces Assembly has some French meetings. Some of these meetings, from New Brunswick, are now part of Quebec East because of linguistic concerns. Les Acadiens (Acadians) from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and southern New Brunswick are bilingual and so attend the Maritime Provinces Assembly in English. (When I visited their Assembly last year, it was fun to speak French with them and hear their accents) The Newfoundland/



Labrador Area has only English meetings, although there is a small French-speaking minority there.

French-speaking Areas need linguistic bridges to the World Service Conference and to the World Service Office in Virginia Beach. One difficulty Quebec East and Quebec West have is that the Delegate to the World Service Conference needs to be proficient in English. Finding candidates for Delegate and alternate Delegate with the necessary service experience can be difficult. Coordinators and District Representatives don't always understand enough English to read communications from the World Service Office or to participate in conference calls. In Quebec West, the English groups have separate District Meetings but attend the bilingual Area Assembly.

One measure that was put in place in Quebec West was a list of member volunteers with translating capabilities. However there were difficulties with finding an actual translator when needed. Quebec East is building a list of translators. If they have questions, members can call the World Service Office and speak to one of the six employees who speak French.

Some bridges we need to have in Canada and the U.S. are between different ethnic communities. In Quebec East Native American members or 'Autochtones' are an integral part of the groups and the service structure. The Alberta/Northwest Territories have Inuit members and the Delegate reached out to more in Iqaluit. Last year the Canadian Areas paid for the Quebec West Delegate, to fly to an A.A. convention with Al-Anon participation in Iqaluit, Nunavut. This is a remote northern community which is part of the Alberta/Northwest Territories Area.

In the United States, some Areas have Spanish districts or Spanish Al-Anon Information Services. If they have ques-

tions, members can call the World Service Office and speak to one of ten employees who speak Spanish.

Some bridges in North America are between independent structures. Some Areas have structures called Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) also known as an Intergroup. These are parallel structures to the Area structure and operate independently of the Area. However they are connected to the groups, since they have an Information Service Representative from each group and a liaison to Area meetings. They usually provide telephone answering services, public information services and may run Literature Distribution Centers. They are prevalent in big cities. Sometimes several groups or districts will get together to provide these services. A list of Al-Anon Information Services is published by the World Service Office in the publication *Getting in Touch with Al-Anon/Alateen* (S-23).

Some services such as the selling of literature can be provided by the district or a group of districts, by the Area or by an Al-Anon Information Service/Literature Distribution Center. Sometimes all three structures can have Web sites. The Group Representatives from the six districts in the Quebec City metropolitan area met all together at monthly meetings. These districts supported a telephone answering service, an LDC, and a Public Information Committee.

When I was a District Representative, some of us wanted to create an Al-Anon Information Service. However long-time members were wary of a parallel structure that did not answer to the district or the Area. They were worried that donations would be requested by too many different sources.

Later as Delegate, I heard at the World Service Conference that some Areas had difficulties with overlapping responsibilities between the two entities. However many Al-Anon Information Services function very well, especially if each Al-Anon group has a representative there and if the AIS sends a liaison to the Area meetings.

When I was a Delegate, the World Service Office was moving to Virginia Beach after the World Service Conference had voted to buy property. We were informed that French literature production would be moved from Montreal to Virginia Beach. At that time the office in Montreal was called Publications Françaises (P.F.A.) Inc. There was a Board of French-speaking members from the two French-speaking Areas. All the groups in the Province of Quebec ordered from the office that was situated in Montreal. Some members were hoping that the decision to move French services could be changed. However this was not the case. We were sad about it. However, for the Quebec East Area, something good came out of it.

As I studied the operations of P.F.A. and the Montreal office and asked questions of other Delegates, I realized that our Area was not receiving the discount that the World Service Office was giving to Literature Distribution Centers. One advantage of the loss of P.F.A. was that we could now

operate like other Areas and receive that discount. I suggested to our Area officials that the Literature depot in Quebec City become an Area Literature Distribution Centre (LDC) With groups from our Area now ordering from our own LDC, we were able to fund more Area activities and help Public Information Committees by providing public outreach material at low cost. So for us, a stumbling block became a stepping stone and a bridge to abundance.

I have been speaking about local concerns and they are very important. However, as Trustee for Al-Anon Family Groups, I now have another responsibility. I serve the world-wide fellowship of Al-Anon as a whole. The Al-Anon Board of Trustees is a bridge between the Al-Anon groups and the business operations of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. The Trustees are the guardians of the Al-Anon Traditions and Concepts of Service. They prevent our spiritual principles from being distorted or diluted. They are also charged with guarding the legal rights of the Al-Anon fellowship. The Board of Trustees acts as the chief service arm of the World Service Conference. The Board of Trustees provides general oversight to the operations of the World Service Office located in Virginia Beach, VA U.S.A. They establish Policy and long range strategic plans.

The International Coordination Committee (ICC), is the link or bridge between the World Service Office and the General Service Offices (GSO).

I am very pleased to have been chosen to attend this meeting as the Canadian Trustee. I look forward to the discussion which follows and to hearing your ideas about building bridges between different communities within the Al-Anon structure.

## **Discussion**

Members responded by describing the problems they experienced in their structures. One of the main problems raised was that of having more than one language spoken in their country.

Another problem shared by quite a few structures was the great geographical distances their service roles had to cover within their service structure. Members then shared how they are trying to build bridges between groups that are not in easy physical contact with each other or with the GSO. Funds are allocated for trusted servants to travel to distant groups to make contact. GSOs found that conflict can be caused by isolation.

One Delegate related how their structure tried to include the different districts into the international experience by visiting them and using slide shows in the meetings. The members understood that Al-Anon was more than just their structure, that it is a living entity.

Another Delegate mentioned how difficult it is for them to build a good relationship with the A.A. structure in their structure.



A Delegate reported that their GSO meetings are held in different Areas. They find face-to-face contact necessary. In doing that they visit interesting places and keep in close contact with the groups. They also visit groups in trouble and try to help. They have a Web site where members or groups can ask for help or information.

One structure uses Loner letters (mostly by e-mail) to communicate with isolated members. The letters are written by volunteers and sent out by the GSO.

One Delegate mentioned about a project that their service structure worked with the WSO to do public outreach in countries on the same continent that were seeking Al-Anon support. The project was aimed at reaching potential members outside of their immediate service structure. However because of poverty, great distances, lack of a stable postal system, and technology challenges, (within the countries targeted) the Al-Anon message was consistently difficult to share. An ICC member also shared background information on the outreach to Africa efforts mentioned.

In 2004 the WSO wanted to try and organize a Zonal Meeting in Africa. They hoped that A.A. would allow the WSO to attend the A.A. African Zonal Meeting. That did not happen. The WSO was then confronted with the reality of how to connect with Africa. After a conversation about the benefits of Zonal Meetings during the 2006 IAGSM, the European Meeting became a reality. Although Zonal Meetings had existed in South America for some time, the purpose of the meetings did not take shape until more structures understood that the intent of the meetings is to share service experience.

In addressing some concerns that the fellowship is not reflective of the diverse populations within the communities, the ICC member stressed “we don’t need to be afraid of diversity. We often don’t recognize the diversity that is currently in our structures. Many times we see who isn’t there; forgetting about the diversity in our midst. For example, we need to know why the younger members do not stay. When a young adult comes to a group, we may say ‘so glad you got here while you are young.’ When we single them out we treat them in a different way and then we don’t understand why they do not come back!”



We want to build the right bridges – we need to think out of the box. Some communities we are reaching out too are not very educated. For them we may not need literature, we need the power of sharing. This is what will bring people to our fellowship. When I came to Al-Anon, it was the voices of the members in the meeting that brought me back; not the literature. As we find ways to carry the message we discover it is a simple message; tell them they are welcome, that there is hope, and to come back.

Finally it was stated that when WSO representatives visit a country, the purpose of that visit is not to check up on the structure, but to share our experience.

# Anonymity

Arnold H., New Zealand

## At Group – District – Area – Trustee levels

We have over four million people in New Zealand a country made up of two main islands the North and the South. Our last survey shows we have about 720 people regularly attending the 89 meetings held weekly throughout New Zealand.

New Zealand's structure has followed the guidelines in the World Service Office *Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual*, adopting the main themes to suit our country. Earlier in our history members of the General Service Board (Board of Trustees) and Literature Committees produced the *New Zealand Al-Anon – Alateen Service Handbook* which is updated as required and guides us in our service roles and structure.

New Zealand is made up of nine Areas and we have a General Services Office based in Auckland. We have two paid staff who work in the office from 10:00am till 3:00 pm during the week. Our General Secretary is one of our paid employees but also gives of her time outside of office hours freely to serve the fellowship. Our annual Conference is held in Auckland.

Our General Services Board is made up of members from a wide geographical area fairly representing our membership across New Zealand.

Understanding anonymity in my experience probably reflects my own journey in the fellowship. When first starting out it seems the use of the word and understanding the principles of this subject is difficult. How we understand it can be up to the interpretation of those around us within the group. Some of this information will be people's ideas based on what they've heard rather than what could be read in our *New Zealand Al-Anon – Alateen Service Handbook* and other Conference Approved Literature (CAL).

The ideas and views we hold about anonymity are in our thinking as we take service positions such as Group Representative, which leads to district or Area meetings. It is hoped by now that individuals will have a Service Sponsor who has experienced this and is able to assist the individual to better understand anonymity.

I believe that by attending our Conference in New Zealand and becoming eligible for a role on the New Zealand General Services Board I am personally growing and learn more fully the differing issues relating to anonymity.

The presenter showed a PowerPoint titled *Understanding Anonymity* and involved other Delegates in a skit also titled *Understanding Anonymity*. Each resource is available to the GSOs on e-Communities.

Listed are examples of issues I faced or were told to me by other members in our fellowship in regards to the issue of anonymity.

I remember in the early days celebrities coming to my meeting for a while, and how I was bursting to tell others about them and what they were saying. Although I didn't understand why it was a good idea, the Tradition of anonymity stopped me from doing it.

I enjoyed acquiring the new skill of knowing what to say when I passed other members in the street and the person with me asked "How do you know them?" I used to fear that I had to "tell the truth," and confess that I was going to meetings (and so were they). I learned it was just as true to say "through friends" or "through friends of friends."

In my home group one person used a false name for years. She became a friend and I found out she did this because she was from a well-to-do family and was afraid about other people finding out that she came to Al-Anon.

At first I had a lot of shame about being affected by alcoholism, and I guarded my anonymity about attending Al-Anon closely. When I started to be involved in service, especially beyond the group, it was exciting and daring to start giving out my name and contact information in connection with my service role. I was helped by others in service who led by their example and over time, it became easier.

I remember being shocked the first time I heard someone use their full name. This was a staff person from the WSO who gave a service talk during their visit to New Zealand. It was helpful that he used his full name as it made me think of anonymity and how it applied in that situation, in other words, he was not required to keep his anonymity as he was not with the media. I felt he was showing us that Al-Anon is not a secret society.

I remember reading Tradition Twelve about anonymity being the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, and realizing that it was talking about something more than the identity of individual members or the public media. I am still learning about this. I found out that this is about humility and the message being important rather than the person carrying the message."

I had difficulty having a family member in meetings and in the fellowship in general.

I had a good experience in my home group when a mother and daughter were attending my meeting and for many months I didn't know they were related. As they became more comfortable with me I noticed when others were not around they related more intimately.

I have a partner in Al-Anon and we treat each other as group members and find that shows members how to treat us. As people get to know we are together they tend to respect our anonymity.

I have members come to my house for sponsoring; I do not tell my family or friends they are Al-Anon members. I say they are friends.

Around sponsorship. I remember an Alateen Sponsor approval process ages ago when someone spoke up for everyone and said they sponsored some of them and could vouch for them. I felt uncomfortable about that mainly because the members were not getting to choosing to reveal who their Sponsor was.

Being on the Board with my partner has been a good experience in having clear boundaries around being treated as individual members and not as a couple. Again I found that how we treat each other and behave has given other members the lead. I used to feel somewhat ashamed about it because it could appear suspect, but that went away as we behaved in ways that assured our independence as individuals with our own minds and opinions.

I am sad that some groups do not provide a contact number. Sometimes as a newcomer we are a little frightened to walk into a group for the first time. A newcomer may want to talk with someone before coming to the meeting or maybe make arrangements with the contact to meet before so they do not have to walk into the meeting alone.

How about groups that refuse to put a sign anywhere in a meeting place, for example, community centre, hospital, church, so that a new person or even a visitor from out of town can find the meeting? They use anonymity as the reason why this is not allowed.

Misunderstandings about whether it is OK to give a member the phone number of a service member such as Area Delegate when a problem needs to be discussed.

As General Secretary I have a unique position. This job is nice, but it can be difficult too. I speak on how Al-Anon works, where groups are located, and I have a fear that I might speak about my relationship with an alcoholic (I am the daughter, wife and now the mother-in-law of an alcoholic). The media professionals don't like this position. They like to hear about tragedy and my sharing is about the hope and the strength of the Al-Anon program. I share how anonymity is important for our recovery.

### Discussion

Delegates expressed their appreciation for the excellent creativity in presenting the topic with a PowerPoint presentation. Members responded mostly by relating their experiences with anonymity.

Anonymity is a huge obstacle between the fellowship and the public. It is important to understand the principle clearly. It was expressed that members often do nothing in fear of breaking anonymity. Some members think you cannot even place an advertisement in a newspaper.

Some spoke about being responsible for their own as well as other member's anonymity. A Delegate said that if someone has broken your anonymity, you do not have the right to retaliate by breaking his/her anonymity.

Another Delegate explained that she does not have a deep concern about her own anonymity. She would tell everybody that she belongs to Al-Anon. But she knows that some day she might act inappropriately in public and harm Al-Anon. It means that she has to think about her behavior. It reflects on the whole of Al-Anon.

Several Delegates realized that they had to break their anonymity when questioned by immigration officers when travelling.

A Delegate reported that a good deal of Public Outreach work was done by the Delegates during their visit to South Africa. Many talked openly about Al-Anon to taxi drivers, immigration officers, shop assistants, hotel staff, etc.

One Delegate related that it is difficult to remain anonymous when living in a small community. She found that her sons want to be anonymous, they do not want to be associated with Al-Anon or A.A. The public opinion of Al-Anon and A.A. is very negative in that small town. It is important for her family that their anonymity is not broken. She has to protect her family's anonymity.



**Questions/answers/comments:**

**How can anonymity be maintained in correspondence?**

An ICC member responded that to maintain anonymity in letters and e-mail, use AFG instead of Al-Anon Family Groups. On Facebook there is, for instance, a closed page called “Friends of Lois” – maintaining anonymity while making communication possible.

**What does “full face” mean? Where does the “full face” start or end?**

An ICC member responded by saying that enough of the face should be covered so that the person cannot be recognized. WSO uses paid models for advertisements.

If a structure employs a paid office administrator, he/she can be named and photographed because of their role as an employee would not need to be anonymous, he/she may talk openly about the work of Al-Anon as long as they do not reveal their membership in Al-Anon.

Media and TV often are not interested in keeping the anonymity of members. Often they are only interested in tragic stories, not interested in what help is available. How should this be managed?

A member referred to the WSO Web site and the section on Anonymity found on pages 89-91 in the 2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual where a good description can be found which can be used when talking to the press.

**Comments included:**

Mistakes do happen despite your best efforts.

Learn to let go, one can't control an enthusiastic reporter.

Answers to difficult questions by the public: “I grew up in an alcoholic family.” “I met “this person” through a friend.” “I do voluntary work for an organization.”

Ideas for anonymous photos: use hands or feet instead of faces. Use shadow to hide faces.

An ICC member spoke about how the WSO handles anonymity. WSO staff who are members may not be photographed full face. The ICC member further explained he uses the phrase “I don't feel comfortable answering the question” when asked if he is a member. In 1988 the World Service Conference passed a motion that no WSO staff member who are members would be allowed to appear full face in media. WSO now has staff who is not a member, that can be a spokesperson and can appear full face on behalf of the service structure.

# Alateen Sponsorship

Silvina Hebe C., Argentina

I would like to thank the World Service Office (WSO), and Argentina's Board of Trustees for the confidence placed in me to introduce the topic of Alateen Sponsorship.

I'd like to begin with a brief description about our structure and then share with you how our Alateen Committee works at the different service levels (groups, districts, and General Service Office (GSO)).

The first Al-Anon Group started in Argentina in August 1966; it was called "Amistad" (Friendship). In 1972 we opened our GSO, located in Buenos Aires; a year later Al-Anon was incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the name "OFICINA DE SERVICIOS GENERALES AL ANON PARA LA REPUBLICA ARGENTINA."

In 1985 we celebrated our first National Service Conference. Our structure began to grow and we had more than 500 Groups, of whom 30 were Alateen.

During the nineties (and in 2000) we were financially able to attend the IAGSM. Because of this attendance, we implemented new changes in our structure (For example Regional Service Seminars; Adult Children's Meetings; safety guidelines for Alateen).

Our groups have decreased in recent years and we have gone through a crisis of communication which, thanks to our Higher Power, we are overcoming.

In 2006 the Conference approved the purchase of the General Service Office for Al-Anon Argentina. Our permanent headquarters is located on Adolfo Alsina 1441 in Buenos Aires.

At the present time, we have nearly 300 groups, of which seven are Alateen.

In our service structure there is not a division by zones or Areas; the groups have a Group Representatives who attend the district meeting. It is at the district meeting that they elect a Delegate to attend the National Service Conference; the representation of the group conscience of Al-Anon.

The country is divided into three Regions: North with six districts and groups in 16 provinces; South with two districts and groups in six provinces, and the Center with 11 districts in Buenos Aires and surroundings.

The GSO works with several Committees, one of which is Alateen. This Committee is composed of a Chairperson, a Secretary, and volunteers who are assigned Delegates.

In each district there is an Alateen Committee. Some hold their meetings on a different day than the district meeting.

At the district level, the Alateen Committee has an agenda dedicated to their study of Alateen guidelines and sharing the process to encourage Sponsorship for Alateen: for example, visiting groups to explain the guideline, suggestions for talking about Alateen when participating in

an open meeting with A.A., and studying the guidelines or reading Alateen literature.

Some District Alateen Committees, have a gathering called "Sponsorship of Alateen Workshop" this is a workshop where Group Sponsors can ask and have questions about their service as a Group Sponsor or questions of other Al-Anon members willing to be a future Group Sponsor for Alateen are answered. This is also an opportunity to answer questions about our Alateen safety guidelines.

In 2007 the *Alateen Safety Guidelines* were changed in order to comply with our national law. In order for us to do this, we had to seek legal advice from a professional who worked with laws that pertained to children's safety.

In July of this year, the Alateen Committee at the GSO organized a meeting to analyze the *Alateen Safety Guidelines*. These guidelines offer procedures for ensuring the safety of Alateen members using our Twelve Traditions as the basis of its foundation. For example the Fifth Tradition, "our groups have but one purpose to help families of alcoholics," which I believe demonstrates the fundamental purpose of our fellowship, and supports our commitment to serve Alateen.

## How can we ensure the continuity of services for Alateen?

When overcoming our fears, we find Alateen service work is exciting and very rewarding. We know a Group Sponsor does not replace parents or interfere in their authority, Sponsors have an opportunity to guide the Alateen member during meetings to encourage them to assume their responsibilities especially towards their Alateen group.

Over the years our Conference approved the following motions:

Implementation of help to younger-aged members in the families of alcoholics who may not be old enough to attend Alateen.

Each Conference will discuss a topic about Alateen to raise awareness about the importance of Alateen Group Sponsorship.

Al-Anon members who also are members of A.A. cannot be Alateen Group Sponsors.

## Alateen Sponsorship



Alateen, a part of Al-Anon, is for young people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. Every Alateen group needs active, adult members of Al-Anon to serve as Sponsors. The following questions may help you decide if you can say "yes" to Alateen sponsorship.

1. Are you looking for service work that is rewarding, loving and exciting?
2. Have you ever thought about helping Alateen?
3. Are you aware that sponsoring Alateen is a Twelfth-Step opportunity for you?
4. Is there an Alateen meeting in your town?
5. Have you thought of the teens who want help and can't get it because Alateen isn't available?
6. Can you make a commitment to an Alateen meeting for the next six months or year?
7. Are you willing to meet with Alateen members to share with them, laugh with them, and sometimes cry?
8. Can you allow Alateens to conduct their own meeting without controlling or directing?

Encourage Al-Anon members in the group to take on the service role of becoming an Alateen Group Sponsor.

Working with the World Service Office to implement an Alateen Chat room.

### **What is suggested in Argentina to a Group Sponsor when he learns that an Alateen member was the victim of abuse or violence?**

The Group Sponsors can share their knowledge of the abuse with the GSO. The GSO Alateen Committee suggests, that the Group Sponsor encourage the Alateen member to seek help from specific professional organizations (there are several organizations that broadcast by TV or a phone number). If it is deemed necessary to report the abuse, the Group Sponsor is encouraged to do so in a personal capacity, not as an Al-Anon member and to take care not to reveal the identity of the abuser to avoid bringing Al-Anon into public controversy (Tradition Ten).

Alateen Group Sponsorship in Argentina is shared by two members. Every Alateen Group has two Group Sponsors and works in parallel with an Al-Anon Group, who understands and supports them. Sponsor resources, when looking for help with problems, are the District Alateen Committee, the Delegate, the District Representative (DR) and the GSO.

In recent years, we have opened some Alateen groups in schools; these groups work within the context of the school day so the teens can attend the meeting.

We have received letters from the personnel at the schools thanking us for the presence of Alateen in their schools. They advise that they believe acts of violence or misconduct have declined and note the teens seem to concentrate better while in school. We believe that in the future the Alateen meetings in schools will grow.

Personally, I think being an Alateen Group Sponsor gives members of Al-Anon the possibility of implementing Step Twelve, being aware that the disease of alcoholism affects not only adults but also children and adolescents.

Growing up in a home where my father's alcoholism took me to despair and filled me with negative feelings makes me aware of how this disease affects the whole family. I was lucky enough to go to Alateen many years ago. It was there that I was able to heal my emotional wounds and where I could love my parents and get the understanding about the complexity of this disease. When I remember those years, I am reminded of my Alateen Group Sponsor.

Alateen is a place where teenagers can build a healthy life, share their feelings with others and grow climbing a mountain slippery with ice.

Being an Alateen Group Sponsor is the beautiful work of

walking with Alateens in that way; being an Alateen Group Sponsor gives us the opportunity to share with them, laugh with them, and sometimes cry. Why lose this?

### **Discussion**

The passion for Alateen was clear during the discussion. Delegates shared how Alateen is organized, shared their failures, and their successes. Most of the structures present reported having no or only a few Alateen groups with very little or no growth. Possible reasons for this included: children will attend for a few meetings but then lose interest, transitional membership and the difference in ages. One member said that in their structure Alateen groups have more or less disappeared. They meet on demand or have only a contact number.

Existing groups are small. Group Sponsors try their best but teenagers seem not to be interested. One structure felt that the children should take responsibility for their meetings – Alateen should not be handed to them on a silver plate. A question was asked “is Al-Anon enabling the teens?” A Delegate suggested in their experience their structure tries to keep Alateens involved in service.

Most structures have a service position for an Alateen Coordinator. In this way Alateen is not forgotten and is discussed at GSO and Conference level.

Alateen Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) training is being done by many structures but some find it difficult to manage the police certification. Many had to consult a lawyer on how to get the certification done. The WSO can supply the basic form to use to register the AMIAS. The structure's policy regarding AMIAS needs to be reviewed regularly.

Comments about Alateen Group Sponsorship and process:

In some countries police clearance certification lasts only 6 months or a year, then it has to be done again. It is a costly procedure.

The WSO Board of Trustees and staff are all certified AMIAS – this is so all of them can assist with Alateen at events such as International Conventions, etc.

Some structures reported that they now have many certified Alateen Group Sponsors but very few groups.

It is difficult to organize Alateen Group Sponsor meetings. There is a great deal of information to communicate to the Group Sponsors.

There should be two Group Sponsors at all Alateen meetings. The 2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen

Service Manual is a good resource as there is now a section for Alateen, pages 85-87. It was also noted A.A. members can be an Alateen Group Sponsor if they attend Al-Anon meetings and meet their Area Alateen requirements.

Group Sponsors must, by law in most countries, report abuse mentioned in an Alateen meeting. Structures need to create guidelines for such because Al-Anon must obey the laws of their country.

Sharings about Alateen meetings and service activity in schools:

It was stated by one Delegate that in their experience Alateen groups in schools must take care to abide by school rules.

A Delegate stressed that because of our principle of anonymity, they are able to ask that school counsellors not attend the Alateen meeting.

A Delegate reported that because they work with the Life Orientation teacher at a school, the Alateen meeting has been added as a class at the school that Alateens can opt to attend.

One structure does public outreach visits to schools. Many times an AMIAS will share about Alateen.

Another Delegate advised sometimes an Alateen member will accompany her to the school. However, this means that that child no longer is anonymous which has been a deterrent for teens willing to share at a school.

General sharings about Alateen:

Alateens are sometimes invited to attend and share at Al-Anon meetings but not all members are comfortable with this situation. One structure reported that they started an Alateen group next to the Al-Anon meeting and that it is successful.

Alateens often attend conventions and enjoy the Alateen program. Their feedback often indicates that they liked the Alateen program offered during the convention, but that they are not really interested in attending Alateen meetings regularly. They seem to enjoy the shared fellowship and gain much from the convention.

Alateens sometimes speak at open A.A. meetings and at fellowship birthday celebrations.

One structure reported that they produce a publication called Alateen Talk which is a good resource for their structure.

Since members inquired about chat rooms An ICC member explained: WSO hosts chat rooms. Each structure or Area can have a room. Group Sponsors are provided by the Area or GSO. The room will be set up in your language. A sample meeting is available to guide through the process. Alateens log on with a username. The ages of those that can attend are 13 – 18. Usually a topic is given, and the Alateens can write at any time. They must abide by the Traditions and chat room rules. The text is monitored by the Group Sponsor. However, if a posting is inappropriate, it will be communicated to the writer by the sponsor confidentially. Once it is set up, the Structure manages the chat room not the WSO.

Before starting the chat room, find interested Alateens: three – four members are suggested. The chat room is a supplement to the ordinary Alateen meetings.

There are approximately 1,000 Alateen groups in the WSO service structure. Resources available from the WSO include Group Sponsor training modules.



# Adult Children and other specialized groups

Silke S., Germany

In July 2012 there were 727 groups registered at the German GSO. Fifty-four of these groups were labeled Al-Anon Adult Children, 24 were Alateen groups and 73 were just phone contacts.

In giving you a brief description of the German service structure, the groups are organized in 35 Regions (similar to the World Service Office (WSO) service structure). The Group Representatives (GR) have their regional business meetings three to four times a year to discuss service issues and, if necessary, elect the Delegate for the General Service Conference.

The Chairpersons of the Regions meet in the seven geographically associated "Intergroups" (similar to Regions in the WSO service structure) to communicate about Al-Anon service issues. Since the Delegates wish continuous sharing of experience between the Conferences, they have an opportunity to hold their own workshops at this gathering.

In order to apply for a position on the Board of Trustees, qualified members from each intergroup may apply to the Executive Committee level. During the Nominating Committee meeting, at the General Service Conference, the most appropriate person is nominated and then elected by the Trustees.

The legal foundation of the fellowship is represented by the Executive Committee and is named "Al-Anon Familiengruppen Interessengemeinschaft e. V.". Members are 1<sup>st</sup> Chairman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chairman (Treasurer), one at-large member, the Chairperson of the Policy Committee and the paid Managing Director of the Service Office.

Every Permanent Committee consists of a Chairperson and volunteers, who are chosen by the Chairperson and will be introduced to the Board. One exception is made for the Financial Committee, because the Chairperson (Treasurer) is a member of the Executive Committee.

The Policy Committee and Board of Trustees meet three times a year. The Policy Committee meets first during one and a half days and then the Board of Trustees meet another one and a half days. The meeting in February before the Conference is open to give new service people a "look behind the curtain."

Because of vacant positions on some committees, during the past two years, the Policy Committee meeting in June 2011 and June 2012 was cancelled. Therefore the Board of Trustees extended its meeting to discuss important questions about the Strategic Plan.

The Alateen Committee and Committee for Public Outreach service positions are currently vacant.

In Germany, there is no distinction between group and the group's main activity, the meetings. That made it difficult for members to convey that there are members who

need exchange of their special needs in the Al-Anon fellowship.

The first groups of Al-Anon Adult Children sometimes were viewed with suspicion. On the other hand, members of these groups tried to give themselves their own structure, similar to that of Alateen. This, of course, led to conflict. At this time members of the Adult Children groups are increasingly ready to be of service to the total fellowship.

The discussions concerning the desire to form groups for gays and lesbians, was comparable with those of the adult children. The pamphlet *Al-Anon Welcomes Gays and Lesbians* (S-70) helped a lot.

The problem of recovering alcoholics who also have alcoholic relatives is a special issue. Some of these members sometimes feel discriminated against because of the recommendation that dual members should not do service work above the group level. At this point, discussions are necessary and a recommendation of the pamphlet *The Al-Anon Focus* (P-45) is suggested as a helpful resource.

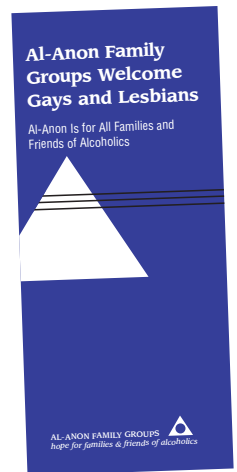
In Germany the registration of a group, that has a special focus, always includes a note that it is part of the Al-Anon community and therefore open to all Al-Anon members.

The best solution in the clarification of the terms "groups" and "meeting" would be the example of the WSO service structure. There are groups that offer different meetings, sometimes with and sometimes without a special topic. So no one would feel excluded. A change seems to be necessary, but after almost 50 years of current structure it would be very difficult.

In examining the pros and cons of groups with a special focus, we find this indicates the importance of studying the Traditions and the Concepts of Service as a basis for all discussions. For example the meaning of the Twelfth Tradition to place Al-Anon principles above personalities helps us to limit conflicts based on selfishness and stubbornness. As soon as we begin to misinterpret the Traditions, we are no longer free in our work. If we do that with one Tradition, we open a door to the recommendations of the others.

The challenge to all levels of the structure is to matter of factly reference our disease and our recovery program. A composition of a group, with the most diverse people is the basis for recovery and active support.

An open discussion with clarification of the responsibilities, and a loving, respectful interaction in the community takes away the menace. The benefit for all parties is located in the continuing examination with our Traditions and Principles. A well-informed group conscience is helpful to





move decisions from the personal on a factual level. People chose an Al-Anon group as a home group where they feel comfortable and safe.

### Discussion

In starting this discussion off, an ICC member explained the WSO created this problem many years ago. Even Lois helped; she got confused and referred to Alateen as the third fellowship. In the past a special focus group could register as such. Last year a Task Force tried to find a better term to identify groups with similar life situations, for example, adult children, parent, gays and lesbians, etc. They could not come to any kind of consensus. We don't have a term that would identify these groups without using the word "focus" as the focus of all Al-Anon groups is the same – to help the friend and families of alcoholics. All groups agree upon registration to abide by the Traditions and are open to any Al-Anon member. All Al-Anon members are free to attend all Al-Anon meetings.

Additional comments shared:

Some structures indicated they have meetings for parents.

One Delegate reported that her country has three times more Al-Anon Adult Children meetings as Al-Anon meetings.

When the discussion introduced the term Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) an ICC member advised we have to be careful as these organizations, ACOA and Children of Alcoholics or CODA are not affiliated with Al-Anon Family Groups.

Sometimes newcomers are confused as many of these groups use Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature.

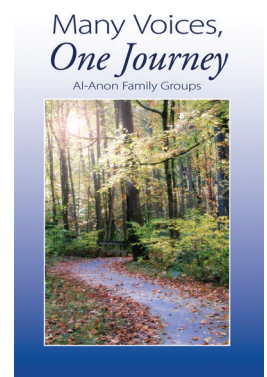
One Delegate shared that within her structure a big controversy was created when for an A.A. anniversary, plans included inviting an Al-Anon speaker to participate as well as a member of ACOA. Al-Anon did point out that this was an outside organization which caused the A.A. planners to re-think and rescind the invitation to ACOA. There is confusion among many because we sell Al-Anon literature to these organizations and they do use our literature. However it is a continual task to inform members that these organizations are not Al-Anon and therefore their literature and information is not included in Al-Anon meetings.

One Delegate mentioned that her structure does not have group names. However, they do love the diversity found in the fellowship.

An ICC member interjected that many of us came in through regular Al-Anon meetings or Al-Anon Adult Children meetings. A strong reason for special focus groups is that to the newcomer they are attractive. However as members grow in the program, they begin to realize that the disease affects us all the same. We honor Tradition Three: the group is open to everybody whose life is bothered / affected by alcohol. In relating the idea of a bridge, "we can start our program by beginning our recovery and use the bridge (literature, meetings) to get us the other side to begin recovery when we are ready."

During this discussion the question was asked, why can't dual members serve above group level?

An ICC member stated the spiritual principle found in Tradition Six is the basis for this policy. It was pointed out that A.A. speaks with one voice through the A.A. service structure. Al-Anon service work above the group level, by someone that identifies himself as also a member of A.A., is a conflict of interest. The new book, *Many Voices, One Journey*-Al-Anon Family Groups (B-31) was cited as a resource for background information on this topic. In addition the *2010-2013 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* is a resource for the policy.



A few last questions about Alateen and other topics concerning specialized groups:

Alateen: some structures uses 12 – 18 (legal age in many countries), others 12 – 20. A member explained: "We work with emotional aspect, not legal aspect."

An ICC member: Addressed the issue of legal age (18 / 21) by stating Alateen is for teens. Teens age 18 and over are legally adults in the WSO service structure. Most of our Areas transition teens to Al-Anon at 18. Teens 18 and over who attend Alateen meetings and Alateen functions do so

as Alateens and must abide by the same rules as younger Alateen members.

When a question was asked about how to handle the attendance of family and friends of drug addicts an ICC member advised, that in Al-Anon although we are welcoming to all, we must remember and explain in an Al-Anon meeting we share our experience about being affected by the disease of alcoholism. We would not adapt the welcome, the Steps, etc. in our meetings to accommodate someone's situation.

A final question was whether it was appropriate to use Al-Anon as a part of an individual's Web name or address. An ICC member responded because the Al-Anon name is trademarked, it is not appropriate or allowed for an individual to include Al-Anon or any of the copyrighted symbols in an individual Web name or address.

# Central American Meeting Reportback

Marsha W., International Coordination Committee

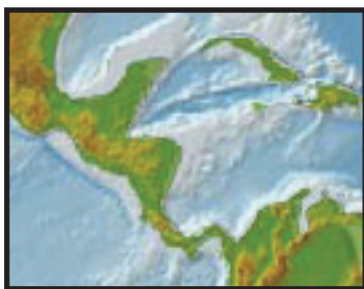
The Central American Zonal Meeting was hosted by Panama November 25-26, 2011. The WSO sent representatives as a support and resource for the meeting.

The initial focus of the agenda was to review, discuss, and edit guidelines that were previously drafted. The five countries that participated in the meeting were Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama. Of these, only Costa Rica and Guatemala have national service offices. The Dominican Republic and El Salvador were unable to send representatives.

The primary topic discussed by the WSO was the purpose and intent of the licensing agreement for a General Service Office to sell Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature to an evolving service structure.

## Highlights

- Nicaragua reported that they have 15 Al-Anon groups. An Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) was registered with the World Service Office in September 2011.
- Honduras has 11 Al-Anon groups. They are in the process of forming an AIS. During the meeting, they expressed concerns about feeling isolated from the other Central American countries. They also reported they have a small pool of members who are willing to do service work and they are continuing to seek ways to motivate others to become involved in service.
- Guatemala has 28 Al-Anon groups and three Alateen groups. Their General Service Office has existed in different formats for more than 25 years. Although they have an office and one staff person, they indicated they are struggling financially. Also we were advised that they have a difficult time finding volunteers.
- Costa Rica has 168 Al-Anon and five Alateen groups. They had been experiencing some financial difficulties, but after making the groups aware of the need, contributions increased. The representatives advised they were very active doing public outreach that included radio interviews, visits to schools, and holding Regional Service Seminars.
- Panama has 27 Al-Anon groups and registered the second AIS with the WSO in November 2012. Their ultimate goal is to form a national service structure for Panama.



# European Zonal Meeting (EZM) Reportback

Maureen M., UK & Eire

The primary goal of the Zonal Meeting is to support the evolving European structures by sharing information, problems and solutions. A great deal of mentoring takes place. It is not a decision-making body. The next EZM will be held in Essen, Germany in August 2013.

At the Zonal Meeting held in 2011, hosted by UK & Eire, 14 structures were represented. Ric and Roger from WSO also attended. The theme was: *Our common welfare*. An evaluation was done to supply information when planning the next meeting.



## Discussion

Much time was given to discussing translating the literature and how to overcome language barriers.

Alateen and chat rooms for Alateens. Web site for European structures.

Conflict resolution. PowerPoint on conflict resolution – put it up on Members' Web site.

The members found the Ask-it-basket to be of great value. A member asked who decided who was to be on the panel of the Ask-it-basket? Answer: The organizing committee.

A member asked what is the length or term for EZM? Members were asked to refer to the guidelines of the meeting.

There was some discussion and information about the Google groups. The purpose of the Google group is one of social networking, they are not meant for business. An e-Community discussion board was ready as promised by Oct 2011.

# Workshop Reportbacks

---

## Staff and Members, office managed with two or less paid staff and volunteer assistance (Track 1)

*Facilitator – Nilce T., Brazil*

*Reporter – Brenda A., South Africa*

### Goal – To share operational experience about your service structure

What checks and balances system do you have to insure constant and accurate communication of important information from the General Service Office (GSO) throughout the service structure and ultimately to individual members?

- One structure reported that their General Secretary distributes all business information to the links of service by e-mail.
- Most structures said that reporting through the structure began with the GSO worker and then transferred through the links of service in the summaries, and Committees reports to the Board of Trustees. Verbal reporting is done at Assemblies.
- Other ways mentioned were by using the Intranet and posting reports on a Members' Web page, in newsletters or magazines (monthly).
- Some structures still use hard copies and snail mail.
- Comprehensive reporting is often done at Area Service Days or District Representative Assemblies.
- Members' Web pages are kept updated regularly.
- One structure reported that having only one person privy to all the information and distribution puts them at risk. When that person left, all information went with the employee. Checks and balances are to have everything written down as procedures, check lists, time lines, etc. Write down the institutional memory.
- One structure cannot leave the distribution to their one office worker. Their voluntary Committee Chairpersons have the responsibility to ensure distribution through mailing lists. Other methods are Area Newsletters, Loners letters, magazines, GR workshops, and Area Assemblies.
- One member mentioned that if communication was not two-way from GSO and Areas back to the GSO then they suspended Areas from the meeting list. This proved to be a reminder to get active and respond.
- A large office was too busy to attend to Twelve Step calls as it could interfere with the day-to-day running of the business side of things. This work was referred to others in the links of service.

### 1. What strategies or plans has the General Service Office put in place to insure connections with the fellowship?

- Close work and communication between the Board of Trustees, General Service Conferences, and Areas are essential. Built on relationships.
- One structure reported that the BOT are copied on all General Service Conference correspondence.
- It was mentioned that DRs could be a weak link in that they do not prepare GRs thoroughly. They have developed resources to support the DRs and Delegates.
- Personal visits ensure connection.
- One structure opts that 50-75% finance goes towards employee salaries to ensure that these connections stay intact. There is a lot of hope for using the technology skills of the younger generation.
- Sharing the responsibility of carrying information by asking everyone something ensures that GRs don't get "burnt out" talking about money or hard issues. Everyone then owns it – for example, the Appeal letter.
- The use of technology is worth the investment for, example, a Web site.
- Use of workshops to encourage, motivate, and educate are helpful.

### 2. Who, in the service structure, has the responsibility to carry out these plans?

- The membership will keep us informed if they do not get communication.
- The Area collates e-mail addresses and updates them but there is a risk attached to losing or changing e-mail addresses.
- Direct links are made using Delegates to membership requesting Thought or Task Forces.
- New service members are given a responsibility list, training, and service sponsorship.



- 3. Considering technology available today, how has the General Service Office effectively used the skills and talents of members to assist in the growth of the service structure?**
- Skills surveys have been conducted on Web sites.
  - Many use Intranet, Internet, e-mail, web pages, Skype, YouTube.
  - Use of new Current Mailing Address (CMA) registration form.
  - Slides, posters, PowerPoint use for Public Outreach (PO) to professionals.
  - Alateen chat rooms in use.
  - PO into schools using resources like PowerPoint and DVD to share the message.
  - E-Communities to connect like-minded groups.
  - Africa has less advance technology when communicating. For example, computer connections are very slow or are not available in some areas. As a result, few members own computers. The way most communicate is by using an inexpensive texting service on their cell-phones.
  - Less than 25% of members have access to Internet. Not many own smartphones. Mix-it, Skype for Board of Trustees, GSC meetings has been used to reach members. Phone is the way forward.
  - WSO and the Areas within the WSO service structure are working together on TEAM events as partners. They share the leadership on presentations. Print out PowerPoint presentations and notes so a computer is not even necessary. Meet members at their level of technological expertise.

# **Paid Staff and Members, office managed with more than two paid staff and volunteer assistance (Track 2)**

*Facilitator – Paula B., Australia*

*Reporter – Uschi v. E., Germany*

## **Goal — To share operational experience about your service structure**

What checks and balances system do you have to insure contact and accurate communication of important information from General Service Office (GSO) throughout the service structure and ultimately to the individual members?

- Present structure has a paper publication with news from GSO going to the groups in varying time segments.
- E-mail newsletters are being used, which can be sent to any member interested enough to sign up.
- Chairperson of the Board of Trustees writes a letter to the Area Delegates after the Board meetings, shortly after that the Trustees call the Delegates and ask if the information was received and if there are any questions.
- When the Conference brochure gets to the Delegate it is being copied for the Area Committee to discuss the topics and prepare the Delegate for the Conference.
- Minutes and other documents get posted on Member-sites on the Internet.
- Anyone posting information has to be mindful of the fact, that the others might receive and understand the information differently from what was intended, so one needs to be aware of the wording.
- If information is shared electronically, it is important to remember that not every member might be able to receive it; there are other solutions. You can also send it as a paper version or you can use an e-buddy (someone who will receive and pass on the information).
- TEAM events are very helpful for passing on information about our structure and what is happening at the World Service Office /General Service Office.
- Communication links should be included in Committee guidelines.
- On-line platforms like e-Communities can be used.

What strategies or plan has the GSO put in place to insure connection with fellowship?

Who in the service structure has the responsibility to carry out these plans?

- Depending on the plan, mostly Chairpersons of the Committees, the Board, Delegates, etc.

Other comments included:

- The WSO will shortly publish a handbook for Board

members, which will be posted to download online, this will contain descriptions of Committees, dress codes, procedures.

- An ongoing book of past decisions of archives can be a helpful tool to avoid spending too much time on old topics or list.
- Checklists of activities, schedules, and responsibilities for certain service positions are very good to help with the start in a new service position GSO level.

Considering technology available today, how has the GSO effectively used the skills of members to assist in the growth of the service structure?

- PowerPoint Presentations have been used to explain the structure (as part of the strategic plan).
- Skype conference calls have been used for meetings of the Executive Committee or other functions in several structures.
- One structure has a pool of programmers and graphic artists who can assist in building a new homepage. Professionals were also used when necessary.
- Several forms of Internet-exchange models are in use such, as e-Communities or exchange platforms where you can post messages.
- A CD with information on the structure was created by one structure.
- Board meetings are held with computers without paper (saved money on paper, travel cost, time, and postage).
- Podcasts have been recorded and posted on-line on various levels of service topics. The production surrounding podcasts is simple and inexpensive.
- E-buddies for members who can't go on the Internet themselves.
- Committees use conference calls for meetings (the WSO has negotiated a special contract with a vendor for these services).
- The WSO is planning a new interactive phone service, where you get meeting information from a computer based on the zip code.
- Blogs are being used; the WSO blog on our Three Legacies resulted in the new workbook that will hopefully be out for the International Convention in 2013.

# Conflict Resolution, attracting members in service (Track 1)

Facilitator – Anja E. F., Denmark

Reporter – Rosalind M., Australia

## Goal — To model in Al-Anon that in service, members can continue building healthy and respectful relationships.

Does it mean if I am working the Twelve Steps in Al-Anon, I will never have to engage in a disagreement?

Discuss how you deal or have dealt with conflict in service.

1. Have you been successful?
2. If not what could you have done differently?

Responses:

- We can agree to disagree – I learned it is ok to disagree.
- Taking a totally different perspective on conflict can lead to a reduction in the conflict.
- Don't give the conflict any importance. Acknowledge it is there but don't pick up the rope to start a tug of war.
- Conflict is a part of reality. They are there because they need to be dealt with. Embrace the reality. It's showing me something I have to learn.
- Listen and respect other people's ideas and personalities.
- Run workshops and healthy groups.
- Talk about what is happening and reason things out. Have face-to-face conversations.
- We use the communication section of The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage (B-4).
- We ran conflict resolution workshops.
- Use Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) – having gathered enough information is very important.
- I've learned to accept that conflict is a part of Al-Anon. Al-Anon can't grow without some conflict in different parts of the structure. I found it is a part of growing the members while growing the structure.
- Do inventories at all service levels regularly.
- Do personal inventories as well. Unhappy members can have some good points that we could address.
- When we need to, we make amends. Often members get anxious because they feel they haven't been heard. We felt we hadn't acknowledged well enough that we had heard them so we made amends for that.
- We decided as a Board we wouldn't enter the conversations about the issues going on around the fellowship. The Trustees had no opinion on the issue and the dissent soon diminished.
- Remember the primary purpose of the fellowship and presume goodwill.
- Be an example – pleasant, kind, and courteous. We need to attract people into service.
- Be open with new service people that Al-Anon service is not always harmonious.
- Nicely mention to members, who have done something like brought in outside literature that this is not Al-Anon (Tradition Six) straight away, after the meeting. If they do it a few times before being told, they may get angry because they didn't know they were doing something wrong.

# Conflict Resolution, attracting members in service (Track 2)

Facilitator – Pierre C., Switzerland (French-speaking)

Reporter – Malgorzata D.-K., Poland

## Goal — To model in Al-Anon that in service, members can continue building healthy and respectful relationships.

What positive ways can Trusted Servants convey that Al-Anon is the responsibility of all?

- Pass on the enthusiasm, passion and excitement to Al-Anon members. I try to model that, I have to take care of myself.
- Exhibit a positive message, behavior when forced into a difficult situation. Listen, be calm.
- Show that I am a human being, share how I worked through a stumbling block.
- Give the time to listen to members, be myself at all times.
- Try to be a good example of Al-Anon recovery.
- Share information with those in your service role.
- My group encourages me to stand for a position. I had the service role of group leader first. I worked with the Group Representative. My Sponsor suggested going with GR to the service meetings.
- I try to apply the Traditions and apply principles over personalities.
- I read our literature. By doing so it helps me to be true to my values, express ideas and feelings, have realistic expectations, and to be grateful. Al-Anon is the responsibility of everyone every day.

Is it necessary to find members with specific leadership qualities?

- Encourage members to start with a small service role; I share with new people my experience; I help them but stay back from their service role as I realize that Al-Anon can go on in spite of me not serving.
- To be a servant in Al-Anon it is not necessary to have knowledge first. It's important to carry on once you accept the position. When you feel you are unable to do the service, resign, or ask for help. What to do when a trusted servant who isn't a trusted servant? Maybe we can ask members to accompany him in service.
- If qualifications are necessary, you have to give people time to know. Be specific to find gifts and talents in people. We should realize the servants' skills. Not everybody is a leader. Look for those who are able to be leaders: passion, commitment, vision, motivation.
- It depends on what position you are looking for. People must be given time to grow from not believing to believing in themselves.

- You should have an organized mind, a vision, responsibility, a disposition to serve and learn, to have courage, be able to obey rules.
- Yes, leader's quality; I have to be honest, recognize my strengths and shortcomings. Al-Anon taught me about the Traditions and Concepts to follow Concept 9. I need to keep my word, when I say something, I must respect it. Don't manipulate. Respect and love myself.
- Yes, the ability to adapt to the situation quickly, the ability to recognize abilities of people you cooperate with. The qualities of leaders can be hidden because they have low self-esteem. Sometimes people are not aware of having leadership qualities.
- Yes, people should have some leadership qualities. Taking initiative, organizational skills. Other members gave me confidence to serve, encouraged: "you can do that." Having the tools-identifying qualities in people, to nurture qualities in a person.
- It has to do with the willingness to learn. I didn't realize who I was in the beginning. Vision and determination are necessary.

How can a Trusted Servant convey that service work should not be done in isolation? Give examples.

- To form committees and give people a chance to do what they can.
- We have a lot of Skype, mobile phone, electronic tools to avoid isolation.
- In my house we had a business meeting-the same is in our service structure-there are a lot of people working together.
- People who work in isolation are in danger. Working with other people increases the quality of service. As trusted servants we spend much time to obtain some level of success. When the new servant comes and is not supported and worked with, he becomes discouraged. Sponsorship might be a delicate matter.
- When you cooperate with others you achieve much quickly and you can get plenty of ideas. Also, you learn "team work," which is very enjoyable. Team work gives our work and service more quality. Together we can overcome obstacles better and we can help each other but we must learn how to communicate and cooperate.



Share resources in Al-Anon you or others you know have used when faced with conflict.

- When we speak about conflict; it is not a conflict, is a string of evolution. We must face the differences between members. It's possible to clarify the conflict in negative situations. We must have the attitude to spot or prevent a conflict.
- I prefer to avoid a crisis. In literature I find resources to solve conflicts, the Steps and the Traditions.
- We had a financial problem. We asked the GSO to help us. We made amends for the conflict. We used the KBDM method for decisions, and we let things go.
- The answers are in the Traditions. Tradition Two-an opinion I say should have the form of a loving God.
- There was a huge controversy at WSO. I had the honor to answer the phone calls. I had to learn patience to listen to them. We all love Al-Anon but we may have different solutions. We initiated the phrase "Presume goodwill." Identify my part in the conflict.
- Accept the group conscience.
- My Sponsor said: What is my part and what is not my part?
- A conflict is a normal phenomenon when people have different attitudes and opinions. In services it's good to use the "Inventory" (in groups, in the Board). I can talk with my opponent in which I tell him about my emotions and my views is necessary (and vice versa). The chance to seek a solution to the conflict should follow the discussion. We may solve the conflict or just accept our different points of view and let it go.
- A conflict is always a conflict of needs. Conflict is a part of every relationship. Respect the core of a person and see the core of the person in a positive light.

# Finance

Facilitator – Clara d. G., Peru

Reporter – Kira S., Finland

## Tradition Seven

*Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions*

### **Goal — To share experience regarding financial matters as it pertains to the service structure**

What is the General Service Office experience with the following?

Contributions by individual members – how is this achieved?

- Talking about gratitude.
- Talking about the Seventh Tradition, about why we need money and for what purposes.
- Providing members the Birthday Envelopes.
- Providing members the Memorial Envelopes.
- Living person can give up to one percent of their own country's annual budget.
- Open basket and reporting how much money we received in this meeting.
- Providing information about planned giving.
- Some countries have received money from bequests.
- By encouraging members to service.
- Some countries have a tax-deduction, when somebody gives money for non-profit organizations.

I was also mentioned that most countries have a reserve fund which will allow them to operate between 10-36 months. In almost in every structure an appeal letter is sent one to four times a year.

All agreed that we have to prioritize how to use money received wisely. Although some structures have reduced paid staff, these structures indicate that volunteers have been willing to continue doing the services that were provided by the GSO.

An ICC member advised the WSO has learned through experience, that the financial investment in projects such as Public Service Announcements attracts new members and ultimately increased contributions.

Contributions by groups and other service entities – how is this achieved?

- Groups have many ideas for collecting money, for example, holding a barbeque dinner, raffle, selling t-shirts, etc.
- Some groups have budgeted for a certain amount for coffee/tea - members don't have to think what to give.
- Some groups give a certain percentage of their contributions to districts and/or GSO.
- Some districts give 30% to the GSO and ten percent to the WSO.
- Groups and districts have their own reference number (or preauthorized contributions) for the GSO (WSO) which makes it easier to pay.

# Self Support: is printing literature financially feasible

Facilitator – Maria B. dos S., Brazil

Reporter – Monica H., Sweden

## **Goal — To discuss the General Service Office rationale regarding whether to reprint Al-Anon/Alateen Conference Approved Literature or purchase from the World Service Office.**

Does the General Service Office reprint Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature or purchase literature directly from the World Service Office?

- Some are finding that because of import/shipping costs, it is more cost effective to reprint literature within their country and not buy from the WSO.
- Those from structures that were not English, Spanish or French- speaking advised they translate and reprint in their language when it is financially feasible.

The additional comments that were not in direct response to the above question were:

- For most structures they indicate selling literature generates income.
- Another Delegate shared the translation process takes a long time which means there is a wait before a new literature piece is introduced that may generate revenue.
- One Delegate mentioned that their groups are advised they should be prepared to support financially the translating and printing needs of the fellowship.
- A Delegate advised their service handbook was a priority for translation and although it took time it did not generate the revenue received from transition of CAL.
- The storage of books is a cost factor for most countries.
- One Delegate advised that a new book they translate and print may sell well at first and then when the revenue drops off, they are disappointed because of the amount of work that was put in the project.

What is the determining factor for the decision? Are the groups made aware by the General Service Office of the financial decisions used to determine whether to reprint or not?

- One Delegate stated it is their service conference that determines printing projects. In their experience, when a new project for CAL aimed at newcomers was suggested some thought that newcomers needed sharings, not books and so a project would be delayed.
- Translation and printing costs are the primary budget issues for new CAL for those that are not English-, Spanish-, or French-speaking.
- One Delegate advised that their Board of Trustees makes the decision to discontinue books and pamphlets that don't sell. This can affect whether the structure is able financially to do a new literature piece. The structure will sell the book/pamphlet until it is out of stock. To move it quicker sometimes special offers are created pairing a new book and an old or discontinued book.
- From those in English-speaking countries, it was mentioned that some outside vendors sell Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature at a higher cost than the GSO. This works to the GSO advantage as the members realize it is more cost-effective to buy from the GSO than the vendor.
- One Delegate stated a determining factor is if members are available to do translations on a voluntary basis since it has been determined that it is too expensive to have translations done by a professional.
- One Delegate advised that they get the majority of their income from member donations, not the sale of literature.
- One Delegate explained that they produce a chart to inform members of cost of services provided by the GSO including the reprinting of literature. This helps the groups understand what they should contribute to the GSO.
- One Delegate stated that to make the groups aware of financial needs in their country, the Board does presentations at various service events as well as at Conference.



# Unanswered Questions

---

## **If we organize events and invite members from other structures, how should we help them financially?**

An ICC member responded that this is up to the autonomy of the structure if the groups are in agreement to support a struggling Al-Anon group/structure. There was a caution to make sure there is set criteria concerning assistance. It was stressed that we would like to give any group/structure the dignity to pay what they can afford. This would also be the same when your structure is invited to come to another country. Be clear about what is paid and by whom. Be careful of helping others while you should be helping yourselves. This is WSO's experience. You are welcome to contact the WSO as a resource. The WSO guides and partners; not parents.

## **Why do we have to go to America for the answers? Why is the WSO not in some other place?**

An ICC member explained that we come to Al-Anon with our own views and feelings. Sometimes they change. Al-Anon is spiritual, not political. Al-Anon had nothing to do with countries as it was organized to meet the spiritual needs of the world. Lois W., our co-founder had a vision of a spiritual place to connect the structures of the world. Statistically almost two-thirds of the groups are in the WSO service structure. The WSO structure is the oldest and it was thought that this service structure would be the model.

The WSO is not part of U.S. and Canada, it is a part of the world. We are the service office and support for the groups and the world. Lois named the Clearing House at one point the World Service Office because A.A. named their office the General Service Office. Lois had the vision that all the countries should organize themselves as Areas and come to the World Service Conference. Later she realized that it was not practical. Each structure needed their own Conference to take care of their needs. But she had already named it. Whatever the WSO is called, it still delivers service to the world. This question always crops up in newer structures.

## **What is meant by the term "Pyramid Sponsorship"?**

An ICC member responded that Pyramid Sponsorship describes a type of high-pressured sponsorship. In groups, that this type of sponsorship occurs, members are overstepping the Traditions and give advice, instructing members on personal matters and give instructions on how to work their recovery. This type of sponsorship moves into controlling not sponsoring. There are podcasts on sponsorship on the WSO Members' Web site to use as a resource on the topic of Sponsorship.

## **When a member of the GSO has stopped attending meetings for personal recovery what can or should be done?**

Several Delegates commented on this question:

In our structure we would ask a member to resign from his or her service position because he/she is not attending Al-Anon meetings any longer.

It becomes a loss of credibility for Al-Anon when you are doing service and are not attending Al-Anon meetings.

Most of our committees have requirements - one is regular attendance at Al-Anon meetings.

In dealing with this issue we suggest having the member do an inventory. The member usually resigns.

# Spiritual Meeting

*Maureen M., UK & Eire*

I feel very humbled to be here with you today at the close of this IAGSM in Cape Town. It is a privilege to be here. My thanks go to the International Coordination Committee for inviting me to speak and for trusting that I may have something useful to share with you. Any similarity between the Maureen before you today, and the Maureen who ventured into her first Al-Anon meeting, is purely incidental. My transformation is and has been the on-going miracle of Al-Anon spiritual recovery.

My road in recovery has been a long and arduous one. I need hardly go into the catalogue of the effects of living with alcoholism. Before Al-Anon I did all the typically wrong things; putting up with abusive behavior, covering up, making excuses, avoiding people, taking on responsibilities of the drinker. I took the blame for everything and tried harder and harder to make an impossible situation better. All this was done with the best of motives. I find it difficult to describe in words the numbing fear I experienced when I was living with physical and psychological abuse and under the constant threat of violence. I was hospitalized and suffered broken bones as a result of this abuse, but I still covered up and made excuses. This was the level of my denial of the damage caused to me when living with alcoholism.

December 13<sup>th</sup> is a very significant date in my life. It was on a Tuesday morning when I attended my first Al-Anon meeting. I had a friend whose husband was in A.A. and she was going to Al-Anon. She told me about how Al-Anon was helping her and she suggested I might find help there too. I was not convinced. After all, I had tried just about everything to get the drinker to stop, but without success, and I felt a failure. I desperately needed a 'quick fix' for a dreadful situation, so I decided to give it a try. I had nothing to lose. I felt very alone. I was physically bruised, emotionally battered, and without feelings. At this point in my life I had three children, two dogs, one violent actively drinking husband and mounting debts spiraling out of control. I also worked full-time outside the home. It was necessary for me to get to meetings without my husband knowing, so I juggled getting to morning meetings while at work. I concocted many excuses to slip away for that precious hour. Entering and leaving the meeting were times of stress and fear as I was in dread of being seen and identified with going to the meeting. That was many Tuesdays ago.

At that first meeting I found hope. I wanted what these



strange people had. I did not know what it was; and I did not know how to get it. I did not know it at the time, but what I had found was fellowship. I found understanding and empathy. I found friendship and unconditional love. The spiritual power in this loving community of people kept me coming back. I was no longer alone.

In my early days I got to as many meetings as I could. I am fortunate to live in a city where meetings are held every day. When I found Al-Anon, I did not have words for how I was feeling. The slogans helped me greatly in my early days; their simplicity I could manage. There was so much stress in my life, I could hardly remember if I had eaten breakfast. In my meetings, I learned a lot of reality. Some of this reality I was not ready to hear. I was a slow learner. I never did get that 'quick fix' for the drinker.

Al-Anon taught me many things; some of these were that I had choices and I had a right to live without fear. A combination of fear and pride made me incapable of making decisions or taking any action. It took a long time to lift MY denial. I had no peace as all my expectations were outside of myself. I learned that the drinker was incapable of giving the commitment I was expecting in our marriage. He could not give to me what he did not possess himself. Alcohol was his top priority. It takes two to make a relationship work; one person cannot do it alone. I was trying to deal logically with all the problems we were encountering. I learned I was fighting a futile battle. Logic and alcoholism do not go hand-in-hand. Love and fear cannot co-exist. I was living in physical danger, and I was allowing my children to be exposed to witnessing a lot of bad behavior.

Gradually, the spirit of Al-Anon seeped into me and I made a decision that enough was enough. I needed to take action. I finally separated from the drinker. This was probably the most difficult decision I ever had to make. I did grieve the loss of my marriage, as I considered marriage was for life. During this time our family home, which I had spent over twenty years putting together, was repossessed. I was left with nothing. My only inheritance was a lot of mounting debt and a bruised body. My two sons were still in school, and I had to make financial provision for them as best I could. Learning to trust was a very slow process; my trust had been betrayed by so many broken promises.

I gradually continued to muddle my way through the Steps. The first Step taught me humility in my powerlessness; this brought freedom to my thinking. Step Two taught me to believe in possibility; I was expected to just believe that things could get better. In Step Three, I was challenged to make decisions; this was the beginning of breaking my denial and the building of trust in a Power greater than myself, my Higher Power, whom I call God.

Gradually, as I continued to recover in Al-Anon, fear was replaced by courage; isolation by belonging; self-doubt by awareness; and denial by acceptance of reality. Through taking the Steps very slowly, particularly Steps Four and Five, I became ready to seek a Church annulment of my marriage. This was granted. Sometime later, when divorce was introduced in my country, I sought and was granted a divorce. These were steps I would never have had the courage to undertake were it not for the trust I developed in my Higher Power. I continue to slowly work my way through the Steps on an on-going basis. As I develop greater awareness, their spiritual meaning and power becomes clearer and stronger.

Along the way in my recovery, I was encouraged to become involved in Al-Anon service. Members trusted and believed in me when I did not have trust or belief in myself. It was this trust that empowered me and broke my isolation and self-doubt. Service brought a whole new dimension to my personal recovery. I have had the privilege of serving in many roles. Each new service role brings its own rewards and challenges from which I can learn and grow. These challenges empower me to have greater self-awareness. Service also teaches me patience, which sometimes can be in short supply. My mantra can go "Dear God, give me patience, but hurry."

My journey in Al-Anon continues to take me on many unexpected paths. Al-Anon does not promise me a trouble-free existence, but the Al-Anon philosophy teaches me to follow a spiritual path and deal with each issue as it arises on a daily basis.

As a display of my trust in my Higher Power, some years after my divorce, I met and later married a wonderful man. He is also a member of Al-Anon. At the time I was not seeking a relationship; in fact I needed a man like I needed a hole in the head! I am so grateful that there is much peace and

love in our home today, which I attribute in no small way to both of us working the Al-Anon program of recovery.

Another significant date in my life is January 2011. I had taken on a new service role as Chairman of our General Service Board in the UK & Éire structure. I was about to attend my first Board meeting as Chairman. I take my service roles very seriously, and this role was a new challenge. However, on the day before I was due to travel, I became very ill and was rushed to the Hospital Emergency Unit. Even at midnight on that night, my concern was whether I would be released in time to make the flight the following morning. This was not to be. Up to that time, I had never missed an Al-Anon service meeting. My Higher Power had other plans and I spent thirty-three days in the hospital, having two emergency surgeries in the meantime. Further surgery followed some months later. I do not yet know why this illness was visited on me. Today I know that I must be accepting of the will of my Higher Power, even though I may not understand His reasoning. This is where I am challenged to trust.

When I was ill, the support from my Al-Anon friends was overwhelming. They arranged meetings in my home, and supported me in various different ways. I shall always be grateful for this tremendous support, which was there when I was in greatest need, and which was so willingly given. My friends on the General Service Board and at our General Service Office were also wonderfully supportive and patient with me during my recovery.

Physically, I am recovering slowly; mentally I am very well. I am grateful to my Higher Power for giving me the strength to continue in service. My service is very fulfilling and rewarding. I know that no matter how much service I give, it will always fall short of what I have received. I am challenged to do what I can, with what I have on a daily basis, knowing that I am not in control. I do not know what the future holds, but I must be willing to accept whatever my Higher Power has in store for me.

I am so grateful for my recovery in Al-Anon and that my home today is full of love, laughter, peace, fun, friendship and fellowship. My three children are married and all have successful careers. I have eight grandchildren. I have a very good relationship with all of them. Without Al-Anon recovery this would not have been possible. Today my trust in my Higher Power enables me to live my life with peace and serenity. Mind you, I am not perfect, but I am excellent!

As I said already, I feel very privileged and blessed to be here today; to make new friends and to meet up again with those of you whom I had the privilege of meeting in Virginia Beach in 2010. My wish is that you will be empowered to continue giving service to Al-Anon. By giving service, we each strive to ensure that no member is ever alone, thus ensuring that "No Structure is ever Alone."



# A SUMMARY OF AL-ANON'S HISTORY

| Structure            | Year Al-Anon Started | Year of First Conference | Which Years Attended IAGSM       | Name of National Newsletter                 | Year First Published |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Argentina            | 1961                 | 1985                     | 1980, 86-2004                    | <i>Amistad (Friendship)</i>                 | 1978                 |
| Australia            | 1952                 | 1970                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>Austra-Link</i>                          | 1974                 |
| Austria              | ---                  | ---                      | ---                              | ---   | ---                  |
| Belgium (Flemish)    | 1961                 | 1982                     | 1980-2006                        | <i>Keerpunt</i>                             | 1982                 |
| Belgium (French)     | 1965                 | 1981                     | 1980-2000                        | <i>Sérénité</i>                             | 1976                 |
| Brazil               | 1966                 | 1979                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>Boletín Al-Anon Informativo Nacional</i> | 1983                 |
| Colombia             | 1960                 | 1992                     | 2002                             | <i>Renacimiento</i>                         | 1981                 |
| Costa Rica           | 1960                 | 1997                     | 1980-1988, 92, 2002, 2004        | <i>Compartamo</i>                           | 1979                 |
| Denmark              | 1974                 | 1985                     | 1986, 2006-2010                  | <i>Perspektiv</i>                           | 1988                 |
| Finland              | 1953                 | 1968                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>Tietoavain</i>                           | 1967                 |
| France               | 1962                 | 1979                     | 1980, 82, 86, 90-2004            | <i>La Chaîne</i>                            | 1967                 |
| Germany              | 1967                 | 1986                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>Intern</i>                               | 1981                 |
| Guatemala            | ---                  | ---                      | ---                              | ---   | ---                  |
| Iceland              | 1972                 | 1986                     | 1984-2010                        | <i>Hlekkurinn (The Link)</i>                | 1987                 |
| Italy                | 1976                 | 1995                     | 1986, 1992-2002, 2008, 2010      | <i>Incontro (Meet Together)</i>             | 1988                 |
| Japan                | 1979                 | 1992                     | 1982, 84, 88, 90, 92, 97         | <i>Hiroba (Inside Al-Anon)</i>              | 1981                 |
| Korea                | 1982                 | 1980                     | 1997                             | ---   | ---                  |
| Mexico               | 1965                 | 1973                     | 1980-90, 97, 2002-2008           | <i>Delta</i>                                | 1976                 |
| Netherlands          | 1976                 | 1995                     | 1980-2004                        | <i>Stapsgewijs</i>                          | 1980                 |
| New Zealand          | 1954                 | 1980                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>N.Z. Al-Anon Messenger</i>               | 1963                 |
| Norway               | 1960                 | 1987                     | 1982-2006                        | <i>Trinn For Trinn</i>                      | 1981                 |
| Paraguay             | ---                  | ---                      | ---                              | ---   | ---                  |
| Peru                 | 1965                 | 2001                     | 2004                             | ---   | 1970                 |
| Portugal             | ---                  | ---                      | ---                              | ---   | ---                  |
| Poland               | 1980                 | 1997                     | 1994-2000, 2006, 2010            | <i>Razem</i>                                | 1993                 |
| South Africa         | 1951                 | 1963                     | 1980, 82, 84, 88-2000, 2006-2010 | <i>Unitas</i>                               | 1967                 |
| Spain                | 1972                 | 1980                     | 1980, 88, 90-97, 2000-2010       | <i>Serenidad</i>                            | 1980                 |
| Sweden               | 1976                 | 1991                     | 1988, 92-94                      | <i>Al-Anon Kontakt</i>                      | 1986                 |
| Switzerland (French) | 1963                 | 1973                     | 1997-2004                        | <i>Sunray</i>                               | 1975                 |
| Switzerland (German) | 1964                 | 1973                     | 1982-2010                        | <i>M &amp; F</i>                            | 1969                 |
| U.K. & Eire          | 1952                 | 1970                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>News &amp; Views</i>                     | 1963                 |
| Uruguay              | 1974                 | 1997                     | 2004                             | ---   | ---                  |
| Venezuela            | ---                  | ---                      | ---                              | ---   | ---                  |
| US & Canada          | 1951                 | 1960                     | 1980-2010                        | <i>The Forum, Inside Al-Anon</i>            | 1978                 |

*Al-Anon meetings are held in over 130 countries. There are a total of 23,556 Al-Anon groups and 1,739 Alateen groups worldwide*

# General Service Offices

---

## **ARGENTINA**

Oficina de Servicios Generales Al-Anon  
Adolfo Alsina 1441  
1er.P - Of 102-103 (1084) C.A.B.A.  
Buenos Aires  
54 11 4382 9311

## **AUSTRALIA**

Al-Anon Australian General Service Office  
Al-Anon Family Groups AGSO  
GPO BOX 1002  
Melbourne VIC 3001  
61 3 9620 2166

## **AUSTRIA**

Al-Anon Familiengruppen Dienstburo Österreich  
Postfach 117  
6600 Reutte  
43 5672 72651

## **BELGIUM**

Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon  
Rue De La Poste 109/111  
Bruxelles B-1030  
32 2 216 0908

## **BELGIUM – Flemish-Speaking**

Al-Anon Familiegroepen V Z W  
Helenalei 24 Gelykvloers  
2018 Antwerpen  
32 3 218 5056

## **BRAZIL**

Escritório De Serviços Gerais Al-Anon  
Caixa Postal 2034  
CEP 01031-970  
São Paulo-SP  
55 11 3331 8799

## **COLOMBIA**

Corporación Al-Anon-Alateen  
Calle 55 # 10-76 Oficina 303  
Apartado Postal 75001  
Bogotá D.C.  
57 1 345 8943

## **COASTA RICA**

Oficina De Servicios Generales de Al-Anon de  
Costa Rica  
Avenida Central Y Primera Calle 2  
Edificio Scaglietti 4o Piso Ofic. No 404  
San José  
506 2256 4137

## **DENMARK**

Al-Anon/Alateen Familiegrupperne  
Postboks 1115  
1009 Copenhagen K  
45 7020 9093

## **FINLAND**

Al-Anon Keskuspalvelu Ry  
Tapalankatu 4  
38700 Kankaanpää  
358 19 739 679

## **FRANCE**

Services Generaux Al-Anon  
18 Rue Nollet  
75017 Paris  
33 14 280 1789

## **GERMANY**

AFG Familiengruppen  
Zentrales Dienstburo  
Emilienstr 4  
45128 Essen  
49 201 77 30 07

## **GUATEMALA**

Grupos De Familia Al-Anon de Guatemala  
6 Calle 0-39 Zona 1  
Edificio Herrera  
502 2253 9637

## **ICELAND**

Adalbjonustuskristofa Al-Anon  
Grandagardi 14  
Posthof 687  
121 Reykjavik  
354 551 9282

**ITALY**

Gruppi Familiar Al-Anon  
Via G. Fantoli 10  
20138 Milano  
39 02 5801 8230

**JAPAN**

Al-Anon Japan General Service Office  
2-9-21 Denenchoufu Otaku  
145-0071 Tokyo  
81 3 3472 7712

**KOREA**

Korean Al-Anon Intergroup  
RM 303 Hyoundae Officetel  
98-16 Guro-Dong  
Guro-Gu  
Seoul 152-841  
82 2 752 1808

**MEXICO**

Central Mexicana De Servicios Generales Al-Anon  
A C  
APDO POSTAL 5-082, Del.Cuauhtemoc  
06500 México D F  
52 55 2208 2170

**NETHERLANDS**

Vereniging Al-Anon Familiegroepen Nederland  
Postbus 340  
6900 AH  
Zevenaar

**NEW ZEALAND**

New Zealand Al-Anon General Services  
P O Box 68-124  
Auckland  
64 9 309 4792

**NORWAY**

Al-Anon Service Kontor  
Torggata 1  
0181 Oslo  
47 2 9284 4551

**PARAGUAY**

Oficina de Servicios Generales Al-Anon  
Casilla de Correo 1479  
Asunción

**PERU**

Oficina De Servicios Generales Al-Anon/Alateen  
Calle José Domingo Choquehuanca 453  
OF 201 Miraflores  
Lima 18  
51 1 422 1665

**POLAND**

Association of Al-Anon Service  
PO Box 14  
60-980 Poznan 13  
48 61 828 9307

**PORTUGAL**

Escritorio de Serviços Gerais (ESG)  
Rua Alfredo Simoes Pimenta N17 Armazem  
2810-010 Feijo  
Almada  
351 2 1216 0397

**SOUTH AFRICA**

Al-Anon Family Groups General Service Office  
PO Box 13810 N1 City.7463  
Unit B5, N1 City Mews  
CNR Frans Conradie Dr & Manus Gerber St  
Goodwood 7460  
27 21 595 4508

**SPAIN**

Grupos de Familia Al-Anon/Alateen  
Calle Rector Ubach, 24  
Barcelona, 08021  
34 932 012 124

**SWEDEN**

Al-Anon Familiegrupper (AFG) i Sverige  
Vasavägen 51B  
17732 Järfälla  
46 8 643 1393

**SWITZERLAND**

Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon  
S.G. Al-Anon de SRI  
Case Postale 123  
1001 Lausanne  
41 21 884 8833

**SWITZERLAND – German-Speaking**

Al-Anon Familiengruppen Der Deutschsprachig  
Neuhardst.22  
Postvach 103  
CH-4601 Olten  
41 62 296 5216

**UK & EIRE**

Al-Anon Family Groups  
61 Great Dover Street  
London SE1 4YF  
44 20 7407 0215

**URUGUAY**

Oficina de Servicios Generales Al-Anon  
Buenos Aires 444-1er Piso Of. 101  
Casilla de Correo NO 431  
Montevideo  
598 2 915 6360

**VENEZUELA**

Oficina de Servicios Generales Al-Anon  
Avenida Universidad de Coliseo A Corazón  
Edificio JA Piso 4 Oficina 41  
Caracas 1070  
58 212 542 2201