

# **2008 World Service Conference Summary**

Also available on the Members' site at [www.al-anon.alateen.org/members](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/members)

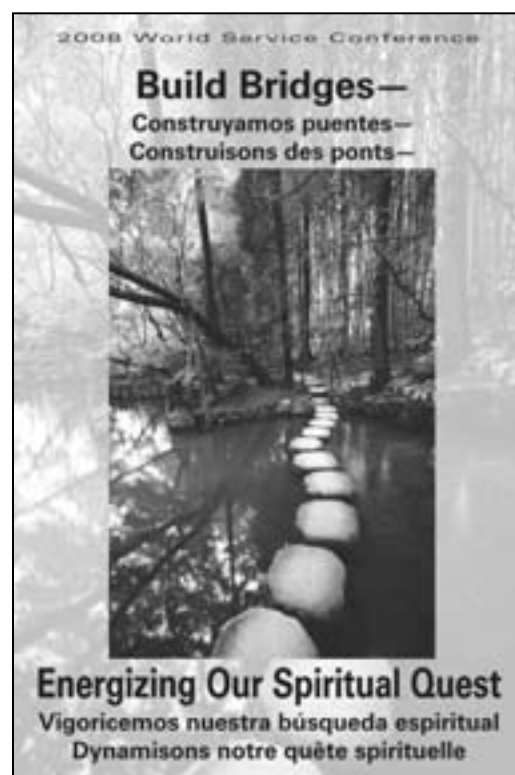
**Build Bridges—  
Construyamos puentes—  
Construisons des ponts—**



**Energizing Our Spiritual Quest  
Vigorizamos nuestra búsqueda espiritual  
Dynamisons notre quête spirituelle**

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**"Our World Service Conference (WSC) is the active voice and the effective group conscience of our society in world affairs."**

*2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual  
(P-24/27), page 170*

## **Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.**

### **Board Vision Statement:**

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

### **Board Mission Statement:**

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

## **Concept Two**

The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.

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**Build Bridges—  
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## OPENING DINNER

Prior to the official opening of the Conference on Sunday, Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee members, and World Service Office (WSO) staff attended an opening dinner on Saturday. The Co-Chairperson of Conference welcomed everyone and the Executive Director reminded Conference members that we can't build a bridge alone. "When we reach out to other people, it helps them and us. We want to continue to reach out to communities not yet at the Conference, but we don't have to dilute our program nor create a separate program to attract these new audiences; we just have to allow the program to grow within each of us." After the Serenity Prayer was recited by all in attendance, dinner began.

Dinner was followed by the "pinning" of new Delegates by their Conference Sponsors. The "B" Brothers—Bart and Bert—made a special appearance, asking Delegates to share how the 2007 Conference created a bridge to allow them and their Areas to let go of old thinking. Here are some of the comments of returning Delegates:

- "Knowledge-Based Decision-Making helped; motions first, then discussion wasn't working."
- "Area Coordinators gave part of my report. I let them get involved; everyone liked the change."
- "I added humor into the Assembly. I came out in my rollerblades, shorts, and t-shirt—on the back it said, 'I love you,' so that when I turned around at the end, I could say 'I love you,' another member and I dressed up and went around collecting money to travel for that year. We collected \$600."
- "The WSO helped—they want us to succeed."
- "We held three 'Big Thinking' workshops. We are no longer doing many reports because workshops have been so successful. We are now doing a Delegate Interactive Presentation."
- "Lois was quite an innovator. That stuck out to me. What could we do? We've sent people to other Assemblies. We're thinking creatively."

The Chairperson of the Board closed the dinner by asking everyone to make eye contact as they stated the Al-Anon Declaration.



## SHARING AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Each year, Delegates gather on the evening before the official opening of the World Service Conference to share their Area successes and concerns. This year, Delegates submitted their responses in advance to written questions about the Conference theme, "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest." In opening the session, the Chairperson asked, "What are we doing to promote unity?" Here are the questions and some of the Delegates' responses:

### How can we get ourselves and others more involved in recovery, thus energizing our spiritual quest?

- Lead by example and promote leadership at the Area level
- Being a good listener is important
- Use enthusiasm to build bridges
- Encourage our members to read our literature
- Support members as they get involved in new service opportunities
- Participate in sponsorship—it's one of the most valuable tools
- Become more involved with Internet communications, blogs, Web sites, etc.
- Get more involved in a home group
- Invite and welcome newcomers
- Reach out to younger people and involve them with tasks related to their skills and abilities
- Encourage Past Delegates to visit districts

### What are our responsibilities to ourselves, to the fellowship, and to newcomers?

- Make a commitment to myself to give back what was freely given to me by attending meetings, speaking to members, and sponsoring others
- Take time to listen with an open mind
- Remember to treat myself and others with love and respect
- Allow members to serve in their own capacity
- Listen, learn, and reflect on what we are receiving from our service work
- Ensure our recovery is not compromised by putting other things before our personal recovery
- Encourage and welcome newcomers enthusiastically and sincerely
- Demonstrate our involvement—practice what we preach
- Continuously clarify Al-Anon's function and purpose and our concept of leadership

- Visit other group meetings
- Be genuine, humble
- Practice the Seventh Tradition—be available to serve in our home groups
- Give members an opportunity to participate in their own recovery
- Take care not to get burned out or overwhelmed with our service responsibilities
- Offer to be a temporary Sponsor; be willing to sponsor when asked
- Share how our Higher Power assists us

### **How can we, as a fellowship, provide guidance and education to the membership about good leadership and healthy sponsorship?**

- Share our own experiences
- Have discussions on the Traditions and Concepts
- Encourage members to use all the tools of our program, i.e., literature, Internet, workshops
- Reach out to young people in Alateen by becoming certified as an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service
- Offer workshops on sponsoring, history, and service
- Speak at special meetings sponsored by the groups
- Develop training modules for GRs, DRs, Officers, and Coordinators

### **What is happening or what would you like to see happen in your Area to energize involvement?**

- We encourage members to invite our Coordinators and Delegate to share at their meetings. We have had a very successful weekend for Alateens, Sponsors, and friends. I invite comments for feedback on any newsletter articles that are posted.
- Reach out to all people through the distribution of the *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazine
- This past year we sent many of our Area's officers and Coordinators to several different Area Assemblies in our Region. This created a new energy in our own Assembly and new ideas for our Area.
- We would like to become more diverse and inclusive.
- Knowledge-Based Decision-Making continues to thrive and serve us well within our Area, helping us to reach our goals. The sharing of information is helping everyone to feel included. The open forum is providing background information. The results seem to be smoother discussions, clearer decisions, fewer and more concise motions, and happier and more serene members!
- The sharing of district reports and experiences at the Committee meetings, at Assemblies, and via e-mail helps each district, including small and sometimes isolated districts, to feel part of a larger whole.
- Our Past Delegates have committed, to the best of their abilities, to visit as many districts as possible, sharing their reports/conversations wherever they have been asked. This visibility and availability has created positive energy and enthusiasm; involvement just naturally follows.



- We have been fortunate in our Area to have hosted a successful Al-Anon/Alateen Conference for the first time in many years. As well, our last two Al-Anon/Alateen Gratitude Days were well attended.
- Our Area still struggles with reaching younger people. Our Web site is very basic, but we do have very energetic members willing to work on it and try to reach the younger generations. We look forward to more information on Web sites and electronic communication tools to inform those still suffering from the effects of a loved one's alcoholism.
- My Area has started to hold Assemblies. That may seem small to most, but my Area did not have annual Assemblies.
- One of the things we will be doing is an Area Committee Inventory three months before the elections. This will help us to see what we can do differently. We will also pass on information to assist new officers in their service venture, which will make them successful so they want to continue.
- We rotate GR and DR seating positions in the Assembly room so that the same people aren't always up front.
- We are looking at integrating the Spanish districts and Intergroups into the English districts and Intergroups and then providing translation.
- One of the things that help a lot is that Delegates in our Area give the World Service Conference report at our Spring Assembly and then throughout the year visit the various districts so those members who are not able to go to the Assembly can hear the report.
- Some members have been asked to speak to the medical students at the local university, which has sparked an awareness of alcoholism and its effects on the family. The university has now made it a requirement for medical students to attend at least one Al-Anon meeting.
- Districts and groups are busy holding meetings in shelters and prisons. Our districts and groups are also offering workshops, attending health fairs, and providing Alateen literature to adolescent treatment centers, schools, and numerous other places.
- We hope to improve our involvement by requesting the district or Area to create activities where all members can participate. We also suggest developing workshops on leadership and sponsorship, among other significant topics.
- In our Area, we have family functions, such as fundraisers, potlucks, family nights, speaker meetings, etc., which include fun things like skits, auctions, and raffles followed by A.A., Al-Anon, and Alateen meetings where each family member has an opportunity to participate in his/her own recovery.
- We have added workshops to our Area Assemblies in addition to Action Committee meetings.
- Coordinators have been very excited about the conference calls that have been taking place.
- By keeping the younger Al-Anon members involved in any way possible, we will build a foundation on which they can lean in the future when their family responsibilities lessen.

## CONFERENCE THEME AND OPENING REMARKS

The 2008 Conference theme, “Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest,” set a spiritual overtone through which many insightful, enthusiastic, and respectful discussions occurred during the 48th World Service Conference (WSC), held at the Stamford Marriott in Stamford, Connecticut, April 13-17, 2008.

This year’s Conference was opened by the Conference Chairperson who tapped the heel of a shoe in tribute to Lois W., our cofounder, against the podium, rather than a gavel. In her opening remarks, she said: “Remember the first time you heard the following words, ‘Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.’ Picture the person you were the moment you first heard them.

“Did you have even the faintest notion that reading, saying, digesting those words would bring you to this place, on this day, among others like you who have also embarked on an unexpected personal spiritual quest?

“Did you know that your spiritual quest, built on the principles of the Steps, the Traditions, and the Concepts of Service, would cause you to leave your home, family and job for an entire week for three consecutive years so that you could ensure that the bridges to those who still suffer from the effects of living with an alcoholic would continue to be constructed with strength and foresight?

“Did you know that serving this fellowship would build your spiritual resources, connect you with blessings and benefits that would bring you out of isolation, anger, and fear, and plant in you the desire to give away what you have gained?

“Our pioneers knew. When they wrote the descriptive text in Concept Two: ‘We believe our fellowship is a spiritual society characterized by enough enlightenment, responsibility, and love for God and man to ensure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions,’ they were talking about us, today! Did you imagine? Can you imagine?

“Not only did those pioneers construct a bridge to those who searched for help in their own life’s journey, but they created a bridge to the future when they created this World Service Conference. They bridged the groups to one another and to the world—and the past to the future.

“They said: ‘It is with a sense of great security that we old-timers are now assured that Al-Anon’s World Service Conference will use its vested authority for giving shape to the destiny that God is holding in store for us all.’

“That bridge to the future has been carefully laid, one Conference at a time, so that its structure and its span would be strong and sure, based on our core beliefs and spiritual principles.

“Concept Two also tells us ‘The many Al-Anon groups scattered all over the world hold in their hands the group conscience.’ These groups, including your group back home as well as mine and the person’s sitting next to you, have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to this Conference and its service arms.



“The words of that Concept, ‘Our World Service Conference (WSC) is the active voice and the effective group conscience of our society in world affairs,’ are again referring to *us*, this 48th World Service Conference body—each and every one of us, occupying each seat in this room, taking actual and spiritual responsibility for our world services.

“Our groups have given us the permission to deliberate on important matters, to give guidance, and to guard our Traditions. They have recognized that this Conference is the voice of worldwide Al-Anon; its largest group conscience.

“Our theme, ‘Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest,’ reminds that each and every one of us will experience spiritual growth this week. It also reminds us that for everyone who walks through the doors to that first meeting, finds our Web site, reads our literature, sees or hears our ads on TV, the radio, or the Internet; for every doctor, counselor, school teacher, clergyman, or supervisor who says to that one in pain: ‘Why don’t you try Al-Anon,’ that person will walk over the bridges that we will build this week.

“It is our work to ensure that our groups are strong, our message is clear and a hand is extended in love to everyone who walks into a meeting unaware that they too will have the opportunity to respond to a spiritual call.

Mary G.  
*Conference Chairperson, Trustee*

Doreen D.  
*Conference Co-Chairperson, Trustee*

Suzanne M.  
*Associate Director—Conference*

“...the Conference Chairperson who tapped the heel of a shoe in tribute to Lois W. ...”

"It was one heck of a big bridge that Lois and Anne began to construct when they wrote their letter to the 87 known Family Groups. It was a bridge that would ultimately unite us in one fellowship. In that 1951 letter, one of the three-fold purposes of those groups was: 'To live by the Twelve Steps ourselves in order to grow spiritually.' It is still one of our primary purposes.

"Lois used the word 'striving' when she talked about her own spiritual life. That word reflects a lifelong spiritual quest. Lois was never complacent, noting that her life in the early years of the programs 'impelled' she and Bill 'forward and onward.' She was a woman who believed that the growth of the fellowship was based in 'growth of the spirit' and she was not a woman who was faint of heart, unwilling to try something new, or take a risk which would strengthen the work of the fellowship or extend its reach to those in need. You will recall that our cofounder was not the one riding passively in the sidecar!

"We still embrace her thoughts written in *Lois Remembers* that the fundamental principles of the program are universal 'but the individual acceptance and application of these principles must continue to grow' or our society will perish. 'For stagnation is retrogression. There is no standing still.'

"I hear that call to the future, do you? As our pioneers were bold and visionary so must we be.

"Our fellowship's unity and survival depend on our conversations and our leadership. Can we construct important bridges this week? Can we accept our huge and precious responsibility to explore every option, to consider every change, to be fearless about our growth and our quest, to let go of old ideas in order to ensure the future for our fellowship? Can we take some spiritual leaps together?

"To borrow a phrase from the Alateens, 'Together We Can Make It.' We can make it because we trust in the spiritual principles of our Legacies, we can make it because we have responded to the call of the Twelfth Step, we can make it because we are bound by the many bridges that tie us together in unity and in love.

"Bridge building is service in action—it puts us on the road to our individual spiritual quests. That quest is about love through service. As Lois wrote in *Lois Remembers*, 'Love inspires us to greater endeavor in all fields of activity.'

"How energizing is that?

"Welcome to the 48th World Service Conference. Let's begin to build our bridges."



After the official opening with the Serenity Prayer, the first order of business was approval of a motion presented by the Admissions/ Handbook Task Force to seat certain people who could provide critical information to the Conference. The following persons were seated:

#### **With voice, but no vote:**

**David Zach**

Director of Business Services

Non-Al-Anon member

**Nydia Julia M.**

International Representative—Mexico

Al-Anon member

**Inga v.E.**

International Representative—Germany

Al-Anon member

**Louise C.**

International Representative—South Africa

Al-Anon member

#### **With voice limited to ECRPM business, but no vote:**

**Annette T.**

Chairperson, Executive Committee for Real

Property Management

Al-Anon member

#### **With no voice and no vote:**

**Nicolette Stephens**

WSO Information Analyst

Non-Al-Anon member

#### **The motion carried.**

(See WSC Motion #1, page 74.)



## WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees for Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., I have the pleasure of extending to each of you a very warm welcome to our 48th World Service Conference. This year's Conference theme, 'Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest,' is the connection of the WSC to the Areas, the districts, and the groups.

"This Conference is the group conscience of our fellowship, and it is charged with the task of serving as guardian of the Traditions and of the worldwide service of Al-Anon Family Groups. That is a tremendous responsibility, and much will be expected of us this week as we work together to strengthen the unity of our fellowship and to carry our message of hope and recovery.

"During the week, we will laugh; we will probably cry together, and as we pray together, we will be given the guidance and strength to

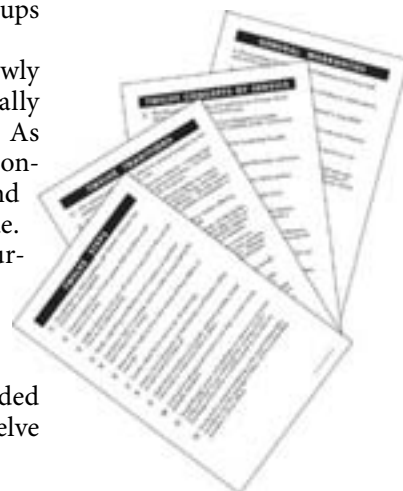
meet the challenge before us.

"Each World Service Conference has done much to maintain the unity of Al-Anon Family Groups and build the bridge to spread the knowledge of Al-Anon Family Groups throughout the world.

"At this time, we begin our work as a newly formed 'Al-Anon Family Group,' officially called the 48th World Service Conference. As members of this 48th Conference, the responsibility is ours—to preserve this program and strengthen our growth and unity worldwide. We will put aside our personal desires, surrender our personal will, and open ourselves to the will of the God of our understanding."

The Chairperson of the Board concluded her welcoming remarks by reading the Twelve Traditions.

Zelda R.  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees



## ORIENTATION

The Chairperson began the session by recalling her first World Service Conference in 1987: "Lois W., Al-Anon's beloved cofounder, was introduced and welcomed at the opening dinner with a standing ovation. Humbly urging everyone to sit down, Lois said, 'Anybody can start something, but carrying it out is the real challenge. And all the rest of you are doing that job. You are all founders in your own right, carrying the message.'"

The Chairperson compared the way communication was then—"snail mail" and large manila envelopes—to the technology of today—e-mail, the Information File Exchange, and conference calls—remarking that "the use of technology to communicate has resulted in the ability to be more nimble and flexible, allowing work to be done in new ways."

The Board decided that since the goals for the 2007 World Service Conference were so

Zelda R.  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees





successful, it would use them again as goals for this year's Conference. The first goal was "Conference members will understand the purpose of the Conference, relationships within the structure, and be able to articulate Conference decisions."

After a brief introduction by the Chairperson of the Board, Conference members shared their roles as Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee, and staff members in creating unity and guaranteeing the harmony and survival of Al-Anon and Alateen. Here are some general ideas brought forth from responses:

- A Delegate is a channel through which all information flows. One of the most important things is to make sure that the information discussed at the Conference is brought back to the Assembly so that everyone has communication between the Area and WSC.
- The WSO is a clearinghouse, information center, service center. At the Conference, the staff is the communication link—providing departmental reports, information about WSO activities, trends, and historical information. The staff brings the voice of the international members and electronic meetings who do not have a service structure. The staff also implements the ideas that are approved at the Conference.
- Trustees lead, listen, and guide. They look into the future and are stewards of finance and property. They have veto power on any Conference action. They review and approve Committee guidelines and the final agenda for the WSC.

- Executive Committee members exercise the oversight of the WSO and are the communication link between the Board and the WSO staff regarding day-to-day operations. They bring this volunteer perspective to the Conference.

After this discussion, the Chairperson of the Board asked for feedback on how Areas incorporated "The Paths to Group Conscience" chart presented at last year's Conference in their Areas. Some Areas didn't like or even use the chart because they felt they already understood how the process works. Others thought it was a valuable resource that could be copied, discussed, and used to help members understand the flow of information from one level of service to another.

The Chairperson of the Board then asked for those who were seated in a role other than Delegate, Trustee, or Conference staff member to share their roles as Conference participants:

- The Director of Business Services presents current financial information and gives the Conference an understanding of where the organization is headed financially.
- The international representatives at this year's Conference were present to learn how our Conference is run so they can compare it to their own Conferences. All three were present to serve as a link between their Conferences and the WSC.

The Chairperson of the Board mentioned tools that were given to Delegates to help them articulate Conference decisions to their Areas. The Delegates were asked how they used the "Hot Topic" sheets for their reports and whether these helped. Many said that the sheets allowed



Member to Member  
Group to Group



Member to Group to Trusted Servant

them to structure their ideas and summarize the main points of each topic, as well as helping them to present the information to their Area in an unbiased manner. The Chairperson of the Board informed the Conference members that we would have a session called “Summing It Up” at the end of every evening, as well as various other reflection sessions to help Delegates collect their thoughts and clarify any questions so that they could have all the information and tools needed to be successful.

The Conference then took a look at the second goal, “The spiritual tone of the WSC will prevail by the demonstration of mutual respect and acceptable conduct by its members,” and discussed what it meant to them. “Presuming goodwill” was the common theme.

The Chairperson of the Board then asked Conference members to take a look at the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) process for an informed group conscience that was introduced two years ago. It was noted that not all of the information would be presented in this format; we have to be flexible and use good judgment.

The Chairperson discussed the following four essential elements of the KBDM process:

#### **Open communication between leadership and membership**

This process is all about talking to each other and reasoning things out.

#### **Dialogue before deliberation**

This allows us to discuss the information, questions, and concerns before we construct the motion. Often the discussion reveals that we really don’t even need a motion. Many times, all we really need is to have the discussion.

#### **All decision-makers will have common access to full information**

This is often one of the most confusing elements. Concept Four tells us, “Participation is the key to harmony,” but it does not say everyone is invited to participate. We are invited to participate if it is in our role as part of the decision-making body. With that comes trust that information will be used to prepare us for dialogue. When a decision has been made, it is important that we recognize and support the group conscience, whether we agree with it or not.

#### **We exist in a culture of trust**

As Al-Anon members, we place a great value on trust. We learn to have a firm belief that each of us would never knowingly do anything to hurt Al-Anon. Many times, we simply need more information for the understanding that lets us lighten our load and experience trust.

The Conference body was invited to share their experiences with the implementation of the KBDM process in their Areas. Areas are experiencing much success—meetings are running smoothly; unnecessarily long discussions are rare or no longer happening; and members are more adequately prepared for discussion.

In closing, the Chairperson invited Conference members to see volunteers with questions on how to write motions and to attend the U.S. and Canadian Annual Meeting of the Corporation on the day following the close of Conference. It is at this meeting, she explained, that Concept Seven is in action—the Conference actions are made legal by the Board.



Trusted Servant to Trusted Servant



Carrying the Message Back

## APPROVALS

Mary Ann R.  
*Treasurer, Trustee*

David Zach  
*Director of Business Services  
(Non-member)*

### 2007 Auditor's Report

Each year, the Director of Business Services explains the purpose of the Audit and its details. The financial records of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., are audited by an independent certified public accounting firm. The auditors, after reviewing all the materials provided, found that the financial statements were prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. Prior to the Conference, a copy of the audit including the opinion letter of the independent auditors was forwarded to all Conference members for review. During the Conference, the Director gave a page by page explanation of the audit, a copy of which is on the Members' Web site. The Director also explained the "2008 Salary Range with Comparative Ranges" report and the "2007 Contributions U.S.A. & Canada" report.

Conference members had the following questions:

"Where do we list the cost of translation?"

The cost of translation is listed on page 11 of the Auditor's Report under "Other literature."

"Did we have to go into the Reserve Fund last year?"

No, not to meet current operations. The Forum mailed free to every group was funded from the Reserve Fund as it was a trial.

"Where do we list bequests?"

Bequests are listed under Contributions.

"Do we have bank accounts in excess of the FDIC limits?"

As stated in note two on page eight of the Annual Audit, we do have funds in excess of the FDIC limits. We have provided some protection by using two banks, but we would need to have accounts in 13 different banks to be within the FDIC limits. We believe the time to manage this arrangement would exceed the risk.

"As Al-Anon Family Groups, we seem to be self-supporting; but as groups, we are far from it when we look at the cost per group compared to contribution per group. Would different parts of the country need to contribute more as a group or should it be divided by how many groups there are to decide how much each group contributes?"

"There are a lot of factors to take into account. There are groups and Areas that are not economically as fortunate as others. What the chart detailing the cost of services per group vs. contribution per group figure represents is that we're not self-supporting with contributions. Contributions have been running about 1 million dollars or so for the past several years. We know that there's been inflation for the past several years; so it's a correct analysis that we are supporting the services to the groups through other areas of revenue."

In summary, on December 31, 2007, the Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, Inc. had total assets of \$10,900,596 and liabilities of \$1,893,392, leaving net assets of \$9,007,204 among the three funds: General, Building, and Reserve.

In the General Fund, revenue from operations totaled \$4,973,330 in 2007 and expenses for the year were \$4,443,888, increasing net assets by \$529,442. The net amount realized on literature sales was \$3,376,417 and contributions were \$1,205,486. Subscription income from *The Forum* totaled \$268,062. Investment income in the General Fund for 2007 was \$123,365. Net income of \$203,936 was recorded in the Reserve Fund. The expense for Special Projects (printing and mailing *The Forum* free to each English-speaking group in the U.S. and Canada) from January to December 2007 totaled \$94,455, and the estimated post-retirement health benefits liability was reduced by \$93,531. Building Fund expenses are charged to the General Fund through occupancy costs.

The Reserve Fund had a balance of \$5,149,922 at year-end after recording investments at market value and estimating the liability for post-retirement health benefits.

The Building Fund, established in 1995 to record the purchase of the headquarters' office, shows the cost of land, building, and building improvements after depreciation at \$2,192,568. There is \$113,409 in the contractual reserve for the retirement of bonds.



## Finance Committee Skit

In framing the skit which was to be presented, the Treasurer gave a history of the Appeal Letter and its intention, "In 1960 Anne B., President to the Board of Directors, addressed the Delegates at the first World Service Conference. In her address she stated that there was more work at Headquarters than can be handled; more staff is needed and that volunteer contributions are only being sent from 55 percent of the registered groups. She asks the Delegates to carry these concerns to their Assemblies.

"The following is a historical summary beginning with the origin of the first Appeal Letter in 1951 to the letter of appeal as we know it 57 years later.

"In September of 1951 the first voluntary contribution was received at the Clearing House from a member in Lynn, Massachusetts. According to Anne B., President of the Board of Directors, receipt of this single contribution gave the committee the courage to ask groups if they were ready to contribute toward the operation of the Clearing House.

"In 1952 Anne B. and Lois W. wrote a letter to the Al-Anon Family Groups asking if they would care to make a semi-annual voluntary contribution of \$1.00 per member to support the Clearing House. They further stated that the contribution would give all an equal opportunity to support their service center and would be voluntary. They asked the groups to discuss this request and send their opinions to the Clearing House.

"The response from the groups was reported to be 'wonderful' with contributions enclosed. This good news was reported to the groups in a follow-up letter with a reminder that it was time to send their spring contributions.

"As early as 1954, a letter was received from one of the groups suggesting that members were not receiving their money's worth from the Clearing House. Anne and Lois responded with an explanation that while the services of the Clearing House were for the use of established groups, of greater importance was the work toward our common goals. They were:

- Helping new groups get started
- Giving hope and encouragement to isolated and despairing relatives of alcoholics
- Providing an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experiences
- Producing standard literature
- Obtaining good publicity through magazines and other news media

"Between 1951 and 1954 the number of groups grew from 50 to 500.

"In 1958 in an effort to raise more funds, a

motion was made and approved to send the Appeal Letter to foreign groups.

"In 1960, a separate Appeal Letter was mailed to all groups asking for contributions to support the operating expenses for the World Service Conference.

"In 1961, the Chairperson of the Conference, concerned that only 55 percent of registered groups contributed to Headquarters, felt there was a need for more awareness of the purposes of Headquarters among individual members. Lois suggested that if the Delegates could return home and let the members see how their dollars spread Al-Anon to others like themselves, individual Al-Anon members might develop a stronger sense of financial responsibility to Headquarters.

"Since contributions in 1964 fell \$1,000.00 below expectations, the effectiveness of the Appeal Letter was questioned and the idea of seeking professional help to write the letter was discussed.



"By 1965, Alateen members were sending contributions to Headquarters.

"The 1966 Conference voted to abandon the separate Conference Appeal Letter, since it confused members, and instituted three Appeal Letters for general support of World Services.

"The 1989 Conference held a workshop on 'How Can We Motivate Groups to Increase Contributions?' Suggestions included:

- Emphasize in local Areas the need for contributions
- Place articles in Area newsletters with a personal touch
- Use and explain the Seventh Tradition

"Responding to a need to increase contributions in 1998, it was recommended by the Budget Committee that the Appeal Letter be mailed quarterly. This was presented to the WSC and approved. Because it is not possible to keep a mailing address for each individual member, letters are sent to the groups requesting a special collection. This allows each member an opportunity to participate in Twelfth Step work beyond the group level.

Mary Ann R.  
*Treasurer, Trustee*

"It is now 2008 and we share the same concerns as Anne B. did in 1960. The percentage of groups contributing in the year 2007 was 56.45 percent, 1.5 percent higher than in 1960. To quote Vi F., the 1962 WSO Treasurer, 'How do we effectively utilize the Appeal Letter and instill a sense of responsibility within the individual member that *money is their messenger in places where they cannot be?*'"

Following the history of the Appeal Letter, the Finance Committee performed a skit about an Al-Anon group's attitude toward the WSO Appeal Letter.

The first half of the skit portrayed a group that was unenthusiastic about the Appeal Letter. The members felt it was, "money, money, money—that's all they want." Members were

more interested in having a meeting than hearing about the Appeal Letter.

The second part of the skit revisited the group two weeks later. An enthusiastic Group Representative educated members about the Appeal Letter and why contributions are important. The GR showed the group a pie chart that described how a simple \$5.00 contribution could be used. The members were much more excited about giving when they understood how their money would be used. The overall feeling in this meeting was, "Contributions let my voice be heard where I can't be."

A motion was made and carried to approve the Auditor's Report. (See WSC Motion #2, page 74.)

## 2008 Budget

Mary Ann R.  
Treasurer, Trustee

David Zach  
Director of Business Services  
(Non-member)

The 2008 Budget was presented to Conference members by the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, Inc. The budget showed that expenses are expected to equal revenue for the year. Overall expenses are budgeted to increase by \$634,000. Labor costs are expected to increase \$339,000 due to merit and cost of living increases for salaries and increases in the cost of benefits. Occupancy expenses are projected to be \$12,000 more than last year. The budget for travel increased by \$30,000 and includes in-service, Committee meetings, and group services. There was also \$3,000 added for a PSA radio campaign and \$200,000 for new videos.

Income from literature sales is estimated to be more than last year because of the new book, *Discovering Choices*. Projected subscriptions for *The Forum* were estimated to be less in 2008 than in 2007. Contributions were budgeted to be \$1,500,000, which is about \$390,000 more than the amount received in 2007. Investment income is budgeted at \$87,000 more than last year. Beginning in 2008, there will be transfers of investment income based on four percent of the market value of the Reserve Fund. In the past, we transferred only the interest and dividends less management fees.

A motion to approve the 2008 Finance Committee report was carried. (See WSC Motion #3, page 74.)

## 2007 Annual Report and Strategic Plan Update

Ric B.  
Executive Director

Mary G.  
Chairperson, Strategic Plan  
Oversight Task Force

Zelda R.  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

Mary Ann R.  
Treasurer

The 2007 Annual Report, including the Operational Plan and the Strategic Plan Update, was sent to the Delegates prior to Conference. The report included updates from Committees as well as WSO departments. The Strategic Plan Update included only the goals and objectives that the Board has been focusing on this past year.

Since the report was provided in advance, the Executive Director made only brief opening remarks, and then opened the floor for discussion. Delegates questioned the change in the title of the *Service Manual* from two years to three years, as well as how updates to the *Service Manual* would be handled. In response, the Executive Director informed the Conference that the change in the title was made because by the time it was printed, a year and a half had already passed. The WSO

is determining if it would be more effective to print the *Manual* once every two or once every three years. He also noted that pages for notes are available in the new spiral-bound edition. Changes to the *Service Manual* will be posted on the Members' Web site when they are available in English, Spanish, and French, so that all members are receiving the information at the same time. These updates can be downloaded and pasted into the *Manual*.

One Conference member asked, "The Board is self-electing, approving all nominees. Do they approve Regional Trustees as well?" The Executive Director explained that the Conference does not exist in law; it's traditional. As the legal entity, the Board has always elected Regional Trustees.

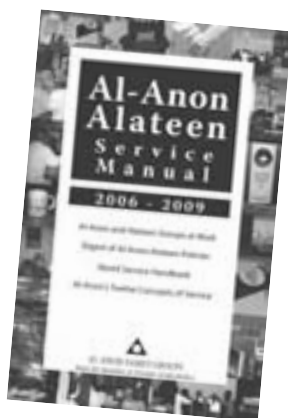
*continued on page 14*

## Schedule 1

**AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, INC.**

	<b>2008 Budget</b>	<b>2008 Preliminary Budget</b>	<b>2007 Actual</b>
Operating Expenses			
Salaries (includes Temp Help)	2,415,000	2,415,000	2,202,000
Payroll Taxes	190,000	190,000	162,000
Employee Benefits	<u>582,000</u>	<u>582,000</u>	<u>484,000</u>
Total Labor Costs	3,187,000	3,187,000	2,848,000
Building Occupancy	280,000	280,000	268,000
Packing & Shipping (Net)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(15,000)
Postage	268,000	268,000	222,000
Telephone	56,000	56,000	53,000
Stationery & Office Supplies	100,000	100,000	111,000
Outreach Activities	30,000	30,000	29,000
Office Services & Expenses	159,000	159,000	147,000
Repairs & Maintenance	23,000	23,000	23,000
Travel & Meetings	344,000	314,000	212,000
Direct Conference Costs (Net)     Schedule 2	120,000	120,000	65,000
General Service Meeting	45,000	45,000	2,000
Regional Service Seminars			19,000
Legal & Audit	40,000	40,000	47,000
Printing	149,000	149,000	167,000
Canadian Office	18,000	18,000	13,000
In-Office Volunteers	4,000	4,000	4,000
PSA Campaign	131,000	128,000	75,000
Miscellaneous	<u>25,000</u>	<u>25,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>
Total Operating Expense	4,974,000	4,941,000	4,340,000
Membership Survey			9,000
Outreach Media (Al-Anon & Alateen)	200,000	200,000	
Depreciation & Amortization (Exc. Bldg.)	<u>130,000</u>	<u>130,000</u>	<u>95,000</u>
Total Expense	\$5,304,000	\$5,271,000	\$4,444,000
Estimated Revenue			
Literature Sales less cost of printing	3,559,000	3,559,000	3,376,000
Contributions	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,206,000
Forum Subscriptions	215,000	215,000	268,000
Transfer from Reserve Fund	<u>210,000</u>	<u>210,000</u>	<u>123,000</u>
Total Estimated Revenue	\$5,484,000	\$5,484,000	\$4,973,000





In discussing the Strategic Plan Update, Conference members asked what the value would be of having a professional non-member, such as the WSO Information Analyst, attend Board meetings or the World Service Conference and how this value would be assessed. The Executive Director responded that attending Board meetings and the World Service Conference is part of the Information Analyst's training to understand what happens within Al-Anon and what the complex issues are that the Board discusses. The Conference Chairperson added that the Board was and is looking at what it would feel like to have other professionals attend meetings. She said, "Our discussions are complex, confidential, and multi-faceted. We didn't know how it would feel for them to attend. We thought we'd test it out."

Another Conference member questioned

whether the Task Force working on the process of asking a non-member to attend Board meetings is made up of Board members. The response was "yes."

In regards to Board evaluation tools, a Conference member asked what tools the Board is using to assess itself. The Conference Chairperson informed the Delegates that the Board is in the process of testing several assessment tools to find one that it can use to assess its work consistently.

Another member asked if the Board has a Strategic Plan evaluation tool. The response was that the Board is beginning to create measurable objectives and give progress reports. The Executive Committee will perform the evaluation.

A motion to approve the 2007 WSO Annual Report and Strategic Plan Update was made and carried. (See WSC Motion #4, page 74. The complete report and update can be found on pages 77-94.)

## Visit to Stepping Stones

This year, the World Service Conference returned again to its roots in Bedford Hills, New York. The Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee members, Conference staff, and guests of the 48th World Service Conference had the opportunity to visit Stepping Stones, the birthplace of the Al-Anon Clearing House as we know it today and the home of Lois and Bill W., cofounders of Al-Anon and A.A. respectively.



On the short bus ride from the hotel to Stepping Stones, members discussed how Stepping Stones served as a bridge between Al-Anon Family Groups' past and its future, how the visit would allow Delegates to build bridges to their Areas and their own spiritual quest, and how Lois built bridges to energize Al-Anon's spiritual quest. Members talked about the strength of our cofounder and her ability to show how one person could make a difference. They talked about Lois's humility and simplicity and the wonderful gift that has been given to our fellowship through her work.

Upon arriving at Stepping Stones, members were greeted by its Executive Director who shared some of the history about the home. A month after Bill and Lois purchased the home, in 1941, there was a magazine article about Alcoholics Anonymous published. Ten years later, the clearing house of Al-Anon Family Groups was formed.

Stepping Stones has been left in its original condition as much as possible, with mementos, photos, and trinkets in place. Stepping Stones' Executive Director further explained that there has been some modernization done to the house to preserve it as long as possible. Visitors were permitted to take pictures at certain places on the property including behind Lois's desk.

## BY-LAWS REPORT

"There are three changes to the U.S. and Canadian By-Laws that were approved by the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee. These amendments are in the By-Laws of both the U.S. and Canadian Corporations and are being presented to the Conference for review. The Conference's role is reflected in the World Service Conference Charter on page 155 of the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual*, 10d, 'The Bylaws (sic) of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., and any amendments thereto are subject to recall by the Conference by a two-thirds vote of all its members. All Bylaw amendments will be presented to the first Conference to be held after their adoption by the Board of Trustees.'

"If there are any disagreements to the amendments, the Board will review them again and present them to the Conference next year for review."

The first amendment was in Article III—Members. A statement was added that requires Trustees to sign a document that outlines expectations of leadership and potential conflicts of interest. To date there has been no clear statement of the expectation of a member of the Board of Trustees. The Board considers it appropriate to have a written document that clearly reflects what it expects of its members. This protects both the Board and each member—should a conflict arise.

A Conference member asked if the Board had a conflict of interest policy. The Executive Director responded, "We have a specific policy for staff. As a result of that, the Board identified that it needed a specific policy for all Board members. It's standard language that prohibits Board members from voting on issues that would financially benefit them or their family members. There's a duty, prior to voting, to disclose potential conflicts whether they are real or perceived. It's general, broad language that tries to envision anything that could possibly be a conflict for Board members. My brother is a printer, so we want to make sure that my brother or his company does not bid to print one of our books."

Is a conflict of interest policy necessary in order to apply as a 501(c) 3 organization?

"The Federal Government may require a conflict of interest policy in the future, but it was not required when we applied for not-for-profit status in 1956. The Board is being proactive because it is anticipating where legislation might go so that anything the Board is doing is without reproach. The Board wants to go beyond what the laws require. As the Board sees trends evolving, it's trying to inform Areas, informa-

tion services, and the districts what they need to be aware of and why these could be potential problems for them, especially if incorporated."

One Delegate was concerned about a member's need to be presented with the document before standing or agreeing to stand for a position on the Board. In the interest of time, a Board member read parts of the document in order to give Delegates the essence of the document.

The second amendment was in Article IV—Trustees. A statement of clarification was added regarding the roles of Trustees at Large and Regional Trustees.

There is still confusion about the roles of Regional Trustees and Trustees at Large. Once elected the positions of Regional Trustee and Trustee at Large are the same. Having each Region vote for a Regional Trustee is to assure geographic representation from a broader representation of the membership.

There was no discussion regarding this amendment.

The third amendment was in Article IV—Trustees—U.S. By-Laws and in Article IV—Trustees—Canadian By-Laws.

An absence of two meetings during any 12-month period (i.e., the 12-month period beginning from the first absence) would be cause for removal. The process for removal is a two-thirds written ballot from those present at the Board meeting.

Presently there is no formal process for removal of a Trustee. The Board felt that very specific language was required regarding absences. The work of the Board is the same regardless of the number of Trustees who share the workload. If a member is absent for a period of time, it puts a heavy load on the other Trustees.

The following questions were asked and answered:

"I'm not sure the sequence of procedure that would be used, but I'm wondering if the last sentence is out of sequence. Or it might not matter at all." The Executive Director responded, "This paragraph is excessively legal and when the committee talked about it, we looked at a variety of processes. When a member is removed, lawyers often get involved. The language is sequential in terms of process. The first statement explains how the removal happens and everything else explains the process. The last statement says that the Board member has an opportunity to be heard before the Board votes."

Another Delegate asked: "If a Trustee is not doing a proper job or misses a couple of meetings because he/she is sick, why would this

Zelda R.  
*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*

result in termination? A member of the Board answered, "Another structure asked us what our process was for removal and we couldn't find anything. We'd had the same problem several times. Because we're legal in nature, it gets difficult to do the business of Al-Anon if we don't have people coming to meetings. Sometimes people didn't come because there were other things going on. We've had one or two people who have the same outside interests continually and the interest of the Board is not their main interest."

The Delegate then asked: "How discretionary is this going to be? The Board is already short-staffed." The Executive Director answered, "The process is mandatory; removal is discre-

tionary. Something like a stepdaughter having a baby might be a wonderful event, but the Board has to decide whether or not that person could have fulfilled his/her duties and then gone to visit the baby."

The final question was: "What happens in the structure if someone decides that in addition to being a member of Al-Anon, they are now a member of A.A.?" The response was: "In that instance, the person is in violation of procedures. An alcoholic cannot serve beyond the group level. The document talks about conflict of commitment, and of course, that would apply as well."

The Conference discussed these changes thoroughly and did not recall them.

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION UPDATE

**Ric B.**  
*Chairperson*

**Marsha W.**  
*Coordinator*

**Suzanne M.**  
*Co-Coordinator*

Conference members were told that the 2008 International Convention will be held July 4-6, 2008, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As of April, there were over 3,200 registrants from 16 countries. Conference members were told that a general agenda would be available on the Members' and Public Outreach Web sites by the end of April.

Delegates were also informed that for the first time, they would receive the names of members from their Area who volunteered to speak and/or lead a workshop to obtain feedback. In keeping with principles above personalities, only the titles of the workshops and big meetings will be included in the program.

Information was also given on the ordering of CDs for workshops and speakers. The taper will only sell the tapes to Convention participants during the Convention and shortly afterwards. When the window period has passed, the taper will no longer sell tapes.

Many people have gotten requests about whether or not they should have a hospitality room. Conference members were invited to participate in the hospitality area in the convention center. They were informed that the big meetings will take place at the Mellon Arena, and all daytime workshops for Al-Anon and Alateen including A.A. will be at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

Delegates were informed that all registrants would receive information to pre-register for the parade prior to the Convention. Due to time restrictions, the parade will be limited to the first 500 people who sign up stating that they will wear a costume.

Delegates received information about Pittsburgh's free shuttle service downtown within the loop of the hotels. For services beyond



the complimentary bus and subway services, Delegates were told that information could be found in the program.

Additional information should be available by the end of May or beginning of June on the Public Outreach and Members' Web site. Members were also invited to call the office with questions.

The final piece of information given to the Conference was about the service day, scheduled for July 3. When asked what would be happening at the service day, Delegates were told that the Board and staff members would put together presentations on service items and topics such as conflict resolution, Knowledge-Based Decision-Making, Alateen, public outreach, and anonymity. An expanded financial presentation would also be made available. Members were asked to pre-register and pay an additional \$10 fee for the service day.

One Delegate asked about the Conference Reunion Luncheon for Delegates and past Delegates. This closed luncheon will be held on Friday, July 4, at 11:30 a.m. Registration forms will be sent to Delegates in early May.

Following this information, Conference members were treated to a few jokes as four members built a bridge with poster panels.



## 2009 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE SITE

The 2009 World Service Conference will be held in Virginia. In searching for a site, the availability of adequate meeting space, hotel room, meal costs, and religious holidays were factors in the selection of the dates and location. The dates selected for the 2009 World Service Conference are April 18-23, 2009. The Conference will be held at the Wyndham Hotel in Virginia Beach. Conference members will have an opportunity to visit the World Service Office during this annual meeting.



Suzanne M.  
Associate Director—Conference

## POLICIES

### Policy Committee

In the past year, the Policy Committee has continued its review of the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” section of the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). Its intent was to ensure that the content of the “Policy Digest” is a clear and concise statement of Al-Anon policy—not historical background, process, or procedure. Ad hoc committees were assigned to examine specific issues and pages and to recommend revisions, when appropriate. As a result of this ongoing process, the Policy Committee brought four motions to the 2008 World Service Conference. These motions proposed revisions to pages 78, 83-84, and 85 of the “Policy Digest” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*. The Committee believed that the recommended changes would improve the clarity of specific text. (See WSC Motions #6, #7, #8, and #9 on page 74.)

For more than two years, the Policy Committee has been discussing various issues concerning our policies on anonymity. WSC Motion #6 is the result of those previous discussions. This work has raised additional questions regarding anonymity in Al-Anon newsletters and on Al-Anon Web sites. An Open Policy Committee meeting was held for Conference members to attend. Observing the Policy Committee, made up of the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and WSO Conference staff, gives Delegates an opportunity to see how the Committee discusses and deliberates policy issues. The first item on the agenda concerned anonymity in Al-Anon publications. The Policy Committee discussed these questions, some of which had been sent in by Conference members in response to the Committee’s request for input:

- In all WSO published materials, anonymity of all members, living or deceased, is maintained. While these materials are intended primarily for members (such as *The Forum*, *Area Highlights*, and *Alateen Talk*), anonymity is maintained because these materials are available to nonmembers. Many Area and local newsletters include the full names and contact information of trusted servants. Should these publications be considered as correspondence between members? In that case, the policies of anonymity within Al-Anon would apply to these publications. But since these publications may be distributed to non-members, should anonymity be maintained as if they were external documents?
- The WSO maintains anonymity of all members on its Public Outreach Web site. The Members’ Web site, however,

uses the full names of some members on some of the materials published there—for example, the Chairperson of the Board’s letter. Full names are also used on the Information File Exchange, which—like the Members’ Web site—is a restricted, password-protected site that is not available to search engines and not

Judith P.  
Chairperson, Trustee

Robert S.  
Secretary, Director of  
Communication





open to the public. Yet many Area and local newsletters, which sometimes include the full names and contact information of trusted servants, are posted on Web sites, not all of which are password-protected. Do these Web sites violate members' anonymity when they are not restricted or password-protected?

- Furthermore, members who have access to password-protected sites can cut and paste from these sites and post them on other sites with open access. Is there a way to convey to members the necessity to respect and preserve the confidentiality of all materials?
- With reverse-look up telephone directories on the Internet, publishing a member's telephone number can provide access to a member's full name and street address. Should this be a concern as well? This issue might pertain to meeting directories and event flyers, as well as newsletters.
- When an Al-Anon service organization has a bank account, does the name "Al-Anon" appear in the account name? If so, members receiving mail related to that account might have their anonymity compromised when they receive mail relating to that account.
- Members are concerned about their contact information published electronically. Would it be prudent to keep contact information out of Al-Anon publications, and only send that information as a separate attachment to the GRs, DRs, and other Officers?
- Should there be a guideline that reminds us to send electronic mailings by blind copy (BCC); to hide e-mail addresses that are linked to a Web site; or clarify other matters in electronic communications that could compromise anonymity? Do we need a guideline to clarify how to select an appropriate e-mail address that protects anonymity?
- When can photographs be taken at functions, and how can they be used? Must the photographer be restricted to showing the photographs only to people within the fellowship? Must the photo be displayed only as a print—not electronically? If permission by the individual or by the group has been given for photographs to be taken, can these photographs be displayed/posted on the Internet? Does permission to take the photograph also permit the photographer to post the

photo on the Internet? If so, must it be on a password-protected site? Legally, can Alateens who are minors give permission for their photographs to be taken?

- Do any of these questions require the development of further policies to be included in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" section of the *Service Manual*?

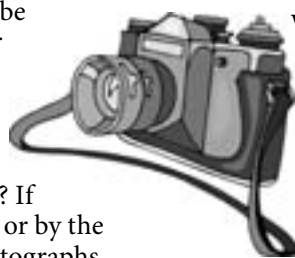
In discussing the questions, these are some of the comments Policy Committee members made:

"I was at an Assembly recently and was asked to do a workshop on anonymity. I reviewed many of our publications because there seemed to be confusion about anonymity in the fellowship and being able to communicate with each other. The conversation spun off—some members were adamant about not putting names in newsletters because the Area was using the publication for public outreach. Maybe Areas also need to have some guidance about what publications should be kept within the fellowship and what publications should really be used for outreach. I don't know how reading minutes from Assembly would be helpful to a newcomer or a professional. Part of the problem seemed to be that members were using internal communication tools in a way that wasn't necessarily appropriate."

"The first thing a publication should look at is what audience the publication is trying to reach and what message they're trying to get across. The issue here with anonymity changes as soon as you post something on an open-access Web site, because it becomes public. What's fine for a newsletter that is passed within the fellowship may not be fine for posting on the Web. Does the technology change the purpose of the publication? If that's the case, what anonymity rules apply?"

"I thought what was fairly clear yesterday during our Conference discussion on WSC Motion #6 was that most members in most Areas have not had these conversations. When the WSO launched its first Web site, which was a Public Outreach site, there was a struggle about what to post. Some staff members wanted to put things up because they saw how they could reach more members. As a result of those conversations, we decided to post the Guidelines. The membership rightly said, 'What are you doing?'

We were forced to struggle with how to get information to members—that was the origin of the Members' Web site. Does it go on the PO site or the Members' site? Messages on the PO site must be for newcomers or



to educate professionals. If it doesn't fall into one of those categories, it doesn't go there. On the Members' site, the greatest difficulty is that members don't always remember the name of their group. It's important to model anonymity at the service level—create an e-mail address that reveals a service position, but doesn't disclose a member's personal information (e.g., [ohiodelegate@yahoo.com](mailto:ohiodelegate@yahoo.com))."

"I think part of the conversation that needs to happen locally is that it's not just a matter of slapping something up as a .pdf. Once it goes up on-line, you have no idea of what can happen. The consequences are far reaching. Starting the conversation by asking, 'Who is this site for?' is very important."

"My Area established an e-mail address for the Alateen Coordinator and it is passed along to the next Coordinator. A guideline on anonymity is something to think about discussing."

"We don't think about the fact that when we put something on the Internet, it's there until someone takes it down."

"Many of our meeting lists are published online, and some of those have phone numbers. A lot of members will complain when someone calls them as a contact. It occurred to me how uninformed members are. There are newslet-

ters with personal sharings in them. I wonder if the person sharing realized that it could be copied and pasted onto another site. We already have all these guidelines that have pieces of this. We really need districts and Areas to have their own Hot Topic presentations so that the information is getting to the membership. I think we can update our guidelines and add information, but I don't think that's the only answer. We have to find ways of presenting this information so our Group Representatives can get it to the groups."

After further discussion, several Committee members summarized the discussion:

- Educate the fellowship; maintain a balanced approach
- Know the target audience of a publication
- The Traditions regarding anonymity are paths in carrying the message, not barriers—whatever we do should expand the message, not restrict it
- Consider multiple approaches, multiple media; multiple levels of communication and information
- Continue looking at the language regarding local publications in the "Policy Digest"

The discussion will continue at the next Policy Committee meeting.

## SELECTION OF TRUSTEES

### Regional Trustee Nominating Process

This is the second year of a three-year trial period for the Regional Trustee (RT) Nominating Process. (Please refer to the Regional Trustee Plan Revisions discussion on page 27 of the *2006 Conference Summary* for details). The Trustee explained the RT Nominating Process and deadlines. Each Regional Committee on Trustees consists of the current Delegates serving the Areas of the Region as well as Out-of-Region Delegates—one for Canadian RTs and three for U.S.

Each Area within those Regions can select a candidate and an alternate. The Regions that will participate in the 2009 Regional Trustee nominating process are the Canada East, Canada Central, Canada West, and US Southwest Regions.

There was additional discussion regarding how to score, rank, and the use of additional comments on the scoring sheet. The Trustee explained the importance the Nomination Committee places on those comments, especially when several candidates have similar scores.

A question was asked, "Is an Area still limited to one candidate?" The answer is, "Yes, however, an Area can also submit an Alternate."

The names of the following Out-of-Region Delegates were drawn to serve on the 2009 RCTs:

Frank R.  
Trustee

Region	Voting	Alternate
Canada East	Leona W., Panel 48 ON (N)	Jeff G., Panel 47, GA
Canada Central	Mary M., Panel 47, MN (N)	Sharon B., Panel 48, AK
Canada West	Rodney B., Panel 47, AL	Marcy M., Panel 48, IL (S)
US Southwest	Cindy H., Panel 48, AR Kerri K., Panel 48, NE Renee H., Panel 47, WI	Leslie N., Panel 47, WA Mary M., Panel 47, MN (N)



Following the selection of Out-of-Region Delegates for the RCTs, each 2009 RCT caucused to elect a Chairperson who is willing to serve and able to perform the duties within the designated time. Each RCT also elected

an Alternate Chairperson, who will perform the duties of the RCT Chairperson if he or she is unable to complete his or her duties as required. The following 2009 RCT Chairpersons and Alternates were elected:

Region	Chairperson	Alternate
Canada East	Judy C., Panel 47, MP	Marilee P., Panel 48, NF/LB
Canada Central	Joan P., Panel 46, ON (S)	Leona W., Panel 48, ON (N)
Canada West	Rose Anna J., Panel 47, AB/NT	Barbara L., Panel 48, SK
US Southwest	Tom B., Panel 47, CO	Chris M., Panel 48, NM

## Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT)

Barbara W.  
*Chairperson, Panel 46, Ohio*

Ric B.  
*Secretary, Executive Director*

Lorraine F.  
*Nominating Committee  
Chairperson, Trustee*

“My first Committee choice as a new Delegate was to serve on CCT. My current Service Sponsor was a Trustee at Large, and I wanted to learn more about this service position. CCT is a subcommittee of the Nominating Committee and its current voting membership is seven Delegates who elect a Chairperson annually. It has been an honor to serve as Chairperson, and I’ve been blessed with the shared leadership of the Chair-elect, Jeff G., Panel 47, Georgia.

“At least once a year, the CCT members independently review and evaluate candidate résumés for Trustee at Large and Executive Committee for Real Property Management. The Delegates submit their scores, rank, and comments to the CCT Chairperson, and these are tallied and sent to the Executive Director. The list of nominees is sent by the Nominating Committee to the CCT, and members have an opportunity to file an objection.

“Since the last Conference, we have participated in this process twice—first last fall and just this week with the special Trustee at Large appointment. Once the process is completed and positions have been affirmed, all résumés and score sheets are destroyed.

“Members of the CCT encourage all Delegates to seek qualified candidates for the Trustee at Large and Executive Committee for Real Property Management positions. At our annual Committee meeting, we discuss how we can get more Conference members involved and how we can be of service to the fellowship, realizing and defining our vision of the candidate’s desired characteristics and experience.” (For further information, refer to Concept Eleven, under Conference Committee on Trustees on page 197 of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*.)

## Nominating Committee

Lorraine F.  
*Chairperson, Trustee*

Ric B.  
*Secretary, Executive Director*

Before beginning the affirmation process, the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee explained how the Board came into being. “As we all know, Lois and Anne wrote to the existing groups in 1951. They asked whether they wanted to form a clearinghouse to connect the groups. They also asked whether the groups wanted to adapt the Twelve Steps and later the Twelve Traditions for their personal recovery. They considered the name A.A. Family Groups, but after consulting with A.A. found that A.A. was willing to share everything but their name. It was at this time that Lois came up with the Al-Anon Family Groups name by taking the first syllables of “Alcoholics” and “Anonymous” joined with a hyphen,

thus making a new word. So, they kept the connection with A.A. through our name, even though it remained separate.

“By 1954, Lois recognized that the Clearing House needed a legal basis to operate. While the groups, as such, ought never be organized, she understood that the Clearing House needed to provide structure or it would be of no value to the groups. It was in 1954 that she, along with Henrietta and another member, incorporated Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, Inc. A Board of Directors was created to oversee this new corporation whose goal it was to serve and connect the individuals and groups that were growing throughout the world.

“The original directors were nominated by

a Nominating Committee as provided by the original By-Laws. Often these directors were friends of Lois and Anne who attended meetings in the New York metropolitan area. As the organization grew, it applied for not-for-profit status in 1956 and amended its By-Laws in 1964 to create Trustees instead of Directors. In 1961, the first trial Conference was formed and Lois and the Directors tried to find a way to link the groups through the Conference with the Board and the organization. Ultimately, as the Concepts of Service developed, the process of the Conference affirming the nominees to fill the vacancies arose. In the mid 1960s, a plan to add regional participation on the Board was developed. The first Regional Trustee selection process began.”

The Nominating Committee Chairperson continued to explain the nominating process:

“In 1986, the Conference Committee on Trustees was created to provide input from the Conference members to the Nominating Committee as it nominated the at-Large Trustees. In 2006, the Conference gave approval to revise the Regional Trustee Plan on a three-year trial basis. Today, we will continue the tradition of affirmation, which gives the traditional concurrence of the whole Conference to the various nominees and officers at the Annual Board meeting. The Board elects those nominees who have received the traditional affirmation. As a result of this process, the voice of the fellowship, through the Conference, is heard as the Board elects these Trustees to serve the organization, AFG, Inc., and the fellowship as a whole.

“Using the new résumés, the Conference Committee on Trustees and the Nominating Committee worked conscientiously to grade the candidates and return the information to the WSO in time for the October Board meeting. With the input of these two groups, we have fielded another excellent slate of candidates to serve the fellowship as Trustee at Large and the at Large member of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM). The Nominating Committee has also proposed an excellent slate of Board Officers.

“Currently, candidates for Regional Trustee are selected by their Areas. Then the Delegates forward the selected résumés to the WSO. This year, the US Northwest, US South Central, US Southeast, and US Southwest Regional Committees on Trustees (RCT) included each Region’s Delegates and three Delegates chosen by lot. These RCTs independently reviewed résumés and an additional written question that has been added for all Trustee candidates as a part of the process during the trial period. The scores, ranking, and comments from

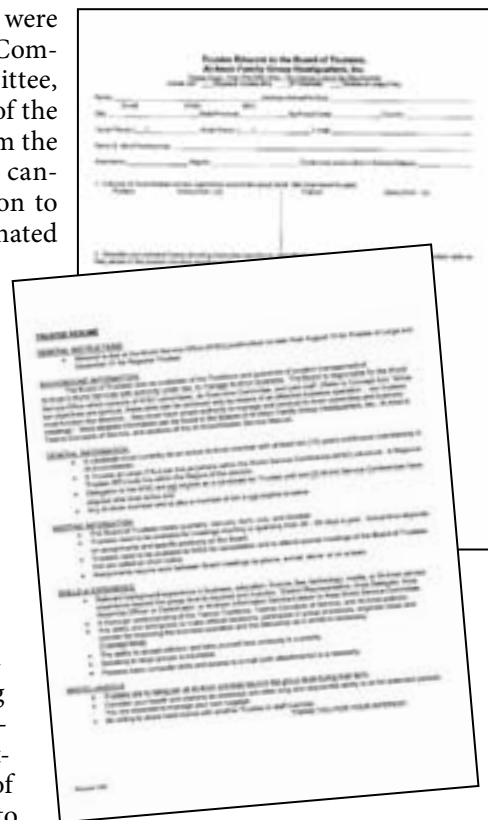
Delegates serving on these RCTs were submitted to the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee, with its own independent review of the résumés, considered the input from the RCTs, and then selected up to two candidates per Region for presentation to the Board. The Board then nominated one nominee per Region.

“These nominees will be given traditional approval by the Conference as a whole and then be elected by the Board at its Annual Meeting. Trustee at Large résumés are solicited from the fellowship after the World Service Conference. Delegates receive a letter from the Executive Director in January and an electronic copy in June. Attached to the letter are a list of openings, deadlines for submission, and copies of all the résumés including Trustee, ECRPM, and Committee résumés. Résumés are submitted to the WSO by August 15th of that year. Résumés are submitted to the CCT and Nominating Committees for review and ranking.

“The CCT Chair tallies rankings from the CCT and sends a report to WSO. At its October meeting, the Nominating Committee uses the CCT input and its own rankings to select a slate of up to six people to be invited to the January Board meeting for an introduction to the Board. Each candidate gives a ten-minute talk about their Al-Anon recovery and service experience. Using this information, the Board nominates up to three Trustee at Large candidates at its January meeting. This year the board selected only one Trustee at Large nominee.

The Executive Committee for Real Property Management was created by Motion #5 of the 1995 World Service Conference in a trial amendment to the By-Laws, Article 12. This Committee, consisting of the Treasurer, the Director of Business Services, and three at-Large members is designed to keep management of our headquarters building separate from the spiritual program of Al-Anon. Each at-Large member serves one three-year term and the Chairperson is seated at the World Service Conference with voice only.

“The nominating process is the same for Trustee at Large. Résumés are due by August 15 and sent to the CCT and Nominating Committees for review and ranking. The name of the nominee selected at the January Board meeting is to be presented to the Conference for affirmation and will be elected by the Board



at its Annual Meeting.

“Today, you are being asked to give traditional approval or affirmation for the nominees for Trustee at Large, Regional Trustee, the at-Large member of the ECRPM, and the Board Officers. Each Conference member has the responsibility to ask questions or state any facts relevant to the candidacy of the person

under consideration. Affirmation under the right of decision requires that each of us take our responsibility seriously. The fact that one is nominated is not the sole reason for affirmation. Likewise, the By-Laws of the corporation articulate the right of decision given to the Board to elect or not elect an affirmed nominee.”

The following Trustees and Board Officers were affirmed by the 2008 WSC:

**Trustee at Large:**

Mary Ann R., 2nd three-year term

**Regional Trustees:**

Penny R., US Northwest, 1st three-year term

Doris W., US South Central, 2nd three-year term

Victoria L., US Southeast, 1st three-year term

**Board Officers:**

Mary Ann R., Chairperson

Doreen D., Vice Chairperson

Frank R., Treasurer

**2008 Executive Committee for Real Property Management:**

Linda B., three-year term

**The Board announced Executive Committee appointments for 2008-2009:**

Judith P., 1st one-year term, Chairperson

Zelda R., 1st one-year term

Julie F., 3rd one-year term

Robert S., WSO staff, 1<sup>st</sup> year of two-year term

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**The Board announced Annette T., Chairperson, ECRPM**

At its Annual Meeting, the Board of Trustees selected for one-year appointments Bev A., Vicki H., and Laurie K. to fill Trustee at Large openings. It also selected Karen R. to fill the US Southwest Regional Trustee opening. These appointees must go through the election process again beginning in August 2008, and if selected, will need to be affirmed by the Conference in 2009 before they can be elected at the Board's 2009 Annual Meeting.

## ALATEEN TRADITIONS/CHARTER DISCUSSION

At the 2007 World Service Conference, the Alateen Traditions became Conference approved. At that Conference, there were requests to give Alateen Traditions the same status as Al-Anon's Legacies. Prior to this year's Conference, Delegates received a copy of the current Charter and proposed changes to the Charter that would protect the Alateen Traditions in the same way that the Al-Anon Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are protected. (See Conference Charter section 3d, e, and f on page 153 of the *Manual*.)

Using the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making model, proposed changes were reviewed and discussed. Views supporting and resisting the proposed changes to the Charter were expressed. Some members agreed that though the intentions were good, changing certain sections of the Charter would be a contradiction and a violation of the Charter itself. Others felt that the proposed changes were only adding additional protection, not weakening the Charter and therefore would be acceptable. Many offered suggestions as to what changes could be made to the proposed text to make these objectives clearer.

After a discussion, the Conference members decided to table the discussion to allow time for reflection before a decision was made. During that time, one Delegate, using notes he had compiled from the previous comments, proposed a new version. This new text was distributed to all Conference members.

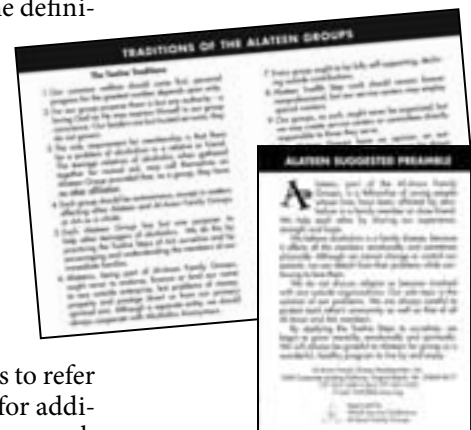
At this point, Conference members were still concerned about the specific wording. Members wanted to make sure that the wording was as clear as possible in regards to the definition of groups; the inclusion of Alateen in Al-Anon; and the distinction between Al-Anon and Alateen Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. The Delegate's proposed changes would allow the Conference to change portions of the descriptive text of the Charter if necessary, but the integrity of the Legacies could not be changed without written agreement of three-quarters of the Al-Anon groups.

The consensus of the Conference was to refer the text back to the Board of Trustees for additional discussion and revision rather than rush a decision.

**Zelda R.**  
*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*

**Doris W.**  
*Chairperson, Alateen Advisory Committee*

**Mary Lou M.**  
*Associate Director Group Services—Alateen and Special Needs*



## BUILD BRIDGES— ENERGIZING OUR SPIRITUAL QUEST

### Part 1

The Chairperson of the Board framed the discussion by saying, “We can learn from our past as we look at the very first World Service Conference in 1961 to see the connection of that World Service Conference to the fellowship. The active voice and effective group conscience of Al-Anon was heard at the first Conference as it is still heard at each annual meeting of elected Delegates from the Areas, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and World Service Office Conference staff. To help Al-Anon Family Groups continue to strengthen, renew, and grow in our changing world we need vision, conviction, and flexibility. These are some of the same leadership skills that Bill W. wrote about in 1959 in his ‘Leadership’ essay. Before I was a member of Al-Anon Family Groups, I had no connection to our fellow members and was trapped in my own negativity and failure. My spiritual quest has been enhanced with my involvement in service at the group, district, Area, and world level.

“When WSC members build bridges to the fellowship by expanding, renewing, and strengthening our groups, districts, and Areas, those people affected by someone else’s drinking will find help and recovery in every community. Imagine for a moment how this can be done in your Area. What if every Area invited a Trustee or WSO staff member to visit the Assembly to strengthen the connection? What if every Area developed goals and worked toward fulfilling them, every Coordinator placed an exciting article in the Area newsletter, and every workshop made service meaningful and attractive? Would this not strengthen, encourage, and excite longtime and new members?

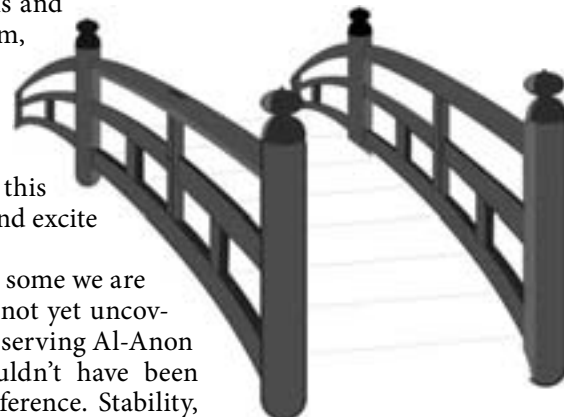
“We all have special skills, some we are aware of and some we have not yet uncovered. We are all dedicated to serving Al-Anon Family Groups, or we wouldn’t have been elected to serve at this Conference. Stability,

**Zelda R.**  
*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*

**Mary G.**  
*Conference Chairperson*

**Mary Ann R.**  
*Trustee*

**Ric B.**  
*Executive Director*





compromise, foresight, tolerance, and responsibility are all leadership skills we each have in varying degrees. Some we are better at than others, and that is all right, my weaknesses may be your strengths. We can learn from each other, transfer knowledge, experience, strength, and hope as we have done ever since we entered the doors of Al-Anon.

“Every Al-Anon and Alateen group has the ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services as expressed in Concept One. At every level of service: problems are discussed, information is exchanged, and issues of concern are brought up—all with the purpose of informing and unifying the groups. This continuous chain of communication between the groups, districts, Areas, WSC, and the World Service Office strengthens the groups and members. This communication is broken when a group does not have a representative, thus its members are denied a voice. It is through the discussions and deliberations at the WSC that the active voice and effective group conscience of Al-Anon is heard on world service matters. To Build Bridges and Energize Our Spiritual Quest, ‘How can we, as WSC members, expand, renew, and strengthen our connections with the fellowship?’”

Following the Chairperson of the Board’s introduction, Conference members broke up into small groups to discuss the question. Afterwards, roving microphones traveled throughout the room to capture the three best ideas from each group about how to expand, renew, and strengthen our connections with the fellowship:

- Ask WSO staff and Trustees to come to Assemblies and conventions to tell their personal stories and present workshops
- Set up conference calls for Area meetings
- Ask Area Officers to call District Representatives (DRs), so the DRs can pass on the information
- Have study groups on the *Service Manual*
- Have the Delegate or an Area Officer visit districts and groups in order to encourage or increase communication
- Model communication skills
- Invite newcomers
- Review crucial points of the AWSC meeting, so that attendees have a list to take back to their groups
- Create a new tab on Information File Exchange to link to workshops
- Accept that we may need to crumble in order to rebuild
- Demonstrate the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process for an informed group conscience
- Create member-to-member connections by interacting on a personal level
- Visit districts, AISs, and groups; bring the AISs into Area work
- Identify the program basics using Conference Approved Literature, the *Service Manual*, and *Groups at Work* starting where members are and giving them additional skills and tools
- Make use of Past Delegates; provide necessary training for current officers
- Share the Conference experience with members

## Part 2

Mary Ann R.  
Trustee

The Trustee started the discussion by encouraging Conference members to utilize technology and imagine ways that we can use the skills and talents of Conference members and energize their spiritual growth.

“How do we define talent? The dictionary tells us that ‘talent’ is a natural endowment, such as a creative or artistic ability. For example, there are Trustee members who, when presented with a topic, can sit down and write a short skit with a cast of characters and ideas for props. Given an issue to present for discussion, they automatically visualize a skit. That ability totally amazes me!

“While talent comes to us in the form of a gift, skills are learned. Skills can be put into two categories: technical and interpersonal. Technical skills may require special techniques

that can be developed by learning to use one’s hands or knowledge effectively. As with technical skills, interpersonal skills can also be learned and/or developed. I have an Al-Anon friend raised in an alcoholic home who exudes warmth and love whenever she walks into a room. She is a natural when it comes to interpersonal skills. I was not raised in an alcoholic home, but prior to Al-Anon was often ill at ease with people. Most of my interpersonal skills were acquired.

“When I entered the doors of Al-Anon, I was emotionally and spiritually bankrupt. I lacked confidence and was unable to identify any positive attributes in myself. Al-Anon members showed me how to use the tools of the program to walk over that bridge of despair and discover the meaning of spirituality. All I

had to do was be willing to ask for help, have the desire to improve my life, and learn to find a way to develop the skills I sought. There was a time when I could not speak in front of a few people—much less a large audience.”

The Trustee continued the introduction by showing a PowerPoint slide presentation she created to better carry the message of recovery to others. She said, “As Trustees we are encouraged to use visual aids when appropriate such as PowerPoint presentations. Several years ago at a Board development session, the Chairperson of the Board gave a demonstration on how to build a simple PowerPoint presentation. I didn’t think I had the ability to put a slide show together, but made up my mind to learn—building bridges. . . .

“ . . . Our spiritual quest is ongoing and as we learn to define our own spiritually in this wonderful Al-Anon program we can effectively carry the message that will help to unite people worldwide.

“In summary, I challenge you to think about the skills and talents that you have already developed through service in the fellowship and those that you would like to develop to grow spiritually.”

Conference members responded to the following question: “Considering today’s technology and imagination for the future, how can we more effectively use the skills and talents of our WSC members to energize their spiritual growth?”

“I have been able to simplify presentations and eliminate some of the ‘yawn’ factor. I work on being a listener so I understand where I can be of service.”

“I’ve learned to see the good in people. I’d like to learn to speak at the microphone without feeling like I’m not making sense.”

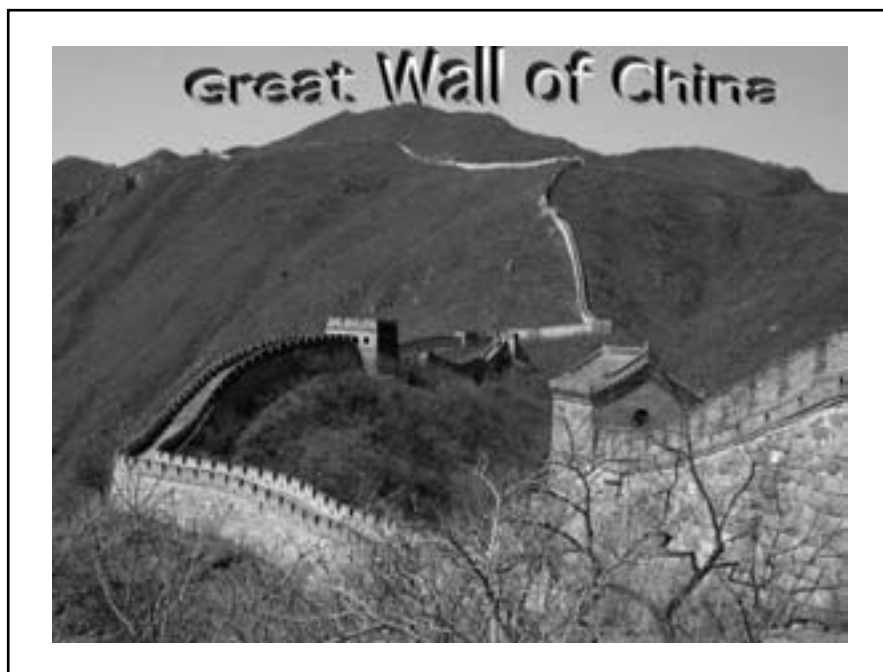
“The one skill I attribute to Al-Anon is public speaking. It was significant in my job growth as well.”

“In my corporate career, I learned a lot about public speaking, but in Al-Anon I learned how to encourage people to serve. I’d like to develop a deeper understanding of myself and others, a closer connection with Higher Power, and a more in-depth knowledge of the Legacies.”

“I have a talent to be dynamic and lively. I have a very creative mind, so I shouldn’t be scared to explore it to the fullest.”

“I’ve learned to delegate and share responsibilities.”

“I learned how to filter through all the stuff and get to the bottom line so I can organize. I’d



like to continue learning about handling conflict and adversity, which I think is a process; it doesn’t just happen overnight.”

“I learned to listen and let others finish what they want to say, knowing that I can’t solve their problems. One of the things I need to work on is not to take things personally.”

“What I’ve learned is that I get to practice in the fellowship what I do in my professional life—work with other people and recognize that they’re not necessarily where I want them to be, but understand that they will get there; finding acceptance is difficult.”

“I too learned PowerPoint from an Al-Anon friend. One of the best things I’ve learned is to express myself and to give my opinion. I’d like to learn to expand my use of multimedia. The other thing I want to do is reach out and develop diverse relationships. I know a little Spanish and a little French, but not enough to get by.”

“When I speak, I ‘Keep It Simple,’ get to the point, and then be quiet.”

“I’ve learned how to solve problems with humor. What I’d like to learn to do is to think bigger and have an abundant outlook.”

“The Conference gave me enthusiasm. My Area didn’t necessarily agree with my ideas, but they did listen. I’d like to learn to be a better communicator.”

“One of the things I’ve learned to do is facilitate meetings. I’d like to learn computer animation.”

...encouraged to use visual aids when appropriate such as PowerPoint presentations.

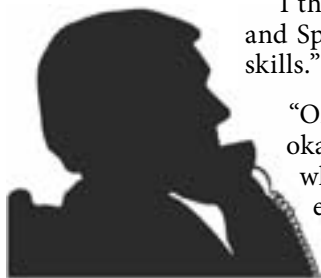
"I think one of my talents is being playful. We wrote an Al-Anon police skit that's been used a lot. One of the things I need to work on is my use of newer technology. I still own eight-track tapes, I can barely operate my digital camera, and I don't own a cell phone."

"I've gained the ability to give presentations. Sometimes we get so caught up in technology—we must always keep in mind that the message is more important than how it's delivered."

"I've learned interpersonal skills—communicating with and listening to others. I'd like to improve my skills by having more trust letting go of things, allowing other people do some things too."

"For me, I've learned to develop a backbone and stand confidently before my Assembly. I have the ability to learn, laugh, and have fun."

"I think I can communicate well in English and Spanish. I'd like to develop my technical skills."



"One of the things I've learned is to be okay with a lack of resolution. I was one who thought everything had to be settled, even if we talked about it to death. One of the things I want to get better at is being able to embrace cultural differences, and I think that's the whole concept of the theme of this Conference. I have an innate ability to be enthusiastic, but just because someone is good at something doesn't mean he/she should do it."

"I've learned to develop positive thinking with an open mind to take a risk. I'd like to retain literature content better—it's always, 'I read it somewhere but I don't know where.'"

Delegates summarized what they heard during the session and offered their own comments:

"What I heard was a whole ton of honesty from everybody, a lack of fear when expressing honestly to a large group, and a real desire to be able to improve and go further."

"I heard that we know what we have and we know what we don't have. My questions are: 'When am I going to act on what I don't have? When am I going to take the action?'"

"I also heard that a lot of us have something but we don't always know how to do something. One member asks workshop participants to submit whatever they have done at the end of the workshop and she mails it back to them in six months. This way they can see where they were six months ago and if there's any change. You might want to mail yourself a letter."

"One thing I've learned from the Conference is to take notes and not write every word down. What I saw here this morning is that there are a lot of us who know a lot and a lot of us who don't. We're willing to admit it, and that's a skill in and of itself. This has been an awareness for us. It's not easy to sit and talk about yourself and say this is what I'm good at and this is what I need to improve."

## CHOSEN AGENDA ITEMS

### Chosen Agenda Items Process

Suzanne M.  
Associate Director of Membership  
Outreach—Conference

The purpose of the Chosen Agenda Items sessions is to provide time on the agenda for the Conference as a whole to discuss topics that are general in nature and pertain to Al-Anon worldwide. Prior to this year's World Service Conference (WSC), the Conference Leadership Team invited Conference members to submit such topics, which Conference members would like to discuss during the WSC.

This year, the Conference Leadership Team wanted to reinvigorate the discussions, aligning them with what our pioneers originally envisioned, and asked for the Conference members' help to identify topics, rather than questions, that would stimulate in-depth discussions and promote shared leadership. In

addition, the Conference Leadership Team wanted one of the topics for discussion to be on "The future of Chosen Agenda Items."

Before the Conference, the submitted topics were combined into a single document and sent back to the members. From this list, each person was asked to select two topics for one-hour discussions. The votes were tallied, and the two topics receiving the most votes were placed on the agenda. Two Conference members were each given a topic and invited to give a brief presentation, followed by open discussion. At the Conference, members voted for an additional topic for a half-hour open discussion session. The remaining topics were not discussed at this year's Conference.

## Open Discussions and Presentations

### Chosen Agenda Item # 1

#### Creating and maintaining healthy groups focused on our spiritual principles and free from program dilution

Rick P., the Panel 46 Delegate from Manitoba, introduced the topic of program dilution:

"I think it is safe to say that the majority of us believe that our membership needs to diversify so as to include all those who suffer from a loved one's disease of alcoholism. Those who are searching for relief are now younger, better educated, communicate with each other differently, and are less patient with their circumstances. However, I think that we know that in order to survive, our fellowship must maintain our singleness of purpose. We can't concentrate on every problem of addiction, or we will lose our focus.

"We know through our past conversations that there are those who continue to bring outside influences into our groups, districts, and Areas. This is an opportunity to apply our Al-Anon principles to a serious problem. The principles of unconditional love, tolerance, courage, faith, humility, acceptance, and patience can help us in our spiritual quest to have Al-Anon and Alateen available to all those who need our fellowship.

"Can you suggest some other Al-Anon principles that could be used? How do we do this? I am reminded of a little story on page 25 of *When I Got Busy, I Got Better* (P-78). It says, 'My grandfather, an avid gardener, used to tell a joke about a man showing a visitor through his garden. "Isn't it wonderful," exclaimed the guest, "what miracles God can work in a garden!" The gardener replied, "I just wish you'd seen it when God had it all to himself."

"I see our fellowship as our 'garden.' At one time it was quite small and sheltered. Our pioneers were able to keep it up with a few volunteers. However, through their hard work and dedication, our 'garden' has become quite large. It now requires quite a few caring hands to maintain it, nurture it, and keep it bearing sustenance for all those who require it.

"Each of us has to help with the upkeep. It is a full time job. We have to encourage others to want to become loyal 'gardeners.' As all gardeners know, weeds and invasive plants may try to take over our 'garden.' Even though these plants may be beautiful in their own place, if they are not gently removed from our 'garden,' they may destroy it. Informed participation may be one of the principles that help us to keep our 'garden' producing bountiful results.

"Tradition One reminds me that the principle of humility allows us to put the common good of all those who suffer from the disease of alcoholism in a loved one ahead of our own personal agendas. When one group chooses to be inconsistent with the suggestions of this Tradition, all of Al-Anon may be affected negatively.

"Tradition Four reminds me that the principle of responsibility suggests I do all that I can to encourage those I come in contact with to see how straying from our primary purpose may adversely affect our fellowship.

"Concept One, 'The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.' Ultimate authority is balanced by responsibility and trust—responsibility to become informed so as to be able to come to an informed group conscience and trust that the representatives we choose will be encouraged and allowed to inform us.

"Each of us here belongs to at least one Al-Anon Family Group. It's a good place for me to continue to encourage the use of the principles, as well as all of our Al-Anon/Alateen Traditions and Concepts. We know that there are some groups and districts that stray from our suggested guidelines. There are those individuals who choose to not follow Al-Anon Traditions and Concepts, whether from lack of knowledge or a personal agenda. There is and has been an ongoing conversation regarding unhealthy forms of sponsorship. There will always be instances where our primary purpose is challenged.

"I believe there is a balance required from what I have often done—that is between burying my head in the sand and hoping it will go away (denial) or worrying that the 'sky may be falling' (fear of anything new). We can choose to do nothing, but it has been my experience that when I do nothing, something does happen. I slide backward in my recovery.



"I see our fellowship as our 'garden.'..."





"I need to have a balanced approach to keep my corner of the 'garden' beautiful and life-sustaining. I believe I can keep myself informed; by being familiar with the Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature and studying the Al-Anon Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. Using the principles of tolerance and courtesy in my conversations and keeping an open mind helps me stay in balance and keep those I come in contact with informed about the Al-Anon Family Groups' spiritual quest.

"I believe that our links of service can be utilized to create and maintain a bridge between all of our service arms. The key requirement is participation at all levels, with lanes going in both directions. Without active participation at all levels, there may only be a narrow, hard-to-navigate path toward our fellowship's spiritual quest. Encouraging everyone in each of our Areas by performing our specific duties as Delegates will help to energize what I believe is Al-Anon Family Groups' spiritual quest—to have a loving, supportive fellowship available to all who suffer from the effects of loving someone with the disease of alcoholism. It becomes a spiritual quest when a loving Higher Power is the foundation of our personal, group, district, Area, and worldwide recovery journey.

"Just as we use new tools and technologies in our gardens at home, these are also available to us in our 'fellowship garden.' When we adapt what is new, balanced by our primary purpose, it is possible to grow and prosper."

The Conference Chairperson guided the open discussion that followed with three questions. Her first question was: "What do we know about our fellowship's needs, wants, and preferences that are relevant to this discussion?"

One member commented, "There are some who want Al-Anon to be all things at all times. There are other people who want the exact opposite—they want to limit who the fellowship is for. I'm struggling not to be a policeman." Another said, "Newcomers want specifics. They want to be taught how to make another person sober. As we've grown in Al-Anon, we know that's not how it works, but we have to get people in and help them to learn that. In our Area, a lot of newcomer groups are sponsored by the districts."

The next question asked by the Conference Chairperson was: "What do we know about the capacity (resources) and strategic position of our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion? What do you know about creating and maintaining healthy groups?"

Members responded:

"A fundamental resource for us is a strong focus on sponsorship where understanding of the principles of our program is shared. It's not what I want them to know, but what's fundamental to know."

"I think that this is part of building bridges. My belief is to stick strongly to the Concepts, Traditions, and Steps as well. I need to broaden my outlook because younger people are coming in. I need to work at keeping my Al-Anon program pure, but I need to be open to seeing it from their perspective. When I came in, there were older members and they let me go on and on. As a seasoned member, I have to work at tolerance. 'Keep Coming Back' is a great bridge builder.

"You can use Al-Anon in your life any way you want and turn the meeting conversation back to the Steps, Traditions, etc. to allow people to stay long enough to decide how they could pursue their own spiritual quest."

"If you ask any group they will say they are healthy, but some other group isn't. We all want others to come to the Al-Anon that made us healthy. There is a tendency to become rigid in a program that urges flexibility."

The final discussion question was: "What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion/decision?"

Here are some of the responses:

"We have an Al-Anon Information Service that has dual members on the Board, but it would never happen at our Area Assembly. We need to use our *Manual* to find answers. Members are leaving pyramid sponsor groups in our Area because we're sharing information like the *Sponsorship* bookmark (M-78)."

"One group had a dual member who had literally started the group; everyone else in the group was inexperienced. The Group Representative hadn't yet learned the Al-Anon principles. So inexperienced people are taking leadership positions, and they don't know how to deal with dominating dual members."

"When a newcomer comes in my meeting, I give them a safety pin—this is to remind them they're in a safe place."

“The last two Membership surveys show that we grew from a fellowship primarily female averaging 51 years old into one of still primarily female but now 55 years old. How do we continue to foster new groups in spite of declining numbers and how do we ensure the purity of our Al-Anon program, especially with younger members? Age doesn’t discriminate against need for this program. Are we doing enough public outreach?”

“We’re all leaders. It’s my job to educate and I do that by example.”

“Twenty-three hours a day we are out in the real world and we bring that world with us when we come into a meeting. One of the biggest realities is that 48 percent of all alcoholics are also drug addicted. It has to affect newcomers. Alcohol is a drug; it’s a wet drug, but it’s still a drug. The reality of what’s happening in the outside world is something we have to address.”

“Are we going to hand-pick new members? No. The courts are sending us all kinds of people. We cannot choose; we just have to be welcoming. It goes back to education. We have a responsibility—it has to begin with us.”

“One of the things we have going on is that all of the sudden a couple of people join in when someone else is reading Concept Four. A new person read the Concept and all these voices jumped in. It didn’t stop and it became a

power struggle. No one addressed it and when we did a group inventory, the group decided to continue that practice. When it was my turn, I said I wanted to say it by myself. I explained that it was intrusive to have others chime in.”

“Last year, I went home energized and feeling positive and hopeful, but what I presented in my presentation was conflict resolution. I knew that we had groups struggling with sponsorship issues, members serving for years and years in the same position, and Group Representatives who were not attending Assembly. They didn’t report the problems—and then something very positive happened. Changes have been made in groups using conflict resolution and Knowledge-Based Decision-Making.

“I feel that creating and maintaining a healthy group involves the use of our rich literature. If we are consistent in the use of our literature, everything will smooth itself out.”

“I’ve noticed things that I never would’ve known before. I try to educate without being the Al-Anon police. The first group I belonged to kicked me out because I went because of my daughter’s bulimia. Shortly thereafter she was diagnosed with alcoholism and I went back. That rigid meeting no longer exists today. I suggest to newcomers that they refer to their situation as alcoholism. I like to welcome newcomers. One of the best things I do is give them a hug.”

## Chosen Agenda Item No. 2

### Are we adequately preparing our future trusted servants for their positions?

This discussion was introduced by Barbara M., the Panel 46 Delegate from Rhode Island:

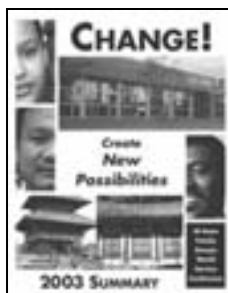
“The only preparation I had for what I was expected to do at my very first Conference was what I had read and a little about what I experienced at my Regional Delegate’s meeting. Perhaps it’s my imagination, but the minute I became Delegate our Past Delegate moved about an hour away, my Service Sponsor needed to take a break, and there was no other Past Delegate in sight.

“That first year was spent defining my role. Even with the *Service Manual* and guidelines, I had little preparation for what was ahead for me and my Area. We had been functioning very ‘differently’ for years. We had a tremendous job ahead, and I was feeling very alone.

“I spent a lot of time asking questions and observing at that first Conference (and still do). Luckily an orientation for new Delegates was held. That was very helpful for explaining what we would see and hear during the Con-

ference. The time spent explaining the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making model and the exercises that clarified the roles of Conference members helped me clear my thoughts on what a Delegate really does at Conference. Lights went on, and I got the affirmation I needed. Most people can’t learn by reading manuals or using guidelines without having some experience to compare it to. I used that experience to communicate back to my Area what we do at Conference. We created ‘role-defining’ breakout sessions at our first full Assembly. It became clear while members shared the roles defined in the *Service Manual* that members’ expectations and personal definitions were different. Additionally, we wrote an article in our newsletter to help share this wealth, too.

“Truly the interpersonal relationships I have established with fellow Conference members have served me well during my term. My panel has given me the best gift of all, their friendship and camaraderie. I recall a few phone



calls I had made to my panel peers after a really cruddy time in my life. Even when we only exchanged voice messages, my day would end with an 'I love you' from a fellow Delegate. Those are the treasures—itty bitty miracles—of working with others that our service positions aren't stressing enough. Members who have never experienced the bonds we feel when we work together for the common good of our fellowship can't fully comprehend what we, who participate, naturally know. Our trusted servants' voices are not heard by the large masses of members we wish to attract.

"Workshops held during Conference are helpful, but taking some of that material back to my Area was difficult. There are still times that the Area World Service Committee or Assembly members in my Area are not ready to hear in-depth Conference decisions. It has been my experience that Areas and members are sometimes not as informed about the Traditions and Concepts when a position is filled. Education on our Legacies and experience in using these tools to work together can be challenging.

"A template would have been helpful for me to put together a workshop or skit, or maybe even the name of a past or present trusted servant who is good at doing that sort of activity. I spent a lot of time researching problems, reaching for strategies, and praying to my Higher Power every time I introduced more material to the Area. After the fact, I discovered that other Delegates do similar things to help release material in their Areas.

"As I finish up my term this year, I am amazed after reading back issues of the *Conference Summary* and *Area Highlights* that we have been consistently experiencing the same problems over and over for years. Yes, change and improvements have occurred, but are they fast enough to keep up with a growing population? And do we study the impact of the changes we do make? Are they sustained, successful, and maintained?

"For example, for years we have been hearing about dual members wanting to serve above the group level, or we're hearing how our members don't always appreciate Conference decisions and misuse our Fourth Tradition. Why are we not looking at the trends and problem-solving one piece at a time? We meet once a year as a large body, but is that really enough? Why do we release our experienced, trained trusted servants and not use their talents? I have attended three Regional Delegates' meetings and feel like a child in a large toy store when I see the wealth of knowledge, experience, strength, and recovery in that room. Our past trusted servants, respectfully speaking, are our best kept

reserve. We could tap into the eager, willing members to keep our membership growing.

"I am saddened to think that once I leave here this year, all of the corporate knowledge that my panel has attained will be a memory, and this team will never work together again. I wonder why we allow that to happen. In my professional career I have studied methodologies, implemented mathematical expressions, and created some pretty interesting products. I believe that for every event, process, or activity that is performed, you can apply an 80/20 rule. Twenty percent of something always will be responsible for 80 percent of the results. Twenty percent of our members are leading 80 percent of the membership.

"I see that fitting very nicely into the Al-Anon membership. Most of our members aren't studying our three Legacies because they see us focus mostly on the Steps. For example, consider our Conference Approved Literature. There are more stories focused on the Steps than on the Traditions and Concepts. Sharings on the growth we get from service work are lacking. Perhaps a daily inspirational reader focusing more on all three Legacies together would be helpful. I'd be willing to bet our past Trusted Servants are overfilled with stories of gratitude, humility, spiritual awakenings, and many wonderful growing opportunities and lessons we could all benefit from.

"With all the enthusiasm and vision that we all leave here with, wouldn't it be great to capture that in our writings, and put it out for the world to see! The excitement and exuberance I experience while attending Conference isn't something I can easily share back home. I have discovered my enthusiasm and vision aren't always received as I would like.

"I discovered another one of those growth opportunities the day I watched my Area gather for its very first Assembly. It dawned on me as the attendees all left for the day that many did not understand what we had accomplished together. They didn't get it—but you all did. I couldn't wait to share this humbling, emotional feeling with someone, and guess where I turned? I turned to my trusted servants past and present. You all gave me the confidence and love that only comes from our fellowship. My biggest reward from this whole experience is that when I am given the responsibility to lead a group, workshop, or project, I need to use energy, enthusiasm, and empathy. When they are working together, people listen.

"So, in the spirit of our Conference theme and following along with a tiny bit of what my real life is like, I would like us to provide vision, insight, and an initial foundation by using our experience, strength, and hope to

plan and construct a bridge that will support our future leaders.

“Let’s start that process and split that bedrock between our history and future in half. Both pieces are needed and both need to have solid footings to build our future. So grab a tool, hold on to your hats, and let’s share our ideas.”

The first question the Conference considered was: “What do we know about our fellowship’s needs, wants, and preferences that are relevant to this discussion?”

#### **Conference member responses included:**

“You are elected or appointed to a position and finally by the end of your three-year term you know what you’re doing. We want our trusted servants to be prepared. My Area handed out empty notebooks to the Delegate, Alternate Delegate, etc., so they could fill those notebooks with information that would help future trusted servants. Communication is critical. When I became Delegate, I did get some information from my predecessors. If I have questions, I don’t hesitate to call and ask about specifics.”

“There are two things that are critical and basic: we need to do a better job with beginners’ packets and beginners’ training—talk about sponsorship right from beginning; I think it might be helpful to create a PowerPoint to standardize things; use Past Delegates—we have responsibility as Past Delegates not to act as elitist, to be a help not a hindrance, and to be willing to serve on ad hocs or task forces.”

“In my Area, it’s become almost tradition that after being Delegate, you’re the Area Chair. I was on a committee that looked at our job descriptions and we changed every one of them. If we feel that you need computer access, that’s in the job description. If you need to be certified Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service, it’s in the job description. Our Area Chair has job descriptions available at the Assembly before elections.”

“We have job descriptions that we post in the newsletter in first issue of the year. That helps. When I came in, people couldn’t wait to finish their jobs and that left the new people in service with no one to help. We decided to change that by mentoring them. We created enthusiasm in service.”

“Before every Assembly, we do a half-hour orientation for Group Representatives, usually presented by the Alternate Delegate. After every election Assembly, we have a transition meeting for GRs, DRs, Coordinators, and Officers. We pass on a notebook of what has happened,

what has worked, and what has not worked. It has helped our Area learn.”

“We have contingency plans. We have to let people know that it’s okay to resign. One Coordinator faded away and we didn’t really know what to do about it. We decided we needed a plan on how to replace someone who’s not doing the job.”

Following these comments, the Conference members discussed the question, “What do we know about the ‘capacity’ (resources) and ‘strategic position’ of our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion/decision?”

“One of the problems we have is the job description of Delegate—it’s scaring people. I started to look at our Policy Manual. I attend more Steering Committee meetings. I’m sitting on boards for our conference and various committees. Just knowing that the Delegate might have only one free weekend a month is scaring a lot of people. We need to look at whether we are using our resources adequately. Our Area has plenty of Past Delegates who are willing to serve.”

“We’ve discovered recently that a lot of people aren’t prepared as they used to be and we have guidelines. We’re feeling as if they do need training. I was giving a report and they weren’t getting it. One of the things we do before the elections is to have all Officers and Coordinators talk about their jobs. Those who plan to run introduce themselves and give a brief résumé. We feel very strongly that no person should be excluded from service work because they don’t have a computer. If they don’t have a computer, we buy them one.”

“We never have enough volunteers; we have a lot of people in the fellowship and not enough volunteers. Some of that I attribute to our fast-paced lifestyle. One of the resources we have is our enthusiasm.”

“What I’m thinking is more on the human side. The Alternate Delegate and I are like day and night. It’s important that she knows it’s okay to be different. Diversity is good. Our differences are our best assets.”

“What this has me thinking of is a story told by a longtime member: ‘Your group needs a GR. This new person says, “What does a GR do?” You say, “Not much of anything,” and that’s what they do.’ Service training and leadership training is something the Board is working on under the theme Support and Strengthen Our Structure. The Board is always willing to go to an Area; all the Area has to do is invite some-



one. We have plenty of resources if we're willing to reach out for them."

"We have nine active Past Delegates. We always present at least one of the WSC skits and workshops at Assembly. We take another skit or workshop to the districts. We get active participation. We're a small Area, but our members do respond when we ask for participation. The important thing is that we're able to ask."

"My thought was to have workshops at Regional Service Seminars on holding a service position. I'm trying to implement having these workshops at roundups."

"Somehow we have to give a standard message and then have some measurement that Areas are doing these things. We need interactive tools, like webinars, conference calls, or workshops to reinforce the message"

"At the Area World Service Committee, I don't get much enthusiasm. At Assembly, I get the enthusiasm. I had asked the WSO if a Trustee could come to our Area. The Trustee came and the enthusiasm was phenomenal. Our Area needs all the education and communication we can get, it doesn't have to be presented by the Delegate."

### Chosen Agenda Items No. 3

#### **How can the Al-Anon/Alateen message reach families of active A.A. members and attract those family members to our Al-Anon/Alateen meetings?**

Here are some thoughts from the Conference members about this topic:

"I was so excited to see this topic because my district has been asking this very question. We have our meetings in same building as A.A. We do things with them, but we're not getting newcomer spouses. In my family, I have sons and a spouse in the program and I'm the only one in Al-Anon. I'm so open to any ideas."

"When our Al-Anon Information Service had to move, A.A. said they had room so we moved in with them. We still hear A.A. members say, 'I can't stand Al-Anons.' I don't know why this is, but we still have educating to do. I just got another letter from a dual member who wants to serve. I had to say, 'You can't, but as an A.A. member, you can serve in another way by letting your family and friends know about us.'"

"During the recent trip to India, some members wanted to know how to better cooperate with A.A. Others stated that A.A. members are afraid that if their spouses get involved in Al-Anon, they'll leave them. During the trip, there were open Al-Anon public awareness meetings with A.A. participation in four of the six cities."

"Trust is a very fragile thing. All it takes is one hurt feeling, one remark, or one misunderstanding and you've lost your whole bridge. In my particular district, I went to the A.A. Intergroup and asked if we could put up an Al-Anon poster. They referred me to a committee that referred me to another committee that referred me to yet another committee. I persisted, and in one Intergroup a person who works there quietly keeps a stack of posters and meeting lists. We're the ones who know

that alcoholism is a family disease. I'm not sure A.A. looks at it that way."

"My husband is in A.A. and loves to go on Twelfth Step calls. He's now unable to drive. When he gets a Twelfth Step call, I get to drive him. If there's a family member inside, I go into the home with my husband and bring those people to our meetings from the beginning. I don't know that it's done a thing for those people, but I have gained so much from that. When my husband and I share our story, he never fails to say that he invites me to open A.A. meetings with him."

"Because of our programs, we're able to walk hand-in-hand. A.A.s love to eat and they love desserts. I'm invited to join them in travel and I can share my program that way. It's not uncommon to go to dinner with some of his friends and hear the same feelings. When we travel on vacation, it's much better when we've got A.A. and Al-Anon meetings in the same place."

"We have an annual sharing day in my particular county and they treat Al-Anon members like second-class citizens. I got more involved and I started to speak to them one-on-one. They wanted to know why Al-Anon didn't participate—it was because we weren't welcomed. We can't change them so we have



to let them go. They think we're going to break up their marriages. We just have to break that thinking. Al-Anon brings people together."

"We have a nice relationship with A.A., and they invite us. I think, 'When was the last time I accepted that invitation?' Dual members can't serve as GR, but they can serve as an ambassador."

"It's important for us to be visible, to build a bridge with A.A. By doing that, they know about Al-Anon and we know about A.A. We

have Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. together. It facilitates recovery. I go to an A.A. meeting every week with my husband so I can be an Al-Anon contact."

"My husband took me to my first Al-Anon meeting and afterwards he said, 'You don't have to go back there.' He didn't want me to go back because I would know that it wasn't all my fault. My daughter was in program nine months before me, and I finally realized there was a problem, I said, 'What have I done to my kids?'"

## The Future of Chosen Agenda Items Discussion

The future of Chosen Agenda Items was introduced by Claire R., Associate Director Public Outreach—Professionals, and Margot M., Trustee:

"Chosen Agenda Item discussions have been taking place at World Service Conferences for 32 years. The original intent and vision was for the Conference as a body to have open discussions on topics of interest and affecting Al-Anon as a whole. Although the process for submitting questions or topics and format has changed over the years, the 2008 WSO Conference Leadership Team is asking the Conference to discuss this annual Conference activity to help it with planning for future Conferences. Conference members are primarily being asked to provide feedback regarding: Chosen Agenda Item discussions, Conference member participation, and the value of the discussions to worldwide Al-Anon."

The presenters discussed the history of Chosen Agenda Items. The title of Chosen Agenda Items has included names such as "Red Light, Green Light," "Green Light," "Green Light Open Discussion," "Timely Topics," "WSC Chosen Agenda Items," and "Agenda Items." Dual members and specialized groups have been the most frequently repeated topics, followed by Alateen, pre-Alateen groups, literature and services for pre-Alateens, Alateen Group Sponsors, and WSO finances and how to increase contributions from members.

The presenters asked the Conference body to perform a spot-check inventory. Every year it was a discussion about dual members serving in the fellowship. "Sometimes I've not known why the topic was chosen. No one came to speak about it. After I attended an IAGSM, with our Delegates, it takes a little longer to

formulate thinking especially in a different language." Another Trustee commented, "I think there was an element of the minority chosen to be heard every year." Other members shared: "What's good about them is that it gives me an idea about what others are thinking. Sometimes my concern is the same thing someone else is concerned about." "When I started attending, I thought these discussions were fascinating. I think there were some misunderstandings. I thought Delegates thought they had to ask a question, even if they knew the answer. I think these discussions are very compatible with Knowledge-Based Decision-Making, and I think there's more freedom of expression; it's a valuable part of Conference."

The first question the Conference body was asked to consider during this discussion was: "Are we sharing leadership in our WSC Chosen Agenda Items sessions?"

One Delegate asked if Chosen Agenda Items were submitted only by the Delegates. The presenters answered, "No, staff and Trustees also submit topics."

"Each year of my term as Delegate, I went back to my Area World Service Committee and said, 'I will need to present some topics that you want me to submit to the WSC for discussion as Chosen Agenda Items.' The Conference discussed the topic I submitted and I was happy to go back to my AWSC and report what happened. It gave the members of my AWSC some input to what I was going to do and input to this Conference agenda. They are not only represented, but also involved."

"Standardization gives resolution and stops these topics from coming up again and again."

"Sometimes we need to hear the same stuff over again."

"What I've learned in my last year is that pulling concerns from my one-on-one con-





versations is how I pull an agenda item. Sometimes it's just conversation, there's no answer."

The presenters asked the Conference to discuss the following questions: "Do our Current Chosen Agenda Item discussions help the WSC to achieve our goals of in-depth conversations about Al-Anon as a whole? Our vision for the future?"

"The simple answer is yes. When I think about the discussions we've had, we talked about our concerns and Al-Anon as a whole and I think we did try to come up with solutions for Al-Anon as a whole. If we have new approaches, then that is valid for us to discuss here."

"I wondered why we rehashed stuff. The answer is that we are in an ever-changing membership."

"For me, I think we do a pretty good job discussing topics related to Al-Anon as a whole. I have not heard much about our vision of Al-Anon in the future. We're not discussing the big ideas similar to those we turned in last year."

"If we had a guideline, then perhaps we could steer our Areas to ask questions focused on the future. I realize new people haven't heard it before, but if we want to go forward with some of this, then we need to send that out with the request."

"What I'm hearing is that the WSC is supposed to have this worldwide vision, which is not the purpose of districts and Areas, but they're the ones we're asking for the information. It sets up the expectation that we're going to give them the answers. There's some sort of disconnect as to how things happen here and what goes back to the Area. It's not their job to do our job. Our job is to think of Al-Anon as a whole and our vision for the future."

"Certainly, technology is something they're all asking about. The big problem I see we have

right now is: how we can appeal to all four generations—Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials. All the answers don't have to come from the World Service Office to us. It can go both ways."

The next question members were asked to consider was: "How do we apply Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) to our WSC Chosen Agenda Items discussions?"

One Delegate responded saying, "I like to see important topics presented. I would like to see us spend more time on strategic plan topics. I think it would work a lot better."

"I like using KBDM for Chosen Agenda Items discussions. I think that is what Lois and the pioneers envisioned. It was supposed to be two-way communication. Originally there was a lot of trust; later the discussion became, 'Who said you could do that?' I think this year's discussions have been broader. The background information helped. We need to have a process in place so that we have broader discussions, but it shouldn't just originate from the staff, Trustees, and Executive Committee. What would it look like if the Conference chose the topics a year ahead so that they could be taken back to the groups to get their thoughts? If the groups are the top, the Conference is the bottom. Not every discussion results in an action, we aren't problem-solvers, we are the think tank to help groups solve their own problems."

"The further you are from a decision, the more it is questioned. We are not an ivory tower with the members sitting in their group. The distance may be a problem."

The Conference was then asked to discuss: "How can WSC members identify topics that concern worldwide Al-Anon and a vision for our future?"

One Delegate questioned: "I don't know why we're the World Service Conference when it's really just North America. I know why the WSO is worldwide. We have people from South Africa, Germany, Mexico, and I wonder why we don't let them have a voice." Another Conference member answered, "We are the senior conference because we were established first. The international representatives have voice in their own structure and they have an opportunity to connect with us through the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting." Another member added, "They do have a voice here; they don't have a vote. The voice for the international community comes through the International Coordination Committee. It's the ICC's job to communicate with the other structures to identify what affects Al-Anon as a whole."

“I don’t know why submitting topics can’t be a Thought Force or a Task Force. That way we keep Delegate involvement.”

“Part of how we identify topics that affect Al-Anon as a whole is to do our homework, study, and use our own big thinking. We don’t have to wait until we come to the Conference to think.”

“Having the topics a year in advance so we could have dialogue from home would be KBDM. As it is, when we get the topics, we don’t really have enough time to get feedback.”

“I believe when we come here, just like any other corporation or business, there are certain things you do when you’re running business every day; you’re conscious of what the future is going to be. Last year we heard the average age was 51 years old—that was a red flag. This is a fact. Do you have any thoughts on this? I don’t think it’s brain surgery to figure out what the priorities are for the next five years. Once you know what they are, there better be some questions

about them because they have to be priorities.”

“Every time we ask, the first thing is how to attract and keep new members. When we vote on Chosen Agenda Items, if we were to have a criteria similar to the Forum Editorial Advisory Committee or the e-CAL Committee, then we could ask, does it meet this criteria?”

“When I submitted my topic, I reviewed back issues of the *Conference Summary* to see that it had not been submitted repeatedly. I looked at the Strategic Plan and the problems of fellowship, so I felt that my question was a good question, but when I heard what people were saying, it felt like people strayed from the topic. We need to have people answer what has been asked.”

The final question presented was: “Do WSC members need more background information on how to frame topics using the KBDM process?” Time did not permit the last question to be discussed. However, the Conference Leadership Team will use these comments when forming next year’s agenda.

## PRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES

“In 1955, a discussion was held noting that the work at Headquarters had become so involved that it was suggested that committees be formed to handle publicity, literature, and finances. Lois stressed the general need for larger committees and stated that we were in a very dangerous position because of one-man committees. Should a Chairperson become ill, it would be a great loss.

“Lois recognized when change was needed and embraced new ideas, but at times had difficulty convincing others to seek help with their tasks. Slowly changes were made and our pioneers began to recognize the benefit of having a variety of ideas exchanged, rather than one person’s thoughts.

“As Committees began, they were delegated a purpose and then they began the work that was requested. Committees were often formed for a three-year trial basis and their guidelines appeared to be designed as they went along. They were always flexible and could be updated when needed.

“The first Committees were composed of staff members and volunteers. Later, Trustees were added and then, in order to widen participation, Delegates were assigned to Committees. Prior to their first Conference, Delegates were given a list of the Selected Committees and were asked to prioritize their first three

choices. They were then assigned to a Committee that they would stay on for their term as Delegate. These Delegate Committees have met annually at the Conference with interim work being done first by mail, and then evolving to also using conference calls and e-mail.

“By 1984, it was suggested that they have a Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT). Rather than just assigning the task, it was decided that a Committee should be formed to develop a job description for the CCT.

“During the past few years a transition has been taking place. Some Committees revamped their guidelines annually and submitted their guidelines to the Executive Committee for review and approval. Several other Committees have disbanded on a three-year trial basis. These Committees were deemed to be no longer effective, needed, or necessary in their current format.

“Small groups, such as Alateen Advisory, have recently been able to participate by meeting at Regional Service Seminars and/or through conference calls, which allows for greater geographic participation as members are not required to travel outside their region. These meetings are being tried on a trial basis.

“A good example of an evolving Committee is the Forum Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC). Back in 1960 Lois met with opposition

Judy A.  
Trustee



when she suggested having a volunteer Forum Committee to assist the Forum editor. The editor said it was such specialized work that it would be a problem to find the right people to help her. Later, in 1960, a Committee was formed with volunteers who were willing to type or do paperwork.

**“In 1962,** Lois expressed ‘concerns about the future of Al-Anon’ and the danger of having ‘all its eggs in one basket.’ The Forum editor said that she had tried having a Committee and it just didn’t work out.

**“In 1967-1968,** Lois suggested to the Board of Trustees that they appoint an Editorial Board for *The Forum* that would become a permanent part of the structure. The Board would serve in an advisory capacity and would meet monthly.

**“By 1972,** the Forum editor had recognized the benefits of having a Committee, which gave her varying points of view.

**“In 1977** and again in 1982, a recommendation was made that the position of Forum editor be a Trustee position. The Trustee Chairperson would not be Chairperson of The Forum magazine, but of the Forum Editorial Committee. A Committee was formed to discuss the recommendation and a Chairperson of the Forum Committee was named on an experimental basis for one year. In 1983, a postponement on the decision was requested and more members were added to the Committee investigating the pros and cons of the editor becoming a Trustee.

**“In 1985,** this was again discussed as the roles of the Forum Editorial Committee and the Forum Business Operations Committee seemed to have overlapping roles; there was no clarity of the parameters of the positions.

**“In 1987,** the Board approved the concept of eliminating the paid editor of *The Forum* from the Board and carried a motion that a volunteer Trustee Chairperson be appointed starting in 1988. This was done on a three-year trial basis and became permanent in 1991.

**“In 1996,** a Standing Committee of members throughout the U.S. and Canada was formed called the Forum Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC) and met four times annually.

**“By 2007,** FEAC members had requested changes to their Committee and review process, doing some meetings by con-

ference call.

“As our Committees are being restructured, the ability to participate has been improved. More Al-Anon and Alateen members throughout the structure are now able to participate on a short-term basis, rather than a fixed number of at-Large members who serve one-year terms and can serve up to six years on a WSO Selected Committee. Some Committees, such as Public Outreach, are able to have short-term, task-oriented groups for specific projects and they are able to have professionals on the Committee by utilizing e-mail and conference calls.

**“In 2007,** a few Delegates were assigned to a Task Force on the Reserve Fund guidelines. This is an example of ways for Delegates to participate in short-term, task-oriented groups where results are readily apparent.

“It is a fact that WSO Committee structures have always changed. Sometimes, there was reluctance to change, but as the benefits became apparent during three-year trial periods, there was a positive response.

“Committees that have traditionally not had Delegate participation are now having open discussions at the World Service Conference to bring a broader spectrum of our membership’s ideas to the Committee.

“As Delegates are given the choice of being on a Committee or short-term Task Forces, it is part of our Strategic Plan. Task Forces or Thought Forces can be formed to move forward with the activities of the Strategic Plan. For example, making recommendations on how technology will be used to engage resources in the completion of tasks or projects; developing measurements to gauge if the groups have become more engaged in welcoming newcomers; or preparing a presentation to educate the fellowship on the interpretation of Tradition Six and Warranty One.

“As we look back at our history, we can see that while change has always been taking place, there may have been resistance to some of the changes. However, the benefits of the changes won’t be fully appreciated until we see the results. When changes are not beneficial, we have the option to implement another trial period if further study is needed, make recommendations to further modify the Committee, or seek approval to dissolve the Committee. Because our Concepts of Service provide us with flexibility, we can move ahead with endless possibilities or we can always revert back if the changes did not prove effective because we know where we have been.”

Before breaking into Committees and Task Forces, the Trustee asked the Conference: Which direction do you, as a Conference, want

**Before 2007****After 2007**

to go in? Do you want to stay in a traditional Committee format or do you want to stick with Task Forces? Here is what some of the Delegates offered:

“I think the Task Forces and Thought Forces are a wonderful idea. However, the one frustration I have with them is that they ask for one big question. In coming up with this question, we’re coming up with solutions.”

“I got the letter explaining Task Forces, but I was confused. I thought the message was that the WSO wanted to do away with Committees. In thinking about it since then, it seems to be a pretty good idea. Our Assembly now is doing the same thing. We’re going to ad hocs to target attention so that we don’t have a Committee sitting idle for nine months—work on it, get it done, and walk away.”

“We are constantly changing who we are. When I got the letter, I was excited and anxious. I ended up staying in my Committee, but I got excited because I thought it would be a little more instant in today’s world. I would actually like to entertain the idea of Thought Forces, but I was afraid to. I would like to hear from those who are on those Thought Forces because I learn more from experiences.”

“I think this is good. It’s new thinking; it’s getting us out of the tradition of just having the same old, same old. We’re branching out; we’re using new thinking, which is important to constant health.”

“I like the idea of not having to choose between one or the other. I think it’s important to have Selected Committees, specifically for archival reasons, but I really like the idea of Task Forces.”

“I think we need to continue our Committees for continuity, but I also had the pleasure of being on an ad hoc. I would hate to think that we would have to make choices that don’t have Delegates making choices.”

One Delegate asked the following questions:

At what level can a Selected Committee be dissolved? As a Board, do you feel Selected Committees are effective? Can the work being done by Committees be done by staff?

A Trustee answered the first question by saying, “My first year as Trustee, I was chair of the Canadian Public Outreach Subcommittee and we just felt like we were doing the same work that the Public Outreach Committee was doing. We wrote a letter to the Board and said that we would like presence on the PO Committee. The Subcommittee was disbanded on a three-year trial basis.” Her answer to the second question was, “Some of them are; some would never be dissolved. The Committees we’re looking at are the ones we feel could be better served by a Task or Thought Force.”

The Executive Director responded to the third question: “The staff could do a lot of things without any input at all, but that would be very stupid. It’s easy to be at the WSO and be in a bubble and a dome, even though we all go to meetings and are out in the world. There’s always going to be a need for volunteer input wherever it comes. We don’t want to lose volunteer input. How much of it needs to be Delegates and how much of it could be other members who could bring that same voice? Rather than set people up to be failures, as a staff, we’re trying to figure out how to do that. I think the overall concern is that however we do it, we want to get volunteer input and that was Lois’s idea.”

**Other Conference members commented:**

"I thought the conference call was absolutely fantastic. Every Coordinator has been absolutely thrilled with it."

"My thought is at my Area, we were doing the breakout sessions with the Action Committees. We had 15 people and they're all trying to get the work done and get heard. We broke them into smaller committees and they could get more work done because they're focused on just one thing instead of being focused on the three things from the Action Committees."

"I have been on Literature I and Literature II, which isn't one of my strengths. I would've been more suited to the e-CAL Committee, but the workload was not suited to me. I was happy doing what I did. When the letter came to me, there was no selection as to what the Task Forces were. I would've chosen to leave the Committee had I known what was coming. We could probably use some clarity defining the roles of Task Forces."

"I chose to stay on my Committee because I wanted the continuity since it was my last year, but I would've loved to be on a Task Force. I like the idea of using Past Delegates. This is part of the Strategic Plan, support and strengthen our structure."

"I see the value in maintaining these Committees. However, I do realize that some of these Committees are far busier than others. It seems imbalanced to me. Could we be given more specific details on what is involved with specific Committees?"

"As I listen to this, this is really the past versus the future. Our whole concept here is to build a bridge to the young people. While we're not selling anything, we do have a service that we provide. I think we're losing a lot of time in Selected Committees. I think time is of the essence. We need to trust our instincts; pre-

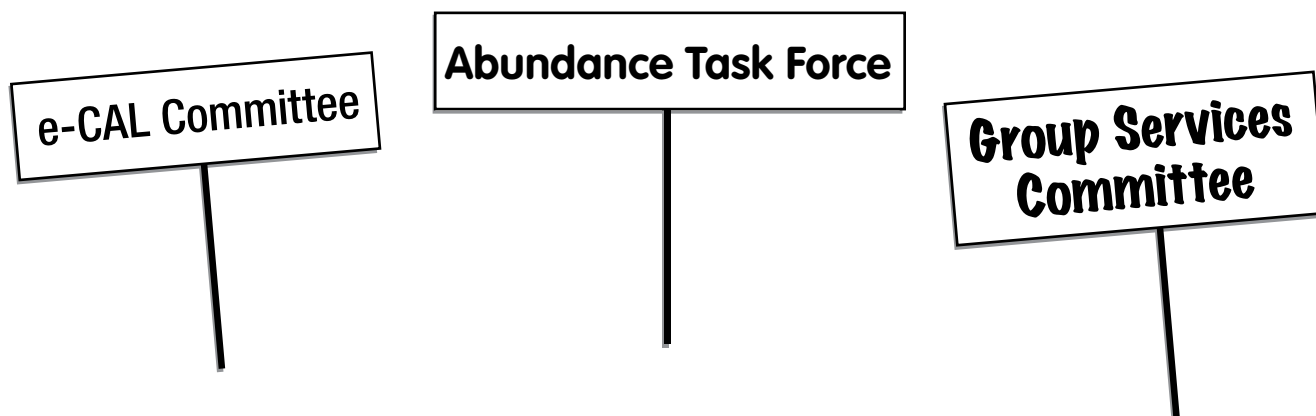
sume goodwill, reach those who are still suffering, and do it a lot faster."

A WSO staff member said, "We want to maximize efficiency. We want your time to be valued; shortest amount of time spent with the most effectiveness. For example, the Reserve Fund Task Force did a lot of work in a short amount of time. You'll see the results of their work this week. You'll see the results without having to wait a couple of years. The e-CAL Committee has had some snags, but it was a process that everybody was involved in and there was an opportunity to involve people who couldn't travel to the WSO. People from all over the country could be a part of this when they otherwise couldn't."

Following this discussion, Conference members met with their assigned Committees, Task Forces, and Thought Forces to discuss this important topic. They used their best thinking to help create the bridges between the work to be done and the ways it could be best accomplished in the world we now live in by answering the questions below.

1. What is the specific work of this Committee?
2. What essential function(s) of this Committee require Conference member participation?
3. What work could be accomplished in other ways?
4. Who are the best-equipped people in the fellowship to accomplish the work of this Committee?
5. What role could technology play in changing the way the work is accomplished?
6. Are there benefits or drawbacks to this Committee meeting during the WSC?
7. What role, if any, should Conference members have on this Committee?

The Board of Trustees will review each groups' answers and continue its discussion on the future of Selected Committees.



## SELECTED COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Delegates, Trustees, and World Service Conference staff members comprise the Selected Committees, Task Forces, and Thought Forces. Below are the Delegate assignments for this year's Conference.

### Selected Committees—2008 World Service Conference

Committee	Panel 46 (2006-2008)	Panel 47 (2007-2009)	Panel 48 (2008-2010)
<b>Admissions/ Handbook</b>	Mary M., CA (S) Georgia C., FL (S) Joyce R., TN	Rodney B., AL Rosie S., WV	Berta R., ID
<b>CCT</b>	Barbara W., OH Mary R., PA Sue M., TX (W)	Jeff G., GA Fran M., NJ Leslie N., WA	Marcia B., NY (S)
<b>Group Services</b>	Lisa P., FL (N) Bruce F., KY Michael B., MI	Pennie K., MT Christa A., VT	Dotty B., NH
<b>Literature</b>	Rick P., MB Joan P., ON (S) Barbara M., RI Bennie P., TX (E)	Paula M., NC/BMD Trudy C., QC (E) Renee H., WI	
<b>e-CAL</b>	Laurel L., KS Karen L., MD/DC Pat S., MN (S) Robert C., NY (N)	Rose Anna J., AB/NWT Dennis G., BC/YK Darcy A., ND	Marcy M., IL (S) Lorraine R., IA Clif B., LA Judy K., NV
<b>Public Outreach</b>	Cecily C., HI Yvette D., QC (W)	Virginia S., AZ Mary M., MN (N) Jacki S., OK	Gina R., CT

### Task Forces and Thought Forces—2008 World Service Conference

<b>FAMILY MEMBER CONTRIBUTION TASK FORCE</b>	Faye S., IN	Skip G., MS Roland C., OR	
<b>MEMBER CONTRIBUTION THOUGHT FORCE</b>		Rose Anna J., AB/NWT Tom B., CO Judy C., MP	Richard B., MO
<b>ABUNDANCE TASK FORCE</b>	Sandi C., CA (N)		Kerri K., NE Marilee P., NF/LD Leona W., ON (N) Esther M., PR Norma D., UT
<b>USING TECHNOLOGY IN AREAS THOUGHT FORCE</b>	Libby D., IL (N)		Cindy H., AR Melissa F., ME Barbara L., SK Linda R., SC Judy S., SD
<b>TASK FORCE ON UNDERSTANDING ANONYMITY</b>	Pam L., DE	Patricia N., MA Donald F., VA	Sharon B., AK Chris M., NM Judy G., WY



## IMPACT OF AREAS SPLITTING OR CONSOLIDATING DISCUSSION

Carol V.  
Chairperson, Admissions/  
Handbook Task Force

“As you may have noticed in your background material regarding further division or consolidation of Areas, the Admissions/Handbook Task Force has been discussing this question for a few years now.

“In 2004, it was reported that correspondence was received from an Area Delegate asking whether a state or province that has already been divided would be allowed to divide again. This question came to this Task Force because any formal petition for change would come first to the Admissions/Handbook Task Force for its review and recommendation.

“The Admissions/Handbook Task Force agreed to start the discussion, not only on the division of larger Areas based on group numbers, but also the consolidation of smaller Areas based on group numbers.

“The current policy in the *2006-2009 Service Manual* on page 128 reads, ‘A state, province, or territory having more than 400 groups may

The Chairperson asked the Committee to consider:

- What designates a need for an Area to divide?
- What do we know?
- What do we wish we knew?
- What do we need to know?

“As early as 1962, the states of Texas and California talked about the large number of groups in their Areas. Both sent a second Delegate in 1964.

“Research in the WSO Archives found that in 1980, the Admissions/Handbook Committee recommended to the WSC that the number of groups be raised. The rationale for the Conference decision to increase from 200 to 400 groups needed to divide was that the Conference would become too large if the number of groups remained at 200.

“In 1982, the Conference voted to reaffirm the policy of a state, province, or territory dividing only once.

“In response to the Chairperson’s request, Committee members shared during discussions from 2004-2007.

- The Delegate from Texas East shared that her Area once considered dividing again and their solution was to redistrict rather than petition to divide the Area.
- It was pointed out that Pennsylvania has the potential to divide with over 800 groups, but has not petitioned to divide.
- One question raised was: ‘How big do we want the Conference to be?’ The Conference balance/voting ratio should be considered when answering this question.
- Another question was: ‘Is the current policy out of date—does it match today’s needs in Areas?’
- It was noted that an exception was made to this policy in the past, but it was done on a case-by-case basis. In 1978, special consideration was given to Atlantic Provinces when they petitioned to divide into two Areas—New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland/Labrador—because of geography.
- Another question raised was: ‘If we lose group numbers, at what point might we consider merging two Areas into one?’
- There was also a suggestion to think about reassigning Area boundaries (state lines may be too strict or unrealistic) as some Areas include groups from neighboring



petition the Conference to divide and send an additional Delegate to the Conference (see Article 6. b. of the Conference Charter). A state, province, or territory may divide only once, as reaffirmed at the 1982 World Service Conference.”

“Committee members reviewed current policy and composition of the Conference.

- Areas because of geography or language.
- Would the two Areas from the first division have to come back together so that a redivision would create three Areas?

“The Task Force has been discussing the implications of a change to the current policy for the past several years and came up with a ‘big thinking’ question that could be considered for a full Conference discussion. The reason for the ‘big question’ is that before we try to resolve any particular Area’s request or need, we wanted to look at the larger context so that we wouldn’t just be trying to put bandages on issues, but finding out what we really think would work best for the entire Conference

and for the Areas whenever these questions or requests come up. The Task Force was encouraged to think ‘outside of the box’ and to come up with ideas for the ‘big question’ instead of trying to figure out the logistics of them. And we think that our ‘big questions’ should start a big conversation.”

The Chairperson of the Admissions/Handbook Task Force asked the Conference to consider the impact of further division or consolidation of Areas on each of these items: **the World Service Conference, finances, innovative approaches to the links of service, growth of the fellowship, and diversity of the fellowship.**

## The World Service Conference:

“Some of the cons are: change is hard to accept, the cost to the Areas involved in the new Area start-up, and less contact with those members we’ve worked with. The pros are: a new opportunity for growth in our service membership, better participation, reasonable travel distances for Area functions, and cost savings—perhaps no increase to the Conference if some Areas decide to combine. It’s important to make the Conference available to more groups in our populous Areas and in the smaller Areas probably to bring together to get better ideas. Many members can only participate from a distance without the contact that is so vital to world service. Some suggest having the Alternate Delegate share the responsibility, but the Alternate Delegate doesn’t have the experience of attending the Conference and I think it makes a big difference.”

“We talked about the balance of Conference and I’d like to know how we think the balance would affect the Conference. The only reference that I can find about balance is that ‘At the 1985 WSC it was voted to make the Conference member ratio two-thirds elected Delegates to one-third staff and volunteers.’ (2006-2009

*Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, page 128) The *Manual* talks about a state, province, or territory dividing. Once that has happened, it’s no longer a state, province, or territory; it’s an Area.”

“My Area has qualified to petition to split, but we haven’t done that because we have a whole quadrant of our state that has no meetings and if we split, it would be substituting one problem for another. Being a Delegate, I can’t imagine covering thousands and thousands of miles.”

“Thinking about the impact on the WSC, the only thing I can really see is that it would add a Delegate or two and the associated expenses. We added districts to facilitate representation and it has not had a negative impact on us. We don’t want the balance to go to any one Region.”

“I think I come from a part of the country that would be in the consolidation category. In orientation, we were told we each bring a different perspective. I have 7,700 square miles to cover. Just the thought of tacking on another Area would be an overwhelming burden on someone. I wouldn’t support consolidating geographically large but numerically small Areas.”

## Finances:

“It just occurred to me that there may not be a financial impact. We could better cover the Areas and help the number of groups to grow. Because we cannot get to parts of our Areas, they’re not growing.”

“I think there would be a greater burden for Conference expense. It begs the question: How big do you want to get?”

“Whatever costs you’re going to incur, you would recover with increased knowledge that would lead to more donations.”

“We’re possibly talking about an additional 10-15 people who would attend the WSC. At an individual cost, I imagine the finances would be substantial. That’s taking it to the extreme.”

"If our groups are growing, that's a good problem to have because at this time we're not growing in numbers. If one Area divides, we'll increase by one more chair, one more hotel room, one more stack of paper. It doesn't seem like a big deal if it's just one, but if it's several, that's something different."

"I don't think it would increase numbers, so our finances wouldn't increase either."

"As an Area, we are having financial difficulty because we need to have AWSC meetings and Assemblies on the weekend. We're incurring \$2,000 for each of the three AWSC meetings and \$5,000 for Assemblies, in addition to what the Group Representatives are paying to attend. While we might be reducing our expense on weekend meetings if we split, we might be increasing it to send two Delegates."

"This is a big question. There is no specific WSO proposal in mind. This discussion is really to think beyond how we're going to do it; we're so used to problem-solving. This is not fixing a problem; this is 'let's stretch our minds.'"

"The Board mandated that the Equalized Expense not exceed 66 percent of the cost; the other 34 percent was to be supported by the groups around the world because that's part of what the Appeal Letter contributions cover. All groups benefit from the decisions of the WSC."

"There is some confusion about what's going to happen with the staff, Trustee, Executive Committee member, Delegate ratio. The number of Delegates is greater than two-thirds of the Conference right now. It is my understanding that we wouldn't ever force an Area to divide or consolidate."

### **Innovative approaches to the links of service:**

"All we have now is recent information, but I was there when my Area split. I'd like to have some background information regarding when the first Area was split. Who thought, 'Hey, we could divide this?'"

"Whenever I see the word 'innovative,' a part of my nervous system starts to twitch because it means change. Change can be interesting, exciting, and good. The way I've been affected by the family disease tells me that any change is bad. When we start thinking really big, we're going to end up in places we can't even imagine now. This is a good problem to have. I think the pioneers of Al-Anon had to think *way* outside of the box because they were going where no one had gone before. The next few Conferences are going to have to go where no one has gone before."

"I'm wondering whether or not the WSO considered going across international boundaries—joining an Area in the U.S. with an Area in Canada."

"When the WSC began, Texas had one Delegate and before the end of that term, Texas was split into two."

"I was in service in Florida before Florida divided. I can tell you that I came in towards the end of that process. The Area studied it for 12 years before they petitioned to divide. I would say the biggest thing we encountered was that there was such a fear of losing something by dividing. One of the things that struck me as funny was the insistence that we would have one Florida convention. Before the end of

that three-year term, every district was having their own convention. There's no perfect answer. It's a really interesting question."

"I was thinking of innovative approaches as a Delegate because I live in one corner of our state and it will take me eight or nine hours to get to the other corner. I've been thinking about how I'm going to use technology, the media, and the DRs to do the job I need to do."

"There's more than just north, south. We redistricted in my Area and took a look at the Area's geography. We went from 31 to 27 districts. The boundary lines—do they need to stay around state lines?"

"The innovative approach seems like what my Area would like to do if we were to divide. We're going against this year's theme, 'Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest.' We're going to have to find a way to resolve that war of north versus south."

"The 1961 WSC transcript reports that a motion carried that the Conference not divide larger states like California and Texas. Then in 1965, a Conference Committee report in the Board minutes indicates that since Texas and California each had more than 100 meetings they were split in two."

"My Area is Alberta/Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories are the 'great white north.' They are almost our forgotten people up there. To travel from Calgary to Fort Good Hope costs \$2,500 to fly and six to eight hours to drive. Face-to-face meetings are almost impossible, so I love the words 'innovative



approaches.’ So how do we build a bridge to these people?”

“Part of our experience is that we decided to incorporate. We had not considered that Bermuda laws were different than North Carolina laws and we had to have two different sets of rules and guidelines. The expenses involved in that can pop out of nowhere if you don’t

consider it thoroughly. It’s not just Conference expenses.”

“We have five districts in my Area; three were active, now we’re down to two active ones. We don’t build a bridge by making it bigger and stretching it. Why are we trying to build a big bridge? Why not build a little one? Being little, I get to move around a lot easier.”

## Growth of the fellowship:

“Is Al-Anon Family Groups able to grow and are we prepared and able to support that growth in the current structure? Using California as an example, my answer would have to be: No, the state of California is currently divided into two Areas, and according to our current policy we’ll remain two Areas regardless of our growth. Our current policy allows for the division of an Area at 400 groups, but only allows a state to divide once. In a discussion held in California North, District Representatives have bemoaned their inability to service such large numbers and Coordinators find themselves completely ineffective. Action Committees became so large there is no time to reach a consensus. If we change Al-Anon’s thinking from ‘can’t do’ to ‘can do,’ we may surpass being one-fourth the size of A.A. Since we have the potential of having a membership four times larger than A.A., there will be more Areas finding themselves in this position. What a glorious problem—too many members! Let’s look forward to that inevitability and review our policies in order to support such growth. Maybe we can use California as a testing ground for new ideas.”

“Why are we discussing the difficulties of communicating with people when we are using new technology? I can reach people with the Internet who I wouldn’t be talking to otherwise. The other thing I saw is that we are now in times when we can reach out in other ways.

Talking about action committees, in Iowa, we have action committees with 50 people: that’s too many! So going back to innovative ideas, are there new ways of doing things, breaking things down smaller, rather than having to split up states?”

“Is it possible that Areas could have two separate Assemblies with one Delegate?”

“I thought about task forces/thought forces because of what we’re able to do. I can see how this new thinking of the redesign of committees could energize huge districts and bring in more people. We have to detach our thinking from the way it’s always been and think about the way it could be. We may just need to go in that direction.”

“I don’t want to lose sight of the purpose of the Conference—to bring the voice of the fellowship. There must have been a good reason that size was an issue and I don’t know why that precedent was changed. I’m not sure why we would consider limiting that just because it’s a state. I don’t want to lose sight of what our interest was with the Conference and the links of service.”

“I would like to have some history. I would like to know how well it worked in Florida, Minnesota, etc. Did communication increase? Was there a vast immediate growth with numbers?”

## Diversity of the fellowship:

“Diversity—I was thinking about different aspects right now—social, religious, economical—there are a bunch of them. The current policy is that a state or province can split once, and the number of groups necessary to split is 400. That is one way of creating diversity. Another way would be to change it to 300 or 600. Another way would be to not offer the option to split. Those are all different ways with different results. When I look at the district where I started in Al-Anon and the district I’m living

in now, the districts are adjacent, and they’re so different. We’ve got to consider diversity. It was mentioned about borders, and right now the focus has been on states and provinces. How can the AIS serve the entire metropolitan area when there are people from East St. Louis going to meetings in St. Louis and vice versa?”

“We have a lot of immigration because it’s a boom province right now. When I was the Public Outreach Coordinator, we sent books to



this location where there were a lot of immigrants. It didn't increase participation, but I hadn't thought: Could they even read the books we were sending? We need some real creative thinking in how to evolve. We were trying to reach out and we weren't even thinking."

"I wanted to speak to the part where it says what might be the impact. The Kentucky Area meets in a central location. My job as Delegate is to be the link between Kentucky and the WSO. I give my report to Assembly and it has nothing to do with how many people are present. It makes no difference if I'm communicating with 100 people or 700 people. One of my jobs is to listen."

"I'm having a hard time wrapping my mind around how consolidation or division is going to create diversity. It's like putting the cart before the horse. Diversity has to come first and then we can think about doing those other things."

"I was trying to figure out if we have 85 percent women and we divide them, how are we

going to get anything other than more women? Whether it's Russia or India, the problems their members talk about in the groups and in service meetings are the same problems our members talk about in Assemblies. How do we get more people involved in service? I don't know that more people saying the same things would be a solution. Maybe division is one of the solutions, but there are other things that need to happen along with it."

"It would be so interesting to have someone talk to us about group dynamics—what kind of models could be used in different Areas."

"We talk about how we're going to do it but we really need to come up with ideas. There are a lot of places you can't even drive to in my Area, so we need to think about ideas of how to actually reach them and get those bridges built."

As the session closed, Conference members were reminded that this is a conversation in progress.

## LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Prior to the Conference, the Conference Leadership Team polled the Delegates asking for suggestions for leadership training workshop sessions. The Conference Leadership Team compiled all of the suggestions and weighed them according to the interest of Delegates and the purpose of the WSC.

There was an overwhelming desire to have a second session on Conflict Resolution, the first of which was during the 2007 WSC (reported on page 23). The next most popular sessions were: "How to Prepare and Give an Effective Delegate's Report," "Connecting the Concepts of Service with Area Service Roles," and "Using Knowledge-Based Decision-Making for a Group Conscience in the Areas." In the spirit of shared leadership, the Conference Leadership Team asked all Conference Members to consider taking part in the leadership workshop presentations with the intention of selecting Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee members, and staff to partner in the presentation of the leadership sessions.

The Leadership Workshops were offered on two separate days in 45-minute sessions. Conference members selected two of the three sessions according to their interests. A Conflict Resolution Workshop was presented to the full Conference. (See page 45.)

Members in the Leadership Workshops discussed the following:

### How to Prepare and Give an Effective Delegate's Report

- Communicating in short time frames
- Involving others in giving the information of the Conference (Shared Leadership)
- Talking about how to use PowerPoint or other technologies
- Sharing Hot Topics information effectively
- Making reports more interesting and exciting
- Engaging the Assembly in the report
- Giving some information in a written report

### Connecting the Concepts of Service with Area Service Roles

- How the principles of the Concepts are transferred to the Area
- How the Concepts can assist the Delegates in working with the Area Chairman and Coordinators
- How Action Committees can use the Concepts in their work
- Using the Concepts to resolve Area problems
- Using the Concepts to help transition from one service position to another
- Using the Concepts to motivate Area trusted servants

**HOT TOPIC**

**Area Report/Book**  
 - High priority report  
 - High priority report  
 - High priority report  
 - High priority report

**Background/What we know**

**Main Points to tell my Assembly**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**How does this tie in to the Branch's Strategic Plan?**

## Using Knowledge-Based Decision-Making for a Group Conscience in the Areas

- How to communicate it to the Assemblies
- Sharing leadership with other trusted servants
- Framing and summarizing discussions
- How the minority opinion is part of the

- “dialogue before deliberation” process
- Creating a “culture of trust”
- Using knowledge-based questions to gather information prior to and during discussion
- Understanding that not every discussion leads to a motion or a decision
- Taking the time needed to fully discuss an issue

## Conflict Resolution Presentation

The Executive Director opened with the following background: “Last year, those of you who were here will remember that the Conference Consultant and I held a discussion before leading a workshop on conflict resolution. Many of you, when we asked you what types of topics you would like to discuss at this year’s Conference, many of you voted rather strongly that you would like another session on conflict resolution.

“This year, I wanted to work with two Delegates because I think the most difficult part of this process is that it’s hard to envision yourself doing this. None of us are professionals—except everyone in this room *is* a professional in dealing with conflict.

“Before the session, several of you told my co-presenters what you liked, what you didn’t like, and what you were looking for in terms of this presentation. After this brief introduction, one Delegate is going to share some ideas about why this session would be worthwhile. The other Delegate is going to tell you about different stages of conflict. I’m going to talk about some techniques for listening.”

As a group, the Conference members discussed possible conflicts to use as an example. There was a common theme of dominance related to service and misunderstanding of dominance. This was the example of conflict the Executive Director and Delegates used during their presentation.

The Delegate from Kansas talked about the philosophy and value of conflict resolution, stating that conflict is natural and people seek resolution. He stressed that conflict has a positive value because it indicates that something needs to change. He said that we should talk to each other and reason things out. He also pointed out the positive value of diversity—it can give us strength by using others’ talents. We also need to listen to and acknowledge the needs of others.

The Delegate from Alaska discussed the stages of conflict and how she works through it:

- Experiencing denial/avoidance: “I don’t want to look at it. Maybe if I ignore it, it will go away. In this stage, I feel angry, hurt, resentful, and sad.”
- Wanting to defend or justify myself to this person: “Someone will say to me you are/are not doing this. I automatically want to defend myself. Because of alcoholism, I think I have to explain to them why I feel differently than they do. In this stage, there has to be an outcome. I want to win because I feel I’m right.”
- Focusing on the solution rather than the problem: “Sometimes I get to this stage and I still don’t agree with what the other person is saying. In alcoholism we always feel we have to have resolution and that doesn’t always happen. When I focus on the solution, I can better work through these stages of conflict. I’ve been so beaten down by alcoholism that I didn’t like feeling angry, hurt, and resentful. I even state sometimes now that I don’t want to argue and move on.”

The next part of the discussion was focused on what to do when in conflict. The main point was that we should listen because most times people just want to be heard. Listening also allows us to hear what the conflict is so we can address it appropriately. The first point was to *stop talking*. Other important points included imagining the other person’s viewpoint; looking, acting, and being interested in what the other person has to say; not interrupting; demonstrating that you care about the other person’s point of view, and finally to *stop talking*.

The presentation continued with some discussion on statements that could be used to be sure that we understand the conflict. Sometimes there is an underlying issue unrelated to the conflict. For example, someone questioning the budget may have a trust issue. When the person has finished talking, it’s okay to rephrase what we thought we heard for clarification. It is important in this process to use

Ric B.  
*Executive Director*

Laurel L.  
*Panel 46, Kansas*

Sharon B.  
*Panel 48, Alaska*

gentle, non-judgmental statements such as, “Let me make sure I understand what you’re saying,” and using the person’s own words to clarify their point. This will help to avoid further conflict. It is also where practicing “principles above personalities” is essential.

After we determine what the conflict is, the next step is to determine the goal. The goal should be consistent with the mission and purpose. It is important to know that conflict may not always be resolved. The goal is to resolve conflict whenever possible, but this may not always happen, and that’s okay.

In resolving conflict, we need to develop a

list of questions or issues to be answered or addressed. The questions should come out of the discussion. Asking questions will help us pull out what the real issues are and try to determine a preferred outcome. It is vital to remember that we have to move away from the idea of winning and losing. We’re not seeking home runs; we are trying to have a discussion. Completing the discussion so that everyone has been heard is the victory.

The presentation concluded with discussion by the Conference members about program tools that could be used in conflict resolution. Here are examples:

### **Separate the people from the problem:**

- Principles above personalities
- Detachment
- Check our motives

### **Take time to build relationships:**

- Build bridges
- Talk to one another and reason things out
- Would you rather be right or be happy?
- Don’t force a solution
- Focus on yourself

### **How will our discussion benefit us and Al-Anon?**

- Clearing the air allows us to move on
- Unconditional love
- Clearer communication

### **Getting past resentments:**

- Awareness, acceptance, action
- Accept the decision of the group conscience

### **Admit previous history without blaming:**

- Share experience, strength, and hope
- Change our attitudes and our actions
- When we were wrong, promptly admitted it

### **Presume goodwill**

- Trust in the competence of our Conference partners
- Though you may not like all of us, you’ll love us in a very special way
- Trust the process

### **Make a verbal commitment to seek success:**

- Agree to disagree
- “I’ll think about that”
- Be part of the solution
- “You may be right”

One presenter discussed the tactics involved in Conflict Resolution by answering the question: “What do I use to resolve conflict?” She reviewed the “Five Guides to Communication” from *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage*. The five guides are: Discuss, Don’t Attack; Keep the Voice Low and Pleasant; Stick to the Subject; Listen to His Complaints; and Don’t Make Demands.

In reviewing the five guides, the Delegate talked about using “I” statements and to avoid attacking even if attacked. She suggested keeping one’s voice low, pleasant, and calm. Sticking to the topic and thinking about the common goal are good guides. She stated that conflict is an opportunity to communicate and to use humor whenever appropriate. Listening to the other person’s complaints without making demands is helpful, as well as detaching from the problem.

## PODCASTS

The Director of Communications and the Associate Director Public Outreach—Media described a new project: a series of six podcasts directed at newcomers. These 15-minute audio files can be completed for the cost of a conference call. To participate in the creation of a podcast, members only need a telephone (preferably a land line for best recording). The difference between a regular audio file and a podcast is that podcasts offer subscriptions. Our series will begin with a discussion by members of why we come to Al-Anon. Currently, the podcasts are only available in English.

The podcasts are an opportunity to inform professionals and potential members about Al-Anon Family Groups. The Associate Director Public Outreach—Media informed the Delegates that each time a podcast is released, a press release will be posted on the Information File Exchange to draw the public's attention to the podcast.

When asked whether these podcasts could be downloaded and used in Beginners' Meetings, the Executive Director informed the Delegates that the podcasts are an outreach tool and not Conference Approved Literature (CAL). He encouraged Delegates to tell newcomers about the available tool, but not to download it and bring it to meetings, as it has not gone through the CAL process.



The Director of Communication also presented a graphic of the cover of our latest book, *Discovering Choices* (B-30), which is about our recovery in relationships. It was given conceptual approval by the 2001 WSC. The book will be approximately 335 pages and will cost \$15 U.S. Currently in the final stages of design, it will be released at the International Convention in July.

Robert S.  
*Director of Communications*

Patrick Q.  
*Associate Director Public Outreach—Media*

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

Last year, the Public Outreach Committee developed with our vendor a very creative format called "Sketches." They discovered that we could produce three public service announcements (PSAs) for the price of one.

They could also present very life-like human interest stories in a way that didn't violate anyone's anonymity because they contain artistic drawings. That was the main reason we decided to follow with a similar version of that same approach this year. In the meantime, we have discovered that the airplays achieved with the first version of "Sketches" have really been outstanding. We not only got three for the price of one, but their results have also been much more effective.

Our PSA plays ranked in the top seven percent nationally against all public service announcements. The number of airplays is up over last year and is really running ahead of the record-setting PSA "Reality" back in 2004. We looked for a way to target some special audiences—young people (20-40 year olds), grandparents, men, African-Americans, and the Spanish-speaking community.

Delegates were only shown three versions of the PSA in English and one in Spanish due to technical problems. The PSA is available in English, Spanish, and French. The Director of Communication informed the Delegates that the WSO sends PSAs to about 1,000 TV stations in the U.S. and Canada. He said that reports are available on the Information File Exchange

for Delegates to see which stations have and have not run the PSA. Delegates were asked to encourage the members in their Areas to thank those stations that have run the ad, distribute copies to stations that have not received it, and use other tools (such as *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, including a meeting list) to provide information to the community.

The Associate Director Public Outreach—Media informed Delegates that all versions of the new PSA will be available on the Public Outreach and Members' Web sites, and that the 2007 campaign is currently available on both sites.

Patrick Q.  
*Associate Director Public Outreach—Media*

Robert S.  
*Director of Communications*





Marsha W.  
Associate Director—International

Barbara O.  
Director of Member Services

## SPANISH/FRENCH PRESENTATION

The Associate Director—International began with background information and the message from the 2002 WSC “gorilla of change” that change is necessary to be open to new possibilities and that the methods of carrying the message could change, provided that our core values remain the same.

Conference members were told that in 2006 we learned that speaking only one language does not have to limit our ability to perform outreach activities to members who speak other languages. Members were given Passports in 2007 noting the different languages spoken in their Areas and were encouraged to communicate with those groups. Bilingual Trustees helped the Conference members practice simple phrases to say “hello” and introduce ourselves in Spanish and French.

This year the focus was on how diversity can benefit Al-Anon. In the Al-Anon Cook-off skit, chefs reminded us that although there were differences in the ingredients, shapes, sizes, and names for the lasagna, all of the casseroles were very similar. The skit concluded with the cooks being presented with a ribbon for their entry and a stone to begin building a bridge.

After the skit, a panel of Delegates discussed the following questions:

**How do we increase awareness within the fellowship that diversity is an asset?**

**How do we make members from a different cultural background feel valued?**

**What difficulties has your Area encountered with reaching out to diverse populations and how were they resolved?**

**What successes has your Area had with reaching out to diverse populations?**

Responses:

“We have a city in our Area, a large metropolitan city, and the members conducted workshops, one of which was on diversity. We had a very good discussion and different cultures shared information. My horizon broadened on how to make feel people welcome.”

“When there are eight members at my home group meeting, we are a full house. It’s strange because in this small group in Canada we have two men, a dual member, an American, an illiterate, a Delegate, a newcomer, and a District Representative/Group Representative. Two men, no problem—they mix and mingle and we don’t see any problem. They’re just part of the gang. The American lady came about a year ago. She can speak French, but she can’t read it. When she came, I lent her my three daily readers. She reads in English. One lady can’t read; we asked her to be the secretary. She’s so proud because she signs the checks. We have a newcomer. And for me, I ask the GR, who is new, to keep it quiet that I’m a Delegate. Whenever they see me at my best or my worst, they know I’m a member first.”

“I was afraid of the younger members with tattoos and piercings. Now that’s my grandbaby’s daddy! I work at getting to know younger members as individuals; not to change who I am or who they are, but to communicate with them. I make it a point to say ‘hi’ to someone new that comes to my meeting and be welcoming.”

“I am half-Eskimo, half-white. In Alaska, we have a lot of different types of Eskimos. I try to be down-to-earth and realize that a person

is a person regardless of what they look like. I make the new person feel welcome, giving them a hug, etc. I’ve made myself available to any natives who come to my meeting because they think that Al-Anon is a white fellowship. What I’m trying to do is be available to them and talk to them. It’s reaching out one-to-one, like we would to any other human.”

“In my home group, we had someone visit whose mother was from South America. The mother didn’t speak English, but they came to the meeting because they needed one. The daughter asked if it was okay to translate and the group was very flexible. Our Area Convention explored having translation available; however, the logistics didn’t allow it. We do have meetings that are translated.”

“After the last Conference, I proposed to my Area officers that we read something in Spanish. We thought it was a wonderful idea. We read six Traditions in Spanish. Immediately we had a motion that we never speak another language other than English. We worked through to resolve the conflict. One of the GRs came up and read from *Service Manual* in Spanish. One came up and said, ‘I never felt a part of before.’ I don’t speak Spanish, but I know the language of love. We can get past obstacles to share the message of hope.”

The Director of Member Services began the next part of the presentation with a brief description of her experience on an international trip to the General Service Offices in Central and South America. “During the trip, I was the only member at the meetings who





didn't speak Spanish. In all four countries we visited, the members made extra efforts to reach out to me in English when I made an effort to speak Spanish. Al-Anon gives us the ability to communicate whatever language we speak."

The Conference members were asked to consider the following question:

"How can we build bridges to meet the needs of our diverse current and future membership and strengthen the Al-Anon Family Groups' foundation of unity?"

Conference members divided into groups to discuss the question. Two groups shared on the first night:

"Not everyone from a diverse culture wants to be treated the same way. We need to watch the way we treat newcomers. We want to look for similarities—we've all been affected by someone else's drinking. Open minds build bridges. We can include newcomers in social events after the meetings."

"Find a bilingual person, check literature in translations; go to places where people can be reached; research culture; sometimes we don't fit in, but don't let that stop you; don't go in as the great white savior; take it slow."

The other groups shared their responses throughout the Conference and then added a stone to the bridge being built:

- Go to meetings held in other languages
- Purchase translation equipment
- Translate Area documents, newsletters, minutes, etc.
- Order PSAs in Spanish, French, and English
- Advertise in other language newspapers

- Put Spanish and English ads inside and outside of buses
- Make sure we have varieties of literature at the meeting (gay/lesbian/Native American/Spanish/French)
- Identify diverse groups in your community and assess ways to include them
- Go to meeting in other languages even if you don't understand everything—help them order literature
- Do public outreach projects in their community.
- Participate in health fairs and other events held in their neighborhood.
- We can be inclusive. Be welcoming to anyone different.
- When approaching groups such as certain Native American tribes, we might need to get approval from their Council. It may be helpful to approach them more than once and do a "Meeting on Wheels" so they can see what an Al-Anon meeting is.
- Learn the culture of the groups in your Area that you will be dealing with—find out things such as making eye contact, joining hands, and such.
- Ask people if they would accept a hug.
- Share your story and ask a member to translate to their language.
- Hold more open Al-Anon meetings, using venues that make it easy to attend—pot luck lunches in parks, etc.
- Go out and talk to churches with Spanish, African American, and other groups, and tell ministers about the program (Al-Anon/Alateen) and ask ministers to refer those who are affected.
- Find a bilingual member to help

## DELEGATES (PANEL 46)

### Sandi C., California North

When I entered Al-Anon, I knew about religion and prayer, but certainly knew nothing about spirituality. I was bankrupt in almost every way and didn't want to go on living. I certainly didn't have energy, much less spirituality.

Our theme, "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest" describes my growth in this program since I chaired my first meeting. I continued in service from that day forward and with each new position I grew more, liked myself more, and felt full of energy. That is not to say it's all been easy, life has been difficult in many ways, but I found a Higher Power who I trust and rely on, who always leads me in the right direction, and who gives me exactly what I need.

One gift I received was sponsoring Alateen. Listening to the Alateen members helped me mature, showed me what I needed to work on from my childhood, and taught me how to have fun. Alateen also helped me to deal with my two teenagers and brought our family closer. It healed some of the damage, and built a bridge of unity among the three of us.

My years as Delegate have energized me more than any other service. The spirituality I experience at Conference is beyond description. When I returned from my first Conference, I was flying high and hopefully passed on some of that energy at home. I didn't think it could be improved, but last year was even better.

Participating at Conference is almost like getting all my vitamins and minerals for the year in a weeklong meeting. By watching, listening, and learning from all of you, I get to take a small piece of all of you home with me.

If someone had told me life would unfold in such a wonderful way with the love, peace, and joy I have today, I would not have believed them. Today, I believe I am a miracle as a result of all of the love, understanding, and encouragement I received as I walked my path in Al-Anon.

I'm not sure what lies ahead, but I know I have more bridges to build in order to continue to energize my spiritual quest. Hopefully I'll be able to pass that on to others as it was done for me.

### Mary M., California South

When I first heard the theme for this Conference, I could only think about rebuilding actual bridges as the bridge in Minnesota had just collapsed the previous weekend and I thought, "How are they going to rebuild it?" Then I reflected on my own life and the destruction in it and how I have rebuilt my own bridges in this program by being of service.

When I came to this program, crossing that bridge was a link to a life I never expected. I'll never forget the woman in A.A. who took me by the hand and brought me to my first Al-Anon meeting. My life was in shambles. I had lived with alcoholism and violence for so long that I didn't think I could get over that "bridge."

I was energized—my Higher Power opened the doors to sanity and for once in my life I could be the person I always wanted to be. I could make my own decisions. My first Sponsor inspired me to become involved in service and took me to my first Assembly—and that was it, I was hooked on service.

After being in the program for about a year, my husband decided to drink again. He told me I didn't need to attend any more meetings, but I had learned my lesson well and like so many of us, I told him that his drinking bothered me and I needed these meetings. Surprisingly, even though he was a violent person, he never stopped me from going. I know today this was my Higher Power guiding me. Today my husband has 33 years of sobriety.

There are so many stories to tell, but the one that remains indelible in my mind is the time that our teenage son was arrested and sent to juvenile hall. I never thought I would have to visit our son in a place like that. On the way home from juvenile hall, I asked my Higher Power why this was happening to my little boy. The answer came from an unexpected source, my husband. He said, "It's going to be okay." Why he didn't even know what I was thinking! Once again God was providing the answer for me. Today our son is sober.

One of the other bridges I crossed was when our infant grandson died. Our entire family was devastated by this loss and our hearts were breaking. The day after the funeral, my husband and I had committed to speak at a meeting. We shared our grief and loss. One of the members came up to us and told us she had lost a child and had never shared that with anyone before. This most certainly built a bridge between us.

When I got here, did I think I was building bridges or on a spiritual quest? Of course not. I came because like so many of us, I had no other place to go, nothing left to try—so why not? That I stand here today as Delegate is only because once again my Higher Power gave me this wonderful gift.

I was able to build a new bridge in my life—one of clarity and a sense of purpose. I will always be grateful for my first Assembly that took me through the bridge of despair to one of spirituality. God has opened my heart for all this program has to offer.

### Pam L., Delaware

When I first came to Al-Anon Family Groups, I realized I had been building walls, not bridges. I had an attitude of hopelessness in coping with the disease of alcoholism. As I started to listen to other members speak of hope, I realized I had come to the right place for help.

It was not long after I started coming to Al-Anon that I jumped up from my seat to volunteer when it was announced that a Group Representative was needed for our group. I felt like I belonged because the members were treating me with lots of love and respect. I loved going to district meetings and Area Assemblies. As a Group Representative, I felt I had something to contribute.

I was building bridges of hope as I returned to my home group with news from our WSO and our Area. My confidence grew as a person and the attendance of members in my meeting grew too!

The next part of my journey was my election as a District Representative. I felt as though I could chair these meetings with my Higher Power's help. He came through.

My spiritual quest came about after I was asked to be the chair of our annual convention. I said "yes" to this big service opportunity. When I woke up in the middle of the night worry-

ing over it, I'd say the Serenity Prayer over and over until I fell back to sleep. I truly felt my Higher Power carrying me through out this convention.

My next service role was Delegate. I prayed about it for months and turned it over to my Higher Power, as He knows what is best. I accepted the role and I would not have traded this part of the journey for all the money in the world. I have never felt so close to my Higher Power.

## **Lisa P., Florida North**

In order to build a bridge there are so many things that need to be put in place or the foundation won't be strong enough to hold the weight. Things like a blueprint, a need, shared vision, project management skills, mechanical skills, interpersonal skills, labor, material, tools, attention to detail, and the big picture view. We need to utilize all the skills and talents from everyone to get the job done.

In retrospect, I was on one side of the bridge with pain, desperation, and misery. I wanted to get to the other side, where I would find hope, serenity, and a better life. I just had no idea how to get there. I showed up in Alateen before I was ready and thank God I transitioned into Al-Anon before I knew I really needed it.

The disease of alcoholism was already in my life since I grew up with it, but now I was married to it. Life got much harder. At times I didn't even think I was going to make it another day. Abuse, neglect, stuffed feelings, and sadness were normal for me. I was looking for the bridge I thought everyone was using, but I learned I had to build one for myself.

In order for me to "break ground" so I could start building my bridge, I needed to work Step One, without which I would get nowhere. Then other things started to happen. There was a need for a Group Treasurer, so I got involved. I didn't even realize I was gathering the labor, tools, parts, pieces, and materials for my bridge. I watched other people and learned the skills I needed to get the job done. Slowly, and with a lot of personal work, I was getting away from the pain and closer to a better life.

Today I continue to build my bridge to energize my spiritual quest. I am remarried now and I have love, encouragement, peace, and happiness. My life is way better. Who knew that signing up for the simple task to be the Group Treasurer would lead me all the way to being a member of this Conference? It's one of the best things I've ever done!

## **Georgia C., Florida South**

I was in the depths of despair thinking I had everything under control when a coworker told me I needed to attend Al-Anon with her. Since I didn't know anything about Al-Anon, I didn't know what to expect. I had a lot of emotions when I came into my first meeting and being spiritual was not one of them.

Members told me to take the focus off of him, to put it on me, and to mind my own business. They said that he had a disease. I fought them long and hard before I finally got the message and started to take down the wall of bricks around me and use them to build a bridge to a better life.

Attending my first Assembly as Group Representative got me hooked on service. Over the years I was given the opportunity to serve my Area in several different positions. I will be forever grateful to the members who encouraged me when I didn't have faith in myself.

My Area met many challenges while I was serving in the capacity of Area Chair. We voted to incorporate our Area. This was before Knowledge-Based Decision-Making and it was a long and difficult process that took five years to complete. Then we had the Alateen Requirements, which brought out a lot of emotions that tested our bridge to spirituality.

We formed an ad hoc that worked many hours to draft guidelines that would be acceptable to our Area. We knew we had to put principles above personalities so we could complete this task before the deadline. Just when we thought things were settling down, our Area was hit with several hurricanes. After experiencing difficulty in attending meetings due to curfews and the loss of meeting places, it was such a relief to see Al-Anon members at our next Assembly and to have some kind of sanity in my life, if only for a day. Our bridge was shaken, wobbly, and a little wet, but Al-Anon prevailed in our Area and our bridge to spirituality continued.

Serving as Delegate has been a learning and rewarding experience. Service is not always easy. I have learned we have to do what is right for Al-Anon as a whole and to accept the group conscience.

I believe enthusiasm is contagious, which is evident in the energy put forth in our public outreach projects. We keep extending our bridge to recovery to the outside world with our billboards and bus ads.

I was told at my first Conference to presume goodwill. If I can keep this foremost in my mind along with guidance from my Higher Power and the love and support of Al-Anon members, my spiritual bridge continues to grow.

## **Cecily C., Hawaii**

In the book *First Steps*, our cofounder, Lois W., is quoted as having said, "The word spirituality means so much, it is hard to define . . . I think that spirituality is living a life that has a deeper meaning than the search for daily necessities. If we live spiritually in our daily life, then we find deeper fulfillment for ourselves . . . every activity can have a spiritual motive."

A little about me—my first encounter with an alcoholic was at the breast of my mother. She died as a result of this disease at age 50, a month after my marriage to my high school sweetheart. My next experience was with my first husband and again with my current husband. Obviously, the first time I had no choice, but I instinctively seemed to gravitate to the unpredictable and exciting alcoholic!

I found the rooms of Al-Anon when spouse number one entered a program of recovery and then again, some 12 years later when I was in a fit of rage and wanted to kill spouse number two. While being in Al-Anon for seven years the first time didn't save me from finding myself with another alcoholic, it had enlightened me about the disease and resources for help. With my tail between my legs, filled with shame, frightened,



and distraught at how far I had fallen, I knew where I needed to go—to an Al-Anon meeting.

Without my knowing, I had existed and survived, but not lived. In the rooms of Al-Anon, I began building bridges from the unknown to the known, with the help of fellow members, literature, meeting, slogans, prayers, and the Twelve Steps. I was expanding my knowledge and experience. I learned I knew nothing about alcoholism, even though I had lived with it since birth.

With my newfound knowledge and the help of fellow members came awareness and understanding. With that came the next step, energizing my spiritual life by living the principles of this program. I thought I had it nailed, the first time around. What I learned the second time around, was that I could not take my recovery for granted. It needed regular nurturing.

Being in service ensured I showed up; it was a commitment I made and have kept. My spiritual journey is unending. As long as I live, I will be in search of deeper self-fulfillment.

Our program is a spiritual program. We are in the business of building bridges. Our bridge is built on the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts. These principles have energized many in pursuit and fulfillment of their spiritual quest. It has been the foundation for rebuilding lives for others for more than 50 years.

I never want to forget that there are still many who have not found our bridge. I am committed to helping others find and cross this fantastic bridge. In doing so, I know that I will reap the ultimate benefit—more spiritual awakenings and a spiritual journey that is continually energized by my participation.

## Libby D., Illinois North

As the eldest daughter, second child of five, much responsibility fell to me. Dad was the alcoholic and Mom, the potential Al-Anon. Denial flourished at our house. We went to church and came home to hell. God wasn't there for us. I had to get out. I left with an unsuspecting young man. We took alcoholism with us and insanity ensued.

Thirty-seven years ago, God's grace led me across the bridge from insanity to recovery in the rooms of Al-Anon. I am so thankful that others went before me and built the bridges I would need.

In Al-Anon, I learned I was not only the wife of an alcoholic, but also a child, sister, niece, cousin, grandchild, and friend of many alcoholics. I was surrounded! With no more denial or escape from the reality of my life, I clung to Al-Anon. It has been a slow recovery—a simple program, but not easy.

As I struggled to practice these principles in all my affairs, I was drawn to service. My self-worth increased and I grew, always receiving much more than I gave.

I didn't want to be Delegate after serving as Group and District Representative, Area Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Chairperson. It sounded like too much work. I was tired and old. Let someone else do it. But when we make plans, God just laughs. So, I stood for Delegate and was elected. It was exciting and scary, but I felt energized.

In 2006, I had knee replacement surgery prior to the World Service Conference. Shared leadership, assistance from my Conference Sponsor and peers, kept me moving forward with "Confidence, Collaboration, and Clarity." The 2006 Conference

theme addressed all facets of Al-Anon working together with Knowledge-Based Decision-Making while presuming goodwill. The amount of information was overwhelming. I began to realize the importance of the Delegate to Al-Anon as a whole.

In 2007, we addressed "New Thinking—New Energy—Abundant Outlook" in relation to our Areas and the future of Al-Anon and Alateen. There was still so much information to impart to the Area, but I felt a little more relaxed and organized.

This Conference is bittersweet. I finally get it. Serving the fellowship and my Higher Power is my heart's desire. I want to give back what has been so freely given to me. I am a willing builder of bridges between families who are still suffering and the gift of recovery; between my Area and Al-Anon worldwide. I will continue, as Lois and my Delegate predecessors have done, to "Build Bridges" and be part of "Energizing Our Spiritual Quest." It is with a grateful and humble heart that I willingly serve. "Let It Begin with Me."

## Faye S., Indiana

As the oldest girl of six siblings, I grew up in a house where children were to be seen but not heard. We were told that if we cried we would be given something to really cry about. In my quest for happiness, I determined early that my family was the problem and the solution was to simply get rid of the problem. Marriage would take me out of the intolerable situation, building a bridge to a happier way of living.

My quest was certainly not a spiritual one; lacking the proper tools for living, my bridge was built on the self-centered premise that if you do it my way, things will be fine. Full of negative emotions my bridge was constructed of fear, resentment, and anger. God never answered my demands that He fix the problem of alcoholism in our home.

Being completely devoid of spirituality, there was no spiritual quest for me, it was complete utter desperation that forced me to look to the spiritual tools offered by Al-Anon. Meetings, literature, sponsorship, prayer, and the Twelve Steps allowed me to stop romancing the pain and start building a truly spiritual foundation that would give me the energy to enjoy a new way of life.

Through the working of our Twelve Steps, came my first connection with a God of my understanding, and in turn a new freedom I had never thought possible. It was this freedom that energized me. Once I had surrendered, a new way of life was opened up to me as I began construction on a new bridge with a solid spiritual foundation.

It is hard to make demands when on my knees; that is where total surrender came for me as I asked, not demanded, God's help. I try to express my gratitude for my new life by being there when someone reaches out for help; through service I realize how God works through us to carry our message of hope.

The service positions I held in Al-Anon became my bridge for serving as Area Delegate while continuing to gain a deeper understanding of our Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. It is impossible to be a part of this great experience and not be affected by it—being Delegate has changed my life. What joy I experienced as a first year Delegate witnessing the entire Conference come together as a whole working for the spiritual good of Al-Anon.

My primary purpose and responsibility are spiritual: share my experience with families and friends of alcoholics. In order

to keep what was freely given, I have to try to give it away—that continues to be my spiritual quest!

## Laurel L., Kansas

When I attended my first Al-Anon meeting some years ago, I was not looking for spirituality. I was looking for answers, as so many of us do. My sole purpose was to find out how to help a loved one stop drinking and how to keep them sober. I had no idea I was beginning my spiritual quest.

Once I determined I needed what Al-Anon had to offer, I turned to sponsorship for guidance and was led into working the Twelve Steps of Al-Anon with the message that working through these Steps would help me find my answers. Thus, I began to build bridges to help me learn who I was. To the best of my ability, I began to apply the principles of Al-Anon in my daily life.

I had experienced trying to find something to believe in long before finding Al-Anon, but I always failed to find the right fit for me. Little did I know I was beginning a journey that would help me in my quest for spirituality. Little did I suspect that by beginning to study and apply the three Legacies of Al-Anon in my life, I was building bridges to find the spiritual peace I had long sought.

While serving as Area Delegate, I have had the experience of seeing the process work and have achieved a much closer relationship with the God of my understanding. I have felt the presence of a Higher Power in many decisions and discussions, both at the Conference and within my Area. I have experienced what I consider my Higher Power talking to me and leading me through experiences I never thought possible. I do not need to understand how or why, I just need to know it is okay to allow my Higher Power to give me willingness and acceptance.

Today, I continue to build bridges toward improving my relationships and strengthening my spirituality. I apply as best I can the principles of the program in my every day life for a better tomorrow. This energizes my spiritual quest.

I feel privileged to have been allowed to serve as Delegate. It is an experience I shall carry with me the rest of my life.

## Bruce F., Kentucky

When I came to Al-Anon at age 22, most people thought I was a member of Alateen. My first Sponsor is a perfect example of people building bridges. She helped build my foundation, the start of my spiritual quest.

After my third meeting a woman came up to me and said, “We go out for coffee after the meeting. Would you like to join us?” It seemed like a meeting after the meeting. That was the first brick that started forming my foundation—someone reaching out to me.

After six months I asked this woman to be my Sponsor. She said, “Why did you wait so long to ask me?” I responded, “I had to ask because I needed to say in a meeting, ‘My Sponsor said ...’” She told me there were two things I needed to do in order for her to sponsor me, one was to attend meetings and the second was to read the *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* book every day. I responded, “I can do that.”

My first homework assignment was to practice the suggestions on the *Just for Today* bookmark. I was encouraged to call

her daily and in every conversation she asked me to do something. I was asked to practice a slogan, change my attitude, read Al-Anon literature, attend an open A.A. meeting, just to name a few. Each principle was one more brick in the foundation.

Nine months after I came to my first meeting, I was sitting in an Al-Anon meeting next to my Sponsor and in came the Alateen Sponsor from the meeting across the hall. She said, “I need help,” and *bam*—my Sponsor leaned over and said, “Put your hand up, its time for you to start giving back.” My hand shot up and that night was my first Alateen meeting. We later talked about appropriate and inappropriate behavior of an Alateen Sponsor. I spent the next six years sponsoring that Alateen group. I learned one week at a time how to sponsor an Alateen group.

Sponsoring Alateen was the spark that began my spiritual quest in service to Al-Anon. I continued to serve the fellowship with enthusiasm by working with the Al-Anon Information Service and our local Literature Distribution Center and by working as Group and District Representative, Area Treasurer, Area Group Records Coordinator, Alternate Delegate, and on to where I serve today as Delegate. There have been many people along the way who have guided me, from seasoned members to past World Service Trustees, all in the quest for building our own bridges to the future in Al-Anon.

## Rick P., Manitoba

The first part of our 2008 Conference theme has to do with bridges. Bridges help me to get over obstacles and dangerous places and shorten the distances I have to travel. They are put in place by others who may be braver, more courageous, or have more faith than I have. They show me their courage, strength, and hope. When I hear members’ shared experiences, I am encouraged to step out onto the bridge and cross over at my own pace.

Different bridges cross over different obstacles at different times. Sometimes I have to turn and go back, but because the others stayed to build new bridges and to reinforce the old ones, the way over is still available. I encounter many obstacles in my spiritual journey, but there is always a bridge built or those who will encourage me to help build a new one.

My recovery triangle may seem very small, but when it is combined with others, it can create a very strong foundation, just like the foundations on the first bridges I was able to cross. Helping to build new bridges of recovery, and reinforcing old ones, is service—gratitude in action. Bridges can include chairing meetings, holding group offices, being involved in district and Area activities and service positions, sponsorship, and many other things.

When I don’t stay involved in Al-Anon activities, my recovery triangle becomes unstable, which affects the stability of the bridges I contribute to. There are always members who need a solid foundation to help them over their obstacles. They, as I, cannot do it alone. As I help build and maintain bridges, the experience becomes easier and I get stronger—energizing my spiritual quest.

My spiritual quest involves seeking a better understanding of my Higher Power’s love for me and learning the different roles we have in my recovery. It is, of course, a journey, not an end so I will always be confronted by new obstacles and cross new bridges, working through my fears and helping others when I

can, just as my Higher Power and other Al-Anon and Alateen members help me.

### **Karen L., Maryland/District of Columbia**

When I came to Al-Anon, there was no Karen, or spirit, or energy—just a shell of a person. I didn't believe I could change. I came to meetings without getting involved. I didn't believe there was anything wrong with me—it was *him*.

A man in my home group, who after seeing me only sitting in a chair for a year, asked me to read and share. I have no clue what I said, but I haven't forgotten what he said—he was glad I shared because he remembered when he felt the way I did.

Finally I was not alone. I was energized! I was ready to begin that spiritual quest to find out about me. A loving Sponsor shared her experiences, the strength she'd gained, and the hope that it would work for me, if I was willing.

My Sponsor gave me a small spaceship toy and asked me to follow the instructions. As I followed the instructions, the spaceship turned into a spaceman. My Sponsor had easily shared with me that if I am willing to work the Twelve Steps in my life, I can change. My spiritual quest had taken another turn.

I am happiest about a bridge I started to build by sharing with another person in despair. My son is in the Navy stationed on a nuclear submarine. I received a call in the middle of the night from his friend who was fearful that something bad was going to happen—my son's friend had left behind a drunken wife and two children. I told him about our fellowship, sent some literature, and we continued to talk.

He went to meetings when he got home and while in other countries, but he was concerned that there were no meetings on submarines and his command wouldn't let him start one. He asked me what he could do. I wrote a letter to the Department of Defense. I was surprised to receive a response asking for more information. I shared literature and my experience, strength, and hope. Today there are meetings on submarines and other Navy vessels when they are out to sea. The bridge has begun.

In Al-Anon, I'm learning that in order to build a bridge, I have to be willing to make the first step to open my heart and reach out to others. My family has benefited, my two sons see a different mother because I joined Al-Anon and became willing. I still have relationships that need rebuilding. Today I am willing to do my part, but I can only do my part. I am grateful every day that because I showed up here and you loved me until I could love myself, I can build bridges in my family, the work place, my life, and in Al-Anon. As my grandson says, "I am 'full up.'" I thank each of you for filling me up today.

### **Michael B., Michigan**

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day." That describes how I felt and how I entered my first Al-Anon meeting, on my knees. I was on my knees because the alcoholics had beaten me down that low, or I had allowed it. I was void of any self-esteem, but full of anger and resentment.

After enduring a childhood of abuse from alcoholics, now two of my four sons are alcoholics and no matter what I did,

the situation and chaos only got worse. I felt I was a total failure as a father and as a human being. I was spiraling into a deep depression.

I do not remember much from my first Al-Anon meeting except that a member mentioned the "three Cs" and I only heard the first one, "You didn't cause it." I wanted to do a back flip. It was not my fault. Oh, I did play a part in it, but it was not all about me, it was about alcohol and the alcoholic. And then you said that you would love me until I learned to love myself. That was many 24 hours ago when my journey in recovery began. That path has led me to places I thought I could and would never go.

My recovery started by building bridges over the vast canyons that existed in my heart and soul. Massive crevasses labeled anger, hate, fear, rage, self-loathing, and loneliness. These bottomless voids could not be filled by me alone, so you—through sharing your experience, strength, and hope—helped me build those bridges and work on filling the canyons with forgiveness, understanding, compassion, love, and respect for myself and the alcoholic.

While on this fabulous adventure called recovery, something most unexpected and wonderful happened. With your unconditional love and fellowship, I found the courage to reach out beyond myself and my understanding and I recognized my Higher Power. A Higher Power who is caring, understanding, compassionate, and loves me unconditionally. I call my Higher Power, "Father." My spiritual quest had begun and I found a universe with no boundaries.

I energized my spiritual quest when I became an Alateen Sponsor and discovered that the more I participated in service, the deeper my spiritual awareness. "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest" encapsulates my program and now, my life. Service through the Concepts allows me to pass this gift of recovery and spiritual awareness on by sharing my program, allowing myself to be human, and by living the life that Father intended me to live.

### **Pat S., Minnesota South**

After the Conference last year when I realized that I was going to have to write, and give, my three-minute talk this year, I was really worried. What would I find to say? Then we received this year's Conference theme and before I could sleep that night, my talk had written itself. Just another reminder that all we have to do is be willing and our Higher Power will help us out.

There were two kinds of bridges in my childhood. The first was scary. We had a little farm almost completely encircled by the oxbow of a river. To get to school, or anywhere else, we either had to cross a bridge or take a long, roundabout route.

The bridge was iron, old, rusty, and it rattled. It was a single lane bridge with a load limit, which meant the school bus couldn't cross it. Sometimes as we were walking to meet the school bus, my brother would grab one of the iron support bars and shake it until the whole bridge shook, just because he knew it scared me.

That bridge was symbolic of most of my childhood, shaky and scary.

There was another bridge, though. That was the bridge on my father's violin. It was the symbol of beauty and escape for me.



Music could always free me from the pain of reality and make my spirit soar in other places.

You probably know what a violin looks like, the thin neck, the hourglass shape, the swirly slots in the front. If you get very close to a violin, though, you see the bridge, which is a real work of art and is the key to the violin's beautiful sound.

You can pluck any string that is pulled taut, like the string of a bow and arrow, and it will make a twanging sound. The violin string is just the same, except that it goes across the bridge, and that makes all the difference. The bridge takes the thin sound of a violin string, and energizes it by transferring it to the sound box.

Think of our Twelve Steps as twelve strings. By themselves they are pretty thin and lifeless. It is within the context of our groups that they resonate. I've known some people who have left the group, only to come back later and say, "I did the readings, and studied the Steps, but it wasn't the same without the group."

When I reach out my hands, when we all reach out our hands, and say, "Let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and—*Let It Begin with Me*," we are turning ourselves into bridges, energizing our program for all of us on our spiritual quest.

## Bob C., New York North

It is difficult for me to express in words what Al-Anon Family Groups, including Alateen, has done for my life. A few notables are: daily connection to a Higher Power, which has truly energized my spiritual quest; developing a spirit of mind that I am never alone; realizing it's okay to do things for myself without feeling guilty; understanding that I can still do for and care for others without it becoming detrimental to myself or them; learning about self-love; knowing that I can say what I really think without fear of people judging me; and, of course, the greatest gift in my mind is the gift of real hope. All these are miraculous happenings that moved my life from one of chaos and fear to hope and serenity.

When I first thought about the theme, "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest," I asked myself what I have experienced in these past 18 years that would equate to building bridges in some way. The following have been critical to my recovery:

- To build a bridge that would move my life from one of fear to one of trust and hope through meetings, service, sponsoring, etc.
- To understand how important service bridges are as a function of recovery and how communication is essential to its success. The obvious place where communication plays a huge role is in the bridges built from the World Service Conference to the Areas, the districts, the groups, and finally to the individual members. Members are elected to serve at the various levels of service and to carry the message from the World Service Conference to all levels of our structure.
- Still other important bridges necessary for the fellowship to function effectively are bridges to local professionals and churches that explain what we're about, bridges between generations of members (i.e., Alateen), bridges that take us from a mind-set of rigidity to one of

acceptance—accepting change as a positive thing, not something to fear.

- The ultimate bridge for me to cross is the one that will take me from this marvelous human existence to an eternal life beyond physical death with my Higher Power who loves me unconditionally.

My role, as I see it in serving as part of the hands of Al-Anon, is to be there for others in need in any way I can be helpful and to make service an intricate part of the foundations of those aforementioned bridges. Service I believe is at the very core of our fellowship and therefore at the very core of the bridges.

My quest for spirituality has given me faith that daily trust in and connection with a Higher Power in my life will serve as a wonderful preparation for the day I meet my Higher Power after crossing that ultimate bridge. My role as Delegate these past three years has inspired me and energized my spiritual quest beyond anything I could have imagined and I thank the members for providing me the honor of being a Delegate and the Conference members for all their love, understanding, and support.

## Barbara W., Ohio

Step One is a bridge from despair to surrender. I come into Al-Anon alone and leave that meeting with a phone number.

Step Two is a bridge to hope. I peek out from under my security blanket of denial and see a room full of new best friends I have not met yet.

Step Three is a bridge to trust. I begin to develop and nurture a relationship with God and dare to believe that God will not abandon me. In turning "me" over, God hands me a road map to self-discovery.

Step Four is a bridge to my character. Judgment is suspended about my actions, reactions, and behavior as I record my reality.

Step Five is a bridge that allows me to let others in. Having faith that God will presume goodwill gives me the courage to believe that another person will love me unconditionally.

Step Six is a bridge to readiness. My eyes are open and my arms are burdened with a bag full of survival tactics I no longer need.

Step Seven is a bridge to humility. I "Let Go and Let God." I release those defects of character. My assets blossom with the new found growing space.

Step Eight is a bridge to willingness. I accept myself as a beautiful, worthy child of God. I acknowledge that the disease has used me as a vehicle to harm others.

Step Nine is a bridge to responsibility and the people who have shared this earthly experience with me. I have the wisdom to know the difference between what is mine and what is yours. I dance within my own hula hoop.

Step Ten is a bridge to accountability. I am free from the past and able to seize the day. I am no longer on my tiptoes trying to lean into tomorrow. I no longer rock back on the heels of my feet, trying to regain my balance as I fall back into yesterday. I stand on the soles of my feet—in alignment with my heart.

Step Eleven is a bridge to God. I feel God's breath on my cheek as He whispers and I hear God's loving guidance.

Step Twelve is a bridge to the world around me. I relax my arms and open the palms of my hands. My fingertips reach out to others, catch another's tear, the corners of my mouth turn



upward and I smile joyfully, sharing the peace and serenity that have become a part of me.

I have all of these bridges around me, and I thought there was only one!

## Joan P., Ontario South

As I reflect on my younger years, I recall asking myself what my purpose in life would be. Little did I know back then that the disease of alcoholism that I grew up with and eventually married into would send me down a path that would change my life and give me a purpose and direction.

From hopelessness and despair, God chose the people who would guide me to my first Al-Anon meeting; that was my first bridge to sanity. I applied the Twelve Steps for personal growth and my perspective on life changed dramatically. Over the years, the strength I received from our three Legacies brought me to a greater understanding of my purpose in life; to love, to be loved and to serve others.

I was deadlocked in fear before coming to Al-Anon. Fear of people and fear of the unknown encompassed my life. Little did I know that I would surmount these fears by sharing my innermost feelings with “strangers.” I was hugged when I didn’t love myself. I was loved by members who assured me they would walk the path to peace and serenity if I was willing to open my heart and allow them in. I learned to tear down the walls that kept me isolated and today I feel the freedom.

The commitment I made many years ago has allowed me to be of service in my group, in my district, and at the Area level. I moved toward each level of service knowing that God has my best interest in mind. He offered the help and walked with me over the hills and through the valleys. The leadership abilities God helped me to develop have allowed me to move forward with confidence. He helped me to develop new thinking, gave me new energy, and He continues to allow me to build bridges that open the door to new adventures. I have met people from many countries, I have traveled to many places, I have shared my personal story and my service experiences with many people. None of this would have been possible without my willingness to cross the bridge and make Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. a part of my life.

In my early years, my mind entertained wishful fantasies, wishing life would be different, more fulfilling. God helped me build the bridge from my wishbone to my funny bone and then to my backbone as He guided me through service. Today I am devoted to pursuing a deeper meaning and a more divine expression in my life.

## Mary R., Pennsylvania

When I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting, I felt very defeated and negative. How could these people have such positive attitudes with the presence of alcoholism in their lives? I soon realized that practicing the Twelve Steps would carry me into a more desirable place and that I would be able to once again laugh and find peace in my daily life.

The personal recovery I experienced made me feel better each day and in listening to the Traditions, I knew they provided unity to each group. The Concepts were “home” to me as I’ve been blessed tenfold by the service I have given in all stages

of my life. I volunteered to attend an Al-Anon World Service Committee meeting when our District Representative wasn’t available and that is where I knew that I wanted to someday be a Delegate!

Serving as Area Delegate has definitely energized my spiritual quest for serenity and closer association with my God. This service experience has driven my recovery much faster than I ever expected it to go. My reasons for wanting to serve as Delegate were to represent my Area at the World Service Conference and to share my Area’s love for our program with the world. I didn’t realize that while doing this I would reap such great benefits.

Trust in my God was the first thing I did after being elected. Like many fellow first year Delegates, I was frightened that I did not have the intellectual ability to fulfill this position and to function in the capacity that was expected. Would I ever be able to remember all that I was responsible to do? Would I be able to represent my Area in the way they were used to being represented? Would I understand what the WSO was asking me to do? I soon learned that we are all different and serve in unique ways. I listened to my predecessors, I read back issues of the *Conference Summary* and the *Service Manual*, and I prayed every day.

The growth in my self-confidence has been marked because I now know that there are not always just “yes” and “no” answers and the right answer for me is not necessarily the right answer for someone else. I have learned to follow my heart and I will not go wrong. I have shared my convictions with the World Service Conference (WSC) in each of my first two years and I am proud that I was part of an organization that allowed me this opportunity. It was not easy to address controversy and speak my opinion, but that is what keeps Al-Anon Family Groups strong—we listen to the grass roots and we continue to have the spiritual quest for unity within our fellowship.

I thank all of you for your patience with me and most of all for the friendship and kindness I received while serving as part of the WSC. Our leaders have shown extreme patience and serenity during difficult times. By demonstrating how this program works we can unite our fellowship, making Al-Anon even stronger.

## Yvette D., Quebec West

I began to reconstruct my life when I found Lois’s shoes (Al-Anon) quite a while ago when I had no gray hair. I continue to build bridges in my life that are more solid with the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts of Service, and my Sponsor. Since having taken on the function of Delegate, I have come to realize that I still need you all.

People in need of the program need to learn about Al-Anon and it is my responsibility to construct bridges and to transmit the message to those who do not know of the existence of Al-Anon as a resource of help for the family members of problem drinkers.

I grew up around many alcoholics in my life. I am still married. We have four children and four grandchildren and my husband tells me, “Go where you would like, but return to me, but do not tell me that I drink too much.” I use the slogan, “Live and Let Live.”

For the future of Al-Anon, I must spread the word with more public outreach and presume goodwill to energize my life. My spiritual quest is evolving with service. I have more self-confidence now while always working within my strengths and weaknesses.

With the help of my God, I always receive answers to my questions according to His will. Nevertheless, I still have some doubts. Like you, I am not alone in service—others have gone before me. I can ask for help, even if it is difficult at times to do so. It is a process of trial and error, but with the help of God and Al-Anon members like you, I will prevail.

One person can make the difference in the life of an alcoholic. I would like to be that person who will build the bridges for the future.

Remember that God is always there even though we do not see Him, I can hear Him by listening to others speak. God has no other voice but my own for spreading His word. My arms are there for welcoming newcomers. Today I can speak from the heart and say that He loves everyone as they are, for who they are.

I embrace you all with big hugs together in service and I thank you for this great experience these last three years. I appreciate all your work done in the name of service and for your help to me.

### Barbara M., Rhode Island

Engineers build bridges to make crossing over areas easier. Delegates are responsible to plan, design, and lay a foundation to build bridges strong enough to carry the message of hope to families and friends of alcoholics for the future.

The first thing I had to do to start the construction was to identify solid foundation materials and recovery tools. Some members expressed adversity and resistance when the changes were proposed, and I learned to practice patience, persistence, and understanding. Through tears and some “good orderly direction,” I was led to the *Service Manual*. Any problem I was experiencing I could find the answer there. I had a hard time imagining that the *Manual* was going to help me deal with people, but after my usual period of doubt, I discovered it was really there, I just had to trust and learn to listen.

I am surrounded by alcoholics and people affected by this disease. I have to stay busy to keep my sanity and realize that service is a great tool to focus my responsibilities positively on my job, instead of on what the alcoholics are doing. Being powerless over my daughter's alcoholism has been the most heart-wrenching part of my recovery, but through that pain I discovered service outside of my home group.

As my term as Delegate is ending, I realize how much this experience has changed the way I interact with people in my personal and professional life. I have been given the gift of lifelong friends, a newfound respect for others, and the confidence to stand by my principles and values. When I put “principles above personalities” and become willing to do the next right thing, I am capable of building bridges, laying out plans, and standing back to see the results. I am grateful to have been part of the positive changes my Area has experienced. I couldn't wait to share this with my Delegate friends. The spiritual energy I felt when I drove home from our first Assembly blew me away. I was humbled by what we had accomplished and will be proud

to watch my Area unite and grow as they see that their voices are heard and validated. I wasn't expecting that.

I am proud to have been part of Panel 46. Thank you for the encouragement when I was sad, the love when I felt unloved, the strength when I was weak, and the wisdom to take risks and change what I can. This support is the energy that has expanded my spiritual quest.

### Joyce R., Tennessee

This year's Conference theme has allowed me to pause and consider my own spiritual journey while serving my Area. As Delegate I have had opportunities to see how important it is to focus on the spiritual principles of Al-Anon, realizing that without these spiritual principles there can be little unity as mentioned in the First Tradition.

An example is that a much deeper understanding of *spiritual anonymity* has brought with it a challenge to look beyond the person speaking so that I can listen to the message and consider the possibilities. This can sometimes be a difficult challenge. I continue to find that the answers to my difficulties are in the Legacies of Al-Anon.

When I came into Al-Anon, I had reached a low point in my life. Sadly for me I did not realize that due to my own disease, my perceptions were distorted as long as I refused to accept the disease concept. I merely heard what I chose to hear and looked for ways that I was not like you. Service work allows me many opportunities to work on this particular part of my recovery journey.

Today as I serve Al-Anon I have a clearer understanding of the family disease of alcoholism. I am able to see with more clarity the opportunities my Higher Power gives me to realize that each member of Al-Anon is just where they are supposed to be in their journey. It is through service that I understand how to work and play with my fellow members while realizing that we all come to Al-Anon with desperate and often broken spirits and begin to work toward learning ways to change our lives by following Al-Anon's principles of recovery. Finding the ability to look beyond personalities and move on with Al-Anon's primary purpose is my personal prayer.

In looking at my Area's membership, we are mostly of one race, though I know that the disease of alcoholism knows no boundaries. Looking forward, one of the goals for our Area is to find ways of reaching out to the Spanish-speaking communities and other minorities. My hope is to build bridges by discovering new ways to bring the message of hope to them. It seems like an insurmountable task. How can my Area begin to accomplish this? I've learned that it begins with my willingness to see beyond our differences of skin color, language, and old thinking, so that I can see all that we have in common. This thinking allows me to start the process of seeking ways to build bridges and energizing my spiritual quest.

### Bennie P., Texas East

When I heard this year's Conference theme, I asked myself, “How in the world do I build bridges?” The second part was easy because I've always been on a spiritual quest. I went back to last year's theme, “New Thinking—New Energy—Abundant Outlook.” to stimulate my thinking.

I thought about when I was first asked to be my home group's GR—I said yes without knowing what GR stood for! When it was explained that all I had to do was go to a district meeting and bring the information back to the group, I thought, yes I can do that! That was the beginning of my spiritual quest to learn more about Al-Anon's service structure. The same thing happened when I was elected District Representative.

After my term was over, I thought that was it. However, my Higher Power had something else in store for me. During elections I found myself raising my hand when asked if I wanted to stand for Area Treasurer. My Sponsor was so surprised because she knew I was not interested in service at the Area level.

I went on to stand for a second term and later stood for Alternate Delegate and finally Delegate. My Area had enough trust in me to elect me their representative to the World Service Conference when I didn't have any faith that I could do a good job.

The first thing that our Area officers did was to set goals for ourselves and the Area and we promised to be in constant communication with one another. I believe we have successfully accomplished that. I didn't know it then, but I know now that we were re-building the bridges of communication, trust, and unity. I brought back what I had learned at Conference and talked about how shared leadership works at all levels.

Many years ago, I was discouraged and frustrated because I wasn't finding the serenity and spirituality that I saw in others and I almost felt like dropping out Al-Anon, but someone said, "Just keep coming back." I'm glad I did, because I can truly say that I finally reached my spiritual quest. Thanks to my Higher Power who was working through my Sponsor and Past Delegates in my Area. Those people nudged me along every step of the way and told me I could do it. I feel blessed that they are still active in our Area and continue to build bridges by sharing their leadership skills, experience, strength, and hope! They are an example to follow.

## Sue M., Texas West

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When I began my journey in the Al-Anon program, I was isolated and alone. I was surrounded by people at work and home, but I was alone. I had built walls with bricks of denial, doubt, disappointment, despair, discouragement, depression, and shame around myself. I had built them strong using mortar made of fear to seal everyone out.

As the message of love and the love of the members of Al-Anon began to seep under and through my walls, I began the arduous job of tearing them down. By applying the principles of the Steps and slowly taking each one, I began to see what fear was doing to me and how a Higher Power could and would remove it. That is when I really began a pursuit of the God of my understanding. This search began the process of building a bridge of hope and faith. It took me many places, including back to church. I found the God of breath and life that gave me the power to walk through the fear.

As I attacked the fear, I let people into my life. At a meeting one night, I heard myself volunteer to pick up one of our members who didn't drive. As I drove home, I was horrified at what I had done! But, fussing at myself all the way, I went by her house to pick her up for the next meeting. This task became one of the highlights of my life because I really let her in—where the fears, doubts, shame, and disappointments lived.

Soon, we were a team. Anything she attended, I drove her there. Likewise, anyplace I went, she rode along. We went to conferences, workshops, and Assembly. We had built a bridge of friendship that lasted until she passed away in 2001.

When you let someone inside the wall with you, the hole where they entered causes the wall to begin to crumble. When that happened, I began to build bridges! At first, I built a bridge with one person in the program, then another and another.

The bridge of friendship led to service, which energized my spiritual journey and allowed me to meet people from around the world. Today I understand what the phrase, "Al-Anon is a worldwide fellowship," really means and I am inspired to reach out to others.

I am no longer alone, the company of other people truly energized my spiritual quest.

## INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

### Inga v.E., Germany

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this WSC and for the opportunity to talk about the German structure of Al-Anon and my experiences with building bridges.

In 1963 the first Al-Anon group was in Germany. It was an American group with participation of German members. You could say this was the beginning of Al-Anon in Germany. To be correct, the first German group was founded in Mühlheim/Ruhr and registered with the World Service Office (WSO) in 1967. We had the pleasure of celebrating our 40th Anniversary last year.

In 1968 the first pamphlet, "Hilf dir selbst,"—in English, "Help Yourself"—was created. It was sold via A.A.

In 1972 you could find groups in all parts of the BRD (abbreviation for the former West Germany). Since that time we have close contacts with Switzerland, Austria, and the WSO. We started building a German structure. The Al-Anon Family Groups were registered as a non-profit-unit in the register of associations at the county court in Bremen. The basic structure was completed.

The first Alateen group began in 1973.

In 1976, we established our own Literature Distribution Centre. Today our literature catalogue contains 15 books and about 30 pamphlets in German.

In 1979 the members of the Al-Anon Committee in Berlin decided to set up a General Service Office in Köln. It started in 1980. One paid staff member was hired. She wasn't an Al-Anon member.

In 1981 we published the first edition of our magazine, "Intern."

In 1983 there were about 650 Al-Anon groups in the BRD.

The first General Service Conference of Al-Anon Germany took place in Essen in 1986. Since then, it occurs every year. Also in 1986 the first Al-Anon group of the former DDR (abbreviation for the former East Germany) was founded.

In 1987 our GSO moved from Köln to Essen.

Ten years later, with the approval of the General Service Conference the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and the Policy Committee are established, as well as the Alateen Committee, the Budget Committee, the Conference Committee, the Literature Committee, and the Public Information Committee. There were about 950 groups in Germany.

Since 1998 people found us via the Internet.

In 2000 the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) took place in Essen. Forty-three Delegates from 20 countries and members from the WSO attended the meeting. The German structure was a part of the IAGSM from its beginning in 1980.

Today we have 818 Al-Anon groups, which includes 41 Alateen groups and 65 groups for Al-Anon Adult Children.

Now I have to build my first bridge. How shall I switch from the German structure to my own experiences? I'll start with the beginning.



After years of suffering from the family disease alcoholism, I was not a nice person at all. I was always fussy. Nobody in my family could do anything right. If someone managed to do a good job, they wouldn't expect me to commend them. You can imagine the atmosphere in our home. It could hardly become worse.

One day I was so unhappy that I was sitting on my bed crying. My elder daughter came to me and hugged me and comforted me. I felt relieved, but I knew at once that there was something wrong in our behaviour. But I could not have told you what. Some days later we had the same situation. And that time I knew what was going wrong. My daughter had taken my position. It wasn't me taking care of my children—my child was taking care of her mum. This time I woke up. Although I didn't know it then, I started building the first bridge.

I had heard about Al-Anon some time before and I knew one person who attended Al-Anon meetings. I called her. Usually she is very busy and hard to reach, but that day she was at home and had an hour to listen and to talk to me. After that hour I went home with all of her Al-Anon literature and a meeting schedule. I felt strengthened and I was able to start changing things. First I read all the books. I read them as if they were detective stories. While reading I thought that everything sounded so easy. The people found their serenity and their recovery. And often the alcoholics in their families became sober. What on earth do they have in Al-Anon that I don't have? I can assure you I had tried almost everything to stop my loved one from drinking.

So I built the second bridge and started to attend Al-Anon meetings. Since that time, lots of things have changed in my life. My husband stopped drinking—not because I told him to do so, but because I had made my decision to change my life. I really wanted to have a good life and I was ready to go my own way without him if he would not change his way of life. And here I come to another bridge. Because of crossing this bridge my husband and I could establish a real relationship.

The next bridge was also built in my family. It was the connection between my elder daughter and me. Although I always thought we were quite good in getting along with each other, I was wrong. There was a deep rift between us. When I started going to Al-Anon meetings, my behaviour changed quickly and she became curious and joined Al-Anon too. And so we learned to talk about our difficulties. First we could only do so at the meetings, but then we were able to deal with our relationship at home. Today we have a very good relationship. Both of us have service jobs in Al-Anon.

Doing service brings more bridges into my life. Soon after joining Al-Anon, I had my first service job. Although I still had a lot to learn in Al-Anon, my group trusted me to become its Group Representative. I am still grateful for the courage to apply for that job. Since then, I've had the pleasure to do quite a few service jobs. Today I am allowed to serve my structure as IAGSM Delegate and as the Speaker of the Board.

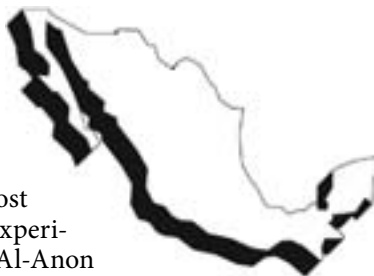
You surely recognized that I did not yet say a word about my spiritual quest—to be honest, it is difficult for me to talk about it. Surely my spiritual journey began at my first Al-Anon meeting, although I didn't realize it at the time. I do not know how it works, but when I started working my programme and



doing service in Al-Anon, this spiritual power increased. I do not have to fret about critical or unknown situations. I am no longer afraid of doing things I have never done before. I just try my very best and believe that my Higher Power will do the rest. And it works. Following the World Service Conference theme, I have to build bridges to energize my spiritual quest.

## Nydia Julia M., Mexico

I greet all of you with great pleasure and thank God that He has given me an opportunity to attend another wonderful World Service Conference. After these few days, I will go back to my country with the most important news and my best experiences from this 48th Annual Al-Anon World Service Conference.



Having the opportunity and the privilege to visit Stepping Stones will be a dream come true for me because nothing is impossible for God. It was there, in the home of Al-Anon's cofounder Lois W., where the first bridge of love and service was created to transmit the message of hope for families and friends of alcoholics around the world.

It was in sunny Mérida, in the year 1963, that a ray of light glowed over Mexico when Mexico received the first message of hope from Al-Anon. It was an effective solution for the recovery of Mexican families that were affected by the dreadful disease of alcoholism.

Then on February 8, 1965, the first structured group with six members was formed in Mexico City. In June 1973, one group of Al-Anon volunteers from Mexico City, aware of the need for a National Service Center, organized a General Service Committee with the purpose of linking all the existing groups in our country and helping them.

For this National Service Center to be functional and legal in our country, it was necessary to establish a non-profit civil association. The first National Assembly took place from September 9 to 12, 1973, in Oaxtepec, Morelos. Nine "representative members" from different states, who were not yet named Delegates, attended the Assembly. In 1973 there were only 73 groups in Mexico.

Now we have more than 3,300 groups, including 420 Alateen groups. The General Service Office is located in Mexico City and has 17 staff members.

In February 2008, we organized with great success, harmony, and peace our 35th National Service Assembly Conference, which took place for six consecutive days. All 36 Delegates from 36 Areas in Mexico attended this Conference, together with the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, Chairpersons of the Alateen, Archives, Literature, and Public Outreach Committees, and the assigned GSO staff. The number of voting Conference members was 54.

The most relevant news from our National Service Assembly Conference is:

- We would like to inform you that the project "Purchase of the House" was successfully completed with the support

and help of its members. The operation was concluded by buying the property for the Association. We signed the official papers on October 26, 2007, at the Public Notary No. 56 in the state of Mexico. This was the day that we finished paying the costs of the building, including tax and notary costs.

- We would also like to inform you of our new projects. For example, the construction of a third floor on our office, the approval of the Plan for Improvement and Development, as well as the Information Technology Areas. The latter includes the improvement of the Web site and the Control Group systems. Additionally we hired another staff member, who started working with us in March 2008. She is responsible for Media and Quality Control of printed materials.
- The Certification Process for Alateen Sponsors was approved by the Conference members and can now be applied on a national level. This process was presented by the Chairperson of the Alateen Committee.
- We have carried out the two dynamics that were realized during the 47th World Service Conference. The "Finance Dynamic," which was realized by the Finance Committee members, and the dynamic on how to bring new energy to our Area Assemblies. Here the main objective was to create new ideas and bring new energy into the Area while leaving behind the old thinking. We also created one dynamic ourselves. This was with reference to the "Al-Anon Spoken Here" project and includes the reminder to focus on the Al-Anon program when the meeting focus wanders to outside issues.
- We would also like to inform the Conference members about the most relevant results of the Regional Service Seminar, which took place in Oaxtepec, Morelos, in July 2007. This seminar was attended by 2,552 Al-Anon and Alateen members and the Convention Committee enthusiastically motivated them to attend our next National Convention in Querétaro. This convention will take place this year from August 1 to 3 with the theme "Following the Steps of Lois W."

The Board of Trustees of the GSO consists of five Regional Trustees, four Trustees at Large, and the Executive Director. We meet every three months, whereas the Executive Committee meets monthly.

Over time Mexico has been represented at 12 World Service Conferences (WSC) and 11 International Al-Anon General Services Meetings (IAGSM). Moreover, we have been present in the last six consecutive WSCs, as well as in the most recent IAGSMs in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2004, and in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 2006. Finally, Mexico will also be present at the 14th IAGSM in Finland in October 2008. The Board of Trustees has elected me as the International Delegate for this great event.

But how have we accomplished all this? By means of creating one bridge of unity that brings us together. This bridge with Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. has made our structure stronger. We are thankful for the invitations that our GSO has received through the WSO International Coordination Committee annually to send one Representative to the WSC and to send one or two Delegates to the IAGSM every two years.

But what other bridges can we build to energize our spiritual quest? We built bridges through the practice of our spiritual

principles, attending our meetings, having faith in our Higher Power, and being ready to serve our fellowship in any way we can. That is also how I started my spiritual quest 17 years ago when I arrived at the Al-Anon Family Groups. Later service gave me step-by-step serenity, confidence in myself, faith in a Higher Power, knowledge, courage, and strength. All this has led me to new and unknown horizons.

I became a Trustee at Large in 2004 and was Chairperson of the Board from March 2005 to February 2008. Currently I am the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The past year I traveled 20 times to properly carry out my service position. How have I been able to do this besides my job and my family? Really, I don't know, but the Higher Power has given me the means necessary to do so.

I am grateful to God for helping me find the Al-Anon Family Groups, as well as guiding me through the path of service. I am also thankful for the wonderful family that He has given me, for my husband, whom I love so dearly, and who found sobriety through A.A. I am grateful for my four children; each of them is a gift from God, my two grandchildren, my two daughters-in-law, and for my precious mother.

The Al-Anon program is a program for life. It is a program of wisdom that guides us to create bridges to energize our search to find serenity, faith, happiness, new opportunities, and the hope for a better life.

## Louise C., South Africa

When I was 23, I met a marvellous man, fell in love, and married him within six months. It took six weeks to realise that he was an alcoholic.

The Higher Power was good to us—in 1967 my husband joined A.A. and I joined Al-Anon. Our marriage became based on the A.A. and Al-Anon programs and we raised our children according to the fellowships' principles.

Whatever my situation, whatever my needs, the Al-Anon principles are still applicable. I became able to take my focus off of the alcoholic and eventually understood that life was more than coping with alcoholism and my husband was more than an alcoholic. With this insight, my whole approach to life changed.

Attending meetings and reading literature forced me to face myself on a regular basis, and to take an honest look at my life. I slowly learned to trust the program.

I decided years ago that I want the best life could offer me within the parameters of my situation. I was prepared to work hard with what I'd been given. I had to learn to be realistic, and honest about my wants, fears, and joys. I learned one of the most important lessons: "Paradise is a state of mind." (*Paths to Recovery*, page 178).

My husband passed away in 1999 and I had to learn a new set of life lessons:

- Accepting the end of the life I led with my husband was more confusing, painful, and difficult than beginning a

new life as a widow.

- Value solitude—to be alone, but not lonely.
- I needed Al-Anon more than ever to fashion a new life.

Al-Anon even gave me a new service position, Chairperson of the GSO, to keep me busy and focused, reminding me what is really important—energizing our team.

### Important Facts about South Africa

South Africa lies at the southern part of Africa, south of the Zambezi river. It's a beautiful country with a mediterranean climate in the southern Cape area, desertlike areas in the Karoo and the Kalahari, sub-tropical areas on the east coast, and savannas and bushveld filled with wild animals to the north.

We have a diverse population, ranging from a third world to a first world culture and is indeed a challenge to build bridges with:

- African tribes each with their own language and culture
- People from European descent who emigrated to South Africa during the 17th century, speaking mostly Afrikaans (based on the language of the original Dutch settlers)
- English immigrants who came to South Africa during the 19th century (mostly English-speaking)

This diversity has resulted in 11 official languages. English is spoken in most Al-Anon groups, but there are some Afrikaans groups. Most South Africans are bilingual and members are encouraged to speak in their mother tongue at group meetings. To reach out to other communities, we have translated some Al-Anon pamphlets and *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* into Afrikaans and a few pamphlets into isiZulu, isiXhosa and seSotho.

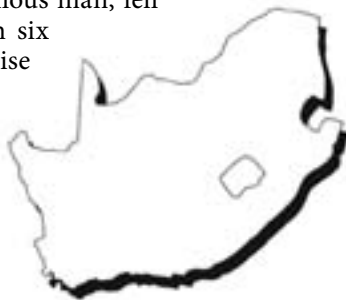
A family group in Cape Town received one of the 87 letters written by Lois and Anne in founding Al-Anon in 1951. By 1963 the first General Service Office was established in Pretoria. Our first Conference was held in 1964. In 1975 the first structure (based on the UK model) was accepted by Conference. In 1976 the first Board of Trustees was elected. In 1980 two South Africa Delegates attended the first trial International Al-Anon General Services Meeting. In 1996, Conference voted to accept a new structure based on the American model but adapted to suit our needs.

In 2001 the Al-Anon Conference voted to relocate the GSO to Cape Town. In 2002 no Conference took place due to finances.

The Executive Director of the World Service Office came to South Africa in 2004 to discuss an outreach project to sub-Saharan Africa. Our GSO office is the only GSO in Africa. We invited the Executive Director back to our Conference in 2005 and he brought the message of *believing in the abundance out there*. After listening to our financial planning, he asked us to make a dream list of how we would like to see Al-Anon in five years time. We were amused by our dreams of growing to 500 groups, having TV ads, radio spots, a new, well-equipped office, even a full time office administrator. We eventually came to believe in our wish list.

In 2006 we received a substantial bequest from a grateful Al-Anon member. Receiving this forced the South Africa Conference and the Board to move into unknown territory—to at last register as a legal entity. The challenge was and is to manage Al-Anon as a legal entity using our spiritual guidelines.

In 2007, our Conference voted in favour of purchasing property to house the GSO. This decision was based on thorough research. We haven't found suitable property yet.



To further benefit all members of Al-Anon South Africa, a portion of the funds were used to:

- Upgrade Area offices
- Give a discount on literature
- Distribute a group file with all relevant group information to each group, including *Groups at Work* (P-24)
- Provided literature for Area public outreach projects
- Moved to a larger GSO office with meeting space and employed a full time office administrator

### **National Conference**

Biennial Conferences are held due to financial constraints—the Areas cannot afford to pay for annual Conferences which are very expensive in our country.

### **Regional Service Seminars**

Well attended RSS are held annually in all three areas. The program usually includes guest speakers, service workshops, an Assembly, some personal growth meetings (candlelight meetings are popular), and lots of fellowship.

### **Member services**

At the moment we have 137 Al-Anon groups in South Africa (includes six Al-Anon Adult Children, nine Alateen, and two young Al-Anon groups).

### **Alateen**

We are concerned about the lack of interest of teenagers in attending Alateen groups, and the lack of willing Sponsors. We intend to have Alateen Sponsors meet the minimum legal requirements for caring for minors.

We have two very active young adults groups.

### **Al-Anon Adult Children Groups**

The six Al-Anon Adult Children groups are strong groups. They continue to ask for more literature focusing on their specific needs!

### **Loners**

Monthly Loner letters in English and Afrikaans are sent to loners in and outside our borders building bridges with those who cannot attend meetings. This loner group is growing and we will be embarking on a loner drive this year.

### **Into Africa Initiative 2007**

The major constraint with Africa north of our borders is communication. Frequent, long-lasting power cuts and email servers regularly being out of order prohibit communication. Internet accessibility is very limited and very expensive. Postal delivery is totally unreliable. We often use travelling Al-Anon members to courier materials for us.

We have had communication with groups and individuals in Harare (Zimbabwe), Maseru (Lesotho), Mbabane (Swaziland), Walvis Bay and Windhoek (Namibia); Oranjemund (South of Namibia), Lusaka (Zambia), Nairobi (Kenya), and Tanzania.

We continue to network with existing AFGs with the assistance of local rehabilitation centers, A.A. and their *Into Africa Initiative* to find, communicate with, and build relationships with existing groups in sub-Saharan Africa. We will continue creating a data base of existing groups and will do our best to supply groups with material and support.

### **Public Outreach**

All three Areas participated in the *Leave Hope* campaign, forgetting material all over the country in buses, trains, at shelters, libraries, post boxes, schools, doctor's rooms, clinics, and rehabs.

Members from all three areas were guest speakers on an interactive radio program called *Anonymous on Air*.

### **Media Campaign 2007**

One of the first aims of the Al-Anon Trust was to launch a media campaign to make Al-Anon Family Groups a household name in South Africa. In the past, even PSAs were totally beyond our means. One of the top South Africa media houses was willing to develop this campaign for us—it includes ads for TV, film, radio, and printed media.

When the filming was complete late in 2007, the agency entered the ads for the MultiChoice Vuka competition for public service announcements. Only PBO organisations are considered for this award. To our great delight one of our three ads won for best cinematography. The other two were ranked in the top ten. The prize was: all three ads will be aired free on DSTV channels in South Africa and throughout Africa for a year. Air-ing began in January 2008.

In Al-Anon we've learned many lessons during the past years about financial abundance, keeping ourselves energized, and following the spiritual disciplines suggested in our 36 principles.

### **In conclusion:**

I am celebrating my 41st birthday in Al-Anon this year, and I have never experienced such abundance as during the past few years. I am not talking about money: I am talking about the abundance of skills, experience, opportunity, good will, creativity, commitment, caring, and unselfish service I am experiencing in Al-Anon. In South Africa we have been blessed with service members willing to give abundantly of their time and skills.

I have immense gratitude for having the privilege of being a member of Al-Anon, for being in a position to use the program, the principles, and the spiritual guidance in my life. I am grateful to be attending this Conference as a representative of South Africa Al-Anon Family Groups. Thank you for allowing me to be present.



## SPIRITUAL SPEAKERS

### Zelda R., Chairperson of the Board

I come from humble beginnings. I was born into a large family of ten children. The first 11 years of my life, we lived on a small farm in rural Kansas. In our home there was no indoor plumbing, electricity, or natural gas. We carried water from the well, used kerosene lamps for lights, and warmed the home and cooked on wood burning stoves. All of us had jobs and if someone didn't uphold his or her responsibility, it was noticed. No one wanted to be without water, lights, or wood for the stoves. Most jobs needed to be done daily. We had water to carry, kerosene lanterns to fill, the wood box to restock, eggs to gather, cows to milk, and other chores. Needless to say, I learned responsibility very early. I was never singled-out; most of us wore hand-me-down, homemade, or altered clothes. I knew I was loved, because I was provided for, it wasn't something that was talked about or expressed among each other. I didn't realize my early upbringing was developing characteristics of a caretaker, controller, fixer, and survivor—character traits that would determine what my choices would be for my future. I didn't grow up with alcoholism and don't recall any drinking in the family.

When I was 11, life was tough for my parents financially and we had to sell the farm. We moved into a three bedroom, one bathroom house in town—with running water, electricity and gas heat. Life was good. I attended a larger school with 34 classmates instead of 13. Gratitude existed until time lulled me into complacency. I continued to feel apart from others and had very little self-worth. I was insecure and unsure of myself. I had learned to work out my problems on my own. To me it seemed that everyone else had problems far greater than mine—mine were just unimportant.

I started babysitting when I was 12 and I worked as a dishwasher in the town steakhouse when I was 15. I would go swimming at the public pool before working the evening shift. While swimming one day, I was aware, as everyone else was, of this individual who walked on his hands around the pool, up the steps of the high dive, and standing on his hands, he would dive into the pool. Something was different for me though—I looked for him every day, thought about who he was and where he was from. This was the summer between my junior and senior year of high school. The day came when I wanted to see if I could get a conversation going with him. So I treaded water close to where he was sitting on the side of the pool believing *he* would start up a conversation, but that didn't happen. In fact I treaded water so long I began to feel like a fool. I was told that boys want to be the pursuer, not pursued. The day after I turned 17, he showed up in the restaurant where I worked. That night he asked if he could drive me home when I got off work and I agreed. He and a friend came back at the end of my shift, drove me directly home, walked me to the door, and said good night. The next morning, my mom wanted to know who drove me home because there were two empty beer bottles sitting on the curb. She suggested he was drinking, but I didn't think so. I thought his friend set the empty bottles on the curb while he was walking me to the door. Looking back, he needed that liquid courage to ask to drive me home. I knew nothing about alcohol, but life began to change when the alcoholic came into my life. I thought he was exciting, he had lived in different

countries, and he spoke French—the language of romance. My world opened up, life had purpose, and I felt important.

I wasn't too concerned about the drinking. I could rationalize that all his friends were drinking and he was older than I. I didn't drink as I was a good girl. When we moved into town, two of my sisters and I joined the church. I believed in obeying the law and the rules. I didn't drink, dance, smoke, or play cards, *yet*. My idea of dating was to go out to dinner, to the movies, or roller skating. One night he convinced me to go into a dance hall, I just knew I didn't belong in there, but I reluctantly went. He found a table and as my eyes adjusted to the dark, smoky room, I saw four members of my church two tables from us. I was shocked they were there—drinking and smoking. As the music started, some of them were even dancing. What I realized that night was that people don't obey the rules. I watched them and observed that they sure seemed happier that night than on Sunday morning. As my boyfriend and I got to know each other better, it seemed to me that he did have a problem, but the problem to me was his mother. Many times we would be in a restaurant and he would be called away for a phone call. When he returned I asked who had called and it was always his mother. She wanted to know if he was eating, where he was going, or who he was with. I thought the problem was that his mother didn't trust him or was obsessed with what he did as he was her only child. I believed if she would just get off his case and leave him alone, he would be fine. She made it very clear she didn't care much for me and I wasn't her choice as a partner for her son.

We decided to get married with or without his parents' blessing. Certain tests were required at that time in Kansas, so we had blood work done and applied for the license. We were to pick up the license on Friday morning. Thursday evening I called his home to make arrangements to pick up the license. His mother answered the phone and said he wasn't there and she wouldn't tell me where he was. I was not of legal age to get married in Kansas, but my mom had signed permission. Being resourceful and unable to locate my husband, I picked up the license myself. My mom was getting concerned and said we need to talk. What she shared reaffirmed my feeling that my parents didn't want me to marry this man. His parents had waited outside of where my mom worked to talk to her. They wanted her to do what she could to break us up. Mom told them she would not interfere and said that our decisions were ours to make as we were the ones who had to live with those decisions. The wedding did not take place as planned. I didn't know where my fiancé was until three weeks later when I received a bundle of letters. He had written a letter to me every day. His parents had put him in a locked ward of a Veterans Hospital. He showed up at my door the day after I graduated. He had escaped from the hospital, hitch-hiked to one of my brother's homes, and then rode to my home. I packed a suitcase with the marriage license and we crossed the Kansas border into Nebraska where we hid out in the corn fields.

The following Saturday we drove back to Kansas and found a judge to marry us. The judge remarked that the license should have been used within 14 days, but it didn't matter once the vows were said. The marriage was valid. We returned to his parent's home to get his clothes and let them know we were married. No blessings, congratulations, or good wishes for us. They only told my husband that he would know how to do it the next time.



We left the area and began our married life in Iowa. He swore off drinking because now he was married and had responsibilities. That lasted for about six months. One night we were watching TV, I was four months pregnant, and I must have fallen asleep. I woke up at midnight to the TV going off the air; the door was open; my husband and the car were gone. I waited until daylight and walked down to the river front; I thought I could find the car and thus find him. Our landlord pulled up beside me and said he received a call that my husband was in jail. Our landlord drove me to the jail and my husband was brought out. What a mess he was! I was sent to the court house to wait for the hearings. As I waited in the back of the court room, a well-dressed gentleman sat and talked with me about what had happened; I explained I was expecting our first child; my husband had a nervous condition from serving in the Navy; and that he should never have drank with the medication he was taking. After a period of time the gentleman excused himself and left. The individuals were brought over for their hearings and a door at the back of the courtroom opened and in walked the gentleman who had been talking to me dressed in a black robe. I had been talking to the judge. There was a \$50 fine which had to be paid in cash. We were allowed to walk to the bank for the cash and return to pay the fine. On the way to the bank I asked a reasonable question: Where did you park the car? He had absolutely no idea where the car was. I knew nothing of blackouts! We paid the fine and went in search of our car. We packed the car and left town, which is the pattern we repeated for the next six years, moving 13 times.

Years later after coming to Al-Anon Family Groups and going to open A.A. meetings I realized all those moves were geographic cures, leaving one difficult situation after another, expecting life would be better if we started fresh. I did a lot of blaming in those days; sometimes the towns, the people, the military, his parents, and even myself. There were many hospitalizations for the alcoholism and 50 shock treatments for depression. I just couldn't get the connection that alcohol was a depressant so we continued to treat the symptom and not the problem. I began to withdraw from neighbors, friends, church, and we stopped inviting people to our home. It seemed nobody understood and I stopped trying to even explain what life was like. I was focused on the alcoholic. Even though we had two children by now, it seemed I needed to know what the alcoholic was doing, where he was going, and who he was with. I had no spiritual tools to use.

We returned to Kansas and moved into a farmhouse because the owner needed someone to keep an eye on his machinery. The alcoholic was unemployable and we didn't pay rent. We were living on \$157.00 a month and food stamps. We couldn't afford to buy alcohol; so the alcoholic made a gallon of wine every day. He would use grape juice, sugar, and yeast mixed together in a gallon jug. This wine needs about seven days to ferment before it is ready to drink. I wasn't handling things very well; it seemed I was physically ill a lot. While living or should I say existing at this farm, I was to watch the man I love go through the delirium tremens. I spent many nights walking the floor—not with the children, but with the alcoholic. In this farmhouse there was water up to the top step of the basement and there were mice. I had seen a rat on the porch. When the door was closed, the bathroom would develop a strong odor as though the gas heater in there had a small leak, so we kept the door open. Our two children slept between us in bed after I saw the rat.

One night my husband watched a movie on TV. He identified

with the alcoholic in the movie and told me he was an alcoholic and needed to quit drinking. He poured out the wine and was determined not to drink. Less than 24 hours later he was agitated, shaky, and complained of caterpillars crawling on him. I knew he needed to have medical attention so I took him to the hospital. He wasn't there long before he attacked a nurse who was trying to help him and I was called into the Administrators' Office. They said they weren't equipped to handle someone going through the DT's and needed my permission to call Alcoholics Anonymous because A.A. members would come and sit with patients who were having DT's. I gave my permission. Two men from A.A. arrived and went into my husband's room. I sat in the hallway and reflected back on what had happened to our lives. I felt responsible. What had happened? I was going to make a difference, I just needed to get him away from his mother and life would work out. I had failed and I didn't know what to do. One of the A.A. members came out of the room and told me they would stay with my husband and I could go home. He added that when my husband was released, he would need to attend A.A. meetings and I should attend Al-Anon meetings. That sounded good to me. Every Wednesday night, we would drive 50 miles to the meetings and 50 miles home. This was in 1971 and my perception couldn't have been very clear, but what I experienced is something I hope no one else will have to experience. It was during the holiday season of Thanksgiving and Christmas. There were three women in the meeting who were sharing recipes with each other. I looked at those recipes and didn't even have some of the ingredients in my kitchen. I recall no Al-Anon literature available and no mention of working the Steps. They did tell me to attend at least six meetings. I returned the fifth week and the A.A.s invited us to an open A.A. meeting the following week. I came back for that open A.A. meeting and made the decision I would go to every open meeting they had. I needed to learn about this disease of alcoholism that had permeated our lives. I admit I wanted to know how to get him sober and keep him sober. The fear I had was that my alcoholic just didn't have the capacity to be honest and the emotional and mental disorders were just too great. I was very much focused on the alcoholic. Actually I was obsessed with the alcoholic!

Early in January 1972 we loaded the station wagon and left the farm with our two children. We needed a metropolitan city with more than one meeting a week. We had no idea where we were going. We had \$37.00 in cash and a desire to locate more A.A. meetings. We literally ran out of money in Lincoln, Nebraska. I was physically ill again and the money was used to pay a medical bill. As a family we were sent to the family mission, they took care of the children and nursed me back to health. The alcoholic was put out for drinking as it was not allowed. I called my father-in-law and asked him to wire me some money to rent an apartment for the children and me. He told me the farm we lived in had blown up and burned to the ground. God watches out for alcoholics and their families.

I found a job and started attending open A.A. meetings. I had been attending the meeting for five years and was so regular at the meetings I was offered a job in the new Central Office. The office stocked Al-Anon books and literature, which I read, and I had the opportunity to talk to Al-Anon members that came in to buy them for their meetings. Many of them knew my circumstances and invited me to their meeting, but I still thought I was in control. There were periods of sobriety, a year

or two, and the birth of a daughter during sobriety. Then the day came when, in the alcoholic's words, he said he couldn't live with drinking and he couldn't live without it, so he attempted suicide. Even with an overdose of sedatives he made it home that night only to pass out in the living room. I didn't want to get him help any longer. I wished him dead. I was angry, discouraged, and devastated, again the old way was returning. I left him on the floor and kicked him in anger as I paced the room, periodically checking his pulse to see if it had stopped. I felt it would be better for him, the children, and me, if he would just die. The children were in bed asleep and around six in the morning there was a "presence," an "outside force" that came into my living room and I heard, "You don't have the right to let this life go, you can do something, and you must." Most people call 911. I called Alcoholics Anonymous and a member came to our home. I saw total fear in his face. He called another member and the three of us got my husband to the car and to the Veterans Hospital. It was too late to pump his stomach, he was in a coma. The hospital told me he may not live and to call his parents, but I couldn't bring myself to do that.

I knew from this episode that I was messed up and needed help for me. I was shocked by my own thinking. I kept remembering the Tuesday night Al-Anon meeting and this was Tuesday morning. That evening I found myself walking into the building where the meeting was held, full of despair and with little hope. My thoughts weren't clear as I remember thinking I didn't want anyone at this meeting to know who I was. Many members of this Al-Anon group attend the open A.A. meeting on Saturday night. I walked through the door, I knew over half the members, I was not judged. I was welcomed into the meeting. I don't remember the topic that night; I felt I had come home, there was a glimmer of hope and I wanted whatever it was they had. This became my home group and I have been a consistent active member since 1977.

I returned to the hospital after the meeting and prayed my loved one would live. Late the following day the doctors told me that his heart was strong and he may live, but it was likely there would be brain damage—no one could take that many sedatives without repercussions. Patients in the intensive care unit of the Veterans Hospital lay on beds with lots of tubes, on oxygen, without clothes, and only a light sheet to cover them. When he came out of the coma he was angry. He threatened to do it again and next time he would take me with him. On the advice of the doctors, it was recommended I file commitment for his protection and mine. This was not what I wanted to do, but I followed their advice, saw the county attorney, and filed the papers. On Friday he was brought for commitment hearing and sent away for an indefinite period of time. There were no guarantees of the outcome, but this began our roads to recovery. Today he has 31 years of sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous and I have 31 years of recovery in Al-Anon Family Groups.

My recovery in Al-Anon began as I crossed the bridge of reason toward my spiritual quest. I got a Sponsor within the first couple of months and learned the real gift of love is self-disclosure. I had to look at where I neglected my responsibilities when I took on others' responsibilities. I was told I needed to accept others as they are and not expect them to be as I would want. My Sponsor stressed the importance of sharing the good as well as the bad and to keep my focus on myself.

I didn't know my Sponsor was the Group Representative;

just that she had this beautiful smile and a lot of serenity even though she was still living with active alcoholism. I wanted what she had and I was sure she was what I needed. Almost immediately she was taking me to other meetings, district meetings, and Area Assemblies. I kept an open mind and learned that alcoholism is a family disease and I had been affected. I worked the Twelve Steps with my Sponsor and volunteered to set up and take down the meeting. After a year I signed up for the 24-hour hot line and shared my experience, strength, and hope with family members reaching out for help. Within the next five years I served as Group Secretary, Treasurer, Chairperson, Alternate Group Representative, and Group Representative. I studied the *Service Manual* and the history of the early beginnings of Al-Anon. I wanted to know everything about this program that was changing my life and why those who came to the meetings stayed. I wanted to know how to make a difference in the lives of those who still suffer. Being an Alateen Sponsor helped me to see how alcoholism affected my children. Two out three of the children were members of Alateen. I served as Intergroup Chairperson, District Representative, and Institutions Coordinator. Actually at one point (I don't recommend this), I was District Representative, Institutions Coordinator, and Alternate Delegate all at the same time. In 1987, I was elected as Panel 27 Delegate for Nebraska. Many doors have opened for me and I have experiences I will never forget.

Life brings to each of us life problems and God knows we have had a few. Walking through the disease of alcoholism, death of family members, our daughter's illness and the blessing of her miracle baby, and my own experience with breast cancer, it is impossible to deny the presence and help of my Higher Power. What I know today is that pain is necessary, but suffering is optional. I have found a spiritual program and am making spiritual progress.

## Barbara W., Ohio

My name is Barbara W., also known as Barbara M., Barbara L., and Barbara C. I've taken back my maiden name, and I'll never change it again!

I do not have the compulsion to drink alcohol from a bottle, but I am drawn to alcoholism in the body of a man. I grew up in a home without alcoholism, and I no longer try to figure out where this began. I know that alcoholism causes me to doubt my reality, my self-esteem plummets, and I focus on the potential of another—casting ME aside.

Why does the abuse have to stop before I know how much pain I feel?

My first husband and I met hopping the college bars on a Saturday night. My future husband stopped me and asked me if I could spare a dime. That should have been a clue! A decade later, I remember my son tugging, as a toddler, on my shirttail and pleading, "Mommy, listen to me with your eyes." My best solution to alcoholism was to have babies.

The marriage endured 13 years. In the last year, my beloved father died of a heart attack and my mother-in-law died from cancer. In his loss, my husband turned to evangelism, while I, in my anger at God, pulled away. I was a walking, talking victim—even to God. The drinking increased, the abuse became more frequent, and I numbed out. I smiled at the grocery store, I kept the house spotless, and I became automated in my

actions. I was unable to go from my back door to the trash cans without first checking to see if my neighbors were outside. My husband left me.

A year after the divorce I looked for love, settled for sex, which I called “dating,” and found another alcoholic “project.” I took this man hostage. After he was arrested for a DUI, he stood before me, pulling the pockets from his pants, saying he had nothing: no job, no money to pay his rent, no driving privileges, and could he move into my basement for a few months? I heard, “Will you marry me?”

It was as if I buckled my two young children in a car and told them to cover their eyes, ears, and mouths while we rode a wild roller coaster into a war zone. The battle? It was the disease of alcoholism driving him to drink, me to change HIM and challenge HIS drinking. I was consumed with my desire to be pretty enough, smart enough, loving enough to satisfy him and squelch the alcoholism.

I compromised the safety of my children and emotionally abused them as I pulled them into the battle. I thought nothing of waking my children in the middle of the night to cruise bar parking lots, looking for my husband’s car. I would leave the kids in the car, enter the bar, and if I found him I’d scream at the barmaid, “Do you know you are serving an alcoholic?” Other nights I would put my kids to bed so I could hurry up and worry. When he finally came home, I’d hurl myself down the stairs, screaming for him to get out. I’d stick my chin in his face and dare him to hit me—my shrill voice spewing my words of disgust. I know today that I have allowed another to abuse me only to the extent to which I was abusing myself. With every slap, kick, fist thrown at me, or saliva spit upon me, I felt this sick surge of fulfillment of “getting exactly what I deserved.” It was just as it is for an alcoholic—an argument is created so the alcoholic has the excuse to drink. I would escalate the argument, when I could have simply left the room, so I had yet another excuse to fuel my self-hatred. What perversion provided me the satisfaction of feeling the blood from my nose dripping down to my lips?

Why would I stare, mesmerized at my reflection in the mirror, at the finger paint of blood on my neck where his hands had tried to hush my condemning voice?

I fantasized about killing my husband. I had thoughts of dropping a hair dryer in the tub while he soaked. I daydreamed about pushing him down the stairs and visualized his body rolling down the staircase. What stopped me from performing these horrific acts was NOT any sense of right or wrong—you don’t murder people! It wasn’t the fear of retribution or the fear of my children growing up with their mother in prison. What stopped me was the fear that I would not be successful and he would come at me like those horror movies where the scary creature never dies—and he only hit me when he drank.

On my last trip to Urgent Care, the female physician said, as I sat huddled in the corner with my three children, “You know you don’t have to keep falling this way. There is help for you if you want it.” I was appalled. I knew she knew. My eyes darted away from her gaze as I drew my children closer to me. Did she know that I held our baby as a shield when he started swinging? He wouldn’t hit me through his baby—and I could still say what I thought and let my sarcastic words tear at his flesh.

My husband attempted to run my car off the road. At the time, my daughter, our son, and I were buckled in my car. He was trying to retrieve his paycheck that I had stolen from his

wallet to pay bills. It was as if someone else was driving my car that night as I drove to the police station and asked for help. I was ready to heed the warnings of the police officers—they could remove my husband from our home, but they could not keep him away. I had to take steps to make that happen. I could not file a restraining order without filing for divorce. I didn’t have a decision in me, even with my back slammed up against a wall—I couldn’t take nor was I willing to accept the responsibility for the simplest decision. I didn’t know yet that God works with whatever decision I make.

Those last weeks with my husband had been full of hope. He had begun to attend A.A. He had a phone number of a man who was willing to sponsor him. My husband didn’t use that phone number, but I did. The voice on the other end of the phone offered me help, but not with him or with A.A. He told me about Al-Anon Family Groups. My sentences began with “Yes, but,” and he had answers to each exception I posed. His voice was calm and serene, not raging and laced with vulgar language. Listening to him repeat his message of hope brought tears to my eyes, and I watched the droplets moisten the toes of my shoes.

It took a lot of courage to go to my first Al-Anon meeting. For the first time in my adult life I was doing something for me. The meeting room was full of best friends I just hadn’t met yet. The woman chairing the meeting closed by saying, “And if no one has said, ‘I love you,’ today, I do.” Her southern accent poured over me slowly, as if it were maple syrup. But by the time I returned to my car, the voice I remembered was the one saying, “You wouldn’t leave him if he had cancer.” I didn’t return to Al-Anon for another year.

I had one more alcoholic marriage in me—this time to a sober alcoholic who talked the talk. I married him in six weeks! Our children were watching—his four and my three—and we had to “set an example.” Boy, did we ever! This relationship, with his dry drunk behavior, dropped me to my knees.

I couldn’t find any alcohol, but I was just as crazy. I was gravely ill with undiagnosed Crohn’s Disease. I ignored raging symptoms of this digestive disease. By the time I received emergency medical care I was down to 88 pounds and had a full blockage that had encased a ruptured appendix!

I returned to Al-Anon and committed myself to working these Steps I thought only the alcoholic should have to work. I found a Sponsor who lovingly guided me through the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service using Conference Approved Literature. I became restless and tried working the Steps through A.A.’s *Big Book*. I found this to be a “relapse” for me because I couldn’t read the *Big Book* without reaching for a highlighter to reference what I was certain HE had missed.

My Sponsor demonstrated by example, how to show my gratitude to Al-Anon by helping others. I discovered who I was and what I liked and disliked. I began to sort out my life and slowly made healthier choices for me and my children. The changes in my life didn’t happen overnight. I was still faced with challenges and obstacles. My third husband got off the recovery train and left me—no doubt recognizing that I had emotionally left the relationship years before. I came to realize that 95 percent of the insanity in my life was a direct result of my own decisions. I learned how to forgive myself for these decisions. I began to become the kind of mother I always wanted to be. I gained self-confidence and regained the poise to look forward instead of at my feet. I no longer expected others to change, so I didn’t. I released the shame



that burdened me and I became aware of and accepted my part in the insanity. My awareness increased as I realized the energy I had consumed trying not to rock the boat, when in reality, I was trying to steady the boat in rocky waters. Amends were made to my children and to those who had been affected by my behavior. I developed a relationship with a Higher Power and I was no longer a victim, even and especially to God. I saw that He was there for me all along, and that His Grace had kept me alive. My Higher Power was the first to grieve, the first to hold me, to shed a tear, and comfort me as each tragedy unfolded.

My children's fathers are both dead. My older children did not see their father beyond their toddler years, visitation rights were suspended when we divorced as a result of his religious fanaticism.

My youngest son was ten when his daddy died. Because of Al-Anon I was able to have a working co-parent relationship with my ex-husband. I separated the disease of alcoholism from the man and viewed him through the eyes of my son. We weren't stuck to rigid rules that didn't hold up to active alcoholism. My ex-husband was free to bring my son home at any time, no matter how short the visit. I knew that the compulsion of the disease didn't adhere to a calendar of visitation dates.

We had last seen him four days earlier when my son called and asked me to come for him, as his daddy was sick in bed. As my son ran out of the apartment, I peeked through the open door and saw a filthy mess. Disgusted, I noted that I would have to address this housekeeping with my ex-husband. My Sponsor reminded me that God was on these visits and it was none of my business as long as my son was healthy and happy. Instead, I phoned and said, "Our son said you are sick, do you need anything from the store? I'll help you if you ask," and he said, "I know you will." These were our last words to each other.

I was walking the circumference of the lacrosse field during my son's practice as I was moved by an indescribable force to stop and look up at the sky. The gray, moisture-filled clouds had parted to reveal an azure sky. Streams of sunshine shone through as if God was shining a searchlight from heaven. It took my breath away and I felt the presence of God as the sky embraced me and warmth filled my spirit. I am certain that this was the moment that my ex-husband passed from this earth.

Three days later I received the call from my ex-husband's employer alerting me to his unexplained absence from work. I called my ex-husband's apartment manager, asking her to check on him. She returned my call with the news I had always thought would come. My son's daddy was dead in the apartment, in his recliner with a massive skull fracture.

My ex-husbands' death certificates do not read "alcoholism" as cause of death, but "blunt force head trauma" and "unknown causes."

We moved my deceased ex-husband's belongings from his apartment back to my garage and once again I stored his belongings. These were my son's possessions as well and he would run out to the garage to retrieve a particular item when he missed it. I took the time I needed to sort through and separate the belongings into piles for donation, trash, and keep-sake boxes. On the Fourth of July, two years after his death, I sorted through the boxes one last time—Independence Day. As I opened a box, the movement of a tiny mouse startled me. I shrieked and jumped back, and then chuckled at my fright. I went back to the box and tipped it over. The mouse ran free.

My ex-husbands are free today. It isn't the freedom I would have chosen for them, but they are free and at peace. I can choose to let that mouse run free or I keep it captive in the box.

In July, 2005, I sold the home we had lived in for 25 years and closed the childcare business I had conducted from my basement for 20 years. I remarried in 2006, eight years after my last divorce, and even though my husband is not an alcoholic, nor has his life been affected by someone else's drinking, there are plenty of opportunities for ME to practice the Al-Anon program in my life.

Blending families (even when the children are young adults) has been a challenge. Some days I have reacted to the stresses of such a challenge. I have not always conducted myself in a manner that reflects my recovery work. I gain comfort in the knowledge that I can work the Twelve Steps around these problems. I can face the consequences of my reactions and clean up my side of the street. I can feel compassion for others and seek to understand, instead of focusing on being understood. I can take the binoculars off of my stepchildren and turn them on me.

My oldest son is a graduate student and will graduate with a PhD in Mechanical Engineering in May. I have not paid a dime for his education, partly because when it got crazy in our house, he studied.

My daughter is an NICU nurse. Remember those train-wreck marriages? The families of my deceased ex-husbands attended my daughter's wedding in February. They filled the church and reception hall with love and support for all of us. Now, *that* is the miracle of recovery! We informed the photographer of the number of families and proudly proclaimed that there was no hostility! He asked, "How did you do that?" and we told him about Al-Anon!

My youngest son is 17. He shares what he is thinking and how he is feeling with me. It's no coincidence that he started attending Alateen a few months before his daddy's death and I am grateful the doors of Alateen were open to a ten-year-old. He didn't go to Alateen because of his father's relapses, he went to Alateen because I went to meetings and I told him there was a program of recovery for him. Sharing recovery strengthened our relationship and gave us a solid foundation for his teenage years. My son is waiting for his age group to finish all their experimentation and catch up to the maturity level Alateen recovery gave to him. My children are living proof that God turns everything to good.

Today I try to realize my own potential rather than focusing on the potential of those around me. It is as if I am Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz*. I had the power all along, maybe not in the tapping of the heels of the ruby slippers, but in seeking and finding help for me, in spite of the choices of my loved ones. Today, as a direct result of my Al-Anon recovery, I can choose the path that enhances *my* self-esteem—it is not my husband's, or my children's or stepchildren's responsibility, but mine! Al-Anon gives me the courage to face that responsibility. Al-Anon helped me find my voice, but it is in service where I gain the courage to speak. In helping friends and families of alcoholics, I have found true happiness and that long sought-after approval and unconditional love. Today I embrace my Higher Power with all the passion and energy that I embraced all those alcoholics in the past. I trust that little voice within, recognizing and listening to God's messages.

In Al-Anon, someone is always "here" for me, and was always "there" before me. Please be here for my children and grandchildren—I'll be here for yours!



## CLOSING SESSION

**Zelda R.**  
*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*

**Mary G.**  
*Conference Chairperson*

In closing, the Chairperson of the Board remarked, "What a week this has been. I don't know about you, but I think Lois was here with us. In just five short days, you almost have your first Conference behind you. You gave conceptual approval to a new piece of literature, approved changes to the Anonymity language of the "Policy Digest," and passed the Bequests motion. This past week you were challenged. Whether you realized it or not, you expanded your role as Delegate.

"As you have all witnessed these past few days, you have shared leadership. At home, you don't have to do it alone. There is a procedure for inviting staff or Trustees to your Area. That invitation is still available to you."

The Conference Chairperson continued, "We are learning and growing together as a Conference and as leaders. One of the areas of growth that the Conference Leadership Team has been addressing is clarity. We have been purposeful in each and every session of the Conference to reflect our Conference theme. We have attempted to carry out the Conference Goals throughout our processes.

"As a Conference, we are attempting to develop our ability to frame a discussion so that it is in a context that will be meaningful to members who are not here with us and to summarize the discussion so that we are all clear on what happened and are able to clearly articulate it in any reports about the Conference, our responsibility. We're getting pretty good at these things, but are still developing our ability to evaluate our work against our purpose. We need to ask ourselves as a Conference if we accomplished what we set out to do and what our pioneers envisioned for us to do.

"Now it is time for us to recall the opening remarks made way back last Sunday, and see if we indeed have functioned as a World Service Conference. As we began, I read this quote from Concept Two: '...it is with a sense of great security that we old-timers are now assured that Al-Anon's World Service Conference will use its vested authority for giving shape to the destiny that God is holding in store for us all.'

"Let's ask ourselves: Did we do that? Have we been visionary? Have we involved ourselves in some work or thinking that will give shape to

Al-Anon's destiny? Did the sessions clarify for you how the work of the WSC is a bridge to the groups? Did our theme contribute to our work?

"Here is another quote I read from Concept Two: 'We believe our fellowship is a spiritual society characterized by enough enlightenment, responsibility, and love for God and man to ensure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions.' Did that spiritual tone prevail in this Conference? Did our goals help us attain it? What about our theme?

"And the third quote from Concept Two: 'The World Service Conference is the active voice and the effective group conscience of our society in world affairs.' Did we fulfill our individual roles as Delegates, staff members, Trustees, and Executive Committee members to form that effective group conscience?"

Conference members took a few minutes for quiet reflection to evaluate the work of the 2008 WSC and to write about a particular session or activity that fulfilled the Conference theme or one of the Conference goals before sharing their ideas:

filled the Conference theme or one of the Conference goals before sharing their ideas:

- The motion on bequests fulfilled the Conference goals. Though difficult, leaders allowed for solutions through rigorous examination of the facts and trust in a Higher Power. The discussion stimulated thought. We considered the welfare of Al-Anon and demonstrated mutual respect for each other. There were strong feelings on both sides, but a decision was reached with courtesy and no hard feelings. We walked over a bridge together.
- Viewing the Trustee presentation on international travel during the Open Board of Trustees meeting gave me a visual of how contributions can reach those who are still suffering.
- The Open Board meeting showed how the minority voice has an impact on my spirituality; nowhere in my life experiences did I see such spirituality.
- I carry the message as a paid worker of AFG, Inc. Stepping Stones is a reminder that all it takes is a vision of hope. We do not need to be afraid of the future.

### Conference Goals

**The spiritual tone of the WSC will prevail by the demonstration of mutual respect and acceptable conduct by its members.**

**Conference members will understand the purpose of the Conference, relationships within the structure, and be able to articulate Conference decisions.**



- The Conflict Resolution session offered tools to build bridges in all aspects of my life. I will be able to build solid relationships with dear ones, friends, and others when I get back home.
- Watching the process of a motion being talked about, a Delegate having the courage to attempt to rewrite it, and then the Conference discussing it further, helped me realize we're not here to build just any old bridge; we're here to build one that energizes our spiritual quest. The passing, rewording, and sending back of Conference motions shows the tremendous work it takes to build bridges. Not only does it energize, but it allows for all of us to fulfill our spiritual quest through respect and acceptable conduct.

- Knowledge-Based Decision-Making allows me to participate equally and serves as a foundation for building bridges. On the other side is renewed spirituality.

The Conference Chairperson encouraged Delegates to consider one final question on their trips home: "What spiritual growth did you personally experience this week?" She encouraged all members to send their responses to *The Forum*.

Following dinner, scroll presentations to the Panel 46 Delegates, and the Spiritual Speakers, the Conference Chairperson closed the Conference by tapping a shoe on the podium once again.

## 2008 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE MOTIONS

### Background and Floor Discussions

#### Motion #5

Since this motion was recommended by the Literature Committee, the Chairperson of the Committee and the Associate Director of Communication—Literature initiated a discussion with the Conference by presenting the following introduction:

“With the implementation of the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process, the Board of Trustees has found the information in our Archives extensive, interesting, and valuable. It contains the thinking and proceedings of our early pioneers as well as the on-going work of all members of Al-Anon and Alateen who are busy preserving the principles set forth by them. Much of this information goes untold, and as our membership continues to experience the passing of many of our early members, their experiences go with them. Many of today’s members have little or no information about our early days and the work that has continued, as *First Steps* (B-12), published in 1986, only covered our first 35 years, and was discontinued in the early 1990s.

“The Board is currently in the early planning and discussion phase for the celebration of our 60th Anniversary to be held in 2011. In commemoration of our 60 years, a member requested that the Literature Committee discuss and consider recommending a ‘piece’ of Conference Approved Literature that is historical in nature for our membership.”

As our 60th Anniversary in 2011 rapidly approaches, the Committee felt this was an ideal time to apply our Conference theme and “build a bridge” by creating a piece of Conference Approved Literature about Al-Anon’s history.

Discussion on the floor included Conference members’ questions, which were answered by the Trustee and staff member on the Literature Committee.

“Part of our early history shows the movement and split of Al-Anon from A.A., the reason for it, and what Bill and Lois said about it. I hope all of that information will be included. Does the Literature Committee know how large it expects the piece to be?”

“No. The Committee discussed in vague ways what the benefits of the piece could be without getting into the specifics of content and design.”

“Would the WSO Archives be used for the project or would the Committee ask for input from Area Archives?”

“We’re going to start with the WSO Archives; I’m not sure about opening it up to the Area Archives. We should probably keep our focus on the WSO. For once, we won’t be waiting for sharings—we already have the information.”

“I think that this is so important because so many things have happened—the adult child movement, parents of alcoholics, relocation—and I think there is a sense of responsibility to leave a trail so that others don’t have to reinvent the wheel. They can learn from our experiences. As Conference members, it’s our responsibility to approve the concept of the project and let the content evolve. We can do much better research now because of the laser fiche technology.”

“I realize that you’re just getting it started. Will this be strictly historical or will you try to include some recovery from the early days?”

*“That hasn’t been determined yet. We still have a lot to discuss. A member asked the Committee to consider a piece that is historical in nature. I believe there is a lot of recovery in our history, but I don’t know where we would divide that line.”*

“I just want to be the devil’s advocate. There have been two history books, *Lois Remembers* and *First Steps*. They didn’t do that well in sales. Would we consider an outside professional to help with content and layout so that the piece is more acceptable?”

*“I think you may be right in saying that the piece being proposed might not be a blockbuster. The Literature Committee talked a little bit about First Steps. This won’t be ‘Second Steps.’”*

*“In defense of Lois Remembers, it was written by our cofounder in her own words as she saw her life and as she wanted others to see it. Our literature is written by our membership. When the WSO hires freelance writers, those writers are not only Al-Anon members, but also professional writers. It hasn’t been the WSO’s policy to have outside, non-members write Conference Approved Literature because it wouldn’t reflect the Al-Anon perspective.”*

Members commented:

“If we do pass this motion, it may not be a blockbuster, but I think it would build bridges and energize our spiritual quest.”

“I think this is a wonderful idea. I know people in my Area get tired of me saying, ‘Remember when?’ This book would say it all and I think it would be a blockbuster. Buy the book; you’ll learn our history.”

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve Motion #5. (See Motion 5 on page 74.)

#### Motion #6

At the 2007 World Service Conference, during the Open Policy Committee meeting, the issue of anonymity on the Internet was discussed. Al-Anon members have expressed concern about protecting their anonymity in e-mail, on the Web, and in other forms of electronic communications. Currently the “Policy Digest” does not address these issues in depth. (See page 16 in the *2007 Conference Summary*.)

At the July Policy Committee meeting, there was confusion among its members about the use of last names on the Internet; including on password-protected Al-Anon Web sites open only to the membership. Some members were surprised to discover through an Internet search that their full names appeared on an Area Al-Anon Web site. The Policy Chairperson appointed a work group to propose language pertaining to anonymity in electronic media for each of the three sections in the “Policy Digest” under Anonymity: Anonymity Outside Al-Anon, Anonymity Within Al-Anon, and Anonymity in our Personal Growth.

In October, the Committee discussed the proposed policy developed by the work group and made suggestions for revisions. The revised language was again discussed and edited during the Policy Committee’s January meeting. A motion was then passed to recommend this proposed language.

The Policy Committee Chairperson reviewed the motion

paragraph by paragraph with Conference members. When reviewing the paragraph dealing with “Anonymity and the General Public,” a member commented: “I’m okay with sharing my own name, but I was married to an alcoholic who was not okay with me sharing my full name.”

In regards to “Anonymity and Electronic Media,” some Conference members were concerned that even with password-protected Web sites, the public could access the information on those pages. It was stated that you can’t find the Members’ Web site using a search engine—members have to know how to get there. The login page does not require inputting any personal information, so a member’s anonymity is not violated.

There was some discussion on the suggestion to change the existing words “suffering from the effects of alcoholism” to “suffering from the effects of someone else’s drinking.” The intention of the Policy Committee change was to include a broader audience, particularly since this part of the policy deals with professionals who are dealing with potential members. A member stated, “When we use the word alcoholism, we limit who we can attract.” Another stated, “I don’t think I have the right to label someone else as an alcoholic.” A consensus vote was taken, and Conference members decided to keep the text as proposed by the Policy Committee.

Another discussion point was the use of business e-mail addresses. The purpose of these proposed changes was to clarify that when using an e-mail address, the owner of the company has access to that account, and someone’s anonymity could be broken. It was also noted that we are a self-supporting organization. When we use business e-mail accounts, we are not supporting ourselves—similar to having a meeting in a church where we don’t pay rent.

The taping of events was another important topic. Members have been taped without knowing they were being taped. Conference members also discussed the possible consequences of having a taper record the event—such as members accessing and posting the recording on other Web sites or a member’s sharing becoming the “tape of the month.” Although there is nothing in this current policy to address this concern (there is an audio taping policy on page 81 of the *Service Manual*), it will be passed to the next Policy Committee for further review and discussion.

The Conference offered changes to the proposed text, which are reflected in the motion on page 74. The staff liaison for the Policy Committee noted that this may not be the last revision to this text, but this is still a great starting point. The Committee will continue to review and revise the overall policy as it decides whether additions need to include finding someone’s name using a telephone number; the use of members’ addresses and phone numbers on Area Web sites; the use of business e-mail; the possible consequences when using personal e-mail at work; and the appropriate use of blind carbon copy (bcc). As a final note, many Delegates noted that although we write policies, we can’t enforce them. It is important to educate members as much as possible. Conference members acknowledged that not every situation regarding breaching anonymity—particularly those that are unintentional—could be addressed, but awareness is the key to avoiding problems.

A motion was made and carried to approve the wording of Motion #6. (See Motion #6 on page 74.)

## Motion #7

The 2007 World Service Conference approved a motion that amended the paragraph on “Institutions Groups” on page 68 of the *2004-2006 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies. The motion used the term “introductory meetings” to replace the term “institutions groups,” so as not to confuse outreach meetings (which introduce the Al-Anon program to the families and friends of patients passing through hospitals or treatment centers) with the meetings of a registered Al-Anon group that may use a hospital or treatment center for its regular meeting space.

At the October 2007 Policy Committee meeting, a work group recommended that the paragraph “Introductory Meetings” on page 78 of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual* would now be more appropriate for the “Meetings” section beginning on page 80. In the previous edition of the *Service Manual*, this paragraph was entitled “Institutions Groups,” but since the title of the paragraph now pertains to meetings rather than groups, this paragraph should be included in the “Policy Digest” under “Meetings” rather than “Membership and Groups.”

In January 2008, the Policy Committee approved a motion to recommend this change. Conference members did not have questions about this proposed language. A motion was made and carried to approve this change. (See Motion #7 on page 76.)

## Motion #8

In September 2006, a work group was charged with exploring the possibility of inserting new language into the “Policy Digest” under the headings “Institutions Groups” and “Limited-Access Groups.” New wording for “Institutions Groups” and “Limited-Access Groups” was introduced at the 2007 World Service Conference. The Conference accepted the proposed changes for “Institutions Groups,” but the proposal to change the “Limited-Access Groups” was withdrawn. The work group was asked to reconsider the language proposed for this section of the “Policy Digest.”

At the July 2007 Policy Committee meeting, the work group proposed revisions to the “Limited-Access Groups” section, changing the title to “Meeting Sites.” One member noted that correctional facilities needed to be included on the list of limited-access sites. Another member suggested that the list of limited-access facilities in this section be consistent with the list in “Introductory Meetings.” The work group revised its proposal, changing the title back to “Limited-Access Groups.” After further discussion, the work group was asked to revise their proposal for the next Policy Committee meeting.

In October, the Committee discussed the work group’s new proposal. A Committee member noted that “membership” at the meetings wasn’t limited; the limitations were instead on access to the sites where some meetings are held. The discussion was continued to the next meeting.

At its January 2008 meeting, the Policy Committee considered the question of where to place the “Limited-Access Groups” paragraph. Again it was noted that it was the meeting site that had limited access; membership in the Al-Anon groups at those sites was not limited. The Committee eliminated the title “Limited-Access Groups,” adjusted the language in the proposal accordingly, and agreed to place these revised



sentences at the top of page 78, under the section on “Registration of Groups.” The Committee approved a motion to recommend this change.

During the Conference discussion, WSO staff and volunteers stressed that “Limited-Access” groups are limited only because the facility has restrictions on who can gain entrance to the facility. These groups are still registered with the World Service Office and can have a Group Representative if they choose. A Current Mailing Address (CMA) is required for all groups that register with the WSO. The groups meeting at sites with limited-access would be registered as regular Al-Anon meetings with limited-access.

A motion was made and carried. (See Motion #8 on page 76)

## Motion #9

In framing this issue for the Policy Committee, the Finance Committee Chairperson presented the following background information:

The first printing of the “Policy Digest” in 1975, stated that “The WSO may accept a *one-time* legacy from an Al-Anon member in any amount up to \$1,000 [U.S.].” In 1986, that amount was raised to \$5,000 U.S. and “(Contact the WSO for details)” was added as a last line to the policy. In 1992, the limit was raised to \$100,000 U.S., and in 2004 raised to “Ten percent of the total revenue of the WSO General Fund as identified in the previous year’s audit.” This remains our current policy.

Since the last revision of the Policy in 2004, members have contacted the WSO wishing to include Al-Anon in their estate plan and desiring to bequeath more than the maximum allowable amount, stating that they have no heirs and wish to give back to Al-Anon to the extent they desire. Additionally, some Conference members have questioned, “Why the limit?”

Under the direction of the Chairperson of the Board, in 2006 the Finance Committee began to discuss the issue of removing limits on bequests while maintaining the spiritual principle that keeps the World Service Office dependent on the groups for funding and not operating independently of them.

At the 2007 World Service Conference, it was suggested that the limit on bequests be reviewed, while keeping within Al-Anon principles. A review of the current policy regarding bequests is a Goal and Objective within the Board of Trustees’ Strategic Plan.

Finance Committee members presented their thoughts to the Board of Trustees at the July 2007 meeting. The Chairperson of the Board appointed the Finance Committee as a Thought Force to continue discussions and to possibly come forward with a proposal for consideration by the Policy Committee and the Board of Trustees.

### The proposal under discussion would:

- Allow a one-time bequest to the WSO in any amount desired by the member so long as it is not earmarked.
- Report separately on the Financial Statements any amount that exceeds ten percent of the total revenue of the WSO General Fund as identified in the previous year’s audit.
- The World Service Conference would authorize the expenditure of these excess amounts. The Board of Trustees would then administer those expenditures with the Conference’s guidance.
- The proposed policy gives the World Service Conference express oversight of these funds.

In the Policy Committee discussion, one member noted that this proposal “presumes goodwill” and a high level of trust between the Board and the Conference; if the Conference will trust the Board to proceed with this proposal, the Board will trust the Conference to appropriately authorize the use of the funds. In its traditional role, the Conference has never had the responsibility to specifically direct the use of funds.

In floor discussions at the 2008 WSC, Conference members made the following points regarding this Motion:

### Pros:

- The last time the WSO was fully supported by member contributions was 1952.
- The likelihood of receiving a large donation is minimal.
- The intent of the motion is that no entity will have sole control of the money. The motion contains checks and balances—any money above ten percent of the total revenue of the WSO General Fund as identified in the previous year’s audit would be identified for projects to be authorized by the WSC. The Board or its Executive Committee would then oversee the implementation of those projects. The staff would then implement the projects and report back to the Conference through the Board.
- The fellowship has benefited from the special projects and foreign trips funded by the Reserve Fund in the past.
- Our members don’t want to be restricted on how much they can give to Al-Anon Family Groups.
- Currently any member could give a million dollars to his/her group; it would be better for the fellowship to have the WSC decide what to do with that amount of money rather than a small group.
- The WSC can change the policy, if it is later determined that this revision to the policy was a mistake.

### Cons and responses (in italics):

- Is this motion consistent with our principles, especially Tradition Six? Does it divert us from our primary spiritual aim? Would discussions in Areas be just about money?

*This motion is about meeting the needs of members. The discussion should be about being in line with our spiritual principles. It’ll only divert us if we allow it. Tradition Six is often misquoted and thus not understood. It says: “Our Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous.” It’s not about Al-Anon having money. It’s about lending our name to outside enterprises to get money, property, or prestige. As long as what we take has no control over us and we don’t merge ourselves with outside enterprises, we really maintain the spiritual idea of Tradition Seven—that we’re self-supporting. We’re not asking members to give beyond their means, but allowing members to donate what they can.*

- Groups would feel that their contributions are no longer necessary to support Al-Anon as a whole. How solid would that policy remain on not using that money to support world services? I can envision not being able to fund daily activities but having too much for special projects.

*Monies would be put into a special line in the Budget. We don’t*

ever want the groups to feel that their donations are not needed to support the WSO. They need to continue to be responsible for it. The truth is that we have not been solely self-supporting through member contributions since 1952.

- Members may try to obtain special recognition.

The WSO does not ask how much a member is leaving for Al-Anon in their will when they call with questions. Since no earmarking of funds is permitted, the member leaving the bequest would not receive any recognition.

- Areas experiencing difficulties may think bequest monies would be used to support WSO big projects.

The WSC would determine how the money would be used. Use big thinking—there are no limits. The idea here is mutual trust between the Board of Trustees and the WSC.

- Al-Anon may get too rich. We're discussing money without limits and may become wealthy to a perilous degree. Would this be a violation of Concept Twelve?

Funds would be used for special projects generated from and approved by the World Service Conference. A minimum of 25 percent of new money would be spent each year. We're not reaching everyone we need to reach. Imagine what we could do with all the extra money. The safeguards of this motion ensure that the General Fund is going to remain intact. The motion doesn't change the fact that funds to operate our WSO will continue to come from our General Fund. If people die and leave us additional money, we can fund projects. Newcomers don't care about how much money we have; they want relief.

- How do we reconcile the Tradition of being self-supporting without violating Concept Twelve and idea of no limits?

The policy allows excess bequest funds to only be used for special projects approved by the Conference. The policy does set a

limit—there is still a limit on amount to world services (ten percent goes to general purposes). Under the terms of the motion, the WSO could not use this money to fund its annual operating budget or routine projects. The Conference will decide how the remaining money will be spent.

#### Comments:

"Rely on God rather than react to our fears just because we have never been there before regarding bequests."

"If we had a bequest for a million dollars under the current policy we could only accept \$497,330 during the year 2008 (10 percent of the total revenue of the WSO general fund as identified in the previous year's audit). This Motion would allow us to accept the remaining \$502,670 and to spend at least \$125,665 the first year and a minimum of 25 percent of the balance in subsequent years."

A concern was expressed that Al-Anon could become involved in a will contest or become drawn into family disputes.

The response was, "No, when that happens, Al-Anon removes itself from the process and allows the court to decide whether we receive anything."

"We come into Al-Anon in a culture of fear. When we first looked at abundant resources it was all about balancing the budget. We get fearful when we talk about expanding Al-Anon worldwide or having too much money. We don't think about how that money could be used to reach more people in pain from the effects of someone else's drinking. Members say that it is their money and ask why can't they give back to Al-Anon what has been given to them."

Following this discussion, a motion was made and carried to amend "Bequests" on page 85 as proposed. (See Motion #9 on page 76.)

## 2008 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE (WSC) MOTIONS

### MOTION #1

#### (BY CONSENSUS)—CARRIED

That the following persons be seated at the 2008 World Service Conference:

#### With voice, but no vote:

David Zach

Director of Business Services

Non-Al-Anon Member

Nydia Julia M.

International Representative—Mexico

Al-Anon Member

Inga v. E.

International Representative—Germany

Al-Anon Member

Louise C.

International Representative—South Africa

Al-Anon Member

#### With voice limited to ECRPM business, but no vote:

Annette T.

Chairperson, Executive Committee for Real

Property Management

Al-Anon Member

#### With no voice and no vote:

Nicolette Stephens

Information Analyst

Non-Al-Anon Member

### MOTION #2

#### (92 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 1 void) - CARRIED

To approve the 2007 Audited Financial Report.

### MOTION #3

#### (92 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 1 void) - CARRIED

To approve the 2008 Finance Committee Report.

### MOTION #4

#### (92 yes, 1 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void) - CARRIED

To approve the 2007 Annual Operational Report and Strategic Plan Update.

### MOTION #5

#### (89 yes, 4 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void) - CARRIED

That the 2008 World Service Conference give conceptual approval to develop a piece of literature on Al-Anon's first 60 years.

(See discussion on page 70.)

### MOTION #6

#### (91 yes, 2 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void)—CARRIED

To amend the text on pages 83-84 of the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies*, "Anonymity." New text is underlined and in bold, strikethrough text indicates deletion.

#### Anonymity

The experience of our groups suggests that the principle of anonymity—summed up in Tradition Twelve as "the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions"—has three elements: There is anonymity as it applies outside Al-Anon/~~Alateen~~, governing our contacts with ~~non-members and organizations~~, **the general public, the media, and professionals**; anonymity within the fellowship; and anonymity as it contributes to our personal growth.

#### Anonymity Outside Al-Anon/~~Alateen~~

#### Anonymity and the General Public

**When dealing with the general public it is important to use discretion in revealing one's Al-Anon/Alateen membership. In settings where there is no media involved (health fairs, speaking to community groups or schools, etc.), members are free to use their full names, if they are comfortable doing so.**

#### Anonymity and the Media

Tradition Eleven gives a specific guideline: "we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV." **It is Al-Anon/Alateen policy to interpret Tradition Eleven to include the Internet as well as all forms of evolving public media.** This gives potential members confidence that their identity will not be revealed when they join Al-Anon. Also, ~~personal~~ **personal** anonymity **in the media** at the public level guards the fellowship from the Al-Anon/Alateen member who may be tempted to seek public recognition.

When speaking or writing as an Al-Anon/Alateen member at the level of press, radio, TV or films **in any form of press, radio, films, TV, Internet, or other evolving public media**, **members** use only **their** first names **and last initial** or pseudonyms. **Members can also speak without identifying themselves or sign articles "Anonymous."**

**Photographs, video, film, or Web postings in published or broadcast media should not reveal full face images of those identified as members.** In photographs for publication and in TV appearances faces should not be recognizable. This may be achieved by back-to-camera or blurring of features in some way.

**On any Web site accessible to the public, whether an Al-Anon site or not, members' full names and faces are not posted if they are identified as Al-Anon/Alateen members.**

#### Anonymity and Professionals

It is, however, important to make Al-Anon/~~Alateen~~ known through our public outreach information work with **the many types of** professionals who come into contact with families ~~still~~ suffering from the effects of ~~alcoholism~~ **someone else's drinking**. Such contacts, of course, make it necessary for the **When working with professionals**, Al-Anon and Alateen members ~~involved~~ **are more credible and effective to when they** give their full names **and contact information.** **While personal**

**anonymity is not required in outreach to professionals, it is helpful to inform the professionals of the importance of anonymity and confidentiality in Al-Anon/Alateen.** Al-Anon members also give their full names to interested doctors, spiritual leaders, school or industrial personnel.

**Note:**

**Alateen members must comply with local laws and their Area Alateen requirements regarding personal anonymity in all public outreach work.**

**Electronic Communication outside of Al-Anon**

**E-mail provides a quick and easy way to communicate the Al-Anon/Alateen message to the media and professionals. Members' business e-mail addresses should not be used for Al-Anon/Alateen outreach, as they could imply affiliation, and may not be confidential to the member.**

**Web-based communication, such as on-line audio/visual materials (e.g., Web casts or podcasts), social networking sites, and blogs, provides members with easy access to distribute information about Al-Anon/Alateen recovery to a large audience. In keeping with Tradition Eleven ("Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members."), members who use this type of communication outlet must maintain their personal anonymity and that of any Al-Anon/Alateen or A.A. member, as the Internet is a form of media.**

**Anonymity Within Al-Anon/Alateen**

Members use their full names within the fellowship when they wish. The degree of anonymity a member chooses (first name, pseudonym, or full name) is not subject to criticism. Each member has the right to decide.

Regardless of our personal choice, we guard the anonymity of everyone else in the fellowship, Al-Anon/Alateen and A.A. This means not revealing to anyone—even to relatives, friends, and other members—whom we see and what we hear at a meeting.

Anonymity goes well beyond mere names. All of us need to feel secure in the knowledge that nothing seen or heard at a meeting will be revealed. We feel free to express ourselves among our fellow Al-Anons/Alateens because we can be sure that what we say will be held in confidence.

At open Al-Anon meetings, group anniversaries, conventions, or workshops where nonmembers **may be** are present, Al-Anon and Alateen members are free to decide how much anonymity they prefer. It is well to **begin these open** such meetings with a brief explanation of the Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions. One suggestion is as follows:

There may be some who are not familiar with our Tradition of personal anonymity **at the public level in any form of press, radio, films, TV, Internet and other electronic media.**

If so, we respectfully ask that no Al-Anon, Alateen, or A.A. speaker or member be identified by full name or picture in published, or broadcast, or **Web-posted** reports of our meeting.

The assurance of anonymity is essential to our efforts to help

other families of alcoholics, and our Tradition of anonymity reminds us to place Al-Anon and Alateen principles above personalities.

**At any function that records its speakers, members need to be aware that some recorders have Web sites that are open to the public. If speakers use full names, their sharings including full names could be posted.**

**In Al-Anon/Alateen service positions** At the service level (Group Representatives, District Representatives, **Coordinators**, World Service Conference members, etc.) it is practical to use full names and addresses to facilitate communication. **However, anonymity and our Tradition of non-endorsement could be compromised in electronic communication with e-mail lists and methods of forwarding messages, as well as on public Web sites. Posting material originally meant for members only (such as printed flyers, reports, letters, e-mail messages, and newsletters) on Web sites could result in posting a member's full name, which violates the principle of anonymity.**

**Service communication via e-mail is expedient and efficient, but care and common sense must be taken in its use, particularly in forwarding messages. Use of blind copies protects members' anonymity. Members should select with care the e-mail address(es) they use to conduct Al-Anon/Alateen business. It is recommended not to use members' full names in them. Business e-mail addresses might not provide privacy and could imply affiliation.**

Letters (including the return address) to an Al-Anon or Alateen member should *never* have the name Al-Anon or Alateen on the envelope. **The WSO uses "AFG, Inc." on envelopes sent to members in order to maintain anonymity. Care should also be taken in the wording of e-mail subject lines, as the e-mail address may not be private.**

**Letters** **Submissions** to *The Forum* should give **include** full names, addresses and phone numbers. Material that is published will be signed any way the writer wishes: first name and initial, initials only, "Anonymous"—either with or without geographical location. **Because The Forum is a publication available to the general public, personal anonymity is maintained.** Area Newsletter Editors— **Service arm publications** usually follow this procedure **if distributed outside the fellowship.**

**Anonymity in Our Personal Growth**

Each member has the right of decision regarding personal anonymity within the fellowship. **In Al-Anon/Alateen** **We** share as equals, regardless of social, educational or financial position. Common sense in the use of anonymity provides freedom and the security each member is assured in Al-Anon/Alateen. Our spiritual growth has its roots in the principle of anonymity. **Each member has the right of decision regarding personal anonymity within the fellowship, which we respect whether the member is attending meetings, not attending meetings, or deceased.** (See "**Public Relations**, Anonymity.")



## MOTION #7

(93 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void) - CARRIED

To move the paragraph titled "Introductory Meetings" from the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, Digest of Al-Anon/Alateen Policies*, Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions, Membership and Groups, Registration of Groups, on page 78 to Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions, Meetings, on page 80 between Open/Closed Meetings and Electronic Meetings.

## MOTION #8

(93 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void) - CARRIED

To amend the text on page 78 of the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies*, Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions, Membership and Groups, Registration of Groups, and move the amended paragraph to follow the first paragraph under "Registration of Groups." New text is underlined and in bold, strikethrough text indicates deletion.

### *Registration of Groups*

The WSO will register any group designating itself as an Al-Anon Family Group with the understanding that it will abide by the Traditions and that meetings will be open to any Al-Anon member. Alateen meetings, however, consist of younger family members assisted by an Al-Anon Sponsor.

### **Limited-Access Groups**

There are Al-Anon or Alateen Limited-access groups where meeting access is limited meet in locations where our general membership may not be able to attend due to the facility's entry restrictions. These Groups meet at sites such as in industrial, military bases, industrial plants, or schools. settings would fall into this category. ~~These are Al-Anon or Alateen groups, but membership may be limited because of location.~~

The WSO cannot register any group that is solely for Al-Anon members who are also recovering alcoholics and members of A.A., because it does not qualify to have a Group Representative.

## MOTION #9

(70 yes, 23 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void) - CARRIED

To amend the text on page 85 of the 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies*, Finances, Contributions to WSO – Individual, Bequests. New text is underlined and bold, strikethrough text indicates deletion.

### *Bequests*

The WSO may accept a *one-time* bequest legacy from an Al-Anon member in any amount, provided its use is not restricted by the donor. Bequest amounts, up to ten percent of the total revenue of the WSO General Fund as identified in the previous year's audit, will be placed in the General Fund.

Members may give more than the ten percent; however, the portion of the bequest above ten percent will be reported separately on the financial statements. The World Service Conference will authorize the use of these excess amounts and the authorized expenditures will be administered by the Board of Trustees. These excess amounts are not available for general purposes, unless further authorized by the Conference. (Contact the WSO for details.)

# **2007 ANNUAL OPERATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

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# ADMINISTRATION

## OVERALL ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. (AFG, Inc.) meets quarterly and is responsible for carrying out the mandates of the World Service Conference (WSC), establishing business policies of the World Service Office (WSO), estimating revenue, administering service to the membership, publishing and distributing Conference Approved Literature (CAL), and approving the quarterly and annual reports submitted by the Executive Director and WSO staff.

The Executive Committee meets monthly and is empowered to act on behalf of the Trustees between Board meetings. It has legal authority bestowed by the Board of Trustees to have oversight of day-to-day affairs of the WSO.

AFG, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization, listed under Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States (US) Internal Revenue Code, and has been incorporated in New York State since 1954. Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (Canada) Inc. has

Ric B., Executive Director

been incorporated since February 1999 as a registered charity under paragraph 149 (1) of the Income Tax Act of Canada.

The Executive Director is responsible for overall supervision of the WSO staff (currently 50 full-time employees) and for administration of the organization's policies. In the absence of the Executive Director, the Director serving on the Executive Committee, currently the Director of Member Services, or the Executive Director's designee acts in his stead. The Director of Business Services is directly responsible for business operations and controlling finances.

AFG, Inc. is committed to equal employment opportunity and is in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local fair employment laws and guidelines. AFG, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or disability status. Every effort is made to maintain a work atmosphere that is free from harassment.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Judy P./Zelda R., Chairperson

The Board of Trustees is self-electing, approving all nominees for Trustee at Large (TAL) as well as Board Officers, Executive Committee-at-Large members, and the respective Chairpersons of the two Executive Committees were elected, having been given traditional approval by the Conference where required. It also approves the Committee Chairpersons for 2007-2008 as proposed by the Chairperson of the Board. It accepted the resignation of Bidge B., Trustee at Large.

In accomplishing its responsibilities for setting and proposing agenda topics for the 2007 World Service Conference, it approved:

- Changes in the supporting text of Concepts Eight, Nine, Ten, Twelve and the Warranties.
- Policy Motion to amend the text on page 77 of the 2004-2006 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, Digest of Al-Anon & Alateen Policies, Finances, Reserve Fund to read: Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. has the right and obligation to establish and maintain a Reserve Fund. This fund, established in 1970, has a two-fold purpose: ensuring the continuation of Al-Anon's essential services and the funding of special projects.
- Admissions/Handbook Motion to amend the 2004—2006 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* on page 148 by deleting the second paragraph under "WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE (AREA COMMITTEE STRUCTURE):" "Each district allocates funds to send its DR to the meetings of the Area World Service Committee. (Groups allocate funds for DRs to attend meetings of the Area Assembly as GRs.)"
- Provided all materials in preparation for the World Service Conference and for the preparation for Delegates' reports on-line.

At the Annual Meeting, it approved the actions of the Conference, giving them legal effect:

- The Southeast Regional Trustee position will remain

vacant and a Regional Committee on Trustees will be created to nominate a candidate using the trial Regional Trustee plan at the 2008 Conference.

- 2006 Annual Report as presented at the 2007 World Service Conference.
- 2006 Auditor's Report as presented at the 2007 World Service Conference.
- All 2006 World Service Conference Motions.

In preparation for the 2008 World Service Conference, it approved:

- Change to 3-d of the Conference Charter and the formal adoption of the editorial note for presentation at the 2008 Conference for its approval. This change would then incorporate the Alateen Traditions into the Charter and give them the same protection from change that the Al-Anon Traditions are afforded.
- Admissions/ Handbook Committee's recommendation to write a "big thinking" question around the topic of populous/declining Areas for discussion at the 2008 WSC.

Other actions approved in its role of oversight:

- The title of the new Service Manual: *Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual 2006—2009*. It was agreed to print *Groups at Work* again as a separate booklet.
- Continue sending *The Forum* free to every English-speaking group in the World Service Conference structure trial for a second year.
- Investment Goals with the Board adding new goals, modifying previous ones, and withdrawing others.
- Task Force of members who work in the estate-planning field to gather the most recent information and material for a fact sheet or guideline on estate planning and other considerations for Al-Anon members when considering inclusion of Al-Anon in their estate plan.
- Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada as the site for



the 2013 International Convention.

- Conceptual approval for an e-CAL contest.
- Task Force of Conference members to explore the idea of allowing contributions from the non-member family of an Al-Anon member in memory of a

deceased Al-Anon member and to formulate a big question for the 2009 World Service Conference.

- Reports on international work and visits to Russia, Spain, France, Finland, Germany, Romania, Greece, and China.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Cecelia L./Mary C., Chairperson

The Committee meets monthly and is the administrator of the World Service Office, with legal authority granted by the Board of Trustees to conduct its daily affairs. It approves actions of the Finance Committee and special projects of the Board and staff that involve day-to-day operations. Its actions are submitted quarterly to the Board of Trustees for final approval:

- Printing of *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29).
- Requests for restructuring committees.
- Approves appointments to the United States and Canadian Alateen Advisory Committee members to be held at Regional Service Seminars.
- At-Large members of the e-CAL, Forum Editorial Advisory, Literature and Public Outreach Committees.
- Committee Guidelines when submitted for approval.
- Conference calls to Area Public Outreach and Literature Coordinators.
- Changes to the WSO Employee Policies and Procedures Manual.

- Finance Committee monthly report.
- Set Registration Fee for the 2008 International Convention and receives periodic updates.
- Staff travel to national and international meetings and conferences within and outside the fellowship.

Other work of the Committee includes:

- Receiving information concerning the reorganization of office staffing including positions open or filled.
- Received suggestions sent in by 2007 WSC members on the proposed wording changes to the descriptive text of Concepts Eight, Nine, Ten, Twelve, and the Warranties in preparation for the Board's final approval.
- Staff reports on the progress of various projects such as media coverage, printing of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, and Public Service Announcements.
- Issues that violate Al-Anon's copyright or are otherwise potentially problematic.
- Monthly reports from the Executive Director for Administration, and the Directors of Business Services, Communication, and Member Services.

## ADMINISTRATION:

The Executive Director in fulfilling his responsibilities to supervise the World Service Office continues to evaluate each job when vacant and make adjustments in consultation with the appropriate Director and needs of the fellowship. This year the Associate Director Group Services/bilingual position was eliminated when a suitable candidate could not be found. The responsibilities were realigned within the Group Services Department. Several positions were regarded as a part of the overall process to provide the services needed to the fellowship. A former staff member was retained as a consultant to help rework the "Groups at Work" section of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*. A task force within the office worked with the consultant to ensure that all changes approved by the 2006 and 2007 World Service Conferences to the "Policy Digest," "Handbook" and "Concepts of Service" sections would be included.

This year the translation of the *Manual* was completed within 2007 in both Spanish and French. The Conference Approved Literature catalogue was also translated and will again be produced annually in all three languages.

The Communication section was also realigned with the elimination of the Associate Director/ Literature I position and the reorganization of the job responsibilities of the WSO Forum Coordinator and Public Outreach Coordinator. These alignments have already resulted in clearer reporting lines and the streamlining of the literature and *Forum* production processes. e-CAL is now handled under

the Communications Manager, the redesigned position referred to above.

An attempt to create interest on the Member Web site resulted in the Asia blog in the Spring of the year and furthered exploration of the additional ways to engage the fellowship in the work of the World Service Office. Beginning work for the interactive blog *Using the Concepts in Our Personal Lives* was completed in time for the translators to finish its translation into Spanish and French. This will allow all members to individually study the Concepts and then write in their own languages their insights and understanding.

New positions this year included the addition of the Information Analyst who will assist the staff in developing and reporting data regarding the demographics and needs of the fellowship through the triennial Membership Survey and other specific need surveys throughout the year. She created four different presentations of the Membership Survey data to meet the needs of professionals as well as give the members tools to communicate who the members of Al-Anon are both to the fellowship and professionals in their communities.

The Web Architect was a revised position in order to improve the World Service Office's ability to reach more members using better technology and present Al-Anon as a reliable but current resource in a changing and evolving world. Improvements to the e-CAL submission process as well as the research and implementation of the Concepts blog have already been achieved.

## ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

The Administrative Team is composed of the Director of Business Services, the Director of Communication, the Director of Member Services, and the Controller. The Administrative Team was created to have oversight of certain office-wide projects assigned by the Executive Director as well as provide leadership support to the office in the absence of the Executive Director. The Director serving on the Executive Committee, currently the Director of Member Services, has full authority to act on behalf of the Executive Director in his absence due to traveling or illness.

Cross-sectional work groups were used to suggest an organization-wide project to support the Strategic Plan. The Administrative Team chose, "The WSO staff and volunteers working together will engage Al-Anon groups in the U.S. and Canada to be more welcoming to newcomers, introducing newcomers to all aspects of the Al-Anon Program in a clear, concise manner" as a project under the

main idea Support and Strengthen Our Structure. Current welcoming practices would be assessed by surveying groups and newcomers. The surveys will be mailed with the group copies of the March *Forum*. The survey results will be analyzed to determine the next steps.

In order to establish an identifiable look that will energize our brand image, the Administrative Team solicited proposals from local design agencies, then engaged one of the agencies to begin their work in June. The work will be completed in 2008 with a new set of graphic standards for use in communicating our image.

The Administrative Team was charged by the Executive Director to create a Disaster Response Team. The roles and responsibilities of the team have been defined and a primary and back-up person for each critical area has been identified. Team members are meeting to set up recovery procedures for their areas of responsibility.

## COMMUNICATION SERVICES

### PUBLIC OUTREACH

The *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* public outreach magazine continued on the growth track that has made it the most successful and significant public outreach project in Al-Anon's history. In 2007, Al-Anon members in the U.S. and Canada distributed 233,500 copies of the magazine—a 28 percent increase compared with 2006, when the magazine first replaced the September issue of *The Forum* as our primary outreach publication. In 2006, members distributed 168,475 copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, a 28 percent increase compared with the September 2005 issue of *The Forum*.

In 2007, for the first time we had two printings of the magazine. In the spring, we did a second print run of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* 2007, which made its debut in September 2006. In the fall, the first printing of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* 2008 was completed.

This year, 2008, will therefore be the second in which we have two print runs of the magazine, which is published in English, French, and Spanish. It remains to be seen if the fellowship will continue to distribute the magazine in increasing quantities in 2008. Compared with 2007, however, the Public Outreach department is significantly increasing its efforts to inform members how the *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazine can simplify their efforts to credibly explain the Al-Anon program to a wide audience.

Our annual Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign for 2006-2007, "What It's Like," showed a 20 percent increase in television broadcast airplays compared with the previous year's campaign. The increase in airplays looks more modest—7 percent—when it is compared to the average number of airplays for the previous five annual campaigns. Of the six campaigns since 2001-2002, "What It's Like" ranks third in airplays. Our PSA campaign's results are measured for the 12-month period beginning each July.

Our current PSA campaign, "Sketches," got off to a slow start because of distribution problems; it wasn't launched

until August. Television stations, however, have continued to broadcast "What It's Like." In the four-month period of August–November 2007, television stations broadcast PSAs from both campaigns: "What It's Like," which includes one PSA; and "Sketches," which includes three PSAs. With both campaigns still in play, Al-Anon enjoyed a 37 percent increase in PSA broadcasts, compared with August–November 2006. Last year we also had two PSA campaigns running simultaneously for some months, but we did not accumulate data for the 2005-2006 campaign after June 2006.

"Sketches" started to gain some traction in October and November. In November 2007, for example, the three "Sketches" PSAs generated 22 percent more airplays than "What It's Like" got in November 2006. In November 2007, total Al-Anon PSA broadcasts were up 76 percent compared with November 2006 when we count broadcasts from both the "Sketches" and "What It's Like" campaigns. Again, we have a higher year-over-year comparison when we count airplays for two campaigns running simultaneously, but we do not have any measurements last year for the previous year's campaign after June 2006.

As a long-term trend, television stations have been cutting back on the time allotted for public service announcements; and generally, competition is intense for the limited time available for PSA broadcasts. It is greatly encouraging that our PSA airplays are getting more air time in this challenging environment.

Beginning in April, for the first time we received public service advertising on Google.com and Google.ca (Canada). Click-throughs from Al-Anon public service ads have sent nearly 16,000 visitors to our Public Outreach Web site. Our Google PSAs appeared on more than 300,000 pages viewed by Google users. Also for the first time, we also put our PSAs and other video material onto YouTube.com, where these files generated about 2,000 "visits." This information is also available on our Public Outreach Web site, but we believe putting it onto YouTube.com enables us to

reach a different audience other than those who are looking for information on our own Web site.

In 2007 we began to be more proactive in outreach to print media. We used Google and other search engines to begin tracking references to Al-Anon in on-line newspapers and news services; and to identify potential contacts and Al-Anon-friendly writers and columnists. We took some first steps to build a closer relationship with these Al-Anon friendly journalists; we thanked them for their support; and sent them copies of *Opening Our Hearts*,

*Transforming Our Losses*. We wrote to them a second time enclosing copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2007* and *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2008*. We expect this effort to yield some positive results in 2008.

In 2007 we wrote three new press releases, two of them for the winter holiday season that usually creates so much trouble for the families of problem drinkers. Also, we had our first conference call with Public Outreach Coordinators in a long while, and worked with them to distribute our press releases to local newspapers.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The Outreach to Professionals Advisory Committee recommended that the M-46 Card be discontinued and that a business card template take its place. The committee also recommended revisions to the M-44 *Al-Anon Is & Is Not* bookmark. The Public Outreach Committee reviewed the proposed changes to the M-44 bookmark, making one minor change to the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

The Committee reviewed proposed text to a new bookmark, to replace the *Crying House* bookmark.

The Committee reviewed the content and offered suggestions for *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2008*. The Committee also had a knowledge-based discussion on several topics affecting public outreach: how to welcome newcomers, tasks to engage public outreach coordinators, and the role of the Al-Anon Information Service in public outreach. The Committee reviewed and approved the content for the "Sketches" PSA campaign.

Gen B./Mirta S., Chairperson  
Judy A., Chairperson, Canadian Public Outreach Subcommittee  
Winnie S., Chairperson, Outreach to Professionals Advisory  
Mary Lou M./Patrick Q., Associate Director Communications—Media  
Claire R., Associate Director Communications—Professionals

Although the Outreach to Professionals Advisory Committee was disbanded on a trial basis, one member was utilized for an Al-Anon presentation and workshops at the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Training Institute in Indiana, PA. Members were also asked to submit articles from their perspective as professionals for inclusion in the *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2008* and 2009 magazines and to provide comments about the benefits of the "Meeting on Wheels" presentation format. Suggestions made by the Advisory Committee were also implemented in the 2008 printing of the *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazine.

Like the Outreach to Professionals Advisory Committee, the Canadian Public Outreach Subcommittee recommended that it be disbanded on a trial basis. The Committee stated that the Canadian needs for communication to professionals and the media were already incorporated into the Public Outreach Committee meetings and processed by WSO staff.

## FELLOWSHIP COMMUNICATION

Prior to April, staff made final edits to the manuscript of *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29), based on comments from the Literature Committee, copy editor, Policy reviewers, and the Executive Director. An index for the book was also completed. This new book was introduced at the 2007 World Service Conference during a half-hour workshop on loss. The book has been well-received by the fellowship, and is reported to have been a valuable tool for discussion at meetings and workshops on grief and loss.

Staff prepared an internal communications campaign to bring news about the new book to the fellowship. This campaign included announcements, order forms, and a B-29 Web Page, as well as articles and ads in *The Forum* and *Area Highlights*.

Even before B-29 was completed we developed a new project plan to complete B-30 (working title: OUR RECOVERY IN RELATIONSHIPS) in time to introduce the book at the International Convention in Pittsburgh. We also created a new outline for the content of the book.

In January 2007, we hired two new writers to begin work on the project. In the first nine months of the year, they provided a series of drafts for all the chapters. By the end of the year, we were able to send the Literature Com-

mittee the final draft of the manuscript, which was well-received by the Committee members, who offered many helpful comments for further improvement.

Our experiment in Electronic Conference Approved Literature (e-CAL) was launched in February 2007 with the introduction of the e-CAL page on the Members' Web Site. To date, most of the members' e-CAL sharings have been electronically-submitted text, rather than recovery sharings that utilize a wide range of multi-media tools available for Web publication. So far, the e-CAL web page has attracted only a small following of less than 1,000 readers per month. Although there have been articles about e-CAL published in *The Forum* and *Area Highlights*, we've found that many members are still unaware of the e-CAL web page and unclear on the concept of what e-CAL could be. We hope to communicate these messages more effectively in 2008.

*The Forum* made substantial progress in adjusting its editorial content to reflect a wider range of diversity and different levels of recovery within the fellowship. Among other new features, each month's issue includes an "Instant Meeting," to encourage the use of *The Forum* at meetings. While many members have commented on the

revitalized content of the magazine, there is still much work to be done in making the magazine an essential part of Al-Anon recovery for a larger number of members.

In 2007 we conducted a conference call with Literature Coordinators, the first such event in a long time. The primary topic for discussion was the introduction of *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses*. Following the conference call, we introduced a new Literature project.

## LITERATURE COMMITTEE

The Committee's major project was the review and final approval of OUR RECOVERY IN RELATIONSHIPS (working title), "a comprehensive piece about our recovery in alcoholic relationships." The 2001 World Service Conference gave conceptual approval to this project. The book drew upon the experience, strength and hope of about 1,100 members, who submitted written sharings to the WSO. Committee members read two drafts of the complete manuscript, and made extensive comments and suggestions.

The Committee also reviewed text changes to *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22).

We asked the members to suggest questions for discussion that would make possible a deeper understanding of *From Survival to Recovery*. We received more than 70 sets of topics, quotations, and questions from members and groups from at least 21 Areas throughout the Conference structure. Selections from this information will be included on the Member's Web Site and in *The Forum*, in support of the Sample Chapter to be posted on the Web Site.

Lorraine F./Roger C., Chairperson  
Tom C., Staff Liaison, Associate Director of Communication—Literature

These changes were based on a motion from the 2003 Conference, which was amended by the 2007 Conference. It includes a new chapter on the Twelve Concepts of Service and additions to the Traditions chapter. These changes were also approved by Policy Committee members and the Executive Director, and will be included in the next printing, as will a revised index, which includes the new material.

Several suggestions from the fellowship for new literature were reviewed throughout the year, but at this point the Committee has not decided to make any recommendations to the Conference.

## e-CAL COMMITTEE

Mary Ann R./Doreen D., Chairperson  
Patrick Q., Associate Director of Communications—Literature/e-CAL /Julie M., Communications Manager

The Committee reviews all e-CAL submissions within a 5-day turn-around period. An e-CAL submission requiring minimal changes can be published within a period of

several weeks, also including a Policy review, and review by staff and Executive Director.

## FORUM EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FEAC)

Bidge B./Mary Ann R./Winnie S., Chairperson  
Suzanne M., WSO Forum Coordinator/Robert S., Director of Communications

The Forum Editorial Advisory Committee met once by conference call in January to discuss the magazine's editorial challenges for the year. Throughout the year, the

Committee reviewed member-submitted sharings for *The Forum* in batches of 50 articles. This streamlined approach to committee work reflects changes planned in 2006.

## MEMBER SERVICES

### MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH

## ADMISSIONS/HANDBOOK COMMITTEE

Lyn D./Carol V., Chairperson  
Cynthia H./Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

The Admissions/Handbook Committee was asked to review for clarity the text that accompanies the "Area Committee Structure" chart on page 148 of the "World Service Handbook" section of the *2004-2006 Service Manual*. Because the same information is clearly stated on page 126, "At the District Level" section, "Finances" sub-section, second sentence, the Admissions/Handbook Committee recommended that the paragraph be removed from page 148.

In response to an Al-Anon member's question asking for clarity about what level of Coordinator was being referred to in the last sentence on page 126 of the "Conference Procedures" section, "Finances" sub-section, "At the District Level," Finances section, the Admissions/Handbook Committee recommended that the sentence be removed and that the term "Assembly Treasurer" be changed to "Area Treasurer" as the Treasurer acts on direction from



the Area Assembly in accordance with the Area budget. The Committee thought that the reference to funding of Coordinator's expenses is an autonomy issue and does not belong in the "Conference Procedures, At the District Level" section, which is talking about the District Repre-

sentative's expenses.

The Committee continued its study of dividing populous states and provinces and initiated a brainstorming session to develop a "big thinking question" to submit to the Board of Trustees.

## CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP TEAM

In July, the Conference Committee was restructured to form the Conference Leadership Team. This change, which is a trial, was made to help the Team focus on a coherent schedule and goals for the Conference at an earlier date. This smaller group, with representation from

Mary G., Chairperson  
Doreen D., Co-Chairperson  
Cynthia H./Suzanne M., Associate Director Member Services—Conference

WSO volunteers and staff, is providing for more successful communication and providing clarity. Any activities that might require more people will be assigned to Task Forces of volunteers and/or staff, as needed.

## INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The 2006 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting Summary was sent to all General Service Offices and 2006 Delegates. The Summary is also available on the Members' Web site.

The idea of a Trial Zonal Meeting discussed at the 2006 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) became a reality when the German General Service Office organized a meeting for countries in Europe that took place August 10-12, 2007. There were eleven service structures, including the US and Canada, that sent participants. To focus the meeting, the par-

Doreen D./Claudette D., Chairperson  
Marsha W., Associate Director Member Services—International  
participants' devised the following Mission Statement: *To improve cooperation between the European Structures in order to support the growth of Al-Anon/Alateen in Europe.* It was decided that future meetings will take place during the year there is no IAGSM scheduled.

Planning began for the 2008 IAGSM which will be held in Helsinki, Finland, October 1-5, 2008. The Chairperson and the Associate Director Member Services—International visited the site following their participation in the Trial Zonal Meeting.

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Ric B., Chairperson, 2008 and 2013  
Marsha W., Coordinator, 2008  
Suzanne M., Co-Coordinator, 2008; Coordinator, 2010 and 2013  
Barbara O., Co-Coordinator, 2010 and 2013

### 2008 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

In addition to being available on-line in English, Spanish, and French, the Registration/Housing forms for the 2008 International in Pittsburgh, PA were mailed in the fall to all groups, District Representatives, Coordinators, Lone Members, *Forum* subscribers and the General Service Offices.

The contract for dorm housing did not materialize in a self-supporting, financially feasible manner. As a result WSO was not able to offer dormitory housing as an option for the 2008 International Convention. Several options

were explored before making the final decision.

Before the Convention begins, a new activity is planned for registered attendees—interactive service workshops. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet others including WSO staff and volunteers on Thursday July 3.

There are two luncheons scheduled during the Convention. The Pioneer Luncheon, which is open with limited seating, and the Conference Reunion Luncheon, a closed event, for past and present Conference members. Both are ticketed events.

### 2013 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The Convention Site Committee, consisting of six WSC Delegates selected by lot at the January 2007 Board Meeting, four Trustees, including the Executive Director and the incoming Chairperson of the Board, Convention Coordinator and Co-Coordinator, Director of Member

Services, and Director of Business Services, reviewed the bid presentations for 14 Areas in the U.S. and Canada following the 2007 World Service Conference and selected three sites for inspections.

The 2013 International Convention Site Selection Com-

mittee visited Denver, Colorado; Anaheim, California; and Vancouver, British Columbia in August. Members of the Site Selection Committee (one Trustee, Executive Director, Director of Business Services, Director of Member Services, and the 2013 Coordinator) spent a day and a half in each city touring the facilities where Al-Anon's major events would take place and gathering data on esti-

mated costs for holding the Convention.

The Site Selection Committee made a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to hold Al-Anon's 2013 International Convention in Vancouver. The Chairman of the Board and Coordinator for 2013 Convention visited the site. At its October meeting, the Board approved Vancouver as the site of the 2013 Convention.

## INTERNATIONAL

WSO representatives went to Romania, Greece, Germany, Finland, France, Spain, and Russia in 2007. The purpose for these trips was to meet with members in various settings about service and share on other Al-Anon/Alateen related topics unique to the country or service structure.

Translations of literature, provided by the World Service Office, were done in Mongolian in the following literature pieces:

*A Guide for the Family of the Alcoholic* (P-7)

*Purpose and Suggestions* (P-13)

*This Is Al-Anon* (P-32)

In addition the "Groups at Work" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* is available in Mongolian.

A common theme in correspondence from service structures and countries that are trying to form a service structure is Public Outreach. Many indicate they are trying to share the message about Al-Anon and Alateen within their communities by doing more organized projects, by participation in open forums when invited, and by reaching out to professionals within their communities. Some have also indicated that Service Seminars/workshops organized during the year were successful ways to introduce and involve more members.

## GROUP SERVICES

The Al-Anon Group Registration/Change form (GR-1) has been revised for clarity and to reflect the field names in the new WSO database. The group focus category **Regular Al-Anon** was added as were separate fields for the meetings with special formats—Beginner meetings and Introductory meetings (formerly called Institution meetings). Reference to specific *Guidelines* and the *Service Manual* (P24/27) for additional information were added where applicable. The on-line version will include a direct link to these publications.

The biannual Area Group Records printout has been adapted to reflect the new database fields. The most significant change is the term "suspended" has been changed to "No Mail" as it describes the actual status of the group when mail is returned as undeliverable to the group's Current Mailing Address (CMA). After two years in No Mail status the status is changed to Inactive. As the name implies, groups with No Mail status do not receive any mail from WSO including the group's free copy of *The Forum*, new editions of the *Service Manual*, or other WSO correspondence. Information on the printout is used for WSO toll-free meeting line and local meeting directories.

In 2007 about 12 percent of the new groups registered submitted group names that did not meet WSO criteria. Most of the groups submitted names that implied affiliation with outside entities, were confusing, or were slang terms. Group Records contacted the group with information and

references in **Groups at Work** and **Policy Digest** sections of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (24/27).

The total number of groups in 2007 is:

U.S. Al-Anon 12,946\*

U.S. Alateen 926

Canada Al-Anon 1,393

Canada Alateen 79

Overseas Al-Anon 9,107

Overseas Alateen 770

Al-Anon Electronic meetings registered world-wide are 37 on-line meetings and 14 telephone meetings.

\*It was noted that due to some U.S. groups having multiple meetings, there are approximately 1,500 more meetings than groups. These meetings do not receive separate mailings from the WSO.

The "Al-Anon & Alateen Groups at Work" section of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) was expanded and reorganized. *Groups at Work* (P-24) was also printed as a separate booklet, allowing members easy access to this basic group information and the meeting format.

In an effort to better serve the groups, the Executive Committee approved discontinuing sending a binder to the new groups effective January 1, 2008. The reformatted information will be sent to the groups in two mailings. A clear plastic envelope will replace the binder.

## ALATEEN

The Associate Director of Group Services—Alateen and Special Services has attended two Alateen Conferences in Canada. Areas have reported success in using Teams

consisting of multiple certified Al-Anon Group Sponsors available for Alateen groups allowing flexibility in service to Alateen.

## NEW MATERIALS AND REVISIONS:

The bookmark, *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover* (M-78), is available in English/French/Spanish.

*Guideline for Al-Anon Web Sites* (G-40)

*Electronic Meeting Guideline* (G-39)

*Starting an Alateen Group Guideline* (G-19)

*Cooperation between Al-Anon and A.A. Guideline* (G-3) was revised in collaboration with Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) The guideline adds on Alateen participation in A.A. events, and clarifies members' roles at open A.A. meetings. New language emphasizes that neither A.A. nor Al-Anon recognize combined A.A./Al-Anon meetings. It is available in English/Spanish/French.

## GROUP SERVICES COMMITTEE

Barbara O., Director of Member Services/Mary Lou M., Associate Director of Group Services—Alateen & Special Services  
Frank R./Margot M., Chairperson  
Doris W., Chairperson, Alateen Advisory Committee, Trustee

In a conference call meeting, the Group Services Committee continued its discussion of how to best serve the fellowship and implement the goal, "Strengthen and support our communication through defined links of service." It is clear that ongoing education in the Areas is important. One Area established a Membership Outreach Coordinator to reach out to groups in inactive districts, resulting in increased attendance at Assemblies. Many Areas use the Internet and e-mail to increase communication. It was agreed that the Committee's next step will be to develop an action plan to implement the goal.

A related topic is how Areas can best work with their Al-Anon Information Services (AISs). In many Areas, there is harmony and cooperation; in others, there is a history of conflict. In many cases, the AISs were in place before the Areas were established. Ways need to be found that all service arms can work together in a spirit of unity for our common purpose.

The Group Services Committee provided input to staff on the *Open Meeting* guideline (G-24). It was agreed that there is much confusion about open/closed meetings in general, and that this guideline is focused on a special open meeting for public outreach purposes. New text in the "Groups at Work" section of the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) explains the difference between the two types of meetings. The Committee consensus was that gen-

erally the content of the G-24 guideline is usable, but the title needs to be more appropriate to the content.

As a trial in 2007, the Alateen Advisory Committee (AAC) met twice, at the USSE Regional Service Seminar (RSS) and the Canada Central RSS. The trial structure worked well, involving more Alateens and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service than in prior years. Canadian Alateens expressed appreciation for being included for the first time. Both meetings used the same agenda, discussing the WSO Strategic Plan as it relates to Alateen, and how Al-Anon and Alateen can help Alateen to grow.

AAC members agreed that they would like more participation in Alateen by Al-Anon members, and would like to be considered as equal, valuable members of the Al-Anon Family Groups. Welcoming Alateens to Al-Anon meetings, especially when Alateen is not available, is a necessity.

When not in meetings, the AAC members participated in RSS activities. Both RSS evaluations showed appreciation for the Alateen attendance.

A proposal has been approved to hold three AAC meetings per year in conjunction with Area Assemblies. The three-year trial will allow members from every region in the US and Canada to participate and get a broader perspective on the needs of Alateen, as well as bring WSO staff and Volunteers to the Areas.

## BUSINESS SERVICES

### iMIS

In 2007 we conducted extensive testing, including parallel processing of the new iMIS software program. In June we went live with the system and established a data maintenance work group for quality control. We are in the process of reviewing the iMIS shopping cart module

and plan to implement the shopping cart in 2008 and interface it with the sales module.

We have tested the inventory system in iMIS and plan to use for literature in English in 2008.

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

Zelda R./Mary Ann R., Chairperson  
David Z., Director of Business Services

The Finance Committee meets monthly and reports to the Executive Committee immediately following the Finance meeting. During Board week the Finance Committee reports directly to the Board of Trustees.

Responsibilities of the Finance Committee include monitoring expenses cash flow, aligning the budget of estimated income and expenses and recommending that the Board of Trustees set aside funds in reserve when

appropriate. The committee's oversight ensures that we remain solvent.

The Committee reviews the financial feasibility of proposed projects not already included in the budget taking into consideration the goals and desired outcomes, cost effectiveness, timing and the relationship to the Strategic Plan. Additionally it sets prices for new or existing literature. The Committee reports those actions to the Executive Committee. Other routine functions include:

- Approve the quarterly Appeal letters.
- Review handouts on previous year's contributions received from the US and Canada for distribution at the World Service Conference.
- Recommended the equalized expense price to send a Delegate to the World Service Conference to the Board of Trustees.
- Reviewed and submitted recommendations of the Investment Strategy goals, to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- Reviewed each department's budget with the Director of that service in preparing the Preliminary 2008 Budget for presentation to the Board of Trustees in January.
- Recommended to the Board of Trustees that the Preliminary Budget be sent to the World Service Conference members after the auditors have completed their field work.
- Approved that the *Courage to Change* CD-ROM be discontinued due to drop in sales. The decision to create the *Courage to Change* in a CD was abandoned due to the inability to obtain copy-protection and a recognized trend towards downloadable mp3 files.

- Reviewed and relayed to the fellowship information that pertains to IRS regulations such as the change in U.S. law relating to cash contributions. Effective this year, a taxpayer is required to have a receipt for each cash contribution claimed as an itemized deduction. The receipt must be from the organization that has received tax-exempt status from the IRS.

To support the Strategic Plan Theme, **Unlimited Abundant Resources, Goal #1: Discover and use universal resources, Objective #2** Within the next 3 years, raise the allowable limit of bequests, the Finance Committee submitted a request to the Policy Committee for a change to the policy under the heading Bequests. The Committee further developed a plan for managing the excess Bequest funds and the prioritizing of special projects by the WSC.

The Committee further developed a goal under the Theme: **Unlimited Abundant Resources Goal #2:** The Finance Committee will ensure that the budget reflects the priorities of the Strategic Plan as set by the Board of Trustees.

This goal will ensure that adequate funds are available to support the Strategic Plan keeping in mind the use of the money within spiritual principles.

**Objective #1:** Increase the contributions 30% by the year 2012

- The Finance and Executive Committees will give a presentation on the Quarterly Appeal at the WSC
- Recognizing that there is a tendency in the fellowship to rely too heavily on literature sales for income the Finance Committee asked the Chair of the Board of Trustees to appoint a World Service Conference member Task Force on member contributions.



**AFRICA**

**South Africa:** The General Service Office advised, for the first time in the history of their service structure, three Public Service Announcements for TV, radio, and written publications were produced through the assistance of a paid professional agency. One of the PSAs received an award and as a result was selected for viewing starting January 2008.

**EUROPE**

**Austria:** A representative participated in the Trial Zonal Meeting held in Germany. As a result of attendance at that meeting, a discussion will take place in April at the annual spring service meeting about forming a Trial National Service Structure.

**Belgium** (Flemish-speaking): The General Service Office relocated their office to cut the cost of finances. Two representatives were sent to the Trial Zonal Meeting for European service structures held in Essen, Germany.

**Commonwealth of Independent States** (formerly the Soviet Union): The World Service Office sent the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and the Associate Director Member Services—International to the Service Meeting held in Moscow. In addition to attending local meetings, there were also meetings with representatives from the Russian Service Committee and members involved in service. A discussion with all involved the proper process of obtaining permission to translate Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature. It was stressed that only the Russian Committee for Russian-Speaking AFG has permission to reprint Al-Anon and Alateen Conference Approved Literature for the Commonwealth of Independent States.

**Finland:** Two representatives, Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee and Associate Director Member Services—International visited the site in Helsinki planned for the 2008 IAGSM. The visit also included scheduled meetings with the Board of Trustees as well as members involved in service to share WSO service experience on a variety of questions.

**France:** The General Service Office advised they were pleased that two World Service Office representatives visited the office. The WSO representatives met with two Board of Trustee members and the past General Secretary in October. The office received notification from the landlord they have to move in June 2008 as the building in which the office is housed is being sold.

**Germany:** The General Service Office hosted the first Trial Zonal Meeting for European service structures in August. The meeting was called “European Talk.” The meeting was open to countries with national service and/or evolving service structures. Ten countries including the US and Canada sent representatives. Germany invited the Executive Director and Associate Director Member Services International to attend the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Al-Anon in Germany. The Director of Member Services also attended as part of her training.

**Greece:** Two representatives from the World Service Office, Director of Member Services and Associate Director Member Services—International, were invited to participate in the Al-Anon program held during the 13th International A.A. Greek Convention. The WSO representatives also met with service representatives from the Al-Anon Information Service to answer questions regarding Al-Anon service structure.

**Iceland:** The General Service Office advised that with a total of 39 Al-Anon groups and two Alateen groups, their service structures are still moving in positive directions.

**Italy:** The General Service Office advised the Literature Committee completed the translation and adaptation of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* and will have it available in 2008.

**Poland:** The General Service Office sent two representatives to the first Trial Zonal Meeting for European service structures. The office moved to a new and larger location in Poznan.

**Romania:** The World Service Office sent the Director of Member Services and Associate Director Member Services—International to Bucharest to meet with members involved in service. Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature printed and *Groups at Work* in Romanian, by the World Service Office, was given to the group in Bucharest to have on hand for newcomers and public outreach.

**Spain:** The General Service Office advised their 2007 Conference was very successful. The World Service Office visited the General Service Office in October and met with the Board of Trustee and members involved in service.

**Sweden:** The General Service Office advised their Literature Committee has been working on a number of translation projects and hopes to printing new Conference Approved Literature in 2008.

**Switzerland** (German-speaking): The General Service Office sent two members to attend the Trial European Zonal Meeting. The General Service Office also has a new General Secretary.

**UK & Eire:** The General Service Office has a new General Secretary as of May. The General Service Office also sent the General Secretary and the current IAGSM Delegate to represent their service structure in the Trial European Zonal Meeting.

**ASIA**

**China:** Two Trustees, the Associate Director—International and a retired WSO staff person participated in a Training Institute for professionals that took place in Shanghai, Beijing and Kunming, China. WSO participants had a presence in the plenary sessions in each city and held scheduled Al-Anon meetings.



**India:** Interest by members to participate in the meetings of the Trial National Service Structures is broader. Two more states are participating, bringing the total to ten. WSO is planning to send representatives to attend the 2008 meeting.

**Japan:** The General Service Office indicates the new location of this office is more accessible to the members.

**Korea:** The General Service Office has a new General Secretary and has moved to a new location that will support their budget.

## AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

**Australia:** A representative from the General Service Office advised they are doing a major revision of their Australian Service Handbook due to the many amendments in the WSO Service Manual. The General Service Office sent the General Secretary to the 47th World Service Conference.

**New Zealand:** A representative from the General Service Office advised the previous General Secretary was rehired. The Board of Trustees is also in the process of reorganizing and adapting the WSO Board as a model.

## NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

**Costa Rica:** A representative from the General Service Office advised they held two Regional Service Seminars and held their 11th National Conference in October 2007.

**Cuba:** Although communication was not as consistent with the World Service Office over the past year, some correspondence received indicates members are still meeting and actively involved in service.

**Mexico:** The Associate Director Member Services -International and Translation Services Manager participated in the National Service Conference held in Mexico City. The structure, with permission of their Conference, purchased a building to house General Service Office opened in April 2007.

## SOUTH AMERICA

**Argentina:** After much work and planning, the General Service Office purchased property, with the permission of their Conference, and moved into a permanent location in the spring of 2007.

**Brazil:** The 2007 Service Conference was very positive. Public awareness was increased through projects by the membership during 2007.

**Colombia:** A representative from the General Service Office advised that their service structure continues to be stable and members have participated in area public outreach projects to raise awareness within the professional community about the benefits of Al-Anon and Alateen.

**Peru:** The General Service Office advised, because of the financial support from the membership, they have been able to do more reprinting of literature.

**Uruguay:** A representative from the General Service Office advised they have selected two Delegates to attend the 2008 IAGSM.

**Venezuela:** The General Service Office has had a good year with the sales of literature. The service structure continues to explore ways to unify the members, identifying themselves as Al-Anon Adult Children, while focusing on the principle of Al-Anon as a whole.

A new theme, **Support and Strengthen Our Structure** was added to the Strategic Plan. It includes some of the Goals previously included under the other themes and additional Goals as well.

A new Goal under this theme was developed by the staff and added to the Strategic Plan as follows:

### Support and Strengthen Our Structure

**Goal #6** The WSO staff and volunteers working together will engage Al-Anon groups in the U.S. and Canada to be more welcoming to newcomers introducing newcomers to all aspects of the Al-Anon Program in a clear, concise manner.

**Objective #1:** To develop effective research-based methods for groups to use to create a welcoming environment for newcomers.

A new goal was added to the **Unlimited, Abundant Resources** theme as follows:

**Goal #2:** The Finance Committee will ensure that the budget reflects the priorities of the Strategic Plan.

**Objective #1:** Increase the contributions 30% by the year 2012.

A Task Force was appointed to design strategies for this objective. Included in the Task Force's charge was to prepare for a discussion on the topic at the 2009 World Service Conference.

### Progress on the Strategic Plan—2007-08 Priorities:

The Board approved the following goals/objectives as priorities and task forces were appointed for each:

**1. Support and Strengthen Our Structure, Goal #5** Evaluate and recreate the structure of the WSO selected committees and other program delivery processes in innovative ways rendering them dynamic, flexible, nimble, and task oriented to fulfill the current needs of the organization.

**Objective #1:** By July 2008, using specific criteria, evaluate the selected committees and redefine their current definition and operation to ensure that they meet the ongoing needs of the organization.

*Approval was given to suspend the Canadian Public Outreach Subcommittee for a three-year trial basis.*

The Canadian Public Outreach Committee, a subcommittee of the Public Outreach Committee, believed it no longer contributed to the planning process for public outreach. The Chair expressed the opinion that continued participation in the parent Public Outreach Committee would be enough to ensure that Canadians are being served.

*Approval was given to suspend the Outreach to Professionals Advisory Committee for a three-year trial basis.*

Suspending the advisory committee could be a way to allow the Public Outreach department to create task forces and thought forces to make broader use of the fellowship and community's resources.

*Forum Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC) Restructured (trial)*

With the new review process, each member reviews articles at their home and sends their responses to the WSO. FEAC meets only by conference call. The cost savings and the convenience for the members by avoiding the time and problems of air travel are two of the most obvi-

ous immediate benefits. Enthusiastic participation of the Committee members has allowed for in-depth discussion on exploring ways to generate interest in *The Forum*. The communication continues between meetings via e-mail.

*Conference Committee—restructured (trial)*

The Board restructured the Conference Committee so that it will streamline the preparations for the World Service Conference. Membership includes the Executive Director, Chairperson of the Board, two Trustees serving as Chairman and Co-Chairman, Director of Member Services, and the Associate Director Member Services—Conference. The Conference Leadership Team (trial) will enable a focus on both content of sessions and setting the actual agenda for sessions. Each and every session of the Conference will reflect and be evaluated on its adherence to the Conference theme.

*Alateen Advisory Committee restructured (trial)*

The Alateen Advisory Committee is in a trial period of restructure with Advisory Committee meetings held with regional representation at RSSs. For the trial in 2007, the Alateen Advisory Committee met at the Southeast RSS in Charleston, West Virginia and in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. At-Large members are selected from the country where the RSS is held. This has allowed Canadian Alateens to participate and has invigorated the Committee. The Alateens also have an opportunity to participate in the RSSs.

*Regional Service Seminar Committee—restructured (trial)*

The RSS Committee has been restructured as a work group for a trial period. The Committee formulated questions to gather information from Delegates at the 2007 World Service Conference. It will continue to seek innovative ways for communication between the World Service Office and the fellowship.

*Admissions/Handbook Restructured (trial)*

The Admissions/Handbook Committee has been restructured as a work force that will meet only to resolve timely questions on the handbook. The Board has begun conversations on other ways to handle approval of admissions for seating at the WSC since this has become a cursory process. During the trial, the Chair of Admissions/Handbook Work Force is not serving on the Conference Leadership Team.

*Delegate Participation on Committees*

Discussion has begun on Delegate participation on Committees. The use of technology and a rapidly changing environment means that Delegate input could be used in more timely, innovative, and dynamic ways. Committee work could be accomplished in other ways, freeing Delegates to focus on their primary work as the link between the World Service Conference and their Areas. Delegate input will be sought on this issue at the 2008 World Service Conference.

The Delegates were polled regarding their interest in serving on short-term, focused dynamic task forces to meet current organizational needs rather than on a Selected Committee during their terms. This would enable a more dynamic connection of the Delegates to the actual business of the Conference and free them up from responsibilities associated with staff work. Other members could continue to provide the necessary fellowship input and a process to ensure Conference review/over-

sight would need to be developed.

**e-CAL Committee**—At present e-CAL is in its second year of a three-year trial period. An on-line review process was designed for the review of e-CAL. E-CAL resides on the Members' Web site and has posted text, video and graphic sharings throughout the year.

The Executive Committee approved requests for restructuring committees.

**2. Support and Strengthen Our Structure, Goal #5** Evaluate and recreate the structure of the WSO selected committees and other program delivery processes in innovative ways rendering them dynamic, flexible, nimble, and task oriented to fulfill the current needs of the organization.

**Objective #2:** Create an innovative Regional Service Seminar by 2008.

A Task Force (see the Regional Service Seminar Committee above) is charged with developing a rationale to support a plan for a new service-oriented event whose purpose is to connect the WSO and staff with our members.

A Task Force suggested the format for an innovative service event to take place at the 2008 International Convention. It will serve as a trial of various formats for future service-related events. Successful aspects of this event can be added to the new RSS events.

Reorganization of the committee structure allows the Executive Committee to choose candidates without the constraints of geographical boundaries.

**3. Support and Strengthen Our Structure, Goal #4** Fill Board vacancies with competent, able members who fulfill the current needs of the Board.

**Objective #1:** The Board will annually review its composition to determine what skills it will look for in upcoming Trustee vacancies (RTs and TALs).

*RT Selection Plan Training was approved and delivered at the 2007 WSC.* The presentation reminded scorers to constantly refer to the qualifications necessary to be an RT when scoring the five sections of the résumé. An information packet was assembled and given to all Conference members.

A Board Task Force was appointed to compile the skills of the current Trustees and to determine how to assess the skills needed in the future. A Board Profile instrument was designed. This is a work-in-progress. The Task Force will develop a timeline for communication between the Nominating Committee and the Conference Committee on Trustees as well as the Nominating Committee and the various Regional Committees on Trustees. There will be a new task force appointed to further develop the skills survey for Board members to use to familiarize themselves with each other about their background and skills. It can be used by the Chairperson to assist with assigning Board members to task forces and work groups based on their skills.

A Board Task Force was appointed to study whether there would be any advantages of having a non-member serve on the Board. The Board is continuing to discuss this topic.

A Work Group was appointed to research and discuss removing members from the Board of Trustees. Their initial discussions led to a discussion of the By-Laws of the Corporation. A proactive stance that would clearly state what is expected of a Trustee during the application process and before a Trustee accepts the position was

endorsed as one part of the process. The Board approved a document spelling out the Attributes of a Board Member.

The Board approved adding an additional question in writing for the candidates for Trustees for the purpose of assessing writing, thinking, and communicating abilities as well as offering insight into the level of understanding candidates have on spiritual principles in addition to current issues of the organization. This question was used in the most recent selection process. The question will change each year to reflect a current issue of concern to the Board.

The Nominating Committee continues its discussion with Conference Committee on Trustees regarding the preparation of Leadership Training workshops for use in the Areas.

**4. Support and Strengthen Our Structure, Goal #1** The Board and staff will be catalysts to strengthen the groups and to expand our mutual relationship.

**Objective #1:** Individual members of the Board of Trustees will participate in 15 different service events annually.

The Board has set up a method for requesting Trustee visits to Area service events. Funds have been identified to support this goal. In 2006-2007 Trustees visited and made presentations at the following Assemblies:

Colorado	Illinois South
California North	Texas East
Minnesota North	Ontario South
BC/Yukon	Connecticut
Utah	Indiana
Quebec East	Oklahoma
New York North	Mississippi
Alberta/Northwest Territories	North Dakota
Saskatchewan	Nevada

**At these Assemblies, Trustees shared their service and personal stories, and gave presentations, Q & A sessions, and workshops on the following topics:**

Leadership, Concept Nine, Ways of Contributing to the WSO, *Service Manual*, the Board's Strategic Plan, Vision and Mission, Prescription Al-Anon, International Outreach, Conference theme, e-CAL, Conflict Resolution, Literature, Using "Groups at Work" for Meetings, Alateen Advisory Committee, 2008 International, *Alateen Talk*, Alateen skit, WSO Web sites, Understanding and Using Electronic Communication, On-line Meetings, Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) and the Traditions, How the WSC works, WSC schematic, Alateen Requirements, Minority Voice, What a Trustee does and how a Trustee is elected, Sponsorship and Controlling Sponsorship, KDBM and the Twelve Concepts of Service, Outreach to other language and cultural communities, *Opening Our Hearts*, *Transforming Our Losses*, Culture of Trust, Responsibility, Big thinking sessions from the 2007 WSC, Public Outreach, Public Outreach and Anonymity, Shared Leadership, Service Structure: Working Together, Anonymity within the fellowship, AFG, Inc/AFG, the fellowship, Concepts of Service in your personal life, and Involving Past Trusted Servants.

The Board articulated and reviewed the criteria needed for each Board member to be successful in this outreach to the Areas and in the world as a representative of the Board. These included endurance, health, and dietary needs as well as cultural sensitivity among others.



A Task Force was appointed to develop a feedback sheet for Areas to let the WSO know if the Trustee visits were helpful to the Areas they visited. The Board reviewed a first draft. The project is a work-in-progress.

The Board held a discussion at the Open Board Meeting during the WSC on controlling sponsorship issues under the larger discussion: "Having studied the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees for Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., and being aware of the growing concerns of some Al-Anon members, what is the Board's role within the Bylaws of the Corporation and the Concepts of Service including the General Warranties of the Charter to ensure the long-term viability of the Al-Anon fellowship?" A variety of ideas were shared which called upon every Al-Anon member to take responsibility for learning about and keeping this topic an ongoing issue for study and discussion.

The Board approved the theme for the 2008 World Service Conference—"Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest," which can encourage building bridges within the fellowship and which can energize the fellowship to consider its spiritual path.

Leadership training sessions, beginning with one on Conflict Resolution, were introduced at the Conference and were overwhelmingly well received.

The notions of Shared Leadership continued to be reinforced and the culture of trust deepened during the WSC.

The continued use and understanding of Knowledge-Based Decision-Making in our deliberations has assisted in the decision-making processes at the Board and at the Conference. We have begun to internalize "Dialogue before Deliberation" as a means of thoroughly examining issues before a motion is brought to the floor.

The Board approved the idea of having a conversation with the Conference members about how issues pertaining to worldwide Al-Anon could come before the Conference in a more dynamic way.

Board members continue to strengthen their relationships with Delegates by making direct contact with Delegates following each quarterly meeting to discuss issues of concern to the Delegates and to answer questions that they might have. In 2007 there has been a focus on getting Delegates feedback on issues related to the WSC.

The idea of having conversation around questions which require "big" thinking (questions which are not easily answerable with a yes/no) was instituted as part of the WSC to encourage forward-thinking among all Conference members for the benefit of Al-Anon.

The *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* was printed with all four sections, "Al-Anon Alateen Groups at Work," "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies," "World Service Handbook," and "Al-Anon's Twelve Concepts of Service" in one publication. A simultaneously printing of the "Al-Anon/Alateen Groups at Work" section as a separate publication was completed and mailed to every group. The *Groups at Work* document was made available at a low cost to encourage every member of the group to have and use it further unifying groups.

A task force was appointed to catalogue and update current presentations that Trustees could take when they visited an area. Suggestions for additional presentations are under consideration and development.

The Nominating Committee reminded the Board that members of the Board, Executive Committee, and staff

also share the responsibility to seek out members to serve at the WSO level when going out to speak in the fellowship or where groups of members gather.

**The staff added additional ideas to support this objective:**

A new Literature Project was developed for Literature Coordinators to share with districts, groups, and members in their Areas. Participants were asked to select a meeting topic using *From Survival to Recovery* (B-21), which will be the Spring 2008 Sample Chapter selection on the Web. They were also asked to select a corresponding brief quotation and write five questions for meeting discussion pertaining to the topic. Over 70 sets of topics, quotations, and questions from members and groups from at least 21 Areas throughout the Conference structure were submitted for possible inclusion on the Members' Web site.

*The Forum* is sent free all groups within the structure. It is a catalyst to unity across the structure, including news and information about the strategic plan, conference, and other activities affecting Al-Anon as a whole.

Staff members participated at RSSs, as well as attended several Area Assemblies and workshops, sometimes in partnership with a Trustee.

**Goal #2:** Prepare the staff, Board and Executive Committee to go out into the fellowship in order to articulate the Vision, Mission and the Strategic Plan of the Board.

**Objective #1:** The Staff, Board and Executive Committee have a viable tool to communicate the Vision, Mission and the Strategic Plan of the Board within one year.

A Task Force has been formed to develop an evaluation form.

A PowerPoint presentation has been designed for the purpose of assisting in explaining the Strategic Plan process.

### **Everyone, Everywhere**

**Goal #1:** The Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and the World Service Office Staff will be catalysts to bring together potential partners who can make a difference in the lives of those affected by someone else's drinking.

The Board approved the theme for the 2008 World Service Conference—"Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest," which can encourage outreach efforts.

The Executive Committee approves staff travel to hear presentations by professionals and to discuss how best the Al-Anon principles can be utilized.

The staff listed other projects that support this goal.

A Canadian Al-Anon member was identified to serve as a liaison on the Canadian National Treatment Strategy Workgroup representing Canadian families of alcoholics.

The WSO served as a resource to the Director of Hallmark Hall of Fame Project Development and two writers' creation of screenplays for a television special about Lois W., Al-Anon's cofounder.

Members were informed about major media events related to alcoholism and families of alcoholics that included an HBO/USA Today television series on addiction.

The coordinator for an experiential program called Professionals in Residence (PIR) in the Training Department at the Betty Ford Center included *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* 2007 in the training notebooks for the remainder of sessions held in 2007 and is ordering 200 copies of the second printing of the 2008 edition for next year. The students of this course are all types of professionals:

counselors, psychologists, probation officers, lawyers, and medical students. The Coordinator of the Betty Ford Treatment Center Outpatient program is taking copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2007* to a new treatment facility in Mexico that the Center is assisting.

Dr. Neil Capretto, Medical Director of Gateway Rehabilitation Center, Pittsburgh, PA gave a presentation on the families of alcoholics at the Pennsylvania Medical Society Conference in Gettysburg. His presentation included a half hour meeting on the subject of detachment held by six local members. This is the fourth time he has seen a “meeting on wheels” included in presentations. He believes it is effective because it makes a family presentation “real.” Three members who are professionals that have made a presentation with a “meeting on wheels” or have observed one have been asked to submit their comments on the “meeting on wheels” and its value so that an article can be developed for the membership.

The Public Outreach staff has worked to develop closer, more supportive relationships with syndicated newspaper columnists who have written news articles that recommend Al-Anon. Public Outreach has encouraged Coordinators at the local level to build relationships with their local newspaper editors.

**Objective #1:** To invite one non-member professional partner annually to attend and observe a Board of Trustees meeting.

The Board approved allowing the WSO Information Analyst to attend Board Meetings. She is not an Al-Anon member. It is hoped that this will develop her understanding of the work of the Board. It will also allow the Board to ascertain whether an impartial and objective non-member could aid the Board. This is a first step in the Board’s consideration of whether having a non-member at Board Meetings could assist us in building a partnership with a professional or an organization which would help carry our message of hope and recovery.

**Goal #2:** The Board, Executive Committee and Staff will coach/support the fellowship in building partnerships to make a difference in the lives of those affected by someone else’s drinking.

The Executive Committee approves Area Coordinator conference calls in an attempt to provide clarity and understanding of policy in respect to the respective responsibilities of the coordinator and to build relationships with the staff.

**Objective #1:** To establish a resource bank that includes three different approaches to address anonymity within the next 3 years.

The staff created and presented several presentations on anonymity at conventions and assemblies.

**Goal #3:** During all planning and business meetings, the Board of Trustees will have a priority focus of spending 80% of time in forward-thinking strategic work and 20% of time in evaluation. Evaluations will include a quarterly review of the WSO’s activities and the Board’s self-review.

**Objective #1:** By October 2007, the Board will have adopted and successfully used a tool which will be an accurate evaluation of its work, will assist in improving its work and also assist in the oversight of the WSO’s work.

The Board has tested some self-assessment tools related to the use of its time and internal functioning.

The Board has delegated the review of the WSO’s day-to-day operations to the Executive Committee. The Com-

mittee approves projects and receives reports from the departments at each meeting. These reports allow the Committee to assess the work’s relationship to the Strategic Plan as well as review its progress. Project proposals/approvals contain a specific connection to the Plan and plans for evaluation and measurement are included.

A Strategic Plan Oversight Task Force has been appointed to review all new suggested goals and objectives for clarity and style prior to their presentation to the Board. This year it suggested 5 priorities for the Board. Following Board approval, the Board Chairperson appointed task forces for each.

A Task Force to design a process for the Strategic Plan, its regular update and evaluation has been at work and presented a preliminary idea to the Board for discussion in October. Once there is final approval, the flow for the regular review and generation of Goals and Objectives will ensure its continued use and maintenance keeping it future focused and integral to the work of the Board.

The Chairperson of the Board wrote an article on the Strategic Plan for the fellowship which appeared in *The Forum* in December 2007.

The Board noted its desire for Delegates to receive the necessary information in advance so that the Conference actions will be related to the Strategic Plan, whenever possible.

The Chairperson of the Board writes a quarterly letter to the Conference Members keeping them apprised of the work of the Board.

#### **Unlimited, Abundant Resources**

**Goal #1:** Discover and Use universal resources

**Objective #2:** Within the next 3 years, raise the allowable limit of bequests

A task force was appointed to study and prepare policy language regarding allowing greater bequests. The Board of Trustees approved language to amend the Policy Digest Section to permit unlimited bequests with the Conference having authority on how to spend those amounts that exceed the current limit of 10 per cent. The 2008 World Service Conference will discuss the proposed change.

**Goal #3:** Articulate, model and operate within the Fellowship in a reality of unlimited, abundant resources.

Following a request from a Delegate suggesting that a piece on finances and maintaining a prudent reserve be developed for groups and Areas to use when conducting their financial inventories, a task force was appointed to include two Delegate members. Presently, the Task Force is unsure if the piece will be a guideline or a fact sheet.

The Board approved the appointment of Task Force of Conference members to explore the idea of allowing contributions from the non-member family of an Al-Anon member in memory of a deceased Al-Anon member and to formulate a discussion question for the 2009 World Service Conference.

The Board approved the appointment of a Task Force of members who work in the estate-planning field to gather the most recent information and material for a fact sheet or guideline on estate planning and other considerations for Al-Anon members when considering including Al-Anon in their estate plan.

The staff included additional projects that support this goal:

The Associate Director Communications—Literature and the Director of Communications held an hour-long

conference call with Literature Coordinators to enhance communication and cooperation regarding their role and generate enthusiasm for *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29). Thirty-seven Area Literature Coordinators participated in the call.

The call helped the WSO continue to build a relationship with Literature Coordinators and support them in using their unlimited abundant resources to effectively encourage the use of Conference Approved Literature in their Areas. It was an opportunity for the WSO to cooperate with Areas by providing an environment for Coordinators to collaborate with each other. It also afforded the WSO the opportunity to respond effectively to questions, concerns, and misinformation. It helped build trust, mutual understanding, and enthusiasm between the WSO and Coordinators. Several of the Coordinators who participated made more frequent contact with the WSO after the call than they had in the past. They also seemed to have a clearer sense of their role and carried out their responsibilities more effectively.

The Associate Director Communications—Media and the Director of Communications also hosted an hour-long conference call with Public Outreach Coordinators. Forty-eight Area Public Outreach Coordinators participated in the meeting. The topics discussed were how to make better use of Public Outreach resources, and how to involve the fellowship in Public Outreach projects.

Audio sound clips of Al-Anon members speaking as “family members of alcoholics” (without revealing their membership) were used in 2007 Recovery Month Web casts by the US Government’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. The WSO served as a resource for the Web casts throughout the year. Its recommendation for a family focused Web cast was implemented.

Child Family Services located in the Timmins District of Ontario reprinted the “Referral—Attend Al-Anon Family Groups” article from *The Forum* in conjunction with National Child Abuse Month. This article is one of three made available for duplication on the Internet in each issue of *The Forum*.

## EVERYONE EVERYWHERE

*Unlimited, Abundant Resources*

**Support and Strengthen Our Structure**

**Universal Understanding of Recovery**

# APPENDIX I

U.S. BY-LAWS TEXT REVIEWED BY THE 2008 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE  
**BY-LAWS OF**  
**AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, INC.**  
**Effective April 30, 1988**

## ARTICLE I ~ NAMES

The name of this Corporation, as set forth in its Certificate of Incorporation, is Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. In these BY-LAWS, the Corporation is sometimes referred to as the Corporation or as the World Service Office. For the purpose of these BY-LAWS, the term Corporation and the name World Service Office shall be deemed synonymous and interchangeable with each other and with the name Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.

1. As used in these BY-LAWS:
  - a) Al-Anon group means a group of relatives and friends of alcoholics organized and functioning in keeping with the principles and Traditions of the Al-Anon fellowship.
  - b) Alateen group means a group of teenage relatives and friends of alcoholics organized and functioning in keeping with the principles and Traditions of the Al-Anon fellowship.
  - c) World Service Conference means the organization described in Article XI of these BY-LAWS.
  - d) Trustee means a person who is or becomes a Trustee pursuant to these BY-LAWS.

## ARTICLE II ~ PURPOSES

1. The purposes for which the Corporation was formed, as set forth in its Certificate of Incorporation, are: "To encourage, assist and serve the families and friends of alcoholics in dealing with the problems concerning and attendant on alcoholism; to reinforce their efforts to understand the alcoholic and to foster his or her restoration to normal life; to disseminate information in relation thereto and to conduct, and participate in, any other classes of service to assist families and friends of alcoholics in dealing with their problems."
2. In furtherance of the purposes set forth in the Certificate of Incorporation, the World Service Office will:
  - a) Coordinate policy among the Al-Anon and Alateen groups throughout the world;
  - b) Assist Al-Anon and Alateen groups in the conduct of their activities;
  - c) Provide relatives and friends of alcoholics with information about the principles and Traditions of Al-Anon and locations of Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - d) Assist in the formation of new Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - e) Publish literature of interest to Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - f) Bring Al-Anon or Alateen groups to the attention of the concerned public;
  - g) Provide information and other assistance to persons for whom regular attendance at meetings of Al-Anon or Alateen groups is difficult or impractical;
  - h) Establish and maintain national and international public relations; and
  - i) Establish and maintain policies for the work of the World Service Office.

## ARTICLE III ~ MEMBERS

1. The members of the Corporation shall be the persons who are the Trustees of the Corporation. Each Trustee shall become a member upon becoming a Trustee and shall cease to be a member upon ceasing to be a Trustee.
2. Members shall not be required to pay dues or any other compensation to the Corporation, or to any one else, as a condition of membership.
3. Members will be required to sign appropriate documents to avoid potential conflicts of interest and clarify desired conduct as set by the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE IV ~ TRUSTEES

1. The Directors of the Corporation shall be the persons who are the Trustees of the Corporation. Each Trustee shall become a Director upon becoming a Trustee and shall cease to be a Director upon ceasing to be a Trustee. For the purpose of these BY-LAWS, the term Director and Trustee shall be deemed synonymous and interchangeable so far as necessary to conform to the Certificate of Incorporation of the Corporation which contemplates, and refers to, Directors.
2. The Board of Trustees shall consist of not less than seven nor more than twenty-one persons of the following classifications: Trustees at Large, Regional Trustees, Lifetime Trustees, and a Sustaining Trustee, as those terms are described in these BY-LAWS. The actual number of Trustees and the composition of the Board as among the classifications referred to shall be as established by the Board from time to time and in this regard the Board will generally be guided by the directions of the World Service Conference.
3. Trustees at Large are Trustees whose nomination originates with, or with the consent of, the Board of Trustees. The total number of such Trustees shall be set by the Board of Trustees from time to time and shall always be a number evenly divisible by three. One-third of the number of Trustees at Large shall be elected each year at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, and shall take office on the day following such meeting.
4. The Nominating Committee, prior to the next annual meeting of the Board, is charged to submit nominations for Trustee at Large positions to replace those whose term will expire. In the event a nominee for Trustee at Large



is not elected by the Board of Trustees, the nominee shall be withdrawn and the position declared vacant. The position may be filled in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 9.

5. Regional Trustees are Trustees who live in geographic areas of the United States and Canada designated as official regions by the World Service Conference. Their purpose is to bring a regional perspective to the Board. They do not represent the members of the region, nor are they responsible to the region. Nominees for Regional Trustee shall be designated annually by the World Service Conference in accordance with such procedures as that body may establish. The total number of Regional Trustees shall be a number evenly divisible by three and one-third of the number shall be elected each year at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees to take office on the day following such meeting. In the event that a World Service Conference's nominee is not elected by the Board of Trustees, the nominee shall be withdrawn, and the position declared vacant. The position may be filled in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 9.
6. The Sustaining Trustee is the person employed by the World Service Office established by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. to hold the office of Executive Director of the World Service Office. The term of office of the Sustaining Trustee shall be for the same period as the person is employed by the World Service Office as Executive Director.
7. Lois W. and Anne B., the co-founders of Al-Anon, were Lifetime Trustees who served as Trustee as long as each lived.
8. Any Trustee may resign by sending written notice to the Secretary of the Corporation.
9. Any vacancy in the office of a Trustee at Large or Regional Trustee which occurs in any year between the annual meeting and the next World Service Conference may be filled by the Board of Trustees until the next annual meeting.
10. The length of time any Trustee at Large and Regional Trustee may serve on the Board is two three-year terms which may be consecutive.
11. Any member of the Board of Trustees may be removed from office for just cause by a vote of two-thirds of the written ballots cast by the Board of Trustees. Just cause is defined as absence from two meetings during any 12 month period; a conflict of interest or a conflict of commitment violation; or failure to adhere to any written policies and procedures of the Board of Trustees. Such removal shall occur at a regular or specifically called meeting of the Board of Trustees. Upon a finding of just cause by the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the Treasurer and the Executive Committee Chairperson, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees shall send a notice of the proposed removal by mail, certified or registered, if possible, to the last recorded address of such member at least fifteen (15) days before final action is taken on such removal. The member shall have the opportunity to present any relevant information, in writing, in person, or through a representative, to the Board of Trustees before final action is taken.
12. Trustees shall serve without remuneration but they shall be entitled to payment of reasonable expenses.

## **ARTICLE V ~ POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE TRUSTEES**

1. The Board of Trustees shall control and manage the affairs of the Corporation.
2. Without limiting the generality of the preceding paragraph, the Board of Trustees shall have the following powers:
  - a) To establish and maintain the policies of the World Service Office;
  - b) To control the property and finances of the World Service Office;
  - c) To establish plans and conduct the operations of the World Service Office;
  - d) To authorize expenditures;
  - e) To elect the officers of the Corporation;
  - f) To elect the at-large members of the Executive Committee and appoint members of other committees in accordance with these BY-LAWS;
  - g) To appoint an Executive Director and a Director of Business Services for the World Service Office; and
  - h) To take such measures as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the World Service Office.
3. Any Trustee having a substantial financial interest in any contract or transaction requiring authorization by the Board of Trustees shall not vote on the matter.

## **ARTICLE VI ~ OFFICERS**

1. The Officers of the Corporation shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer and a Secretary, and such other officers as may be deemed necessary from time to time by the Board. The Executive Director serves as the Secretary of the Corporation.
2. The President, the Vice President, and the Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting of Trustees from among the Trustees for a term of one year each.
3. The President shall also be known as the Chairperson (and is sometimes herein referred to as the Chairperson), and the Vice President shall also be known as the Vice Chairperson (and is sometimes herein referred to as the Vice Chairperson).
4. Any vacancy may be filled for the unexpired term by a majority vote of the Trustees.
5. Any Officer may be removed from office by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees.

## **ARTICLE VII ~ DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

1. **THE PRESIDENT.** The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees, and shall perform all the necessary duties, and exercise all the customary powers incident to the office of President, including appointment of committee Chairpersons, with the exception of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The President shall have general supervision of all of the affairs of the World Service Office, and shall be an ex officio member of all committees.

2. **THE VICE PRESIDENT.** The Vice President shall be an aide to the President and shall perform the duties of the President in the absence or disability of the President. The Board of Trustees shall in its sole discretion determine the matter of the President's disability. In the event the Board determines that disability has occurred, the office shall be deemed vacant. The Board of Trustees may elect a successor to serve until the next annual meeting of the Board of Trustees.
3. **THE TREASURER.** The Treasurer shall be the financial officer of the Corporation and shall provide advice to the Corporation with respect to general financial policy and ancillary matters such as the collection, custody, and control of funds of the World Service Office and maintenance of books of accounts and financial records subject to such directions as may be given by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer is responsible for having the books of account of the Corporation audited by a Certified Public Accountant at regular intervals as directed by the Board of Trustees. He may be an authorized signatory for disposition of funds of the Corporation on deposit in banks and other holding accounts. The Treasurer shall not be individually responsible for accounting procedures, security of funds, books of accounts or financial records, but does have general oversight authority respecting these matters.
4. **THE SECRETARY.** The Secretary shall record the minutes of all meetings of the Corporation, shall be the custodian of books and records of the Corporation and shall perform such other duties as may be delegated. The Secretary shall be an ex officio member of all committees.
5. The Officers of the Corporation shall each perform such other duties as may be delegated to them by the Board of Trustees as well as such other duties as shall pertain to their respective offices.

## ARTICLE VIII ~ FINANCES

1. The fiscal year of the World Service Office shall begin on the first day of January in each year and end on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December thereof.
2. Checks shall be made in the name of the Corporation and shall be signed by two officers or employees as may from time to time be designated by the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE IX ~ MEETINGS

1. The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees shall be held on the day following the World Service Conference in April of each year at such place as is designated by the Board of Trustees, except when special circumstances warrant a change of date of the Conference.
2. Regular meetings of the Board of Trustees shall be held three times a year in January, July and October at a time and place designated by the Chairperson. In addition, there will be a regular meeting in April of each year on a date to be determined by the Board of Trustees.

If all the Trustees consent thereto generally or in respect of a particular meeting, a Trustee may participate in a meeting of the Board or of a committee of the Board by means of such conference telephone or other communications facilities as permit all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other, and a Trustee participating in such a meeting by such means is deemed to be present at the meeting.

3. Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called by the Chairperson at any time. The Chairperson shall call a special meeting upon the written application of three Trustees or upon the written application of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee for the transaction of such business as may be described in such application.
4. At least fourteen days' notice of each meeting shall be given to the Trustees by mail. Forty-eight hours written notice of any meeting may be sent by electronic means. Trustees may waive notice of meetings by executing appropriate waivers.
5. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business in any meeting. Each member shall have one vote. The vote of the majority of the Trustees present at the time of the vote, if a quorum is then present, shall be the act of the Board of Trustees, except as otherwise provided by law. In the absence of a quorum, a majority of the Trustees present may adjourn the meeting from time to time until a quorum is obtained.
6. Any member unable to attend any meeting of the Board shall give advance notice of the absence to the Chairperson or Secretary of the Board and indicate the reason for the absence. Any member who fails to attend two meetings per year for reasons deemed inadequate by the Board shall be subject to dismissal by the Board for such cause. For the purposes of this paragraph, the Board of Trustees meetings during the World Service Conference shall be deemed to be one meeting.
7. Unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson, the order of business at all meetings shall be as follows:
  - a) Calling of roll;
  - b) Approval of minutes;
  - c) Report of Treasurer;
  - d) Committee reports and communications;
  - e) Elections (if such action is scheduled for such meetings);
  - f) New Business.

## ARTICLE X ~ INDEMNIFICATION

1. Each individual serving or having served as Trustee or Officer, or both, of the Corporation shall be indemnified in the circumstances and to the full extent permitted by law, against any and all costs, expenses and financial consequences of whatever nature, including legal fees actually incurred in connection with any action, suit or legal proceeding of any kind in which such an individual is a defendant by reason of serving or having served as

an Officer or Trustee, or both, of the corporation. This indemnification shall also extend to any individual made party defendant to any actions, suits or legal proceedings referenced in the preceding sentence by reason of the fact that his testator or intestate served as Trustee or Officer of the Corporation.

2. The foregoing indemnification shall apply also to each individual serving or having served (in his individual capacity, and not as a Trustee or officer) as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees or of any special committee as may be authorized from time to time by the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE XI ~ WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

1. The World Service Conference consists of the following persons:
  - a) Al-Anon Delegates from the United States and Canada;
  - b) Trustees of the Corporation;
  - c) Al-Anon members who serve as Directors and Associate Directors of the World Service Office;
  - d) The Chairpersons of committees established by the Board of Trustees;
  - e) The persons comprising the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees; and
  - f) Such other persons as deemed necessary for Conference business and representatives from countries not served by the World Service Conference Structure may be admitted by Conference vote. These persons may participate but not vote.
2. The World Service Conference shall be the permanent body empowered to express the conscience of the Al-Anon fellowship.
3. The Board of Trustees shall consult with the World Service Conference and, when required, accept its decision. However, the Board of Trustees shall continue to be vested with the full legal powers and responsibilities for the World Service Office.
4. Three-fourths of all authorized participants registered at the Conference may bring about a reorganization of the World Service Office as or when it is deemed essential. They may request the resignation of the entire Board of Trustees and nominate a new slate of Trustees. In this regard the annual election of Trustees shall be conditional upon the understanding of each, that his resignation is required on call for the same by the Conference, subject to the further understanding that prior to any such resignation becoming effective each Trustee shall be deemed to vote for the successor slate of Trustees presented by the Conference. For the purpose of bringing about a reorganization of the World Service Office, the number of World Service Office participants voting shall be limited to one-fourth of the total Conference vote.

## ARTICLE XII ~ COMMITTEES

1. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.** The Board of Trustees shall elect at each annual meeting an Executive Committee consisting of seven persons. The Executive Committee shall include the Executive Director of the World Service Office, the Chairperson of the Finance Committee, the Chairperson of the Policy Committee, an Al-Anon member from the administrative staff of the World Service Office, and three Al-Anon members, preferably not Trustees. The Executive Committee shall meet at such times as the Board of Trustees may direct and shall have the power to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees in the intervals between meetings of the Board of Trustees. The Committee shall report all such action to the full Board no later than the next meeting of the Board. The Board of Trustees shall elect one volunteer member of the Executive Committee as the Chairperson. The Executive Director is the Secretary. The President, an ex officio member, shall perform the duties of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee in that person's absence.
2. **FINANCE COMMITTEE.** The Board of Trustees shall appoint a Finance Committee consisting of the following members: the Treasurer of the Corporation, the President, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, one other Trustee designated by the President, and the Executive Director. The Treasurer shall be the Chairperson of the Finance Committee. The Executive Director is the Secretary. The Finance Committee shall plan the yearly budget of the World Service Office and shall render such other services as may be requested by the Board of Trustees. The President shall perform the duties of the Chairperson of the Finance Committee in the absence of the Treasurer.
3. **POLICY COMMITTEE.** The Board of Trustees shall appoint a Policy Committee consisting of the following members: Trustees, Executive Committee members, the Chairpersons of all committees of the World Service Office, and the Conference members of the WSO administrative staff. The Chairperson of the Policy Committee shall be appointed by the President of the Board of Trustees. The Policy Committee shall consider Al-Anon policies particularly in relation to Al-Anon's Traditions, make recommendations to the Board of Trustees, and render such other services as the Board of Trustees may request. The President shall perform the duties of the Chairperson of the Policy Committee in that person's absence.
4. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE.** At each annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Chairperson of the Board appoints the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, with Board approval. After the annual meeting, the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board, appoints the members of the Nominating Committee.
5. The Board of Trustees may appoint such other committees as they may from time to time determine appropriate.
6. Committee members shall hold office for a term of one (1) year.
7. Committee members shall serve without remuneration but shall be entitled to payment of reasonable expenses.
8. Any Committee member may be removed from office for cause by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees.

## ARTICLE XIII ~ AMENDMENTS

The Board of Trustees shall have the power to amend or alter these BY-LAWS in whole or in part by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees at a meeting called for the purpose of amending the BY-LAWS.

Amended: January 28, 2008

Reviewed by the April 2008 WSC

## APPENDIX II

CANADIAN BY-LAWS TEXT REVIEWED BY THE 2008 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

BY-LAW NO. 1 OF

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS (CANADA) INC.

Effective March 9, 1999

### ARTICLE I

#### NAMES

1. (a) The name of this Corporation, as set forth in its Letters Patent of Incorporation, is Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (Canada) Inc. In these BY-LAWS, the Corporation is sometimes referred to as the Corporation or as Canada Service Office. For the purpose of these BY-LAWS, the term Corporation and the name Canada Service Office shall be deemed synonymous and interchangeable with each other and with the name Al Anon Family Group Headquarters (Canada) Inc.
- (b) The Corporation is associated with Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters Inc. of Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA and it has been incorporated to carry on, in Canada, the work of the United States corporation.
2. As used in these BY-LAWS:
  - (a) Al-Anon group means a group of relatives and friends of alcoholics organized and functioning in keeping with the principles and Traditions of the Al-Anon fellowship.
  - (b) Alateen group means a group of teenage relatives and friends of alcoholics organized and functioning in keeping with the principles and Traditions of the Al-Anon fellowship.
  - (c) World Service Conference means the organization described in Article XI of these BY-LAWS.
  - (d) Trustee means a person who is or becomes a Trustee pursuant to these BY-LAWS.

### ARTICLE II

#### PURPOSES

1. The purposes for which the Corporation was formed, as set forth in its Letters Patent of Incorporation, are: "To encourage, assist and serve the families and friends of alcoholics in dealing with the problems concerning and attendant on alcoholism; to reinforce their efforts to understand the alcoholic and to foster his or her restoration to normal life; to disseminate information in relation thereto and to conduct, and participate in, any other classes of service to assist families and friends of alcoholics in dealing with their problems."
2. In furtherance of the purposes set forth in the Letters Patent of Incorporation, the Canada Service Office assisted by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. will:
  - (a) Coordinate policy among the Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - (b) Assist Al-Anon and Alateen groups in the conduct of their activities;
  - (c) Provide relatives and friends of alcoholics with information about the principles and Traditions of Al-Anon and locations of Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - (d) Assist in the formation of new Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - (e) Publish literature of interest to Al-Anon and Alateen groups;
  - (f) Bring Al-Anon or Alateen groups to the attention of the concerned public;
  - (g) Provide information and other assistance to persons for whom regular attendance at meetings of Al-Anon or Alateen groups is difficult or impractical;
  - (h) Establish and maintain national public relations; and
  - (i) Establish and maintain policies for the work of the Canada Service Office.

### ARTICLE III

#### MEMBERS

1. The members of the Corporation shall be the persons who are the Trustees of the Corporation. Each Trustee shall become a member upon becoming a Trustee and shall cease to be a member upon ceasing to be a Trustee.
2. Members shall not be required to pay dues or any other compensation to the Corporation, or to anyone else, as a condition of membership.
3. Members will be required to sign appropriate documents to avoid potential conflicts of interest and clarify desired conduct as set by the Board of Trustees.

### ARTICLE IV

#### TRUSTEES

1. The Directors of the Corporation shall be the persons who are the Trustees of the Corporation. Each Trustee shall become a Director upon becoming a Trustee and shall cease to be a Director upon ceasing to be a Trustee. For the



purpose of these BY-LAWS, the term Director and Trustee shall be deemed synonymous and interchangeable so far as necessary to conform to the Letters Patent of Incorporation of the Corporation which contemplates, and refers to, Directors.

2. The Board of Trustees shall consist of not less than seven nor more than twenty-one persons of the following classifications: Trustees at Large, Regional Trustees, and a Sustaining Trustee as those terms are described in these BY-LAWS. The actual number of Trustees and the composition of the Board as among the classifications referred to shall be as established by the Board from time to time and in this regard the Board will generally be guided by the directions of the World Service Conference.
3. Trustees at Large are Trustees whose nomination originates with, or with the consent of, the Board of Trustees. The total number of such Trustees shall be set by the Board of Trustees from time to time and shall always be a number evenly divisible by three. One-third of the number of Trustees at Large shall be elected each year at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, and shall take office on the day following such meeting.
4. The Nominating Committee, prior to the next annual meeting of the Board, is charged to submit nominations for Trustee at Large positions to replace those whose term will expire. In the event a nominee for Trustee at Large is not elected by the Board of Trustees, the nominee shall be withdrawn and the position declared vacant. The position may be filled in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 8.
5. Regional Trustees are Trustees who live in geographic areas of the United States and Canada designated as official regions by the World Service Conference. Their purpose is to bring a regional perspective to the Board. They do not represent the members of the region, nor are they responsible to the region. Nominees for Regional Trustee shall be designated annually by the World Service Conference in accordance with such procedures as that body may establish. The total number of Regional Trustees shall be a number evenly divisible by three, and one-third of the number shall be elected each year at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees to take office on the day following such meeting. In the event that a World Service Conference's nominee is not elected by the Board of Trustees, the nominee shall be withdrawn, and the position declared vacant. The position may be filled in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 8.
6. The Sustaining Trustee is the person employed by the World Service Office established by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. to hold the office of Executive Director of the World Service Office. The term of office of the Sustaining Trustee shall be for the same period as the person is employed by the World Service Office as Executive Director.
7. Any Trustee may resign by sending written notice to the Secretary of the Corporation.
8. Any vacancy in the office of a Trustee at Large or Regional Trustee which occurs in any year between the annual meeting and the next World Service Conference may be filled by the Board of Trustees until the next annual meeting.
9. The length of time any Trustee at Large and Regional Trustee may serve on the Board is two three-year terms which may be consecutive.
10. Any member of the Board of Trustees may be removed from office for just cause by a vote of two-thirds of the written ballots cast by the Board of Trustees. Just cause is defined as absence from two meetings during any 12 month period; a conflict of interest or a conflict of commitment violation; or failure to adhere to any written policies and procedures of the Board of Trustees. Such removal shall occur at a regular or specifically called meeting of the Board of Trustees. Upon a finding of just cause by the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the Treasurer and the Executive Committee Chairperson, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees shall send a notice of the proposed removal by mail, certified or registered, if possible, to the last recorded address of such member at least fifteen (15) days before final action is taken on such removal. The member shall have the opportunity to present any relevant information, in writing, in person, or through a representative, to the Board of Trustees before final action is taken.
11. Trustees shall serve without remuneration but they shall be entitled to payment of reasonable expenses.

## ARTICLE V

### POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE TRUSTEES

1. The Board of Trustees shall control and manage the affairs of the Corporation.
2. Without limiting the generality of the preceding paragraph, the Board of Trustees shall have the following powers:
  - (a) To adopt and maintain the policies of the World Service Office;
  - (b) To control the property and finances of the Corporation;
  - (c) To establish plans and conduct the operations of the Corporation;
  - (d) To authorize expenditures;
  - (e) To elect the officers of the Corporation;
  - (f) To elect the at-large members of the Executive Committee and appoint members of other committees in accordance with these BY-LAWS;
  - (g) To take such measures as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the World Service Office.
3. Any Trustee having a substantial financial interest in any contract or transaction requiring authorization by the Board of Trustees shall not vote on the matter.

## ARTICLE VI

### OFFICERS

1. The Officers of the Corporation shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer and a Secretary, and such other officers as may be deemed necessary from time to time by the Board. The Executive Director serves as the Secretary of the Corporation.

2. The President, the Vice President, and the Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting of Trustees from among the Trustees for a term of one year each.
3. The President shall also be known as the Chairperson (and is sometimes herein referred to as the Chairperson), and the Vice President shall also be known as the Vice Chairperson (and is sometimes herein referred to as the Vice Chairperson).
4. Any vacancy may be filled for the unexpired term by a majority vote of the Trustees.
5. Any Officer may be removed from office by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees.

## ARTICLE VII

### DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. THE PRESIDENT. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees, and shall perform all the necessary duties, and exercise all the customary powers incident to the office of President, including appointment of committee Chairpersons, with the exception of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The President shall have general supervision of all of the affairs of the Canada Service Office, and shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees.
2. THE VICE PRESIDENT. The Vice President shall be an aide to the President and shall perform the duties of the President in the absence or disability of the President. The Board of Trustees shall in its sole discretion determine the matter of the President's disability. In the event the Board determines that disability has occurred, the office shall be deemed vacant. The Board of Trustees may elect a successor to serve until the next annual meeting of the Board of Trustees.
3. THE TREASURER. The Treasurer shall be the financial officer of the Corporation and shall provide advice to the Corporation with respect to general financial policy and ancillary matters such as the collection, custody, and control of funds and maintenance of books of accounts and financial records subject to such directions as may be given by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer is responsible for having the books of account of the Corporation audited by a Chartered Accountant at regular intervals as directed by the Board of Trustees. He may be an authorized signatory for disposition of funds of the Corporation on deposit in banks and other holding accounts. The Treasurer shall not be individually responsible for accounting procedures, security of funds, books of accounts or financial records, but does have general oversight authority respecting these matters.
4. THE SECRETARY. The Secretary shall record the minutes of all meetings of the Corporation, shall be the custodian of books and records of the Corporation, shall have custody of the corporate seal and shall perform such other duties as may be delegated. The Secretary shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees.
5. The Officers of the Corporation shall each perform such other duties as may be delegated to them by the Board of Trustees as well as such other duties as shall pertain to their respective offices.

## ARTICLE VIII

### FINANCES

1. The fiscal year of the Canada Service Office shall begin on the first day of January in each year and end on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December thereof.
2. Cheques shall be made in the name of the Corporation and shall be signed by two officers or employees as may from time to time be designated by the Board of Trustees.
3. The Board of Trustees shall at each annual meeting appoint an auditor to audit the accounts of the Corporation for report to the Trustees at the next annual meeting. The auditor shall hold office until the next annual meeting provided that the Trustees may fill any casual vacancy in the office of auditor. The remuneration of the auditor shall be fixed by the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE IX

### MEETINGS

1. The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees shall be held on the day following the World Service Conference in April of each year at such place as is designated by the Board of Trustees, except when special circumstances warrant a change of date of the Conference. Annual meetings may be held in the United States of America if approved by resolution of the Board of Trustees.
2. If all the Trustees consent thereto generally or in respect of a particular meeting, a Trustee may participate in a meeting of the Board or of a committee of the Board by means of such conference telephone or other communications facilities as permit all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other, and a Trustee participating in such a meeting by such means is deemed to be present at the meeting.
3. Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called by the Chairperson at any time. The Chairperson shall call a special meeting upon the written application of three Trustees or upon the written application of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee for the transaction of such business as may be described in such application.
4. At least fourteen days' notice of each meeting shall be given to the Trustees by mail. Forty-eight hours written notice of any meeting may be sent by electronic means. Trustees may waive notice of meetings by executing appropriate waivers.
5. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business in any meeting. Each member shall have one vote. The vote of the majority of the Trustees present at the time of the vote, if a quorum is then present, shall be the act of the Board of Trustees, except as otherwise provided by law. In the absence of a quorum, a majority of the Trustees present may adjourn the meeting from time to time until a quorum is obtained.

6. Any member unable to attend any meeting of the Board shall give advance notice of the absence to the Chairperson or Secretary of the Board and indicate the reason for the absence. Any member who fails to attend two meetings per year for reasons deemed inadequate by the Board, shall be subject to dismissal by the Board for such cause. For the purposes of this paragraph, the Board of Trustees meetings during the World Service Conference shall be deemed to be one meeting.
7. Unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson, the order of business at all meetings shall be as follows:
  - (a) Calling of roll;
  - (b) Approval of minutes;
  - (c) Report of Treasurer;
  - (d) Committee reports and communications;
  - (e) Elections (if such action is scheduled for such meetings);
  - (f) New Business.

## ARTICLE X

### INDEMNIFICATION

1. Each individual serving or having served as Trustee or Officer, or both, of the Corporation shall be indemnified in the circumstances and to the full extent permitted by law, against any and all costs, expenses and financial consequences of whatever nature, including legal fees actually incurred in connection with any action, suit, or legal proceeding of any kind in which such an individual is a defendant by reason of serving or having served as an Officer or Trustee, or both, of the Corporation. This indemnification shall also extend to any individual made party defendant to any action, suit, or legal proceeding referenced in the preceding sentence by reason of the fact that his testator or intestate served as Trustee or Officer of the Corporation.
2. The foregoing indemnification shall apply also to each individual serving or having served (in his individual capacity, and not as a Trustee or Officer) as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees or of any special committee as may be authorized from time to time by the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE XI

### WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

1. The World Service Conference consists of the following persons:
  - (a) Al-Anon Delegates from Canada and the United States;
  - (b) Trustees of the Corporation;
  - (c) Al-Anon members who serve as Directors and Associate Directors of the World Service Office;
  - (d) The Chairpersons of committees established by the Board of Trustees;
  - (e) The persons comprising the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees; and
  - (f) Such other persons as deemed necessary for Conference business and representatives from countries not served by the World Service Conference Structure may be admitted by Conference vote. These persons may participate but not vote.
2. The World Service Conference shall be the permanent body empowered to express the conscience of the Al-Anon fellowship.
3. The Board of Trustees of the Corporation shall consult with the World Service Conference and, when required, accept its decision. However, the Board of Trustees shall continue to be vested with the full legal powers and responsibilities for the Canada Service Office.
4. Three-fourths of all authorized participants registered at the Conference may bring about a reorganization of the Canada Service Office as or when it is deemed essential. They may request the resignation of the entire Board of Trustees and nominate a new slate of Trustees. In this regard the annual election of Trustees shall be conditional upon the understanding of each, that his resignation is required on call for the same by the Conference, subject to the further understanding that prior to any such resignation becoming effective each Trustee shall be deemed to vote for the successor slate of Trustees presented by the Conference. For the purpose of bringing about a reorganization of the Canada Service Office, the number of World Service Office participants voting shall be limited to one-fourth of the total Conference vote.

## ARTICLE XII

### COMMITTEES

1. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.** The Board of Trustees shall elect at each annual meeting an Executive Committee consisting of seven persons. The Executive Committee shall include the Executive Director of the World Service Office, the Chairperson of the Finance Committee, the Chairperson of the Policy Committee, an Al-Anon member from the administrative staff of the World Service Office, and three Al-Anon members, preferably not Trustees. The Executive Committee shall meet at such times as the Board of Trustees may direct and shall have the power to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees in the intervals between meetings of the Board of Trustees. The Committee shall report all such action to the full Board no later than the next meeting of the Board. The Board of Trustees shall elect one volunteer member of the Executive Committee as the Chairperson. The Executive Director is the Secretary. The President, an *ex officio* member, shall perform the duties of the Chairperson of the Executive Committee in that person's absence.

2. **FINANCE COMMITTEE.** The Board of Trustees shall appoint a Finance Committee consisting of the following members: the Treasurer of the Corporation, the President, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, one other Trustee designated by the President, and the Executive Director. The Treasurer shall be the Chairperson of the Finance Committee. The Executive Director is the Secretary. The Finance Committee shall plan the yearly budget of the World Service Office, including the activities of the Canada Service Office, and shall render such other services as may be requested by the Board of Trustees.

The President shall perform the duties of the Chairperson of the Finance Committee in the absence of the Treasurer.

3. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE.** At each annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Chairperson of the Board appoints the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, with Board approval. After the annual meeting, the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board, appoints the members of the Nominating Committee.
4. The Board of Trustees may appoint such other committees as they may from time to time determine appropriate.
5. Committee members shall hold office for a term of one (1) year.
6. Committee members shall serve without remuneration but shall be entitled to payment of reasonable expenses.
7. Any Committee member may be removed from office for cause by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees.

## ARTICLE XIII

### EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS

1. Contracts, documents or any instruments in writing requiring the signature of the Corporation, shall be signed by any two officers and all contracts, documents and instruments in writing so signed shall be binding upon the Corporation without any further authorization or formality. The Trustees shall have power from time to time by resolution to appoint an officer or officers on behalf of the Corporation to sign specific contracts, documents and instruments in writing. The Trustees may give the Corporation's power of attorney to any registered dealer in securities for the purposes of the transferring of and dealing with any stocks, bonds, and other securities of the Corporation. The seal of the Corporation when required may be affixed to contracts, documents and instruments in writing signed as aforesaid or by any officer or officers appointed by resolution of the Board of Trustees.

## ARTICLE XIV

### CORPORATE SEAL

1. The seal, an impression whereof is stamped in the margin hereof, shall be the seal of the Corporation.

## ARTICLE XV

### HEAD OFFICE

1. The Head Office of the Corporation shall be in the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, Province of Ontario.

## ARTICLE XVI

### AMENDMENTS

1. The Board of Trustees shall have the power to amend or repeal these BY-LAWS in whole or in part by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Trustees at a meeting called for the purpose of amending the BY-LAWS, provided that the repeal or amendment of such BY-LAWS shall not be enforced or acted upon until the approval of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has been obtained.

ENACTED AND CONFIRMED on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1999.

Helen Ridgway, President

Richard Buchanan, Secretary

Amended: January 28, 2008

Reviewed by the April 2008 WSC



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

\*Nonmember, non-voting

\*\*Non-voting

### Trustees at Large

Judith P.  
Doreen D.  
Zelda R.  
Mary Ann R.  
Mary G.  
Judith A.  
Mirta S.  
Roger C.  
Margot M.

### Regional Trustees

Frank R., US Northeast  
Carol V., US North Central  
Doris W., US South Central  
Judy D., US Northwest  
Winnie S., US Southwest  
Claudette D., Canada East  
Jo-Anne L., Canada Central  
Lorraine F., Canada West

### Executive Committee

Mary C., Chairperson  
Ric B., Executive Director  
Zelda R., Board Chairperson (Ex-officio)  
Mary Ann R., Treasurer  
Judith P., Policy Chairperson  
Marjorie S., Member at Large  
Julie F., Member at Large  
Barbara O., Staff member

### Non-Trustee Committee Chairpersons

Annette T., ECRPM Chairperson\*\*

### World Service Office Staff

Ric B., Executive Director  
David Zach, Director of Business Services\*  
Barbara O., Director of Member Services  
Robert S., Director of Communication Services  
Claire R., Associate Director of Public Outreach—  
Professionals  
Mary Lou M., Associate Director of Group Services—  
Alateen and Special Needs  
Marsha W., Associate Director of Membership  
Outreach—International  
Pat Q., Associate Director of Public Outreach—Media  
Suzanne M., Associate Director of Membership  
Outreach—Conference  
Tom C., Associate Director of Fellowship  
Communication—Literature

### International Representatives

Nydia Julia M., Mexico\*\*  
Inga v. E., Germany\*\*  
Louise B., South Africa\*\*

## AREA DELEGATES

Rodney B., Alabama  
Sharon B., Alaska  
Rose Anna J., Alberta/Northwest  
Territories  
Virginia S., Arizona  
Cindy H., Arkansas  
Dennis G., British Columbia/Yukon  
Sandi C., California North  
Mary M., California South  
Tom B., Colorado  
Gina R., Connecticut  
Pam L., Delaware  
Lisa P., Florida North  
Georgia C., Florida South  
Jeff G., Georgia  
Cecily C., Hawaii  
Berta R., Idaho  
Libby D., Illinois North  
Marcy M., Illinois South  
Faye S., Indiana  
Lorraine R., Iowa  
Laurel L., Kansas  
Bruce F., Kentucky  
Clif B., Louisiana

Melissa F., Maine  
Rick P., Manitoba  
Judy C., Maritime Provinces  
Karen L., Maryland/District of  
Columbia  
Patricia N., Massachusetts  
Michael B., Michigan  
Mary M., Minnesota North  
Pat S., Minnesota South  
Skip G., Mississippi  
Richard B., Missouri  
Pennie K., Montana  
Kerri K., Nebraska  
Judy K., Nevada  
Marilee P., Newfoundland/  
Labrador  
Dotty B., New Hampshire  
Fran M., New Jersey  
Chris M., New Mexico  
Robert C., New York North  
Marcia B., New York South  
Paula M., North Carolina/Bermuda  
Darcy A., North Dakota  
Barbara W., Ohio

Jacki S., Oklahoma  
Leona W., Ontario North  
Joan P., Ontario South  
Roland C., Oregon  
Mary R., Pennsylvania  
Esther M., Puerto Rico  
Trudy C., Quebec East  
Yvette D., Quebec West  
Barbara M., Rhode Island  
Barbara L., Saskatchewan  
Linda R., South Carolina  
Judy S., South Dakota  
Joyce R., Tennessee  
Bennie P., Texas East  
Sue M., Texas West  
Norma D., Utah  
Christa A., Vermont  
Donald F., Virginia  
Leslie N., Washington  
Rosie S., West Virginia  
Renee H., Wisconsin  
Judy G., Wyoming