

2018 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

2018

AL-ANON—

THERE IS NO STANDING STILL!

—

AL-ANON –

IL N'Y A PAS DE PLACE POUR L'IMMOBILISME!

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AL-ANON –

¡NO HAY RAZÓN PARA DETENERSE!

wsc 58th Annual

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS 2018 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

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The 2018 Conference Summary is available in color online at al-anon.org in the Members section. Remember, you can enlarge the text by using the zoom button.

Concept Two

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

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

*2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)
page 180*

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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.

2018 ASSIGNMENTS FOR SELECTED COMMITTEES AND 2018 THOUGHT FORCE

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

Assignment	Panel 56 (2016-2018)	Panel 57 (2017-2019)	Panel 58 (2018-2020)
Conference Committee on Trustees	Richard McC., Chair, MA Don B., WIUPMI Laura D., OK	Sarah S., Chair Elect, MO Sue C., SD	Jeffrey F., PA Phil G., KS Sue G., ON(S)
Literature Committee	Renelle M., GA	Gail F., AR Gail L., CT Jean H., SK Janet P., NV	Christine W., IL(N) Leah L., TN Theresa M., OH
Public Outreach Committee	Duane F., VA Janis A., BC/YT Norma F., AB/NWT	Beth K., IA Madeline S., WY Sonya M., ME	Cheryl A., FL(S) Kay M., TX(W) Sherry H., KY
Thought Force: Welcoming Potential Members	Janis A., BC/YT	Stephanie S., NM, Chair Kathy B., ID	Betty A., MN(S) Kim C., DE Mintie G., MB/NWO Miriam B., IN Rosanna H., CA(N)

INTRODUCTION OF OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

"At the start of the 2017 World Service Conference (WSC), the Board of Trustees announced with great enthusiasm and hope for the future that it was ready to begin the search for our new Executive Director. The hiring process was shared during Conference and posted on AFG Connects.

"On Wednesday, July 19, 2017, three candidates interviewed with the full Board of Trustees at our World Service Office (WSO). Each candidate shared their personal and service story. Afterward, they responded to a series of roundtable questions and had discussions with the Board. The meeting concluded with an informal lunch, and the day ended for the candidates with a tour of the WSO. The Board spent the remainder of the day talking with each other and reasoning things out. We shared openly and honestly concerning each candidate, spent time alone with our respective Higher Powers and returned to the boardroom ready to make our decision. I believe I speak for the Board when I say we each sought the guidance of our Higher Power and walked away from the boardroom that day knowing we had fulfilled our legal responsibilities in the best way possible.

"Vali's prior work experience was as a General Manager of product management for a division of a billion-dollar software company, where she was directly responsible for creating long-term strategies and managing plans to accomplish strategic and financial objectives in a fast-paced and ever-changing international environment. She was charged with leading and inspiring a team of globally and culturally diverse members through the use of web and video conferencing and in-person consultation.

Her AI-Anon service includes Area Delegate (Panel 53), Area Chair, Area Secretary, Area Treasurer, Area Convention Co-Chair, AIS Chair, Alateen Coordinator and Group Representative. Last but not least, she remains an active member of two home groups.

"Concept Eleven tells us that any active service, to function well, must be managed by a competent Executive. It must always be directed by one person, supported by such Staff as needed. This function must be delegated to an individual with ample freedom and authority to do the job without interference, so long as the job is done well. A good executive possesses a special combination of abilities, one of which is the ability to lead by example, thus securing willing cooperation.

"Concept Nine speaks to leadership itself: a person who can put principles, plans and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back them up. A person who consults widely before making decisions and understands a fine plan can come from anyone, anywhere. A good leader often discards their own cherished plans for those that are better and gives credit to the source. Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured of sufficient backing, a good leader freely makes decisions and puts them into action, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of their defined authority and responsibility.

"It is my personal belief that you will find that Vali meets the definition of a good leader as defined within our Concepts. It is now my privilege to formally introduce to you Vali F., Executive Director of AI-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S SHARING

Vali F. • Executive Director

"Welcome to the 58th Annual World Service Conference (WSC). My name is Vali F., and I have the privilege of serving as the new Executive Director of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. I have two home groups: one in Northern Virginia—Thank God It's Saturday at 10am in Leesburg, Virginia and one in Virginia Beach—Sandbridge AFG. And I can assure you, as would my Sponsor and home group members, that I'm here because I belong.

"It was not that long ago that I sat in this room as a Delegate. And throughout my three-year experience, I was awed and inspired by the Conference members' commitment to presuming goodwill, supporting each other as trusted servants and seeking the highest good for Al-Anon Family Groups. My experience as the newly hired Executive Director has been just as positive. Each day, I am graced to work with the most dedicated and effective Staff. We aim to serve as the Clearing House for Al-Anon Family Groups by registering groups, answering member questions, creating and translating our literature, publishing magazines, updating and expanding the website to provide current information to professionals, members and newcomers, and balancing the needs of generations as we adapt new technology for Outreach and communication.

"I would like to thank the Conference Leadership Team for letting me provide you with a little introduction of myself and letting me talk about how I understand my role at the World Service Office (WSO). Currently, I am beginning my seventh month on the job. (Won't it be interesting to reflect on this journey in ten years' time when my service as Executive Director is finished? I know it was interesting to reflect on being a first- and second-year Delegate in my last year, as Panel 56 members may be doing right now. I'm certain the time will fly by, as it will for the Delegates of Panels 57 and 58 and the Volunteers who serve for their specific terms.)

"As Debbie mentioned, I come from a background in technology. What is curious is that for many years, I hoped continuously—continuously!—for the opportunity to leave my field for something more meaningful. My husband even says that, during this time, I mentioned my dream job would be becoming the Executive Director of Al-Anon Family Groups. (At the time, we lived in Arizona—where he had come to retire and, for that matter, ultimately be buried. In other words, the place he had no intention of ever leaving; I truly believed I was dreaming the impossible dream.) At the time, I was doing service in the Area and eventually became Delegate on Panel 53. I am grateful for the commitment to service and dedication to the Legacies I experienced there.

"Fast forward five years and, thanks to the successful completion of the last amends from my Eighth Step list and my Higher Power's guidance, I found myself living on my ancestral farm in Northern Virginia, working to help struggling retailers overcome the challenges of technology and attract the next generation of shoppers—ones with smart apps and personalized connection. Then I received a nudge from a dear Al-Anon friend to apply for the position of Executive Director. Suddenly my Higher Power's plan became clear—the reason I had stayed so long in my technology role. Because when I considered applying, I realized Al-Anon Family Groups was facing challenges that were similar to the ones retailers were facing. I also realized that the Board of Trustees and Conference needed to make 'thoughtful estimates' about the future, to ensure 'future progress.'

"You may be asking yourself how Al-Anon's current situation in

any way mirrors that of a for-profit organization. And I'll give you my perspective. Fundamentally, retailers and Al-Anon share a similar underlying mission: to attract people—shoppers for retailers and members for Al-Anon—to fulfill their vision. Certainly, the retailers' vision of success is significantly different from our own. Retailers are motivated by profits, whereas Al-Anon leaders are motivated by the desire to offer hope and recovery to every community. Nonetheless, in order to be successful, both organizations must attract people while maintaining their existing membership (or customer base). And that means adapting to the changing needs and expectations of their future membership while supporting their existing membership. Failure to do so ultimately leads to irrelevancy, which we have certainly seen repeatedly in the retailer environment. In Al-Anon's case, the result could be, as Bill W. described so eloquently in his Leadership Essay found in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) under Concept Nine, unforeseen woe for Al-Anon.

"Just as in the retail environment, those who successfully navigate this delicate balance between existing and future members do so not only because they are adaptive and strategic in their use of resources but also because they maintain their underlying values (which for us, of course, means our spiritual principles). And so, I have come to Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. to *support and guide* the Staff in transforming the Vision and Priorities of the Board of Trustees *into tangible solutions and plans*, while maintaining focus on our underlying spiritual principles. In essence, honoring our past while embracing our future.

"The Board, as you know, must act as the visionary for Al-Anon Family Groups. It must look at past and present experiences to create ideas for not only how we can address our challenges *now* but also how we can evolve to support the next generation of friends and families of alcoholics. As a Trustee on the Board, I am honored to participate in building the future Vision for Al-Anon. I do so with an amazing group of Volunteers, who give an inordinate amount of their personal time in service to our fellowship.

"My ability to transform this Vision into plans and experiments rests, in accordance with Concept Eleven, in the World Service Office Staff. It is a privilege for me to manage their incredible wisdom and experience. When we collaborate together, each of us brings to the table our collective knowledge, creativity and skills to thoughtfully consider new ideas and their implications for the fellowship, and to draft plans and trials for potential solutions (which will be considered by the Board of Trustees).

"As I have learned in the program and from my professional experience, we can accomplish our purpose only by collaborating at all levels; this is the way we learn what is needed, so that we can anticipate how these plans might work in the short and long term. You will see a commitment to such collaboration transformed into action later this week, when we invite the Conference into a conversation that was initiated by the Staff, brought to the Board and expanded to include all Conference members. It deals with a challenge we face at the WSO every day and which has significant implications for not only the Areas within the WSC Structure but across the world. I'm very excited to collaborate with you all on this challenge!

"There is, of course, much that I'm excited about these days. In addition to my responsibility to help transform the Vision of the Board into plans, I am equally responsible for encouraging the

thoughtful estimates and ideas of Staff. I also ensure that these estimates and ideas are shared with the Finance and Executive Committees and the Board, along with all the implementation details necessary for them to make informed decisions regarding approval. I know the membership is already enjoying the benefits of some of these thoughtful estimates, like the fantastic Meeting Search tool with its Report a Problem feature and the beautiful new, full-color *Forum*, which inspired one non-member Staff person to read the magazine cover to cover! Less exciting but equally important to our electronic meetings, we have simplified the registration process and eliminated barriers to listing meetings in multiple formats. We have implemented an online process for Group Records changes and registration.

"And lest we forget, 80 percent of you have joined the WSC app, which Staff hope has eased your navigation around the lovely hotel here in West Harrison, offered an easy way to connect and share pictures (remember, these stay within the app, so you can snap pictures of your friends and share while still adhering to the Traditions) and even provided a little gamification for the competitive amongst you. (How many know who's at the top of the Leaderboard?) Staff will beg your indulgence at some point during Conference to test out the polling feature, which may become a viable option in the future to replace the voting clickers.

"But we all know it is 'wishful fantasy' to believe all trials will be successful. A good example is the font size for the redesigned *Forum*, which we had to adjust. We realize that our efforts to evolve the organization to meet the needs of the future membership may be met with resistance. (My Sponsor used to say that Al-Anon members don't just get into ruts, they move in and furnish them ☺.) This is the case with *In the Loop*, which the World Service Conference conceptually approved could serve as the evolution of *Group eNews*. The new tool is designed to provide smaller chunks of information more frequently, so groups and members can stay current on what's happening at the WSO or which events affecting Al-Anon are happening worldwide. When we were notified about a recent "Dear Abby" column's posting about Alateen, we were able to share an announcement almost immediately through *In the Loop*.

"Part of my responsibility as Executive Director is to listen for minority opinions, while constantly seeking to balance the needs for supporting our existing membership with our goal of embracing our future membership. I recognized the peril of not doing so as I watched retailers struggle to shift from their traditional store-based customers to new, online-based ones. (Sound familiar? At Conference, we are ourselves talking about electronic/virtual meetings and how they might become part of our Structure.) Those who succeeded did so through balance: personal progress for the greatest number depends on unity. Sometimes that means embracing the old and, sometimes, persisting through the trial of the new. I am grateful for the Executive Committee's willingness to reinvigorate their advisory role. Together we can 'talk to each other and reason things out with one another' when deciding whether a plan should be delayed, overturned or followed in light of minority opinions. (As you can imagine, since members primarily only write to the WSO when they have concerns, their emails and letters have to be considered at least partially in the context of minority opinions.)

"That's what is so wonderful about being a part of AFG, Inc. at this point in history. The Staff, Board, and Executive Committee are participating in both embracing the new and respecting the old. Isn't that an inspiring message for us as Conference members? Especially considering we are only a day away from visiting Stepping

Stones, where so many of our foundations were formed. It was Lois who gave us the theme of our Conference: 'Al-Anon—There is no standing still!' She was a visionary, as are all Conference members here this week.

"We can all expect more 'new' to come. As Staff, we are committed to exploring all new opportunities to reach and attract potential members, from reaching out to unregistered Facebook groups to begin conversations and seek understanding, to enabling monitored comments on social media posts. We are committed to learning, so we can make our thoughtful estimates and share information with the Board of Trustees in its legal and visionary role. Our previous surveys provided data that showed our membership was aging; preliminary results of this most recent Membership Survey suggest the same. We cannot deny this reality nor, as Bill W. said in Concept Nine, 'cast the job of planning for tomorrow onto the fatuous idea of Providence.' Within the context of our Legacies, which our conversation with the Board and Conference protect, we will continue to explore new avenues to reach those who have not yet found us.

"So that's a little bit about me and my current understanding of the new role. As anyone who has taken on a new role in an unfamiliar industry knows, it usually feels anywhere from a bit to quite scary to be taking on something new. You can imagine when that job involves a program that has saved your life, the stakes feel even higher. Considering the concerns about our aging membership, and despite having an enormous faith in my Higher Power, I certainly felt the stakes were high coming to Al-Anon. I did not want to mess this one up!

"Which is why I was very thankful to discover, upon arrival, that through the wisdom of the former Chairpersons of the Board and Executive Directors, Al-Anon is connected with the American Society for Association Executives (ASAE). This organization supports for-profit and non-profit associations across the United States and guess what—many are struggling with an aging population and are unsure of how to overcome technology barriers to reach a younger generation. Reading their materials, I realized with a sigh of relief that Al-Anon is not alone. Just as when I came into Al-Anon with distorted perception that made me believe I was all alone in my disease and found hope and recovery through shared experience, I came to understand that Al-Anon is not terminally unique. We can gain help by listening and learning from the experience, strength and hope of other associations. This does not mean we give up what is unique; rather, we get to take what we liked and leave the rest.

"With help at hand, I can tell you that I'm grateful beyond measure for this opportunity to be of service to Al-Anon in the capacity my Higher Power has afforded me. I feel graced to work with such amazing trusted servants: Staff, the Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees and the Delegates who represent your Areas. Having had the opportunity in my role of Secretary of AFG, Inc. to participate on the Nominating Committee, I am appreciative of the wisdom of the Conference, which established the Conference Committee on Trustees and defined the Regional Trustee Plan. Choosing good leaders is imperative for our future, and so I would ask each of you, when it comes time to provide traditional approval for future Trustees, to take time to carefully review the résumé packet you have received and to give thoughtful consideration to the spiritual process which has come before. The Conference will be affirming these future leaders of Al-Anon Family Groups later this week.

"Thank you so much for this opportunity. I'm excited to meet you all throughout the Conference and work together toward Al-Anon's future."

SHARING AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Prior to the opening of the 2018 World Service Conference (WSC), a session was held by the Delegates to share Area successes and challenges. All other Conference members were invited to attend as guests with no voice. Before the Conference, the Sharing Area Highlights Recorder compiled all the Delegates' written Reports and made them available electronically to the session attendees.

The Sharing Area Highlights Chairperson, Duane F., Panel 56, Virginia and Recorder, Kathy E., Panel 56, Mississippi, opened the session by noting that this was a continuation of an expanded format that began with the 2016 Sharing Area Highlights session; they also communicated that this Sharing Area Highlights format was a work in progress.

During the session, Delegates broke off into small groups and talked about strategies they use to encourage participation in their Areas.

What are the main tasks the Delegate performs?

The Delegate:

- Serves as a conduit of information between the Area and the World Service Conference.
- Brings fun to service—attraction.
- Empowers and encourages Group Representatives (GRs) at Assemblies.
- Visits Districts—a number of them are difficult because they cover large Areas.
- Helps District Representatives (DRs) encourage GRs to serve.
- Assists with Regional Trustee searches.
- Communicates with the World Service Office (WSO) regarding Area issues and successes.
- Participates on Thought Forces, Task Forces and Committees.

How much time does the Chair set in the agenda for the Delegates' Report? What sources of information do you use for input into your Report? How do you decide what goes in the Report?

- Once yearly, we spend one hour coordinating with the Chair. During the year, we use newsletters, provide workshops and make the Report fun. Pictures are incorporated to speak to Area interest.
- Why are we there? To carry the message. We are "myth busters" that let the Area know how the WSC really goes.
- We provide GRs and DRs with an outline that they can use for their Reports.
- We do an interactive one-hour Report and information session on the Area website about WSO and Area resources.
- We have a separate four-hour Assembly.
- Reports are typically one hour long. We rely on what members want in the Report.
- Some incorporate skits and workshops. Others spread Chosen Agenda Items throughout the year so there is time to discuss them. Pictures in PowerPoint are essential.

Do your Assembly members formally write motions? If so, how do they introduce their motion? If not, how does your Assembly bring a motion forward? Is there any deadline (prior to Assembly) by which you must bring a motion to the Area?

- Most require written motions and all rely on Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM).
- Committee and Coordinator Reports bring motions.
- Most use KBDM to write motions. Only GRs make and vote on motions. Every Area is different and has autonomy.

How have you or how would you like to include technology in your Report?

- Most use PowerPoint. Some include cartoons and animation and AFG Connects slides for presentations. Some also provide handouts with bullet points, and a Report outline for GRs. Some post presentations on the Area website. IT Coordinators supply projectors, microphones and laptops.
- We should make fewer handouts because of PowerPoint.



- We could put Reports on our website because it is password protected. We could also provide laptops for Areas, embracing technology apps. We should explain how to use AFG Connects so that members can communicate quickly and comfortably with other members and WSO Staff.

What steps are you taking, do you need to take or would you like to take for the future of AI-Anon in your Area?

- Alateen participation in Area and District levels.
- Financial support for Alateen Sponsors at conventions, for workshops.
- Use of electronic technology to cut down on time lost in traveling to meetings. Rekindle, reintroduce AI-Anon members who were active in the past.
- Incorporate technology, email announcements. Use web conferencing to reach out because of distance.

The full group discussed the following:

What change has your Area completed and worked hard on in the last two years? Will it have lasting results?

What does your Area do to include Outreach projects to reach those in need?

What lingering concerns exist in your Area?

Successes:

- Liability insurance: One Area found that for \$200 more per year, it could cover all groups in the Area.
- We looked at how we communicate information and created a Technology Coordinator position. The Coordinator is available to members who have problems.

- Two hundred members attended an Oregon/Washington TEAM event.
- Changes: In a financial situation, we created a committee that was directly responsible to those it served. It obtained non-profit status.
- We used KBDM in creating an Area Charter.
- Support for Delegates: We approved and funded a current Delegate, a past Delegate and an Alternate so that they could attend the Regional Delegates Meeting.
- A Public Outreach Coordinator set up a table at Assembly to provide information.
- Discussing everything before it was voted on helped to decrease the chance for controversy.
- We purchased liability insurance for Officers; our Public Outreach Coordinator organized spot ads before shows in theaters for six weeks.
- A Task Force moved District lines to streamline the Area.
- Spanish: Our Area bought translation equipment for Assemblies and conventions.
- Financial Inventory: We took leftover money and made posters and a starter kit for professionals and gave them to our Public Outreach Coordinator.
- We put up Public Outreach billboards and digital signs in restaurants and used a fundraiser dinner to finance it.

- We helped our Area go paperless by posting to the Area website.
- We held a mandatory Alateen Coordinator training session at a retreat center.
- In our “Passing the Torch” workshop, we lessened fears and concerns about what an Area position entails. To address declining service positions at all levels, we provided descriptions and examples of each job’s roles.
- We created a Task Force on auditing the Area Financial Report to improve transparency.
- We tried to address the issue of liability insurance.

Concerns:

- Large Reserve Fund at the Area level.
- Lack of Alateen participation at Assembly.
- Declining service participation at all levels.
- Teaching members about service—getting them to be enthusiastically willing.
- Use of A.A. literature in meetings.
- Circuit Al-Anon speakers who grew up with *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the big book).

Before the session ended, Taaj J., Panel 57, New York South, was elected to serve as Chairperson for the 2019 Sharing Area Highlights session, Mabel M., Panel 57, Puerto Rico, was elected Co-Chairperson, and Carmen O’M. Panel 57, Louisiana, was elected to serve as Recorder.

OPENING DINNER

Teri M. • Trustee, Conference Co-Chairperson

Prior to the official opening of the Conference, the Conference members, two International Representatives and Staff attended the Opening Dinner. The Co-Chairperson of the 2018 World Service Conference welcomed everyone and opened with the theme: *“Al-Anon—There is no standing still!”*

The Co-Chairperson began her welcome by commenting that we cannot know where we are going until we know where we have been. She also mentioned that she had heard that we like progress, but not change. She noted that the wisdom of our Founders was evident when Lois W. wrote:

We believe the principles upon which A.A. and Al-Anon are founded are fundamental for all time and all people. And yet our individual acceptance and application of these principles must continue to grow or we as societies will perish. For stagnation is retrogression. There is no standing still. Lois Remembers (B-7), p. 195

The Co-Chairperson continued, “My hope is to realize the unborn potential of Al-Anon at this Conference.” She asked Conference members to reflect on the following questions:

- How will I participate in Al-Anon’s growth in an ever-changing world?
- What do I hold dear?
- Can I listen with an open heart as I hear new ideas?

- Will I know how brave we, as the new pioneers for Al-Anon’s future, really are?
- Will I bring my best and know that it is good enough? Will I trust that the spiritual principles are present?
- What do I hope to bring back to my Area?
- What do I hope to gain?

“Let us keep in our thoughts that we are a part of the future of Al-Anon, that we are the voice today for Al-Anon’s tomorrow.”

The Co-Chairperson of the Conference then introduced the Chairperson of the Board, who welcomed new Conference members to their first World Service Conference and introduced the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee. The Executive Director introduced the World Service Office Staff in attendance.

Following dinner, the Conference Chairperson invited the Conference Mentors to “pin” the new Panel 58 Delegates. Each first-time Conference attendee received a 2018 World Service Conference pin.

Marsha W., Director of Programs, was the opening dinner speaker. (Her talk can be found on page 68.)

Before leaving the dining room, all attendees gathered in a circle and held hands as the Al-Anon Declaration was recited in unison.

CONFERENCE THEME AND OPENING REMARKS

Judy K. • Conference Chairperson, Trustee | Teri M. • Conference Co-Chairperson, Trustee | Suzanne M. • Associate Director—Conference

The 2018 Conference theme, "Al-Anon—There is no standing still!" laid the foundation for the spiritual tone of this year's World Service Conference, which was held April 16–20, 2018 in West Harrison, New York. The Conference Chairperson opened the Conference with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

"Welcome, Conference Members, to the 58th Annual World Service Conference—a conversation that began 58 years ago. We are not far from Stepping Stones, the home of our Cofounder, Lois W. Are any of you having to pinch yourselves, knowing we will actually visit it tomorrow and take a glimpse into Al-Anon's history? Our Cofounder, Lois, was quite the 'handywoman,' even laying the squares of linoleum in her kitchen at Stepping Stones. However, her greatest home improvement project was probably helping to lay the foundation for a Clearing House named Al-Anon Family Groups, in order to coordinate, unify and serve groups already meeting in 1951.

"Your personal journey up to this moment, like Lois's—and mine—may have been one that included hopelessness and despair. However, with the help and friendship found in Al-Anon group meetings, you made progress in your recovery from the family disease of alcoholism. Today, you find yourself seated at Al-Anon's 2018 World Service Conference, some of you for the first time.

"Our presence here is proof that miracles do happen...but our miracles include willingness, commitment and hard work. The Al-Anon members I see in this Conference room remind me that applying the principles of our Legacies does save lives, restore people to sanity and guide individuals like us to a life that includes a strong spiritual component.

"This week, we certainly celebrate the joy of our own recovery, but we also embark on a mission, a mission of great significance, to represent the Al-Anon fellowship—its current members and members yet to come. I think of those who have not yet found Al-Anon, of the empty chairs at meetings. That is why we are here—because some potential members are not. We are here to speak for those who cannot yet speak for themselves and to focus on providing services to members and future members of Al-Anon and Alateen. This task might feel inspiring, yet intimidating, to think that we are participating in this Conference as the voice of world Al-Anon. Yes, this Conference is much bigger than our personal piece of the planet.

"When I felt most hopeless, I had no idea—or faith—that life could look as splendid as it does at this moment. I am humbly reminded that sometimes the scene of my greatest disappointment may be the setting for my greatest future miracle. This morning we assemble here to continue the miracle of recovery through service to Al-Anon Family Groups. Apparently the Higher Power had—and has—a plan for each of us, one much bigger and grander than any of us could possibly have imagined in those darker days. With humility and gratitude for recovery, let each of us now focus on the personal responsibility and delegated authority entrusted to us.

"Our purpose at this Conference is to ensure that our world services continue under all conditions. We are here to act on behalf of Al-Anon as a whole. We are here to apply the spiritual principles of our program as we conduct the business of Al-Anon. Obviously we did not come here to simply sit or stand still—although we do have assigned seats! We come in the spirit of freedom—Al-Anon's most cherished liberty—to participate as equals and to share service ideas and experiences with each other.

"May each of us also come with an open mind and a renewed commitment to service, appreciating the privilege of having a seat at this Conference and representing the fellowship. I am hopeful that our work here this week will inspire other members to act—to step forward and to participate—so that Al-Anon and Alateen's message of recovery is heard throughout the world and our services remain available to every current member, every group, every potential member and every group not yet formed.

"The Sixth World Service Conference adopted the following statement on public relations that is as relevant today as it was in 1966. It said, in part, '...There is no standing still without retrogression. Al-Anon must continue to grow if it is going to fulfill its primary purpose of reaching millions who need Al-Anon's help but who are not yet aware of the existence of our fellowship....' From this statement emerged our 2018 Conference theme:

Al-Anon—There is no standing still!

Al-Anon – Il n'y a pas de place pour l'immobilisme!

Al-Anon – ¡No hay razón para detenerse!

"Our service is about our actions...what we do here. I believe we have the abundant resources and the personal resolve needed to

accomplish our mission: helping families and friends of alcoholics by ensuring Al-Anon's message of hope continues to be carried worldwide.

"We Conference members are Al-Anon's leaders, the largest group conscience of Al-Anon Family Groups—Al-Anon's trusted servants—here to accomplish Al-Anon's primary purpose and to safeguard Al-Anon's future. Yes, our Conference days will be long and full and even tiring, but let us not tire of this special privilege to serve. Let us not underestimate the importance of our being here. May the Higher Power guide all our thoughts, our words and our actions at this 58th Annual World Service Conference so that we clearly reflect the sacred trust our fellowship has placed in us. With confidence that we have ample resources and a program based on sound spiritual principles, let us not stand still!"

The Conference Chairperson concluded by saying, "Once this gavel sounds, let us embrace our commitment to serve the fellowship." Tapping the gavel, the Conference Chairperson said, "I declare this Conference open!"



ROLL CALL

Judy K. • Trustee, Conference Chairperson

"Often, new Delegates are surprised to find out that they are not the only individuals who attend and vote at the World Service Conference (WSC). The Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and some administrative Staff from the World Service Office (WSO) are participants as well. Why is this? As we often hear, 'It's in the book,' meaning, of course, our *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). In this case, Concept Four of our Twelve Concepts of Service: 'Participation is the key to harmony.'

"In the descriptive text of Concept Four, we find our suggested guide as to who participates and why. The Delegates, who meet only once a year, are concerned primarily about policies, plans and actions that will take effect in the future. The WSO Staff and Volunteers, because of their daily work and regularly scheduled meetings, are the individuals who have more firsthand information on aspects of Al-Anon business related to the present. These groups of individuals bring different knowledge and perspectives on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole. Thus, the Conference has access to the spiritual guidance found through the collective wisdom of all Conference participants.

"These individuals, despite their different service roles, share two common traits while at Conference:

1. They listen and participate in discussions on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole.
2. They vote on these matters."

To help members visualize the different groups that comprise the (WSC), the Chairperson asked the members of each group to come to the front of the General Session room. The first member in each group read the role of his/her group. All members of each section were invited to introduce themselves and name their Area or position and their home group.

Delegates

Besides listening, participating and voting on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole, we Delegates bring the viewpoint of our Areas on matters affecting all of Al-Anon. We also return to our Areas to share a broader perspective of Al-Anon worldwide. We are the bridge of understanding that links the groups in the Area with world Al-Anon. We are the trusted servants of Al-Anon. Read more about us in Concepts Two and Three as well as in the "World Service Handbook" portion of the *Service Manual*.

WSO Volunteers, Our Board of Trustees

Besides listening, participating and voting on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole, we have a legal responsibility for the funds and services provided by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. We guard the legal rights of Al-Anon Family Groups, protect our principles from distortion and dilution, and are the chief service arm of the World Service Conference. We ensure the goals and directions of the Conference are carried out by the WSO in accordance with our Twelve Traditions. Read more about us in Concepts Six and Seven.



WSO Volunteers, Our Executive Committee:

We, too, listen, participate and vote on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole. We have been granted legal authority by the Board of Trustees to conduct the administrative affairs of the World Service Office. You might know us best as the body that reviews presentations prior to Conference, but that is just a small part of the responsibilities delegated to us by the Board of Trustees. Read more about us in Concept Eight.

WSO Staff Members, Our Service Workers:

We, too, listen, participate and vote on matters affecting Al-Anon as a whole. We are Al-Anon members and paid workers at the WSO. We are in direct contact with Al-Anon members worldwide through correspondence and sometimes travel. We serve the fellowship in a variety of ways, all of which you have seen listed on the back of the Appeal letter this past year. We not only support the world leadership of the Trustees, but we share world leadership with them. Read more about us in Concept Eleven.

Non-Voting WSO Staff Members

We, too, listen and participate as a resource in matters relevant to our service responsibilities. We work at the WSO in service roles affecting both the members of Al-Anon worldwide as well as other Staff and Volunteers. We often develop and implement new plans to more effectively provide services to the fellowship or for the Staff. We are a visible image of world service when members visit the WSO. Read more about us in Concept Eleven and about the functions of the WSO in the "World Service Handbook."

Chairperson of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM):

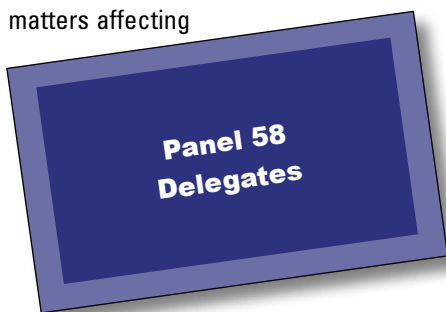
A task delegated to me at Conference is to ring the bell and keep everyone on time. However, my primary responsibility as ECRPM Chair is to ensure that the spirit and letter of the resolution to create the ECRPM and handle the management of our property is upheld. This includes the actual WSO building and its grounds. This is why, as ECRPM Chair at Conference, I am given voice limited to ECRPM business, but no vote. Read more about ECRPM in Concept Eight.

Conference Recorders

We ensure that an accurate record of this Conference is available to members and retained for the Al-Anon archives.

International Guests

We come to gain information regarding the World Service Conference procedures and policies, to share with you a little about our service structures and to participate in worldwide Al-Anon.



SEATING MOTION

After the official opening of the Conference, the first order of business was approval of a motion brought forth by the Conference Leadership Team. It dealt with seating certain people who could provide critical information to the Conference, Representatives from other structures, and Staff members who attended.

The following persons were seated:

With voice, but no vote:

Niketa Bailey

Director of Finance and Operations, Non-AI-Anon Member

Scot Powers

Associate Director—Digital Strategy, Non-AI-Anon Member

Ann W.

International Representative—Denmark, AI-Anon Member

Gabriela O.

International Representative—Mexico, AI-Anon Member

With voice limited to Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) business, but no vote:

Jeffrey K.

Chairperson, ECRPM, AI-Anon Member

The motion carried. (See WSC, Motion #1, page 78)

United States

Canada

Bermuda

Puerto Rico

WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., it is my pleasure and extreme privilege to welcome you to the 58th World Service Conference. We extend a special welcome to our international guests, whose presence illustrates our worldwide influence.

"This is the eighth year since the full Conference's return to Stepping Stones, a perfect complement to this year's Conference theme, 'Al-Anon—There is no standing still!' While Stepping Stones was the personal home of Bill and Lois W., it also served as the initial location of the Clearing House. It was from Stepping Stones in May of 1951 that 49 family groups moved forward in selecting the name 'Al-Anon Family Groups.' Lois and Anne compiled Al-Anon's first pieces of literature, two pamphlets called *Purpose and Suggestion* (P-13) and *One Wife's Story*. Within eight months Anne and Lois moved the Clearing House to the old 24th Street Clubhouse in New York City and, with the help of Volunteers, registered 200 groups: All this was accomplished without computers or smart phones. Stepping Stones is filled with over-

whelming evidence that Lois W. and Anne B. were visionaries, committed to reaching families and friends of alcoholics.

"I challenge each of us this week to envision the future of Al-Anon Family Groups. To continually ask of ourselves and of each other: What are the challenges and the possibilities for tomorrow? In what ways can we enthusiastically carry the message of this Conference back to our Areas? How can we instill in ourselves the importance of moving forward and embracing the challenges of today and tomorrow? How can we ensure that we are applying our spiritual principles as a format for change rather than stagnation?

"I'll close simply by saying that, with the help of our Higher Power, I know this Conference will once more be an example of unity, mutual trust and love for one another."

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

TWELVE TRADITIONS

- 1 Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
- 2 For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.
- 3 The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.
- 4 Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.
- 5 Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.
- 6 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.
- 7 Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8 Al-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9 Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10 The Al-Anon Family Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11 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.
- 12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

Al-Anon Family Groups ©

TASK FORCE FOR INCREASED DELEGATE PARTICIPATION IN THE WSC AGENDA

After the reading of the Twelve Traditions, the Conference Chairperson presided over an orientation session. The session was created and presented by Delegates to provide Conference members with a common understanding of what a successful Conference should accomplish.

The Board's Goals for the Conference

Sarah S. • Panel 57, Missouri | Dave B. • Panel 57, South Carolina
Beth K. • Panel 57, Iowa

The World Service Conference (WSC), Al-Anon's largest group conscience, will act in the spirit of unity and goodwill to ensure that Al-Anon's world services are continually available to the Al-Anon fellowship:

Goal One: The spiritual tone of the Conference will prevail by the demonstration of Al-Anon's core principles in action.

A Delegate began, "Each year, the Conference Chairperson reviews the goals of the Conference. We are reminded of these goals so that we keep them in the forefront of our minds as we proceed through the week of service for the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon.

"Demonstrating principles is very different from following procedures. Demonstrating Al-Anon's core principles is, by definition, demonstrating a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior, or for a chain of reasoning.

"During Conference, we also follow procedures, which, by definition, are an established or official way of doing something. In essence, procedures are the mechanics of getting things done.

"This goal is important is because Al-Anon's core principles are something we carry deep within our being. These principles, combined with our Higher Power, help us transcend who we were and become who we are today. Delegates representing not only our Areas together with the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and World Service Office Staff, take into careful consideration the effect our work at Conference will have on the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon.

"*Reaching for Personal Freedom—Living the Legacies* (P-92), page 168, states 'Concept Twelve again reinforces the strength of the Al-Anon program. Through a Power greater than ourselves, we find the courage to make the changes necessary to live differently today. By practicing the principles outlined in the General Warranties...' and by exercising spiritual principles such as: Honesty, Integrity, Gratitude, Humility, being Ever Kind and Respectful; Prudence, Optimism, Willingness, Equality and Responsibility, '...we have the opportunity not only to change our lives, but also to offer our experience, strength and hope to those around us.' This is by no means the entire list of spiritual principles."

Goal Two: The Conference will provide guidance to Al-Anon's Board of Trustees and the World Service Office (WSO) on services to the fellowship and guardianship of Al-Anon's Twelve Traditions.

"Al-Anon's Tradition Two states, 'For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.'

"Warranty Two states, 'that no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members.'

"These world services depend on guidance from the Conference. Among the many services that the WSO provides are: Group Services, Literature, Public Outreach, Finance, Policy, Alateen, International Conventions, International Coordination Committee (ICC).

Goal Three: Conference members will understand the purpose of the Conference, relationships within the Structure, and be able to articulate Conference discussions and decisions.

"The purpose of the WSC is to build the membership's trust in the Conference, its processes and its decisions. Trust ensures the membership's buy-in so that action items can be carried out efficiently and consistently throughout the fellowship.

"As the largest group conscience, 'The World Service Conference makes the group conscience available and effective for all Al-Anon. It is the practical means by which the group conscience can speak; it is the voice of the world Al-Anon and the guarantee that our world services shall continue to carry on under all conditions.'

"As guardians of the Traditions, 'the Conference protects Al-Anon and Alateen against a service breakdown; it makes for unity and enables our fellowship to act as a whole upon important matters. This makes it the principal guarantor of Al-Anon and Alateen's harmony and survival.'"

Articulate Conference Discussions

The Delegates continued, "Concept Five states: 'The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.' Our members need to be reassured that both perspectives have been shared and that all viewpoints were considered before a decision was made."

Communicating Decisions

To communicate accurate information, Conference members were asked, "Do you let your members know what to expect from you prior to leaving for the WSC? Do your members know what is on the WSC agenda? Are our members eagerly anticipating your Delegate's report?"

"If we inform our membership and gather feedback prior to Conference, we will be able to communicate the group conscience of our Area more effectively and accurately. It is just as imperative to communicate accurate information when reporting back to the Assembly. After all, it is one of our primary duties."

Implementing Conference Decisions

"If we can articulate discussions and decisions, we will understand whose responsibility it is to be able to implement the decisions that are made. We can't implement something we don't understand. The World Service Conference is composed of Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee members and Staff. Each member of the WSC needs to understand if it is their responsibility to implement the will of the group conscience."

Answering the "Why" Questions

"Our members may want to know why a Conference decision was made. All Conference members need to be able to articulate the decision and why it was made. What was the reasoning behind the resolutions the World Service Conference decided on? Our members not only want to know what the decisions were; they want to know why those decisions were made."

2018 World Service Conference

The presenters asked Conference members, “Do you agree to uphold these goals?”

The session concluded as follows: “The 2018 World Service Conference has been charged with the responsibility of making decisions on behalf of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups. Each member of the World Service Conference has carefully been selected by their Higher Power. We are not here by chance! We challenge you to keep our World Service Conference goals in mind when casting a vote. We challenge you to consider all of our spiritual principles throughout the duration of the 2018 World Service Conference.”

World Service Conference Theme

Laura D. • Panel 56, Oklahoma | Carol T. • Panel 56, North Dakota

The purpose of the Task Force was to present the 2018 World Service Conference (WSC) theme, the origin of it and inform all Conference members of their opportunity to suggest ideas for the 2019 theme.

In the past, the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) decided on the theme and presented it to the Board of Trustees. Last year was the second time that all WSC members could make suggestions for the theme.

The Conference theme lays the foundation for the tone of the WSC. It encourages members to use the Legacies of the Al-Anon program to empower members to serve. Many of the breakouts, discussions and items in the agenda are derived from this. Even the three-minute talks by the outgoing Panel of Delegates may build from this. So, it “sets the stage.” The Conference theme keeps us all moving in the same direction.

The Task Force members began their presentation by saying, “This year’s theme is an excerpt from a statement made by our Cofounder, Lois W.: ‘Al-Anon—There is no standing still!’ This is saying to me that we are always changing, continuing to grow and that we need to reach the millions who need Al-Anon’s help but are not aware of us yet. It is a reminder and a call to action for every member.

“Our Board’s Mission Statement speaks to this: ‘Anticipate the future and Al-Anon’s place in it and ensure that the necessary resources are available.’

“The Strategic Plan Priorities state, ‘Al-Anon’s spiritual principles permeate our policies and practices; we apply emerging technology and communication options:

- To increase the visibility of Al-Anon so that it is recognized as the number one resource throughout the world for helping friends and families of alcoholics.
- To empower the Al-Anon fellowship to be vibrant, inclusive and flexible.
- To achieve a viable future for Al-Anon Family Groups, the Board will be adaptive and strategic in its use of talents, skills, and abilities.

“So it is very important for us, as Conference members, to participate in coming up with theme ideas for the next Conference. Conference members now have the opportunity to participate in helping to choose the theme. Each of us needs to make a conscious decision to continue to engage in the Conference at all levels possible. It shows our commitment to the program and how we want to grow. This is definitely a way for Conference members to participate in the agenda—as it is when we are asked to send items to be considered for Chosen Agenda Items.

“You may have noticed how the themes have sometimes built off the previous year or years. The theme does not need to build off previous years; it could be something transformative and exciting about the future.”

Conference members were invited to come together in developing a theme. They were also reminded that it was time for follow-through on their request for more participation in the agenda, and were encouraged to submit their ideas for a Conference theme for 2019.

The Task Force closed the session, saying, “Remember Tradition Four: ‘Participation is the key to harmony.’ And another quote by Lois W.: ‘You are all founders in your own right.’”



World Service Conference Etiquette

Janet P. • Panel 57, Nevada | Renelle M. • Panel 56, Georgia

Nancy W. • Panel 57, Utah

A Task Force composed of three Area Delegates introduced the etiquette of the World Service Conference (WSC) by saying, “Adherence to our Conference etiquette helps us follow our spiritual principles.” The Delegate Task Force then reviewed the etiquette and the spiritual principle(s) it embodies:

1. *Starting and stopping on time* demonstrates *integrity*.
2. *Sticking to the Agenda*. The spiritual principle of *perseverance*, while conducting business in the best interest of all Al-Anon, preserves recovery at all levels.
3. *Two minutes at the microphone*. During discussions, limiting our time at the microphone embodies the spiritual principles of *humility* and *trust*.
4. *Staying on topic*. The spiritual principle of *simplicity*, while we stay on topic, will help us reach our primary goal to help families of alcoholics.
5. *If someone before you says what you were going to say, sit down*. Spiritual principles: *efficient leadership* and *awareness*.
6. *No clapping, cheering, or booing when opinions are shared* demonstrates *mutual respect* and creates an atmosphere of *harmony*.
7. *No side conversations*. The spiritual principle of *courtesy* is shown when we actively listen and form our own conclusions, leaving out reactions, opinions and judgments.
8. *No miscellaneous distractions*. Show *discipline* and *respect* for the service commitments of those who have prepared for Conference.
9. *Keeping our cell phones off* demonstrates *consideration* for those around us as we focus on our World Service Conference.
10. *No perfumes or flowers*. Be *respectful* and *understanding* of others.

11. If you are unable to attend a session, notify the Conference Chair, Associate Director—Conference, or your Mentor. Our spiritual principles of *selflessness* and *dedication* are evident when we do the right thing and are responsible to those we serve. Keeping an accurate count of members present at Conference is essential during voting.
12. Practicing spiritual principles and presuming goodwill. By practicing *humility*, *harmony* and *unity* we can reach our ideals.

Following the review, the Task Force members appeared in their “rapper” outfits and led Conference members in a “rap” about the etiquette.

Voting Procedures

Terry T. • Panel 56, Alaska | Stephanie S. • Panel 57, New Mexico/El Paso

Conference members were informed of the voting procedures and their connection to Al-Anon’s Legacies and spiritual principles.

Vote Count and Substantial Unanimity

The Conference looks to the General Warranties for guidance in observing the spirit of the Third Warranty, which states, “that all decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible by unanimity.”

Each Conference will determine by an open vote (that is, a show of hands) whether to require a two-thirds vote for its decisions. At our Conference, a “two-thirds vote” means two-thirds of the votes cast.

Al-Anon Family Groups’ “World Service Conference Charter,” item 3c states, “Delegates are free to vote as their conscience dictates and not necessarily as instructed by their Areas.” The Concept Three descriptive text in Al-Anon’s Twelve Concepts of Service notes that “...the ‘instructed’ Delegate who cannot act according to his own conscience on a final World Service Conference (WSC) vote would not be a ‘trusted servant’ at all but a messenger.”

The Board of Trustees, Staff and Executive Committee members are also free to vote their consciences.

Affirmation Process

In addition to our standard votes on motions, there are also nomination affirmation votes for Trustees. Before Conference there is an in-depth review of the nomination process. It is understood that the By-Laws of the Corporation require that the Board of Trustees legally elects nominees at its Annual Meeting on the Saturday following the Conference. Traditional approval by the entire Conference gives the Board of Trustees the guidance and voice of the fellowship.

The Conference Leadership Team decided this year to show the nomination affirmation vote counts on the screen in order to ensure all Conference members have accurate information and that there is transparency. However, with seeing the vote comes the added responsibility of maintaining confidentiality. As members of the WSC, we are “trusted servants.” The spiritual principles of trust and anonymity ensure that the vote count will not be discussed outside this room. Concept Twelve, Warranty 4 states: “that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.” Any discussion of our votes with anyone outside this room can defeat the very purpose of our Conference. This means that we cannot take photos or text people outside of this room. All Conference members must feel free to vote their conscience and continue to have confidence that they are trusted servants.

Counting Electronic Votes

The totals of the electronic vote are projected onto a screen. Any vote not registered due to pressing an invalid button or not pressing any button is void. Abstentions and voids are not considered votes. Therefore, the number of voting members necessary for substantial unanimity may vary from motion to motion. The number of voting members changes if someone is out of the room. The number of cast votes may change if there are abstentions and voids. The two-thirds is based on the total of yes/no votes cast.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Following discussion at the 2014 World Service Conference, a motion was carried (91 yes, 6 no, 0 abstentions, and 0 void) to authorize the use of electronic devices for note-taking, starting at the 2015 World Service Conference on a three-year trial basis. (See Motion #7 of the 2014 WSC Summary, page 90)

The Conference Leadership Team (CLT) agrees that using electronic devices at the Conference has been successful and moves to end the trial.

Conference members were asked to consider this action prior to Conference so that it could be voted on the first morning of the Conference.

A motion to end the three-year trial authorizing the use of electronic devices for note-taking, which started at the 2015 World Service Conference, and adopt the use of electronic devices at this and future World Service Conferences was made, seconded and carried.

The motion carried unanimously. (See Motion #2, page 78)



APPROVALS

2017 Auditor's Report

Jennie McC. • Trustee, Treasurer

Niketa Bailey • Director of Finance and Operations (Non-Member)

The Director of Finance and Operations began by introducing herself to the new Conference members and commenting that "The Director of Programs says nobody comes to the World Service Office (WSO) by chance. I have found a home here. I take stewardship of your money seriously."

The presentation was interspersed with Al-Anon trivia questions. This year the Director of Finance and Operations explained the purpose of the audit and its details. The financial records of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. were audited by an independent Certified Public Accounting firm. The auditors, after reviewing all the materials provided, found that the financial statements were in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Prior to the Conference, a copy of the audit including the opinion letter of the auditors was posted on AFG Connects, so that all Conference members could review it. During the Conference, the Director defined the items on the audit. A copy of the audit can be found on the website.

Conference members had the following questions and comments:

- Do Area contributions show up under groups?
They show up as "Other."
- It is nice to see the group contributions comparison between the last two years.
- If making individual contributions through PayPal, where do they show up?
Under PayPal.
- How does downloading literature from Amazon affect our finances?
E-books are a small portion of our revenue. We do not budget for that other than what we have collected in other years.
- Why has the cost of sales increased?
It increased because we replaced the 2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (Service Manual), which had an impact on cost of sales.
- So part of the increase in cost of sales is old stock of the Service Manual and disposing of it?
Yes, it does. We have completely revised the literature inventory process and are ordering less now. Typically, sales of the current edition decline prior to the introduction of the new edition, so we need to be deliberate in the quantity we order so that we do not end up with a large excess when it is time to print the new edition.
- Do total figures include literature in all three languages?
Yes.
- Non-cash contributions, is that the volunteer work?
No, it is a non-revenue source from Google AdWords available to all non-profits.
- How often do you review vendors for price and service?
All the time, on an ongoing basis. We have more than one vendor for literature and shipping.
- What do we do with the revenue that comes to AFG, Inc.?
Examples are the newly redesigned website launched in 2017, increased social media presence to attract new

members and global protection of our trademarks and copyrights. A new pamphlet and new literature are being introduced in 2018. We had to procure writers to start the new literature. There are international meetings (for example, the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting) to fulfill Al-Anon's primary purpose, 2018 International Convention planning, fully staffing the World Service Office and placing professionals in key places to continue the work of the organization.



- What was the top-selling book of 2017?
Courage to Change (B-16).

Investment Income

Investment performance helps to grow the Reserve Fund. It provides for an annual transfer to the General Fund if needed. Investment income was \$568,900 in 2017.

Literature sales and contributions alone do not fully support our work. The Reserve Fund is currently at ten months of operating expense. The Board objective is 12 months of operating reserves.

Expense Comparisons

We want the majority of expenses to be supporting the program services and literature distribution, not general administration.

- Our investments in the market—are they conservative?
We have investment managers instructed to pursue a moderate strategy. They have ongoing talks with the Director of Finance and Operations, and meet with the Finance Committee.
- Investment income shows an increase. Was that all from the market?
We get very little from our bank account. Everything else is earned in the market.
- We made money in the market. What was the percentage or rate of return for the portfolio this past year?
The rate of return is identified for each individual investment. We watch it every month to measure how we are doing against the industry and to see how we are tracking against the indexes. Are we following the returns they have or are we doing better? In most cases our returns are right along with the indexes.
- Have we looked at our portfolio and is it in line with our program?
Yes, our portfolio is in line with our principles.

Functional Expenses

These are activities that fulfill the purpose of our mission, such as Public Outreach, Outreach to Professionals, International Services, and Group Services. These expenses include literature, publication, shipping receiving, warehouse and customer service.

Notes to Financial Statement: These describe Al-Anon and help to improve readers' understanding of the financial statements. We are required to report them. They include additional information that supports summary totals or line items. They also contain information about any items that are not included in the financial statement.

Investments: We have two investment brokers that we meet with and consult throughout the year to ensure that Al-Anon is invested in reputable equities.

Postretirement health benefit: This is an unfunded liability that is carried by the Reserve Fund. The liability is based on future costs, age of retirees and life expectancy. It fluctuates yearly.

Summary: This was another strong year for literature sales. Contributions were consistent with the prior year. There was improved investment performance during the year and the WSO was fully staffed. Resources were allocated to technology and innovation. Connections with professionals were enhanced. The 2018 Membership Survey was created, and new literature is being introduced in 2018.

A motion to approve the 2017 Audited Financial Report was made and carried. (See WSC Motion #4, page 78)

2018 Finance Committee Report

Jennie McC. • Treasurer, Trustee

Niketa Bailey • Director of Finance and Operations (Non-Member)

The 2018 Budget was presented to the Conference members by the Treasurer of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. The 2018 Budget shows expenses are expected to be \$2,772 less than revenue for the year: Expenses are estimated to be \$5,501,028 and revenues to be \$5,503,800.

Projected Expenses

Overall expense is budgeted to increase by \$222,499 from last year's actual expenses. The increase is related to the location of the World Service Conference (which was held in New York this year so that Conference members could visit Stepping Stones), the development of three PSA campaigns, and hosting of the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM). Salaries increased only \$9,500 with normal cost of living and merit increases.

Estimated Income

We are estimating income from literature sales to be about \$229,132 more than last year and *Forum* subscription income to be comparable to the prior year. We are anticipating the introduction of new literature this year to provide the increase in literature sales. We are budgeting contributions to be \$2,000,000, which is comparable to last year's actual. Beginning in 2008, we agreed to transfer up to 4 percent of the average market value of the Reserve Fund.

Following the presentation of the 2018 Budget, the Treasurer said, "The funds that allow us to cover the expenses are literature sales, contributions, investment income, *Forum* subscriptions and a possible transfer from the Reserve Fund.

"We are budgeting for a \$300,000 increase in net literature sales in 2018. We are projecting sales of about \$3,600,000: After subtracting the cost of producing that literature we should have about \$3,000,000 left to spend on supporting our members and reaching out to potential new members and professionals in an effort to spread the message of help and hope.

"New literature, in this case the sales of the new book, *Intimacy in Alcoholic Relationships—A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Stories* (B-33), and *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon 50th Anniversary* (B6-50), both of which will be available at the International Convention, will probably cause a spike in literature revenue. "While we did not surpass 2016's numbers in contributions, we still recorded our second-best year ever. With your help spreading the word of need and informing the membership about how their expressions of abundance are spent, we are hoping for a new sec-

ond-best year with \$2,000,000 in contributions.

"We are so pleased that groups and individuals stepped up and purchased *Forum* subscriptions. We are hopeful this will continue and increase further."

Expenses

"If we compare the 2018 Budget to either the 2017 Revised Budget or the 2017 Audited Actual there is a small increase. Some of the increase is due to cost-of-living and merit increases based on performance.

"The Finance Committee, as part of its annual budget review, compares WSO employee salaries to those offering similar services and abilities in comparable not-for-profit organizations to ensure the salaries we pay are fiscally responsible.

"Postage increased by \$8,000 from the 2017 budgeted amount. Last year, after careful consideration, the decision was made to suspend mailing each group a complimentary copy of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). This year, the Board decided to mail each group a complimentary copy of *Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work* (P-24) at an estimated cost of \$19,575.

"This year we are suspending TEAM events to focus on the International Convention. Staff and Board members will visit international structures (General Service Offices) to support those structures in their Public Outreach and to help with general service concerns. These meetings are very important outreach to worldwide structures, who appreciate the help of the World Service Office in understanding the Legacies, policies and some procedures that work well in our Structure. Staff also attend conferences dedicated to understanding alcoholism and its treatment. Al-Anon's attendance is crucial in making the professional community aware of what a valuable resource our program is to family recovery.

"We are budgeting a \$40,000 increase in direct Conference costs for 2018, due to the Conference being held in New York and the additional exciting visit to Stepping Stones this year.

"We are expecting an increase of \$20,000 in printing costs for 2018. With the positive response to *The Forum*, there are increased costs in printing, which we know are covered by the subscription revenues. Other printing includes that for *Alateen Talk*, inserts that the office sends out, *Le lien* and *en acción*. Some of the increase in the Budget is accounted for by the printing of the complimentary copy of *Groups at Work*.

"The IAGSM will meet in 2018, as it does every other year, with a budgeted cost of \$15,000. This is a year when the IAGSM does meet, but the Zonal meetings will not take place.

"Due to changes in Staff, we were able to bring the Membership Survey in-house and save significantly over contracted costs of previous surveys.

"The PSA Campaign budget is increased to accommodate development of three PSA campaigns in 2018. We can now deliver the PSA to radio stations through an electronic link instead of sending a digital format such as CD, media or DVD.

"In summary, Operating Expenses are budgeted to increase 5 percent in 2018. At long last we have a technology team and technology plan that adequately support the needs of the fellowship, and are poised to offer even more.

"Outreach by means of Trustee visits and PSAs strives to fulfill the Board's Mission and Vision.

"Protection of trademarks and copyrights, while somewhat costly, is the prudent and responsible thing to do.

"This past year has been one of many exciting changes and we hope for the same in 2018. If we as members show our support as

we did last year, the World Service Office will be able to offer great support, and more great projects that are dependent on technology and innovative Outreach. We are projecting a small surplus of \$2,772 but, as always, we and the success of AFG, Inc. are dependent upon our members. We hope we all are able to share our abundance of gratitude for what Al-Anon has given us.

"Thank you for your support and for all your ideas on how we can improve."

Conference members had the following questions and comments:

- Would you spend a minute to clarify the Equalized Expense for the Delegates? It continues to come up in the Area, and Past Delegates have different understandings of what it is. My Area had the conversation and wants to pay the Full Amount. What does it cost for a Delegate to come?

We create a spreadsheet comparing the last five years of Conference expenses. It includes travel, hotel, meals, ground transportation, supplies (notebook, and incidental costs). It is compiled for all Conference members. Then we extract the portion for the Delegates (the Full Amount) and calculate a percentage of that cost that is approved by the Board of Trustees as the Delegate's Equalized Expense. Through the General Fund, AFG, Inc. budgets to cover the difference between the Full Amount and Equalized Expense for all Delegates. Many Areas send in more than the Equalized Expense, some pay more than the Full Amount and others pay the Full Amount.

- If every Area sent in the Full Amount, would that cover the Delegates' Expense 100 percent? What would be left on the Budget line? Zero?

Yes, the cost for the Delegates to attend and participate would be 100 percent covered; however, the Budget line would still include the cost for the other Conference members (Board of Trustees, the At-Large Members of the Executive Committee, and the World Service Staff) to attend and participate.

- Do members of the WSO pay for Public Outreach to be at professional conferences or do they personally attend the conference?

The Associate Director—Public Outreach Professionals will be attending two conferences: DC National Recovery Planning Partners organization and the NAACSD Conference of Affiliates. The registration fee is included in the Budget.

- What is the cost of sending the Appeal Letters?

\$34,000 for the year.

- After the investment income transfer from the Reserve Fund we still showed a deficit in 2017. Why not transfer enough to have a zero balance?

We are limited by the Board of Trustees policy from 2007, which states "That 4 percent of the average market value of the Reserve Fund for the 36 months ending at the end of the current year be transferred to the General Fund annually; the amount to be reviewed each year during the budget process."

- Should we be looking at an increase of the Delegate expenses in our Area budget?

This Conference was special in that we traveled to New York. Areas should plan for higher Delegate expenses when the Conference is held in New York.

- Is the new *Service Manual* revenue neutral?

Yes.

- Last year there was a lot of discussion about the Reserve Fund and understanding the reasons why money is pulled from it. Why would you create a budget that counted on pulling from the Reserve Fund? Is there some reason the budget couldn't be down to a few thousand dollars?

The Board has authorized we can pull up to 4 percent per year from the Reserve Fund, which is approximately \$200,000. To make up that difference in the budget, we could have anticipated 2.2 million in contributions and not taken from the Reserve, but we try to make a budget with realistic income and expenses. We try to keep the budget as accurate as we can. We felt showing such increases to income, like literature sales, would not be a responsible way to present the budget.

- *The Forum* full color: Is that something that has increased cost and is there money in the budget to do it?

Yes. The cost increased \$2,000 per year, so it is a small cost.

- I didn't understand the cost of *The Forum* in color. I understand it is \$120,000 per year for it. How is that self-sustaining?

We were able to evaluate the cost against revenue. This was based on current data, which showed that the subscription level increased over the last two years. We were able to stay revenue neutral.

- Someone had mentioned that there was \$752,972 in literature revenue and someone commented that the *Service Manual* was disposed of due to the printing of a new issue. What was the dollar amount that was disposed of?

\$26,000.

- Is \$26,000 something we should expect in the future?

New Inventory measures were put in place when the Director of Finance & Operations came on in late 2016. It will not happen in the future.

- Salaries are going up because of more Staff, raises, or what?

There is a modest increase due to cost of living and merit increases.

- I heard there was a WSO uniform in the WSO Budget.

What is the uniform?

The uniform is for warehouse employees. It is \$400.00 per year.

A motion to approve the 2018 Finance Committee Report was made, seconded and carried (see Motion #5, page 78).

2017 Annual Report

It is difficult to capture a year's worth of effort in one document. The Annual Report was sent to the Delegates prior to the Conference. The Report included updates from various Board Committees as well as World Service Office (WSO) departments. Delegates had time to review the Annual Report and submit questions in advance to ensure they were clear on the material before coming to the World Service Conference (WSC). The submitted questions were answered and then were sent to the Delegates before the Conference began.

This year, the Five-Minute Staff Updates were included as part of the Annual Report session during Conference. These updates enabled Delegates to appreciate the scope of Staff accomplishments on behalf of the worldwide fellowship that have occurred in the three months since 2018 began. Where appropriate, Staff were encouraged to offer "Insights" into how their daily work helps the WSO fulfill the Board's Vision and Mission for Al-Anon Family Groups.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, INC.

2018 BUDGET

	2018 Budget	2017 Actual
<u>Estimated Revenue</u>		
Literature Sales less cost of printing	3,000,000	2,770,868
Contributions	2,000,000	1,972,931
Forum Subscriptions	260,000	264,461
Investment Income/Transfer from Reserve Fund	243,800	203,771
Total Estimated Revenue	5,503,800	5,212,031
<u>Operating Expenses</u>		
Salaries	3,201,972	3,172,159
Payroll Taxes	236,084	243,568
Employee Benefits	457,115	469,896
Total Labor Costs	3,895,172	3,885,623
Building Occupancy	265,800	266,999
Packing & Shipping (Net)	(75,000)	(65,779)
Postage	198,000	187,785
Telephone	51,000	50,299
Stationery & Office Supplies	83,000	78,707
Office Services & Expenses	230,000	173,430
Repairs & Maintenance	7,000	8,969
Travel & Meetings	191,000	209,195
Direct Conference Costs (Net)	103,000	62,358
Legal & Audit	70,750	38,576
Printing	132,000	109,196
Canadian Office	2,000	1,523
General services meeting	15,000	1,496
In-Office Volunteers	100	70
Membership Survey	2,080	750
PSA Campaign	102,126	43,076
Bank and Credit Card Fees	83,000	94,093
Miscellaneous	19,000	20,735
Postretirement Health Benefits	58,000	63,917
Total Operating Expense	5,433,028	5,231,018
Depreciation (Exc. Bldg.)	68,000	47,512
Total Expense	5,501,028	5,278,530
Net increase (decrease)	2,772	(66,499)

Administration and Finance

Vali F. • Executive Director

A key focus for Staff has been the implementation of the new project calendar, which provides cross-departmental visibility to the major projects occurring at the World Service Office, ensures all steps and activities are considered and bottlenecks identified, and increases collaboration between Staff when issues arise. The pilot projects for the project calendar are *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism (AFA) 2019*, French and Spanish translations of the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)*, the monthly Directors' Report to the Executive Committee and the World Service Office Annual Report. The project calendar is displayed along a busy corridor at the WSO, and all Staff are encouraged to check updates regularly.

HUMAN RESOURCES

This year, a new time and attendance system was successfully implemented. Supervisors are now able to review employee time prior to submission to payroll.

Staff

Toward the ongoing goal of increasing cross-departmental collaboration and aligning responsibilities with skills, several organizational changes were announced at the end of January 2018:

- Digital Strategy, Human Resources and Project Management, including the Events & Special Projects Manager and Meeting Planner, now report to the Executive Director.
- Digital Strategy Manager was renamed Associate Director—Digital Strategy to reflect the responsibilities of this position. As a non-member, the Associate Director—Digital Strategy will be invited to attend Conference with voice only.
- The Translation Team began reporting to the Director of Finance, whose position was renamed to reflect the full scope of the role: Director of Finance and Operations.

Additionally, many title changes have occurred to ensure consistency in descriptions and to clarify responsibilities. Changes include:

- Replacing “Clerk” with “Generalist,” with the goal of increasing the attractiveness of the World Service Office as a place of work.
- Ensuring only supervisory positions have the title “Coordinator” to provide Staff with a clear understanding of career progression and authority within the office. For example, “Archives Coordinator” is now “Archivist.”

Following the resignations of the Communications Secretary and Member Services—Secretary, the Staff Leadership Team created an Admin Role Task Force to evaluate the needs of the organization. The Task Force determined that these roles should be replaced with two new positions, which have both been filled:

- Translation Project Coordinator, who is responsible for coordinating the translation work of the Translation Team.
- Editorial Quality Specialist, which is a much-needed position that monitors editorial quality across all Conference Approved Literature, Al-Anon Family Groups service materials and administrative reports.

The Employee Relations Manager has continued to facilitate the

Admin Role Task Force to finalize allocation of remaining responsibilities from the two former positions. Tasks are being evaluated in terms of complexity and duration to help with allocation.

TRANSLATION

Translation for *Hope & Understanding for Parents & Grandparents (P-94)* pamphlet was completed and sent to Publications for design on March 1st, 2018.

The translation timeline has been set for the Spanish and French versions of the new book, *Intimacy in Alcoholic Relationships—A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Stories (B-33)*: Shipments to members will begin in February 2019.

In reviewing the Translation Team request to revise the timeline for the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, variances were discovered between the online *Service Manual* and the version provided to the translators, as well as between content for the “World Service Handbook” and “Policy Digest” as approved and documented in the *2017 World Service Conference Summary* and the version provided to the translators. These variances reflect the challenges of using a manual system to manage versions of such a complex document. Future versions will be managed using an online system.

Translation for the *Service Manual* is being delayed until baseline Spanish and French versions have been created and a process established to distribute and alert the membership of changes in the English version.

PUBLICATIONS

Groups at Work (P-24) has been shipped to all English groups within the WSC Structure.

Digital Strategy

Scot Powers • Associate Director—Digital Strategy (Non-Member)

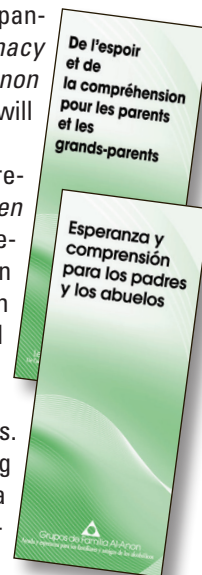
Digital Strategy is responsible for leveraging technology to facilitate communication within the fellowship and generate awareness in newcomers and professionals. The Digital Strategy team consists of:

- the Senior Communications Specialist—Media, who is responsible for moderating website comments, administering the French social media pages and coordinating the email newsletter *In the Loop*;
- the Social Media Specialist, who is responsible for developing and scheduling posts on all our social media platforms, responding to questions via direct message and moderating comments;
- the Webmaster, who is responsible for maintaining the WSO website and other technical development;
- the Data Analyst, who is responsible for tracking and reporting website, meeting line and social media stats.

The team works to build technical solutions for issues the public faces (such as the website and meeting search), as well as internal solutions (such as the Group Records' change webforms and surveys).

Website

The Digital Strategy team completed the migration of content



from the old password-protected members' website to the new al-anon.org website. Programs Staff determined whether the content was to be migrated, moved to AFG Connects or was outdated. A password is no longer required to access general member content, as any sensitive content was moved into the proper AFG Connects community.

Digital Strategy was able to identify the source of an Internal Server Error that would show up intermittently, causing poor user experience. A fix was implemented, and the errors have ceased.

The website was designed as a collection of Al-Anon personal stories organized by relationship to make it easy for newcomers to connect with Al-Anon's message and decide to try an Al-Anon meeting. Some members and newcomers are leaving comments on stories; these add an organic component to our website that is viewed favorably by various search engines. The Senior Communications Specialist—Media reviews the comments, and, if the comments do not violate any of Al-Anon's spiritual principles, they are approved and published.

People primarily find our website through searches on various search engines. Expertise in search engine management is needed to maximize the visibility of the WSO website and ensure that anyone, anywhere can find help and hope in Al-Anon.

Meeting Search

Working with Group Records and the Software Engineer, Digital Strategy launched a new meeting search that allows members and newcomers to search within a radius, view in a map, and search by specific meeting attributes such as focus or accessibility. The new search also made it easier for newcomers to report problems with meetings that are no longer meeting for whatever reason. Conversations with various Area Web Coordinators have been very positive and, as a result, more Areas are beginning to link to the WSO meeting search to provide their site visitors the most complete and accurate list of meetings for the US, Canada, Bermuda and Puerto Rico. Over 340,000 meeting searches have been conducted since the new meeting tool's launch on January 11, 2018. We are on pace to have over 1.5 million meeting searches conducted by the end of the year. Some key factors to its success are the link's placement (at the top and center of the meeting search page), its unique color (which makes it stand out), the fact that it is mobile friendly and the fact that it is one of the top-linked pages, with several Area, District and AIS websites linking directly to it.

The Data Analyst identified that there has been a corresponding decline in the number of calls to the Al-Anon Family Groups toll-free meeting line, most likely due to more members and potential members being able to find meeting information easily on the website. This has reduced the demand on WSO Staff. Compared to last year, call volumes are down almost 70% and website meeting searches are up 376%.

Group Records

In an effort to streamline the process of changing group information (new time, GR, CMA, etc.) and creating an updated WSO meeting list, and to address the challenges members were having with the fillable PDF not saving properly, Group Records and Digital Strategy created a webform for Group Change Requests (known in its paper format as the GR-1 form). This form can be completed by any member of the group who enters the necessary group information. The system then generates an email with the information to the Area Group Records Coordinator, so he/she can make the update in the WSO Online Group Records. These updates are fed

directly into the new meeting search tool every hour, 24/7. There is also a New Group Registration web form, which is sent to WSO Group Records so that they can add the new group as they do when receiving the paper form.

Social Media

Digital Strategy continues to post to Al-Anon social media sites daily, with both seasonal and timeless content. Timely content was posted during Children of Alcoholics Week; over 170,000 people were reached because of sharing of posts or discovery of al-anon.org through hashtag searches.

Programs

Marsha W. • Director of Programs

Retirement Announcement

"Conference has heard updates from the six services within Programs and met the wonderful Staff that I, as Director of Programs, get to work with every day. Each member is talented in their own way. Now I want to share some additional news. Our coworker and friend, Pat Q., Associate Director—Public Outreach Media, will retire on June 15th, 2018.

"When Pat told me that he was retiring after 22 years of service at the World Service Office, I was sad, but moved. Pat was here the day I started working for the WSO and through it all, he has always been someone in the company that I can rely on.

"I have to say that Pat has been a role model at work for many employees at the WSO. If all employees were as hard working, committed and dedicated, then the world would be a better place. His passion to make sure that Al-Anon's message of hope reaches the families and friends of alcoholics is infectious.

"So, on behalf of the World Service Office, and from me personally, I wish Pat all the best in retirement. We hope he has a long and peaceful rest, spends some time with loved ones and does everything he wants to do with his time off, including telling jokes and playing golf!

"All the best, Pat, and thank you for your 22 years of continuous hard work and service!"

Conference

Suzanne M. • Associate Director—Conference

"As the Associate Director—Conference, I am responsible for communicating with Delegates, Area Chairs and District Representatives in addition to the year-round planning and implementation that takes place in relation to the World Service Conference. I am a member of the Conference Leadership Team and I also help plan International Conventions."

Chosen Agenda Items

During the conference call for new Conference members in January, incoming Delegates were invited to submit Chosen Agenda Items (CAIs). Seven Panel 58 Delegates did so.

The Chosen Agenda Items Task Force, comprised of two Delegates and the Conference Chairperson, combined like items; this condensed the 36 CAIs into 16 CAIs. Concurrently, the Chosen Agenda Items Fact Checker Task Force, comprised of two Delegates and the Associate Director—Conference, reviewed the CAIs for misinformation. The 16 CAIs were presented to Conference members for voting prior to Conference.

Out of the 93 voting members, 77 Conference members voted for their top five CAIs. Twenty members were from Panel 56, 15 from

Panel 57 and 20 from Panel 58. Thirteen were Trustees, three were Executive Committee members and six were WSO Staff. The Conference will discuss the topics that received the first- and second-highest number of votes in 45-minute sessions in the General Session. Conference members will attend two of three breakout sessions to discuss the third-, fourth-, and fifth-highest-voted topics.

The Web of Connectivity

During the WSO's all-Staff monthly meeting in March, the Associate Director—Conference presented the web of connectivity as it relates to the World Service Conference. (Web of Connectivity is a standing item on the Staff meeting agenda that serves to increase visibility of the relationships between Staff working across departments.) The Associate Director—Conference kicked off the presentation by stating: "The World Service Conference is Al-Anon's annual business meeting held each April. The Conference provides guidance to the WSO in service matters brought to its attention."

The interactive presentation included an overview of the year-long cycle of preparation for and/or implementation of the Conference to demonstrate that every member of the WSO Staff is involved in the Conference in some way or another.

Conference App

The Conference app went live on March 26th. The overwhelming response to this year's app shows that Conference members favor this year's app over last year's app.

Conference Notes

In June, the WSO will publish several "Notes from the WSC" via *In the Loop*. In July, the *2018 World Service Conference Summary* will be posted to the website, with the hard copy available for purchase in August.

Miscellaneous AWSC Updates

It has been customary for Areas to submit updates to their Area World Service Committee members through the Delegate's point person. Following a review of this procedure with the WSO's Group Records Coordinator, Programs Assistant and Software Engineer, it was agreed the process would be simpler and more effective and efficient if the AWSC update forms went directly to the Group Records Department. Following Conference, an announcement will be made on AFG Connects to provide the new contact email address so that Areas can begin sending AWSC updates directly to the Group Records Department.

Insights

The Conference Leadership Team tapped into the incoming Delegates' talents, skills and abilities by enlarging the pool of Conference members that were eligible to submit Chosen Agenda Items.

Wow—Conference members are excited about the Conference app! The WSO is applying emerging technology and communication options by including a social stream with this year's app, where Conference members can communicate with each other. Stay tuned as we use the app throughout the week to send reminders and take fun polls. It's true: Al-Anon—There is no standing still!

Group Services

Sue P. • Associate Director—Group Services

"As the Associate Director—Group Services, I oversee all activity related to Al-Anon and Alateen groups, meetings and members as well as the Inmate Correspondence Service. The Group Services

Team brings the voice of the membership into all discussions at the WSO. We collaborate with all teams to ensure that the message of hope that Al-Anon and Alateen offer is readily available in English, French and Spanish. This includes Group Records, Public Outreach, website content, guideline review/revision and social media posts to name a few. We want to sincerely and humbly thank you for allowing us to serve you."

Groups

2017 was a momentous year, as Group Services were able to successfully revise and post the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* online before the end of the calendar year. The Board of Trustees has since decided to mail via post a complimentary copy of *Groups at Work* (P-24) to the Current Mailing Address (CMA) of all registered Al-Anon groups; this effort is currently in progress. The WSO has received numerous requests to post the index in the online version. Members are reminded the online version is word searchable and the table of contents is fully interactive, which is why an index is not included in the online version.

The Group Services team became aware after printing of the revised *Service Manual* that there were omissions and errors in the new text and index. As a result, the team is undergoing another complete review of the English version to ensure that the Conference-approved text is accurate. This review has caused a delay in the availability of Spanish and French versions. It did not make sense to translate an inaccurate version. Once the English revisions are complete, the *Service Manual* will be forwarded to translation. The digital version will be posted as soon as translation is complete. The printed Spanish and French versions will be available for shipping approximately six to eight weeks thereafter.

The WSO receives calls from members who are starting new Al-Anon groups, asking for proof of liability insurance. Members are informed that the WSO does not provide insurance on behalf of groups. This is an important discussion for the Areas, as new and established groups are experiencing more and more difficulty finding places to hold meetings when they lack liability insurance coverage. Areas that do offer insurance are encouraged to share the information on AFG Connects so that other Areas may benefit from their experience, strength and hope.

Alateen

2017 was the 60th anniversary of Alateen. The Staff would like to sincerely thank all members, Al-Anon/Alateen groups and participants in Alateen events/conferences that sent "Happy Anniversary" cards! For the first time in more than five years, the WSO is recording an increase in new, registered Alateen groups: 21 new Alateen groups have been registered since the beginning of the year.

As members continue to spread the message of hope for Alateen, it is important to always be reminded of the 2003 Alateen Motion and the important role it plays in the Area Safety and Behavioral Requirements. I am happy to inform you that the 2003 Alateen Motion from the Board of Trustees is now posted on the al-anon.org website under "Alateen Participation in Events" and "Starting an Alateen Group" (both pages are linked to the Alateen home page, which is found in the Group Resources tab under the Members menu). Furthermore, where the 2003 Alateen Motion is mentioned in the online *Service Manual*, a direct link to the 2003 Alateen



Motion is now established. The 2003 Alateen Motion posted is a PDF of what was published in the *2004 World Service Conference Summary*.

Insights

This past year has been the example of abundant thinking and action. WSO Staff are committed to empowering members as they share your experiences, achieving a viable future for Al-Anon Family Groups and being recognized as the primary resource for the friends and families of alcoholics. There is no standing still as we continue our role as the clearinghouse for information.

International

Kerri K. • Associate Director—International

“As the Associate Director—International at the WSO, mine might be the service area most of you know the least about. I am responsible for communicating with and providing guidance to 36 General Service Offices, 14 Service Boards, and local meeting contacts in 68 other countries where Al-Anon has a presence. I am the Staff liaison to the International Coordination Committee (ICC) and I help plan the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting. This update is a report of significant international activity that occurred from the first of the year.”

Updates from International Structures

The General Secretary of the General Service Office (GSO) in Brazil wrote to request additional information about copyright enforcement. The idea of copyright is relatively new and the GSO and its Board of Trustees work hard to educate the Al-Anon fellowship in Brazil about the importance of respecting the copyright of Conference Approved Literature. Staff provided suggestions about creating a process for members to request reprint permission and shared the policies and forms that the WSO uses.

The Russian Service Board is planning a three-day event in November to celebrate Al-Anon's 30th anniversary in that country. They are exploring the feasibility of Together Empowering Al-Anon Members (TEAM) events, building a website and applying the Traditions and Concepts to solve group problems, provide services on a national scale and grow their membership. They are planning to print the *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon 50th Anniversary* (B6-50) in Russian.

South Korea completed a translation of *Hope for Today* (B-27) and is moving on to printing.

In January, the UK & Eire GSO notified Staff of a change in leadership. The previous General Secretary resigned and was replaced by someone who is now filling the role on an interim basis. Staff sent a welcome email and scheduled a telephone call for early March. Among the items discussed was the upcoming departure of the UK from the European Union and how it would impact business operations in Eire, which is part of the Structure, and which will remain in the EU. The WSO committed to providing assistance as needed.

Updates on Planned International Trips

Greece – Staff contacted members of the Greek Structure to initiate coordinating a visit in May. Those contacted were extremely enthusiastic in their response and helpful with suggestions related to conference attendance, transportation, and willingness to coordinate with other members. In the introductory email, Staff conveyed the high-level purpose of the trip, which includes meeting with members of Public Outreach, Literature, and other

committees and interested Al-Anon members, to talk about how the WSO can support this evolving Structure. Some possible areas of discussion, based on recent conversation with members in the Structure, include using the Traditions in meetings, understanding the translation process, doing Public Outreach, and learning to use the *Service Manual*. Other English-speaking structures usually attend this event, and an invitation was sent via AFG Connects to invite them to schedule meetings while WSO Staff are there.

Norway – The GSO in Norway contacted WSO Staff to announce that there has been additional turnover in the office. An interim General Manager is currently overseeing the operations until the General Service Conference in April, at which time they hope to identify a permanent replacement. The Associate Director—International and Director of Programs have been meeting with the interim General Manager using web conferencing to provide guidance and share the WSO's collective experience on these kinds of transitions. Staff were already planning a trip to this Structure for summer 2018 and it will most likely now include visits with neighboring Structures such as Finland and Sweden. These countries are small, work well together and can learn a lot from each other, just as some Areas do in the US and Canada. Sweden has invited all of the other Scandinavian structures to attend their annual General Service Conference in April.

Insights

In my work with the international community, I have seen that entire structures, just like groups and Districts in the US and Canada, can become isolated and out of touch. However, I have also seen that the international community has the capacity to function as a network, as in the case of Sweden fostering supportive relationships with Finland, Denmark and Norway. Planning international trips that bring members of this network together is part of ensuring that help and recovery will be available in every community. It is part of helping structures evolve. Being accountable, purposeful, and strategic when planning trips ensures that necessary resources will be available for Al-Anon's future.

Literature

Tom C. • Associate Director—Literature

“As Associate Director—Literature, I have the great pleasure of serving as the Staff liaison to the Literature Committee as well as to the Area Literature Coordinators and Area Newsletter Editors. When the World Service Conference gives conceptual approval for new pieces of literature or revisions to existing pieces, I orchestrate the process for developing Conference Approved Literature (CAL) with the Literature Committee, freelance writers, Policy Committee reviewers and all others involved, including the entire fellowship, so that we receive the necessary sharings to make it all possible. When the piece is completed, I work with the Literature Coordinators to make sure that the fellowship is aware it exists. I am also responsible for reviewing all reprint permission requests for Conference Approved Literature. As immediate supervisor of the Magazine Editor, I am also part of the monthly review process for *The Forum* magazine. In addition, I respond to between 150-200 correspondences a month from the fellowship and others regarding Al-Anon literature. I'm never bored, and my hands are never idle.”



2019 Calendar Quotations

For the last six years, the WSO has provided CAL quotations that could be used by service arms in fundraising calendars without them having to seek written permission. In March, the WSO posted 20 quotations for use in 2019 calendars on the Announcements community of AFG Connects. If service arms submit reprint permission requests for use in calendars, they will be asked to select from the 20 quotations instead.

Hope & Understanding for Parents & Grandparents (P-94)

Translation of this new pamphlet was completed in time for it to be introduced at the Conference in English, French and Spanish. The pamphlet will be available to the fellowship in May for \$.75.

Intimacy Book

In January, the Titling Committee selected the title *Intimacy in Alcoholic Relationships: A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Stories* (B-33). This 144-page book will be introduced in English at the Al-Anon International Convention in July for \$11.00 each. French and Spanish translations are expected to be ready for shipping by February 2019.

One Day at a Time in Al-Anon 50th Anniversary (B6-50)

We are celebrating this classic book's 50 years with a special anniversary cover, ribbon and commemorative bookplate that will be available (in English, French and Spanish for \$15.00 each) at the International Convention in July. The text of the book remains the same. Any books remaining after the Convention will be sold while supplies last.

Forum Coordinators

In January, WSO Staff began posting a newly-revamped *Forum Sales Report* on a monthly rather than quarterly basis, on the *Forum Coordinator* community of AFG Connects. A revised *Area Forum Coordinators Guideline* (G-32) will replace the current one on the website and AFG Connects once it is designed.

Insights

Cross-departmental collaboration allows the Staff to access the best and most appropriate information, and is truly in keeping with the slogan, "Together We Can Make It," as well as the Board Mission Statement, "Anticipate the future and Al-Anon's place in it and ensure that the necessary resources are available."

Public Outreach—Media & Group Records

Pat Q. • Associate Director—Public Outreach Media & Group Records

The Nielsen TV Rating Service recently announced that the Al-Anon TV public service announcements in the US earned a Top Five Percent Award for 2017. The award recognizes nonprofit organizations that had the most PSA broadcasts during the year. The Al-Anon PSAs appeared 51,000 times for an estimated audience of 325,000,000 at an estimated value of \$7,000,000. The radio PSAs played 65,000 times to an estimated audience of 338,000,000 for an estimated value of \$4,000,000.

The easiest way for members to place Al-Anon PSAs with local TV or radio stations is to play the PSA for a station representative. Going to al-anon.org on a smart phone, tablet or laptop and scrolling to the Media Kit will take you to the PSAs. Showing the PSA and sharing a little of your personal story as a member of the station's audience will let the station representative know how they can help their community by broadcasting Al-Anon public service announcements.

All a Public Outreach Volunteer needs to do is send the WSO the name of the station, along with the name and phone number of the representative at the station who expressed an interest in playing the Al-Anon PSA. The WSO will arrange for an electronic delivery to the station at no charge.

The fellowship throughout the US and Canada continues to demonstrate a willingness to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery. Social media likes and shares, flyers in public places, posters on varying modes of transportation, billboards, reader boards, copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazine, PSAs in movie theaters and maintenance for all the service arm websites show how far members are willing to go to help carry the message. All these messages invite people to visit the new WSO website and to attend convenient meetings in person and online.

During January, the WSO received advance notice about a syndicated newspaper column, "Dear Abby," that recommended Al-Anon. In April, the same syndicated column notified the WSO about an upcoming recommendation for Alateen. The Alateen item appeared on April 12th. The WSO notifies the fellowship about national media events when it learns about them in advance, so the groups can respond when newcomers explain how they found out about their meeting.

Public Outreach messages, including PSAs, social media posts, the WSO website and all service arm websites throughout the fellowship are not the only important tools for welcoming families and friends of alcoholics to Al-Anon. They might not even be the most important tools.

The most important tool for all newcomers is the Al-Anon group. The purpose of all Public Outreach messages is to help people get to a meeting. When suffering families and friends of alcoholics reach out for help, it is absolutely critical that they can find a meeting the first place they look.

When a group changes their meeting day, meeting time or meeting location, it is so important for them to notify their Area Group Records Coordinator—if possible, before the change occurs.

Many members pay the most attention to updating the local printed meeting list, which lets people know where all the meetings are in their community. But before newcomers can receive a printed schedule, they usually need to attend at least one or two meetings so a member can hand them a copy.

The Group Records Department's efforts to encourage Areas to use the al-anon.org meeting search tool has gained momentum the last few months. Some Coordinators pointed out the benefits of listing uniform meeting information on all Al-Anon websites, and the reduction of the Area Group Record Coordinators' workload.

The WSO posted frequently asked questions about the Group Records online forms to clarify the new process. The answers can be found on the Area Group Records Coordinator community in AFG Connects.

The new "Report a Problem" feature, which was added to the WSO meeting search 2.0, is generating an average of 30 reports a week. The WSO temporarily places a group in "Reported not Meeting" status and removes the meeting information from the meeting search and WSO toll-free meeting line until the group can verify the status of the meeting.

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there. And Let It Begin with Me.

Public Outreach—Professionals

Claire R. • Associate Director—Public Outreach Professionals (and Archives)

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism (AFA) magazine

Congratulations to the members, groups and service arms participating in the AFA magazine Outreach project. The WSO shipped 208,050 copies of the AFA 2018 second printing magazines to the fellowship. This total, combined with AFA 2018 first printing copies (192,275), is a record-breaker. For the first time since its inception in 2006, a total of 400,325 copies of our Outreach magazine were ordered.

The new AFA 2019 cover again features the purpose of the magazine (Help and Hope for Families and Friends of Alcoholics) in the masthead, the title and year of the magazine along with an invitation to readers to take the magazine with them at no cost.

General information about AFA 2019, tear-off tab flyers and order forms for the first printing were sent to Public Outreach Coordinators in time for spring Assemblies. The deadline for placing orders was July 11th, 2018, 5 pm ET. The deadline was extended to allow time for members to place orders after they returned from Al-Anon's International Convention or their respective US Fourth of July and Canada Day holiday vacations.



Insights

WSO Staff efforts ensure publications align with service arm timelines in addition to WSO print and online publication schedules. These enable greater awareness and participation in the AFA magazine Outreach project, a vital tool in our effort to increase visibility and awareness of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Cooperation with Professionals

Goodwill toward Al-Anon increases, along with Al-Anon's ability to attract families of alcoholics, when Al-Anon cooperates with outside entities. The WSO continues to participate in events sponsored by national nonprofit organizations and federal government agencies while retaining Al-Anon's identity as a separate, unaffiliated organization. One of these events is the Children of Addiction Week in February, which is sponsored by the National Association for Children of Addiction. During this week, Staff posted young and adult children memes on WSO social media pages.

Staff also attended the US Government's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Council and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Recovery Month Planning Partners meetings in Rockville, Maryland. This gives Al-Anon as a whole the opportunity to maintain our presence and build a network of new contacts. An added benefit is that these meetings give the WSO the opportunity to have lunch with the A.A. General Service Office's Cooperating with the Professional Community (CPC) Coordinator.

An Al-Anon information table was set up at the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence's (NCADD's) Conference of Affiliates in Alexandria, Virginia. Al-Anon's Staff attendance provided an opportunity to network with representatives from 35 NCADD affiliates across the US and to attend conference workshop sessions, which feature effective use of social media.

Plans for the 2018 International Convention also included Outreach to professionals. A workshop featuring a speaker panel of three who are "Al-Anon friendly" is scheduled for Friday, July 5th, 2018.

Insights

It is essential that we continue to cooperate with entities outside of our fellowship to maintain and increase recognition of our name and awareness of our program.

ARCHIVES

The WSO Archivist continues to digitize documents and photos and store many of these materials "in the cloud."

October 2018 marks the 30th anniversary of Cofounder Lois W.'s death. Although only available in English, the December/January 1988-89 Memorial issue of the *Inside Al-Anon* newsletter was provided to the Area Archives Coordinators on their AFG Connects community.



Insights

Digitizing archival materials greatly improves and increases the capacity to preserve Al-Anon's history for present and future generations.

Following the staff updates, Conference members had the following questions and comments:

- Would the WSO delist a meeting if they had specific guidelines like the ones California South and Tennessee created? When I learned about the delist discussion, our Area talked about it and asked WSO Staff about delisting a new meeting. Our Area said we would do it and now it appears the WSO process has changed. *Policy that guides the Office does not allow us to delist a meeting. Areas that have a policy for delisting and directions for relisting can do that. We adhere to the "Policy Digest" and it does not have a policy to delist. We will not register a group initially that we understand will not adhere to the Traditions.*
- How many responses did we receive to the Membership Survey? *The ballpark is about 13,000. The last one was 8,500.*
- How do International Representatives attend the WSC—is it by invitation, request? *We invite the General Service Offices (GSOs) to send one Representative to observe our Conference. If a GSO sends a Representative, it pays the cost.*
- We understand there are issues with the English 2018-2021 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). Will people who purchased one receive a replacement when the issues are resolved? *There were issues in the first version of the Service Manual. We will publish a new version in English and a first version of French and Spanish. For a printed copy, until we run out of inventory and purchase new, we will provide members with page changes, as we have done in the past. We are managing inventory better than in the past. When we run out, the next printed version will have a new version number and the corrections. Everyone will have the ability to print out page changes and incorporate them so as not to have to buy a new Manual.*
- I love the Annual Report enthusiasm.
- I noticed that the wording "families and friends of alcoholics" is again being used instead of "families and friends of problem drinkers." When and why did that change? *A year and a half ago the Board changed the tagline back to "families and friends of alcoholics" because the words it uses are Google searchable. The word "alcoholic" is more likely to find you information on Al-Anon.*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (ECRPM)

Jeffrey K. • ECRPM Chairperson

Background:

In 1994, the World Service Conference (WSC) passed Motion #12, which empowered the Board of Trustees to purchase property for Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. This purchase of real property was for a trial period of 15 years and contingent upon several conditions.

In 2011 the World Service Conference passed Motion #6, which ended the 15-year trial period and empowered the Board of Trustees to continue to own the current or subsequent property in the name of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. The ownership of property is contingent upon the conditions enumerated in Motion #6.

One condition set forth in the 1994 Motion #12 and the 2011 Motion #6 was that the Board of Trustees “establish a separate Executive Committee for Real Property Management in order to ensure that the management of the real property be done in a prudent manner and not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the spiritual parts of the program, i.e., service to the groups, individuals, or Al-Anon as a whole.”

To fulfill that condition, a motion to create the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) was approved by the WSC in 1995. The By-Laws were amended in January 2012 to include the Executive Committee for Real Property Management and the Amendment was presented before the 2012 Conference. The separate Executive Committee was preferred for its simplicity and the fact that it would cut down on the need to file additional forms annually with the Internal Revenue Service. This Committee was established to oversee the management of real property in order to separate property maintenance and management from the day-to-day operation of the Al-Anon fellowship. The Committee consists of three At-Large Al-Anon members, the Chairperson of the Finance Committee and the Director of Finance and Operations. The Committee first met June 15th, 1996 and has met twice a year since then.

Another condition contained in the motions to purchase real property was that the Board of Trustees would “report triennially as to the financial feasibility of the ownership of real property, the compliance with the spirit and letter of this resolution, and the negative impact, if any, that the purchase of property has had on the fellowship as a whole.”

The Board of Trustees reports the following:

1. Has ownership of property been financially feasible?

The Board of Trustees reports that ownership of property has been a very good step financially. Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. received tax-exempt financing and thus a lower rate of interest due to non-profit status.

A savings of approximately \$446,000 this year has been

realized by owning property vs. leasing it in Virginia. Now that the mortgage is paid in full, the gap between ownership and leasing continues to widen as costs of ownership decrease and costs of leasing increase.*

2. Are we complying with the spirit and letter of the resolution?

The Board of Trustees concerns itself with ownership of real property to the extent that it ensures that the ownership of real property is financially feasible and that the spirit and intent of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are maintained. The Board affirms that with the management of the property being the business of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management, and as a demonstration of mutual respect, the property management continues to be kept separate from the primary spiritual aim of Al-Anon Family Groups. The Executive Director is able to focus entirely on assisting the groups in the primary spiritual aim of Al-Anon—helping families and friends of alcoholics. The need for Staff to be concerned with the frequent search for office space and to deal with the day-in and day-out maintenance of commercial property has been eliminated.

3. Has there been any negative impact on the fellowship as a whole?

After reviewing the last 21 years of real property ownership, the Board of Trustees has no negative impact to report. In 2004, a small minority of groups attempted to tie the Alateen requirements established by the Board of Trustees to the ownership of property. The Board of Trustees clarified that the only assets it was protecting were our name and safety of our children. The ECRPM is a Committee separate from all other committees. It operates separately from the work and business of the World Service Office (WSO), allowing the WSO to focus on the primary spiritual aim of the fellowship. This real separation is what allows ownership of property to function as well as it does.

*Please see Budget line item “Occupancy” for the actual yearly costs of ownership.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION UPDATE

Day of Connecting

Judy K. • Trustee, Chairperson

The 2018 International Al-Anon Convention begins July 6, 2018. The day before the Convention begins, a “Day of Connecting” (DOC) will take place; the purpose of this DOC is to celebrate recovery through service and leadership. There will be exciting workshops, panel discussions and speakers. Al-Anon members from all parts of our Structure will be there.

During the DOC presentation, the emcee called out the letters of “Day of Connecting,” starting with “D.” Delegates jumped out of their seats when they heard their Area called and came forward quickly, “connecting” from different locations around the room. A Task Force member handed the Delegate his/her appropriate sign with a letter on it, starting with “D” for Day. The Delegate read the title and a brief description, then stood in front to begin the spelling of “Day of Connecting.” The last letter, “G,” provided a summary statement of what the DOC is—a day featuring our third Legacy: Service.

PRESENTATIONS

- ♦ Al-Anon’s International Reach—Our Worldwide Fellowship
- ♦ Telephone Book or the Internet—What’s Your Digital Age? Al-Anon on Social Media
- ♦ Know Your WSO—Service IS Its Middle Name!
- ♦ Al-Anon’s Financial Stewardship—Gratitude in Action

DISCUSSION MEETINGS

- ♦ Dusty Bookshelves Full of CAL—Going beyond the Daily Readers
- ♦ Tag—You’re It! Now What? —Becoming the Leader Others Know You Can Be
- ♦ Attitudes—Are Mine Worth Catching? The Twelve Traditions
- ♦ The Three Ts of Public Outreach—Tips, Tools, and Techniques—Successful Public Outreach

PANELS

- ♦ Are They Still the Best-Kept Secret? Living the Twelve Concepts of Service
- ♦ Young Members Wanted—Alateen Opportunities
- ♦ Big “P” or Little “p”—Big “T” or Little “t” (Policies and Traditions)
- ♦ Face Time—Not What It Used To Be! The Changing Face of Meetings

LEADERSHIP TALKS

Members share their service experience and talk about how serving has affected their personal lives.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Collaborate with someone from another Area in an informal setting about your service role. Grab a chair and share!

At the presentation’s close, the emcee commented, “It will be great when we all come together July 5th for the Day of Connecting in Baltimore. We encourage members worldwide to join our Board,

WSO Staff and Al-Anon/Alateen members from all Areas and structures. Together we can share the many ways we serve our fellowship and inspire each other to grow in leadership and service, our third Legacy.”

Afterward, the emcee announced that there are currently 964 members registered and attendance is limited to 1,500. Conference members were encouraged to go online and register so they could go back to their Areas and help inspire others to get on that train, boat, plane (and maybe bus or van) and head to Baltimore for a “Day of Connecting”!



2018 Al-Anon International

Marsha W. • Director of Programs

Conference members were reminded that the World Service Office (WSO) is counting down the days to the 2018 Convention. It will take place in Baltimore, Maryland, July 6-8, at the Baltimore Convention Center. The WSO will have an app for the Convention that contains all the meeting information on it and other “goodies.” There will be daytime A.A. meetings at the Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel and Al-Anon and Alateen meetings at the Convention Center. Activities will include workshops in French and Spanish. There will also be different types of sessions, including workshops, book studies and speaker meetings. The Convention registrations for this year are ahead of 2013’s by 5.5 percent. To date 3,294 registrations have been received.

Entertainment will include a Friday night “Dutch treat” ice cream social and a Saturday night dance. Friday will also include a Big Meeting with speakers from outside the US and Canada and the Language of Love Parade with costumed participants. The Saturday night Big Meeting will have Al-Anon, Alateen and A.A. speakers. Sunday will include a Spiritual Meeting panel. Big Meetings will have Spanish and French interpretation and closed-captioning.

Book sales will include *One Day at a Time Al-Anon 50th Anniversary* (B6-50), which comes with a commemorative edition bookplate when purchased at the Convention. Copies of the new book, *Intimacy in Alcoholic Relationships—A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Stories* (B-33), and the *Hope & Understanding for Parents & Grandparents* (P-94) pamphlet will also be available. *One Day at a Time Al-Anon 50th Anniversary* and *Hope & Understanding for Parents & Grandparents* are both available in English, Spanish and French.

The WSO is trying new things at this Convention to make it more exciting than ever!

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Karen W-P. • Trustee, Chairperson | Rosie M. • Trustee, Co-Chairperson | Debbie G. • Chairperson of the Board
Kerri K. • Associate Director—International | Marsha W. • Director of Programs | Vali F. • Executive Director

The presentation began with an overview of the International Coordination Committee (ICC) by the Chairperson. “The ICC is a work group and advisory Committee that makes recommendations to the Board and participates in the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM). It reviews Al-Anon activities and policies as they relate to individual groups and service arms outside the World Service Conference (WSC) Structure. As an advisory Committee, it makes recommendations to the Board about issues that affect Al-Anon worldwide, such as translation and reprint policies, visits to evolving structures and the IAGSM, and activities and policies as they relate to individual groups and service arms outside the World Service Conference (WSC) Structure.”

Supporting Our Groups and Global Structures: The Co-Chairperson explained, “We use the term ‘structure’ frequently when working with other countries. A structure is a network of groups and local service arms that is responsible for organizing Al-Anon services. Structures usually have permission to reprint Conference Approved Literature. They have paid and volunteer staff and an elected Board of Al-Anon members. The ICC supports the growth of the structures worldwide by considering first-time requests for translation and reprint permission, providing input on international site visits and coordinating and participating in international service meetings.

“Part of the ongoing work of the ICC is planning and attending the 2018 IAGSM and international trips by invitation from other structures.”

International Service Meetings: The Chairperson continued, “The ICC coordinates the IAGSM. The IAGSM is a biennial service meeting for national structures. The Delegates provide input about their service structures. Two members of the ICC represent the WSO as Delegates. The purpose of the IAGSM is to share the experiences of Al-Anon national services around the world through Al-Anon’s Delegates. It encourages growth and sound service structures while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of Al-Anon Traditions. It also represents the expression of the worldwide group conscience. Ultimately, this supports the primary purpose of Al-Anon as a whole: to seek the best way to carry the Al-Anon message of recovery to families and friends of alcoholics amid cultural and language differences.

“The ICC plans the agenda for the IAGSM, which will include discussions about identifying barriers to Public Outreach and a visit to the World Service Office (WSO).

Two international trips are planned for 2018. The Chairperson of the Board and Associate Director—International will meet with the evolving Structure in Greece. The Executive Director and Director of Programs will travel to Norway, which is experiencing significant turnover in their Structure. Sweden and Finland were notified of the visit to determine if there is an opportunity for WSO Staff to visit these Structures as well. The WSO hopes that by sending Staff to visit Norway and sharing experience, strength and hope, the trip will help connect it to other nearby structures.”

Zonal Meetings: These meetings are structured and organized service meetings that are less formal than the IAGSM. Attendance is open for national and evolving structures. Zonal meetings provide an opportunity for service structures and the WSO to meet face-to-face, hear reports, exchange information and strengthen mutual connections. They are hosted and attended by structures in Central America, Europe and South America.

There are several places to learn more about the work of the ICC, the IAGSM and Zonal meetings:

- The *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), where the descriptive text of Concept Eleven details the primary responsibilities of the ICC.
- al-anon.org includes an International page under the Members menu that has archives of the *IAGSM Summaries* dating to the first meeting in 1980.
- World Service Conference Summaries* provide reports of international trips, the IAGSM and Zonal Meetings.

The Chairperson concluded by sharing her experience as Chairperson of the ICC; she said, “It has been my pleasure to serve on the ICC. When I was new to the Board, I didn’t really comprehend the nature of the work this Committee does. I have learned so much about the growth of our international community and our connection to these groups, and I have come to understand what we mean by worldwide Al-Anon. I have experienced what other structures have to teach us, as well as how we provide some leadership to those emerging structures. This Committee work has helped expand my personal program by expanding my understanding of worldwide Al-Anon. I have felt a deep spiritual connection to the people on this Committee. I will miss each of you.”

Zonal Meetings

The European Zonal Meeting (EZM), the Ibero-American Zonal Meeting and the Central American Zonal Meetings are held every other year in years opposite the IAGSM.

Central American Zonal Meeting

Judy K. • Trustee | Kerri K. • Associate Director—International

The meeting took place in May of 2017 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The theme was taken from the pages of our Conference Approved Literature, *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31).

“Our journey began at a hotel on the outskirts of town where we met up with the rest of our group. From there we rode a bus into the city. The meeting included four national Structures—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua—and two evolving Structures: Honduras and Panama. Mexico was present as a special guest since they are not part of this Zone. The WSO Staff were guests there as well. As guests, we led presentations and participated in discussions, but we did not participate in the business meeting.

“Over the two days of the meeting, Delegates from each Structure made presentations that included a history of Al-Anon in their Structures, weaknesses and achievements since the last meeting, upcoming and proposed Public Outreach efforts within each Structure and an overview of their Structures.

“Our agenda also included a tour of the office in Guatemala. There were a number of key takeaways:

- The importance of affordable Conference Approved Literature (CAL) cannot be overstated. For many members abroad, it serves as a bridge between meetings. For example, the cost for *Paths to Recovery* (B-24) is about \$33. By comparison, a dinner at a hotel costs \$10 including tip.

This highlighted a challenge many members face: the lack of affordability of literature.

- Costa Rica and Guatemala are the most stable Structures in this region. Together, they provide leadership and fiscal planning. They share valuable experience from their Boards, office workers and service arms.
- Honduras reported that it has a goal of opening a General Service Office (GSO) with a part-time service worker.
- Every Structure in this Zone reported on the activity of their Public Outreach Committee's efforts within their Structure. These included distribution of copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* (AFA), Outreach to radio and TV outlets, Cooperating with the Professional Community and A.A. and using social media to reach new members.
- There was a business meeting on the second day; a host Structure for the next meeting was elected. The next meeting will be held in El Salvador in 2019. The theme will be "Responsibility with Love—Structures without Borders."

The Associate Director—International reported that many members in this part of the world live amidst violence and poverty. More than one of the Structures that attended the Zonal Meeting reported that it is limited to daytime meetings because of concerns about the safety of the members. They try to focus on how to make Al-Anon available under these conditions. They look back on where they have been and try to make plans for their future.

Ibero-American Zonal Meeting

Joan S. • Trustee | Kerri K. • Associate Director—International

The Ibero-American Zonal meeting was held in October 2017 in Quito, Ecuador. This was a two-day meeting hosted by the Ecuador GSO (Corporación Grupos de Familia Al-Anon Ecuador [OSG]) that is composed of employees and volunteers. The theme of the meeting was "United, We Are More." Twelve Delegates represented Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the WSO. Each Structure at this meeting delivered a presentation on one or more of the Concepts of Service and how it works in his/her Structure.

During breaks and mealtimes, there were opportunities for fellowship and informal sharing. There was also time on the agenda for the members to ask questions of the World Service Office (WSO).

"Our assignment was Concept Six and 'What Trustees Do and Do Not Do.' It was our goal to share what the roles and responsibilities of the Board are with the Delegates at the Zonal meeting. The Board members are the planners, not the doers. We shared how Concept Six came to be and shared that the 'hands on' responsibilities are those of the Executive Committee and the WSO Staff. The role of the Board is leadership and oversight of the activities of the WSO. We do this by actively using all of the Twelve Concepts of Service. It is also the role of the Board to think globally when it comes to planning Al-Anon's future and fulfilling the directives of the Conference.

"On a personal note, I was given another opportunity for growth and acceptance. I learned the value of being in an uncomfortable setting. I cannot speak or understand Spanish, but I was representing Al-Anon and needed to be an active participant. We had wonderful interpreters during all of the business sessions. At first it was a struggle to listen to a voice in the headphones while watching others speak. Then from inflection, tone and body language, I start-

ed to pick up on the challenges and solutions that other countries are finding in our Concepts of Service. Gradually we became very aware that the interpreters were really understanding the power of Al-Anon in translation. I think that the common bond of the recovery aspect of the fellowship might be even stronger in the service part of my recovery. Bringing more global thinking into my service as a Trustee will become more important after this service experience."

Both interpreters and translation impact our international services. To help Conference members understand, the Associate Director—International clarified that, "We generally use the term 'translation' for printed products and their translation, and when we are talking about simultaneous language translation, we call it 'interpreting.'"

"The need for simultaneous interpreters at the upcoming IAGSM was raised at this meeting and also at the Central American Zonal meeting last May. As a result, the topic was taken to the International Coordination Committee (ICC) for discussion and will be placed as a topic on the agenda for the IAGSM business meeting. It is hoped that the WSO members will see how suggestions come from Zonal meetings to the IAGSM, and from there, make their way to the ICC, to the Board, and the Conference and back. It is a closed loop.

"The limited permission to sell literature policy was discussed as well. Some Structures provided the number of groups, the number of contributing members and the costs and restrictions of printing literature in their own Structures. This aided the WSO in understanding the areas of potential opportunity and conflict. Although the WSO can provide guidance and legal authority, it cannot enforce cooperation between structures or override their autonomy.

"Throughout the weekend there were many opportunities for informal sharing. Our Host Committee invited local members to attend our final dinner. This was a special time for us to meet many of the members and for them to meet visitors from the WSO. The Host Committee planned an educational and entertaining after-dinner program that showcased many ritual dances by the indigenous tribes of Ecuador."

The Associate Director—International concluded the presentation by saying, "Although some problems are universal, not all solutions are. Al-Anon's international viability depends on its adaptability."

European Zonal Meeting

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

Marsha W. • Director of Programs

The Chairperson of the Board began the presentation: "The Director of Programs and I had the privilege of attending the 2017 European Zonal Meeting (EZM) in Essen, Germany in August 2017. We were met at the airport by a former Chairperson of the Board of the German GSO. Our drive from Dusseldorf to Essen was scenic, moving through the beautiful German hillside, and as with any time we have the opportunity to 'get in the car,' the conversations were filled with the sharing of current service events within our Structures, laughter and the knowledge that new friends were awaiting our arrival.

"The European structures are larger and have been in place longer than most other international structures. They are similar to ours.

"The meeting setting was on the edge of the beautiful village of Essen, Germany, with lodging on the campus of a Catholic monastery. The building and grounds offered a simple and quaint setting for our weekend together. All meals were together; this was an

added plus for continued conversations and opportunities to learn more about each other on a personal level.

"The EZM acts as a forum for sharing experience of mutual support across established structures within Europe while giving support to evolving structures. The EZM is not a decision-making body. The theme for this year's EZM was 'Discovering Choices.'

"In order to define a clear purpose for this Zonal meeting, the structures within the EZM have developed their own mission and vision statements:

- The mission is: 'to improve cooperation between European structures in order to support the growth of Al-Anon and Alateen in Europe.'
- The vision statement is 'that every European country evolves to have a GSO and attend the IAGSM.'

"Fifteen Structures were in attendance, with the majority sending two representatives: Germany (who also served as the host), the Netherlands, Poland, Finland, France, Russia, Switzerland, Austria, United Kingdom & Eire, Slovenia, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium/Flemish-speaking, Belgium/French-speaking and Spain. While these Structures are among some of the oldest and largest Structures within our international community, it is important to remember that these Representatives are considered pioneers. Each looks to the others for solutions and ways to keep moving forward—there is no standing still!

"The purpose for World Service Office (WSO) participation at the EZM is to share the experience of the WSO as a clearinghouse as well as the workings of the Board of Trustees. Three separate question-and-answer sessions that would last a total of four hours were set aside on the weekend agenda. Each Structure came prepared with questions related to issues they were experiencing within their own Structures. Most of these questions were directed to the experience of the WSO and Board of Trustees. Many were related to protection of anonymity on the internet, strengthening Alateen, and retaining experienced service leaders while encouraging new members to become involved. Other questions centered on the work of our Board of Trustees (e.g., the Board's experience in establishing an Audit Committee), Delegate participation at the WSC and the transparency in our financials. They also requested information related to the 2016 and 2017 WSC Finance Committee presentations (they read our *World Service Conference Summary* [P-46]), the application of spiritual principles within the revised 'Financial Matters' section of the 'Policy Digest,' rotation of leadership, how Board meeting agenda topics are prioritized and how to encourage younger members to become and remain involved in service.

"For me, the opportunity to participate in the EZM was a privilege; I was able to continually observe firsthand how saying 'yes' to service literally changes lives. I had met more than half of the attendees at previous meetings, all of whom were first-year Delegates who arrived at the IAGSM with the same sense of awe and plethora of questions that most of us arrive with at our first WSC. What I took away from being in the presence of these Delegates one last time was the absolute certainty that the EZM and IAGSM and the work of the WSO are serving their purpose. Those Delegates are now viewed as the leaders not only within their own Structures but within Europe itself. They are confident, knowledgeable, humble trusted servants willing to share what has been so freely given to them."

The Director of Programs related her impressions: "Many structures that attend, regardless of size, follow the WSO model closely. They use the principles found in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Tradi-

tions and the Twelve Concepts of Service as a guide to assist in solving service-related problems. For example, during the topic of 'Modern Communication,' Denmark's Representative advised that studies show that the younger generation primarily uses social media to find information. Applying Concept Eleven as a guide and using the principles found there, Denmark formed a Task Force to ensure relevancy. On the topic of anonymity, it was shared that before a national Public Outreach campaign, the UK & Eire did articles about how the principles of anonymity help the membership understand how to share the Al-Anon message on the public level. As a result, Alateen members participated in a TV program that used the London Zoo as its location. The children who appeared on the program shared their message of hope wearing identical tops and berets, with their faces painted as animals. That way they could be filmed without being recognized or portrayed as victims. This was successful, and they were able to share the benefits of Alateen in a creative way.

"The Seventh Tradition is always a topic. All Structures found that transparency is necessary to ensure that members in their respective countries feel they can ask questions. It was shared that all members need to be informed and have an understanding of why money is needed and how the money is spent. There was concern that members would continue to put coins in the basket. We shared how the Director of Finance and Operations was not an Al-Anon member, which was a conscious decision made by our pioneers. It was also explained that we have an Audit Committee to ensure that checks and balances are met within our Structure.

"It was previously shared that the mission of the EZM is to improve cooperation between structures in Europe. This was demonstrated by the presence of a Representative from Russia. She was amazed at the creativity of the Public Outreach projects. She explained that, in her country, some of the state agencies ask for a signature of an authorized person in the organization before allowing display of a poster. In applying the principle of anonymity within their Structure, Russian Areas are selective with regards to whom they approach when doing Public Outreach.

"During our three days of conversation, we learned much from each other. I believe we also walked away with a deeper understanding of how we can pass along the message of hope.

"The theme for the next EZM meeting will be 'Embracing Changes,' and Slovenia will be the host country. This is significant, since this will be their first time hosting. Like Together Empowering Al-Anon Members (TEAM) events and the Road Trip, it is an opportunity for the host country to corral the energy and spirit of their members."

Conference members had the following questions and comments:

- I was upset with the Board for making trips because I didn't understand the importance of what we do internationally. My Area doesn't really understand what we are doing in other countries. Will we have access to some of the presentation? If so, I can show my Area what we are doing and how.
Yes, the presentation will be posted.
- How is Alateen doing in different structures?
They want more Alateen members and Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIASs). Something new we heard from Panama was that, in some Areas, Alateen is not supported by parents in Al-Anon. They don't encourage young people to attend Alateen meetings. A topic on the agenda was "How do we, as Al-Anon members, create a supportive environment for our teens to attend Alateen?"

- I remember my first IAGSM. Zonal meetings are a new phenomenon and a new need. Please explain how they are helping local Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) structures. I understand it is different.

Zonal meetings take place on opposite years of the IAGSM. Only General Service Offices can send Delegates to attend the IAGSM. With Zonal meetings, they can attend along with countries that only currently have an AIS or evolving structures. It is helpful for evolving structures that don't have much experience, money or resources. They can attend and see how it works at the Al-Anon business level.

- Assuming you met members, how did they receive you and did you meet any Alateens?

We did not meet Alateens but we had an incredible connection with local members. We were received very warmly. Hospitality is so important. People who seemed to speak no English in the beginning were "trying it out on us" by the end.

In many countries, Alateen is struggling with the same issue: trying to make its safety guidelines fit with country laws.

- Some World Service Delegates speak Spanish. Is there an opportunity to be involved when the IAGSM Delegates come to Virginia Beach?

The IAGSM is a closed meeting, just like the World Service Conference.

The WSO sends two Delegates to represent our Structure at the IAGSM. One is the Chairperson of the Board and the other is a Board member either from the US or Canada, depending on the nationality of the Chairperson of the Board.



OPEN BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

Conference members had the opportunity to hear what the Board receives every month in a report from the Finance Committee. The Board reviewed literature sales, contributions, the Reserve Fund, intangibles (trademark costs), unearned income (World Service Conference and Convention income) and the statement of financial position.

With advances in technology, communications have advanced. In keeping with the Board's Vision and Mission to anticipate the future, the Board began a discussion about virtual Board meetings. They considered the questions below:

As technology becomes more affordable, and travel and accommodations become more expensive, should the Board of Trustees replace one or more face-to-face Board meetings with a virtual experience?

A typical Board meeting lasts four or five days. Would holding one or more virtually during the year be practical, efficient and in accordance with our principles?

Board members responded as follows:

- Unity is created when meetings are held using web conferencing, as Board members can see and speak with each other. Web conferencing could accommodate Board members with challenging schedules. The Board could also consider shortening the week to one day. By doing this, it would continue to meet its responsibilities with a unified voice. There was, however, concern about unity; the Board's voice can only reach the membership when its members work together.
- Unity occurs when we meet face-to-face. It gives us, the Board members, the chance to observe the strengths and challenges we have with technology, or talents we would otherwise miss the opportunity to learn about. Meeting together can strengthen us as a group. The Board cannot do all things virtually.
- New Trustees interact with the Staff and learn where things are in the World Service Office. Strategically, there was concern about that; that type of interaction cannot be accomplished virtually.
- During face-to-face Board meetings, new Trustees can get individual assistance that is not available virtually. With Tradition Two, they feel the presence of a Higher Power and spiritual connectedness. There was concern that the Board only meets with the Staff four times a year. Would it be a positive to have less interaction with the Staff?
- The Board members are pushed for time together to work on projects; could virtual meetings allow them to get the work done outside of Board meetings?
- It makes for efficiency and cuts time in Board meetings. The Audit Committee meets virtually. In doing so, the Committee practices financial prudence because they are not flying or paying for hotels and meals. However, there were concerns

about Tradition Eleven and anonymity and confidentiality. What if the face-to-face Board meeting was shortened to one or two days on a trial basis instead of four to five, and the rest was done virtually?

- Much of the Board's meeting is spent on routine matters. Those could be done virtually; emailing reports and feedback before the meeting would save time. However, the spiritual connection Board members get while they sit together in a meeting room is important.
 - Meeting in person fosters trust in individuals, and that helps in the Board room. Board members expressed their concerns regarding Tradition Seven: possibly feeling guilty about paying airfare on a trip that would only last a day or two.
 - One comment was: "I like progress, but I don't like change. Are there studies on boards that meet virtually? We may have access to different boards and scenarios...The possibility of change is there."
 - The conversation struck one member as an issue that could be viewed with a broader lens. The Board meets quarterly so, keeping that in mind, what would changing to some virtual meetings do? Is there room for other ideas besides virtual meetings? It is hard to participate in web conferencing for five days.
- The member also noted that a large portion of the week's costs comes from hotel and meals, not airfare: Cutting down to two days would help save money.
- Would it affect unity?
 - An American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) article centered on the idea of flexibility and bringing younger people who work full-time onto the Board.
 - Of the last four web conferencing meetings one member had attended, only one had worked. He saw "a lot of connectivity issues."
 - Legal issues and the State of New York's incorporation need to be looked into. Do they allow virtual meetings? We must look at the By-Laws as well, to see if they comply with legal requirements.

There was consensus to continue the discussion. A Thought Force will be assigned to answer the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions, as well as the following questions: Are there items that can be moved from the Board agenda to accommodate a virtual Board meeting? What are the implications of virtual Board meetings?

OPEN POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

John McL. • Trustee, Policy Committee Chairperson

An Open Policy Committee meeting was held during the Conference so Delegate members could observe the Committee in action.

In 2014, because many Areas were seeking clarification regarding meditation in Al-Anon meetings, Group Services drafted a detailed response. Group Services then brought it to the Policy Committee to determine whether the answer was consistent with Al-Anon's Twelve Traditions. The Policy Committee refined the response to state in part: "Groups spending time during the meeting to meditate is not within the Traditions as doing so could be interpreted as a religious activity, affiliation with an outside entity or an endorsement of a particular practice or style of meditation."

Delegates were also encouraged to engage in principle-based discussions within their respective Areas in keeping with Traditions Three, Four and Five. The World Service Office (WSO) Staff have continued to receive requests for clarification of Al-Anon's policy on meditation during meetings. They have requested guidance from the Policy Committee. Since the Policy Committee has not held a detailed discussion of this subject, and many of our Legacies are potentially implicated by the practice, this subject was chosen by the Policy Committee as a topic for the 2018 Open Policy Meeting.

The discussion focused on whether a group violates the Traditions (Traditions One, Three, Five or Six) when setting aside a period of silent time, as part of the meeting format, to connect to a Higher Power.

The goal was to discuss meditation at meetings in light of the Legacies. It considered the following:

- Is holding a period of meditation as part of the meeting format an appropriate exercise of group autonomy through its group conscience (Traditions Two and Four and Concept Five)? Is it an issue for the Policy Committee

to decide whether the WSO should provide guidance on this issue (Tradition Two and Warranty Five)? Should there be a statement on this issue in the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27)?

- Tradition Two: Is meditation during a meeting an appropriate exercise of the group conscience?
- Tradition Three: Is meditation, as part of a group format, an improper affiliation with an outside entity or religious activity?
- Tradition Four: Is meditation, as part of a group format, an appropriate exercise of group autonomy, or does it improperly affect another group or Al-Anon as a whole?
- Tradition Five: Is the practice of a period of meditation, as part of a group format, consistent with our primary purpose to help families of alcoholics? Is it welcoming to the newcomer?
- Tradition Six: Is meditation, as part of a group format, an endorsement of an outside entity or particular practice of meditation?
- Also potentially involved in this discussion are Tradition One, Concept Five, Warranty Five and Step Eleven.

It was the consensus of the Committee members that the issue warrants further discussion and that a Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process is needed.

ROAD TRIP! YOU AND YOUR BOARD CONNECT

Teri M. • Trustee, Work Group Chairperson

The purpose of the Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect event is to take the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee members to one of the 67 Areas to hold a Board meeting. The day after the meeting ends, Board and Executive Committee members meet with other members at the Road Trip! event.

- This event is an opportunity for Trustees and Executive Committee members to share their personal recovery and their current service roles with Area members in an intimate setting. It is also an opportunity for members to learn more about how the World Service Office (WSO) serves the fellowship.

In October 2017, the Road Trip was held in Aurora, Colorado. More than 100 members from Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, Wyoming, Minnesota, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah registered.

The agenda included:

- Personal sharings.
- Examples of Area and international visits.
- Descriptions of Board Committees.
- Roundtable discussions of topics of Area interest.

Comments from the members who attended:

- ♦ “Absolutely one of the most informative sessions I’ve attended.”
- ♦ “I liked meeting the Board, hearing their stories and realizing they are just like us.”
- ♦ “It was a great privilege to see the real people of the Board; usually, Delegates are the only ones that get to meet and interact with them.”
- ♦ “It was great to meet Al-Anon members from all over the

The October 2018 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect will be hosted by Texas East on October 20th in Houston, Texas.

Conference members received the 2019 invitation and request form, which included a list of tentative meeting space needs, to assist the Area in selecting a hotel site. Answers from this form will allow the Planning Committee to more accurately determine which accommodations the event requires. This list will also save the Planning Committee time. It will prevent possible problems regarding the initial selection of a hotel, which must have adequate space and the ability to provide all the necessary accommodations for the event. The Board will take care of the agenda.

Conference members were asked to take the invitation back to their Areas and discuss putting in a bid to host the 2019 Road Trip.

Conference members had the following questions and comments:

- What process is used to select the Area?
The criteria are in the invitation. The bid information is put into a spreadsheet and if an Area meets the criteria, its name is placed in a hat. Three Areas are drawn so that if the first one does not work out, we can go to the second Area drawn, etc.
- We had the privilege of hosting. Last year, we had flyers made up and brought them to the Conference for the Delegates. The Area helped with registration, and the Board took care of the agenda for the day. It was so easy.
- Where have the Road Trips been held in previous years?
Newfoundland/Labrador in 2014; Alberta/Northwest Territories in 2015; Arkansas in 2016; Colorado in 2017.



SELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT)

Richard McC. • Chairperson, Panel 56, Maine

"Fellow members of Al-Anon's World Service Conference, it is my pleasure, as Chairperson of the Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT), to report to you the work of this year's Committee.

"The CCT is composed of World Service Conference Delegates and elects its own Chairperson each year. Résumés for Trustee at Large (TAL) and Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) are submitted to the World Service Office in August of each year. The CCT members review the submitted résumés. They score each résumé based on skill sets, while taking into consideration the current needs of the Board and the ability of each candidate to effectively answer the résumé questions. The CCT members also write comments related to their scoring decisions. When completed, the scoring sheets and accompanying comments are sent to the CCT Chairperson. The CCT Chairperson then consolidates the comments and rankings that were submitted by each CCT member and forwards the compilation of rankings and comments to the World Service Office in early October.

"The Nominating Committee meets during the October Board meeting. Using the information submitted by the CCT and the knowledge it has about current Board needs, the Nominating Committee scores each résumé for Trustee at Large and Executive Committee for Real Property Management. The Nominating Committee then notifies the CCT of the potential candidates the Nominating Committee has selected. CCT members have the opportunity to file an objection to a potential candidate by December. The final selection of the candidates is decided at the January Board meeting. At the World Service Conference, the TAL and ECRPM candidates are given traditional approval by the Conference and may be elected by the Board at the Annual Board meeting following the World Service Conference.

"Last September, we received six TAL résumés. The CCT completed its work on October 4th. No objections were raised.

"Unexpectedly, we received only one ECRPM résumé. The Board of Trustees chose to reopen the invitation to submit résumés and our fellowship responded. So, the CCT processed résumés in September and again in December. In the end, a total of six ECRPM résumés were reviewed. The work was completed on December 22nd. No objections were raised.

"Last year, the CCT had 11 Delegate members. Two of those were not at last year's Conference and had some catching up to do. One member resigned during the year. This year's Committee has eight members assigned.

"Now, let me thank the members of the CCT. Because of our commitment to confidentiality, we can't share our personal struggles with the process (and it can be very difficult). You are truly silent servants. Finally, let me say to everyone who submitted an application, your willingness to serve is inspiring, and for the recommended candidates, we share our heartfelt appreciation."

Nominating Committee and Trustee Affirmation

Marilyn M. • Trustee, Nominating Committee Chairperson

Before beginning the affirmation process, the Chairperson provided some background and explained the purpose of the session.

"Before 1960, Lois and the Directors wanted to link the groups to world services through a Conference. The first trial Conference was held in 1961. Subsequently, the Board of Directors was converted to a Board of Trustees and a plan to add Regional participation on the Board was developed. The first Regional Trustee selection process began.

"In 1986, the Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT) was created as a subcommittee of the Nominating Committee to provide input from Delegates for at Large Trustee candidates.

"Since 2010, following a Conference-approved revision to the Regional Trustee Plan, the Regional Committees on Trustees (RCTs) have provided the Nominating Committee with input for Regional Trustee nominations.

"As the Concepts of Service were developing, so was the Conference's process for affirming nominees to fill vacancies on the Board of Trustees. Although the Board of Trustees is a self-electing Board according to the By-Laws of the Corporation, traditional approval affirms the World Service Conference's (WSC) support of the nominating process and gives the Board the direction and voice of the fellowship. Concept Two states, 'The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.' In Concept Three on page 184 of the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), we read, 'Our entire Al-Anon program rests squarely on the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust Al-Anon and we trust one another. Therefore, we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service. The Right of Decision we offer them in Concept Three is the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively; it also is the symbol of our implicit confidence.' The affirmation by the World Service Conference also exercises Tradition Two: 'For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants—they do not govern.' Today, we will continue our tradition of affirmation of Trustee candidates as well as Board Officers and members of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM).

"Although the Conference gives traditional approval, the Board must legally elect nominees at its Annual Meeting following the Conference. These Trustees will serve Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. as well as the fellowship as a whole."

The Chairperson continued, "The process of electing Trustees, Board Officers, Executive Committee and ECRPM members begins with the acknowledgement that our task is a sacred trust. The spiritual principles of trust and mutual respect are vital. These same spiritual principles must exist between the Al-Anon groups, the Conference and the Committees charged with scoring candidates and selecting nominees. These spiritual principles must be in play for those involved in choosing these trusted servants to carry out their responsibilities effectively. We are all devoted, humble servants who dedicate ourselves to the purpose of serving our treasured Al-Anon program. Each member involved in the nominating process is responsible to the fellowship.

“As Trustees, we are expected to spearhead the formulation of Al-Anon policy and its proper execution. Trustees have the grave responsibility of preserving and prudently managing Al-Anon’s assets. We are also the active guardians of the Twelve Traditions. Our objectives are both spiritual and practical—to carry the message. In order to fulfill that mission, we must understand that the search for good service leaders is ongoing. Concept Nine urges us to recommend members ‘whose dedication, stability, vision and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible assignment’ (*Service Manual*, page 196). Here the Nominating Committee’s responsibility in making selections is to carefully consider the kind and degree of authority, responsibility, leadership, and legal status the Trustees must possess in order for the Board to function effectively in the years to come. By selecting the kinds of spiritual qualities and skills that will be required for an effective Board of Trustees, we will ensure the Board’s capability of future leadership.

“I would like to thank members of the CCT, the members of the RCT, and the Nominating Committee for their hard work throughout the last year. In reviewing and scoring the résumés and responses to the additional question, they have worked conscientiously to rate the candidates and return the information to the WSO in time for the October Board meeting. As a result of the input from the RCT, CCT and Nominating Committee, the Board of Trustees has fielded another fine slate of candidates to serve Al-Anon Family Groups. The Nominating Committee has also proposed an excellent slate of Board Officers. In October 2017, the Nominating Committee found that there were no viable candidates for At-Large member of the ECRPM, and no résumés for Canada Central Regional Trustee. The Nominating Committee recommended candidates, and the Board agreed to solicit résumés for appointments to fill these positions for one year until the regular process was followed and the names were brought to the Conference for traditional approval. The Board will consider these appointments at its Annual Meeting the morning after the conclusion of the Conference. All appointees will have to resubmit their résumés in August 2018 in order to be considered for election for the remaining two years of each term.”

Below are the steps that were followed to bring the nominated candidates forward:

Trustees at Large

Trustee at Large résumés are solicited from the fellowship after the WSC each year. Delegates and Area Chairs receive a letter from the Executive Director in January and in June. Attached to that letter are a list of vacancies, deadlines for submission and copies of all the résumé forms including Trustee, ECRPM, and Executive Committee positions.

Trustee and ECRPM résumés are submitted to the WSO by August 15th of the year prior to possible election. Those résumés and responses to the additional written question are sent to the CCT and Nominating Committees for review and ranking.

The CCT Chairperson tallies the scores and rankings from the CCT members and sends a report to the 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 invite to a January Board lunch for introduction to the Board. At that time, each candidate gives a ten-minute talk about their Al-Anon recovery and service experience before answering interview questions.

Using this information, the Board nominates up to three candidates at its Quarterly Meeting.

Today, you will be asked to give traditional approval to the proposed nominees. All of the nominees receiving traditional approval may be elected Saturday morning at the Board’s Annual Meeting.

Regional Trustees

Candidates for Regional Trustee (RT) are selected by their Areas, who forward their résumés to the WSO via the Delegate.

This year, the Canada East, Canada West, US Northwest, and US South Central Regional Committees on Trustees, consisting of the Regions’ Delegates and three Out-of-Region Delegates who were chosen by lot, independently reviewed résumés and the responses to the additional written question that had been added as part of the process. Canada Central’s RCT did not participate because no résumés were received.

The comments and feedback from Delegates serving on these Regional Committees were submitted to the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee combined their own independent review of the résumés and, upon considering the input from the Regional Committees on Trustees, selected up to two nominees per Region for presentation to the Board.

The nominees elected by the Board met with Regional Trustee candidates over lunch in January prior to nomination, using a process identical to that used for Trustee at Large candidates.

The Board then nominated one candidate each for the Canada East, Canada West, US Northwest and US South Central Regions. If the nominee receives traditional approval, then they may be elected by the Board at its Annual Meeting on Saturday morning, as previously explained.

The Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM)

The Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) was created by an amendment to the By-Laws—Article 12 by the Board in 2012. This Committee, consisting of the AFG Treasurer, the Director of Finance and Operations 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 a three-year term, and the Chairperson is seated at the WSC with voice only in matters related to real property management. The nominating process is the same as that for Trustee at Large, except there is no additional written question and the candidate does not meet with the Trustees in January.

Résumés for the ECRPM are due by August 15th and sent to the CCT and Nominating Committees for review and ranking.

Conference members had the following question about the process:

- We have Regional Trustees and Trustees at Large, so do Regions pick their own Trustee or is it a Trustee at Large going through scoring process?

In a Region, each Area selects one candidate then submits that candidate’s résumé to the Nominating Committee.

By September, the Nominating Committee will have any résumés from all Areas in the Region.

“Today, you are asked to give traditional affirmation for the nominees for Trustee at Large, Regional Trustee and the Board Officers. A candidate must receive a two-thirds majority to be affirmed.

“Each Conference member may 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. 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 candidate selection process begins with prayer. Members of the various committees pray to their Higher Power for guidance before they begin reviewing the candidates’ résumés. By the time a Trustee candidate is brought to the Conference floor at least 30 people—a combination of Trustees and Delegates—have reviewed their résumé. In addition to the reviews, the candidates have been interviewed by the Board of Trustees. The Delegates of the Areas that the candidates are part of have had an opportunity to voice any concerns they have about the candidate. Oftentimes prayer and consideration have brought these candidates to you. We ask that you respect that work, remember the spiritual principle of trust and consider whether or not the candidates are acceptable to serve on the Board of Trustees.”

The voting process was explained, and Conference members were given the opportunity to discuss all candidates. Any nominee present in the room was asked to leave during discussion of his/her candidacy.

The following Trustees and Board Officers were affirmed by the 2018 WSC:

Trustees at Large:

Catherine T., first three-year term

Norman (Norm) W., second three-year term

Regional Trustees:

Thérèse S., Canada East, second three-year term

Gail G., Canada West, first three-year term

Cynthia (Cindy) K., US South Central, remaining two years of a first three-year term

Chéré F., US Northwest, remaining two years of a first three-year term

Board Officers:

Debbie G., Chairperson

Joan S., Vice Chairperson

Joyce B., Treasurer

The Board announced the appointment of the Executive Committee members for 2018-2019:

Paula B., third one-year term, Chairperson

Connie H., third one-year term

J.P. M., third one-year term

Marsha W., WSO Director of Programs

The Board announced the appointment of Thomas B. as the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) Chairperson for 2018-2019.

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE SITE (2019)

Suzanne M. • Associate Director—Conference

The dates selected for the 2019 World Service Conference are Saturday, April 13th through Wednesday, April 17th, 2019. Delegates are scheduled to arrive on Friday, April 12th and depart on Thursday, April 18th. The Conference will be held at the Sheraton Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 3501 Atlantic Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23451.

In searching for a site to hold the Conference, the availability of adequate meeting space, hotel room costs, meal costs, and dates of religious holidays were taken into account.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
APRIL 2019						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

2018 REGIONAL TRUSTEE NOMINATION PROCESS

Marilyn M. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Regional Trustee Oversight Committee | Thérèse S. • Trustee

The Trustees explained the Regional Trustee Selection 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 drawn by lot.

The Out-of-Region Delegates selected:

REGION	VOTING	ALTERNATE(S)
US Northeast	Patti P., Panel 58, Hawaii Kay C., Panel 58, Texas East Nancy W., Panel 57, Utah	Kathy B., Panel 57, Idaho Phil G., Panel 58, Kansas
US North Central	Carol T., Panel 56, North Dakota Angela D., Panel 57, Newfoundland/Labrador Gail F., Panel 57, Arkansas	Madeline S., Panel 57, Wyoming Elaine D., Panel 56, Montana
US Southeast	Stephanie S., Panel 57, New Mexico/El Paso Cindy E., Panel 56, Oregon Janis A., Panel 56, British Columbia/Yukon	Sarah S., Panel 57, Missouri Norma F., Panel 56, Alberta/Northwest Territories
Canada Central	Barb L., Panel 56, Arizona	Janet P., Panel 57, Nevada

RT Training/ RT Caucus

Following the selection of the Out-of-Region Delegates for the RCTs, each RCT caucused to select a Chairperson (from the Region's Delegates) who was willing to serve and perform the duties within the designated time. Also selected was an Alternate Chair-

person from the Region's Delegates, who would assume the duties of the RCT Chairperson, if he or she cannot fulfill his or her duties as required.

The Chairpersons and Alternate Chairpersons for this year's RCTs are:

REGION	CHAIRPERSON	ALTERNATE
US Northeast	Richard McC., Panel 56, Massachusetts	Ann Marie Z., Panel 56, New Jersey
US North Central	Beth K., Panel 57, Iowa	Ann M., Panel 58, Michigan
US Southeast	Leah L., Panel 58, Tennessee	David B., Panel 57, South Carolina
Canada Central	Sue G., Panel 58, Ontario South	Mintie G., Panel 58, Manitoba/Northwest Ontario

AREA RESERVE FUND WORKSHOP

Eloy M. • Panel 56, Colorado

The World Service Office (WSO) has received questions from members related to the establishment, use, balance and investing of Area Reserve Funds. Even with existing resources (*Reserve Fund Guideline* [G-41], *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* [P-24/27], the Legacies), questions remain about the appropriate amount, use and management of finances. There are also concerns about whether an Area's Reserve Fund* is in keeping with the spiritual principles found in the Legacies.

The goal of this workshop is to start a conversation about the need, purpose, use and management of Area Reserve Funds. To begin the conversation, we start by looking at Concept Twelve and Warranty One:

The spiritual foundation for Al-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter...

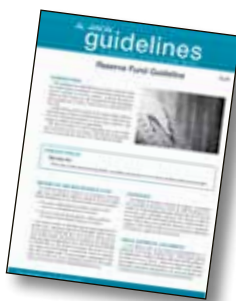
(1) that only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle...

All the Warranties counsel prudence—prudence in personal relations, prudence in money matters and prudence in our contacts with the world around us. For Al-Anon, prudence is a middle ground, a channel between fear on the one hand and recklessness on the other. Prudence creates a climate of harmony, effectiveness and consistent spiritual progress. These Warranties express the wisdom of taking thought for the future based on lessons of the past. They protect us against needless errors and the natural human temptations of wealth, prestige and power.

2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27), page 211

The Purpose of a Reserve Fund

1. To assure continuation of essential services in the event of a substantial decline in income.
2. To cover costs of special projects which could not be financed from normal sources of income. (*Reserve Fund Guideline* [G-41])



Conference members shared their Area purpose of establishing a Reserve Fund and how Reserve Funds are structured in their respective Areas. All have Area Finance Committees.

The Task Force Chairperson continued the discussion, asking Conference members:

- I. In what ways is our money held in reserve?
- II. When does a Reserve Fund become excessive?
- III. Why is having an ample reserve considered a sound financial principle?

Conference members responded:

- We hold it in a savings account, which is more readily available when necessary.
- We hold it in CDs that are staggered over one year.

- We designate an amount for it. It is excessive when it exceeds an average of three year's expenses.
- We keep two-thirds of one year's expenses so if something were to happen, we would have it and would not have to completely disrupt and stop services to Coordinators, etc.

Goal Amount of Reserve Funds:

An Area's financial obligations are undoubtedly larger than that of a District or group and as a result may find it prudent to have a Reserve Fund. The amount of reserve may be dependent upon its budget, the extent of responsibilities it has chosen to cover, for use in the event of an emergency, or to fund special projects.

Reserve Fund Guideline

The Chairperson asked Conference members to consider:

I. Why was your Area Reserve Fund established and when was the last time it was reviewed?

II. What are your Areas' current goals for your Reserve Fund?

Conference members responded:

- Last fall we did a motion to create a Reserve Fund. We had been carrying one year's operating expenses in a checking account. The goal was \$5,000 and \$1,000 a year on a three-year trial.
- Currently we have \$17,000. We are having a vote for six months' operating expenses. We never talked about how we were going to use the Reserve Fund. It will be a conversation at Assembly.
- We sign contracts for Assembly and Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meeting space for three years. So if we need to buy out a contract or pay for projects, we can. We discussed this at Assembly and have fundraisers to replace the money. The Reserve Fund is also used to pay for Assembly expenses.
- We stash money in CDs; we wouldn't know the amount unless we asked. Recently, there was enough money in there to keep the Area going for 15 years.

Distribution of Proceeds:

Excess funds are often used to establish the next convention's "seed" fund. Since accumulating large sums of money is discouraged, in keeping with Al-Anon's Traditions and Concepts, excess funds over and above a seed fund for the next event can be donated to the District, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS), Area, or the WSO.

2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, page 91

I. What are special projects that are not covered by normal budgeting?

II. How can we approach our Areas' financial needs from a spiritual basis, stepping away from fear and/or greed and practicing prudence, gratitude and generosity?

III. In what ways can our Area make better financial choices that are consistent with our primary spiritual purpose?

Conference members responded:

- We purchased translation equipment and AV equipment for Assemblies. We depreciated that and now we are saving to replace it in the future.
- We used the Reserve Fund for our website design and now are updating our teleconferencing equipment.
- We upgraded our voting to use “clickers.”
- Our excess funds are used for Public Outreach. We also made a large contribution to the WSO to cover groups not able to donate. We established a fund to pay expenses for past Delegates to go to our Regional Delegates meetings so that we could show our appreciation for their service.
- We have two signatures on all checks. We conduct an audit twice a year.
- We created competition in Districts—whichever District can make the best use of this money will receive it.
- We doubled our Public Outreach in English and Spanish. We talked about a literature project and bought computers that were needed. We are beginning to offer contributions to the WSO.

Oversight:

Tradition Nine: “Our groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

I. Who has oversight of Reserve Fund?

II. What is the process for withdrawing funds?

Conference members responded:

- We have an Audit Committee consisting of the Chairperson, a past Delegate, a District Representative, a Group Representative, the Treasurer and Secretary. Once they have completed their audit, they establish the ample reserve and make a recommendation at Assembly regarding adjustments.
- Our AWSC would make a recommendation to the Assembly and the General Assembly would vote.
- I don’t believe in perilous wealth but when we start to view our Reserve Fund as a safety net, we lose touch with our Higher Power.
- Having too much is a bigger problem than not having enough.

The Chairperson then opened the floor for comments.

Conference members responded:

- We’ve got our stuff backwards. We went from \$10,000 to \$15,000 five years ago to stop incurring bank charges. Our expenses run \$17,000 but it still feels like too much for me. At the beginning of the year we take our checking account balance and send it to the WSO. Our Reserve Fund is used to get through Assemblies. We are hoping for something better.
- I have never seen us go to the Reserve Fund. We do keep six months’ worth to advance to the AI-Anon Convention and Alateen Convention; it is budgeted in and presented to the AWSC with a prayer at the beginning. It is discussed and then presented to the Assembly. We try to be transparent.
- We have a Reserve Fund, but no budget. I appreciate the workshop. I have lots of questions and we are going through the process of trying to establish a budget based on spiritual

principles. It would be helpful to the Area if we looked at an inventory based around money. Can we somehow incorporate spiritual principles into the *Reserve Fund Guideline*? It does not incorporate spiritual principles now. We have a reserve but don’t call it that. We call it “seed money” in categories. We slice it up and we don’t realize how much we have. Our budget estimate is on the high end every year and on the low side of contributions. We always have a deficit budget. That is the frame through which the Area is looking at its Reserve Fund. We need to look at it through spiritual principles—are Area needs being met?

- We never have pots of money but we do have a Reserve Fund. We use it for TEAM events, etc.
- Our Reserve Fund covers one year’s annual budget. We have a strong Alateen presence, so with excess we include Alateen in scholarships to attend our convention and Assembly. We used it to cover my Delegate’s expense to spend the night when our Assembly met in the middle of state. The Reserve Fund is more than twice our Area treasury. We decided to spend on Public Outreach. We have been able to send the Full Amount rather than the Equalized Expense amount for the last five years.
- We have a nine-month reserve. We give Action Committees a budget to work on during the year. Perilous wealth... natural disasters. We operated with a fear-based mentality and our budget dipped a lot after Hurricane Katrina. We are trying to establish a line item in the budget to send contributions to the WSO and possibly sponsor or help some small groups get to Assembly one time. We’ve got copies of *AI-Anon Faces Alcoholism* for all interested groups, and *World Service Conference Summaries* and *Service Manuals*.
- Our Reserve Fund is based on the WSO’s model. We operate one year on past expenses. The Treasurer is discussing how we should manage it. Is it wasteful putting excess in CDs rather than in the stock market (like the WSO)?
- We have a Task Force to review our process. Our Reserve Fund is based on the previous three years’ expenses and the Audit Committee makes recommendations to the Assembly.
- Who has oversight? The Reserve is recommended at the AWSC.
- Our Budget Committee is a work in progress each year. We continue to rely on them to determine the percentage (typically 70%) of last year’s budget that makes up the Reserve Fund. It is voted on at Assembly and used on community expos and Public Outreach projects.
- People don’t understand where to draw the line. Our Area Reserve Fund is big enough that if the membership does not donate a single cent, we will still be able to conduct Area business. If there were no Reserve Fund bank account there would still be income coming in from the membership. They don’t understand. I will use this workshop at my Assembly.
- Our Area special projects are funded and so successful they are budget items. We now have an excess in our checking account that equals one year’s operating expenses and an additional nine months’ in CDs. We need a conversation about the Reserve Fund. Our Area is afraid money will stop coming in.

- We are struggling with being self-supporting. We held our Assemblies in conjunction with A.A. for years and had no expense, plus, we sold raffle tickets and made at least \$1,500 each time. We have since split from holding Assembly meetings at the same time/location. Once we split, not everyone was paying their own way. Now savings are equal to budget.
- The Finance Committee has to have a discussion about what is ample for the WSO. We don't think one year is necessary. Not because we are falling short. The WSO has many commitments and even we don't feel we need a year.
- We do not have a Finance Committee or Audit Committee and are looking at having an audit from an outside source. What is an ample reserve? Our guideline says six months. Is that really enough? Because the WSO was doing a full year. I told the panel that it is nine months. It was not brought to our membership but maybe it should be; we should take the issue to our members and ask what they think is ample.

- Why do we need a Reserve Fund? You are budgeting projects in your Area, sending the Delegate to Conference and paying the Officers' and Coordinators' way to Assembly. If that is budgeted, you don't need to make a reserve. Be visionary. Think forward. If it is in your budget, it does not need to be in the reserve.
- There wasn't a reason for a Reserve Fund, so we asked the Treasurer to start putting the checking account balance for the past six months on the financial statement. That allowed for transparency. Money sitting there is not fulfilling our primary purpose.

The Conference Chairperson thanked the Delegate Task Force for their well-organized and well-framed discussion.

*For the purposes of this workshop, Reserve Fund is defined as any funds equal to six-months' to a year's operating expenses, such as maintaining a significant minimum checking balance, "seed money," line item allocations in the budget, etc.

BEING A TRUSTEE

During Conference, members listened to several brief talks by Trustees. These discussions focused on the various aspects of serving on the Board. It was hoped that the talks would be informative to those who might consider serving as members of the Board of Trustees in the future. Trustees shared the following:

Résumé and Interview Process

Terry F. • Trustee

When I decided to submit my résumé for the Trustee position, I did so with prayer, after talking to my Sponsor. I needed to assess whether I had the time and skills needed to be an effective Trustee. As I filled out the résumé, I allowed myself the time to be thorough and accurate, and to give thoughtful, spiritually based responses. From listening to others, I knew it was important to follow directions, use proper grammar and spelling, and document everything accurately. I did not fill it out in one sitting; I needed to really process the questions being asked and how I wanted to respond to them.

I also asked for guidance from people who knew and loved me; they reminded me of the skills and experience that they knew I possessed but did not think to include. When I finished, I asked another member—a former Trustee—to look at it and suggest any additions or corrections. I sent the résumé in to the World Service Office (WSO) with plenty of time to meet the August 15th deadline.

Next, an extra question containing a concern about Al-Anon Family Groups was sent to me. This question had a two-week response deadline, a word count limit, and a requirement to answer the question without input from anyone else. It asked me to consider the stated concern and provide my thoughts on possible solutions. Again, I prayed and took time to really think about visionary solutions. After answering the question, I set the document aside for a few days. When I returned to it, I made sure it truly answered the question, met the word count requirement, had no spelling errors and was grammatically correct. I sent it in. I did not know if I would be selected for an interview, but I had done what I could do. Now I had to let go.

In early December, I was notified that I had made it to the interview stage. I was almost immediately both excited and nervous. I memorized the Board Vision and Mission Statements. And one night, I read the By-Laws of the Corporation, absolutely sure that they would put me to sleep! But they didn't.

The January interview included a ten-minute personal and service sharing, interaction with the Board members during a meal, and a fast-paced session with pre-written questions on topics such as strategic planning, work styles, teamwork, principles, technology and conflict resolution. After rotating through all the tables for about an hour, the interview was over. They said we'd be notified of whether or not we were nominees by the end of the weekend.

While waiting to hear, I shared my apprehension with a former Trustee. I told her I wasn't sure how I'd done and whether the Board would have me. She said, "It's not up to the Board; it's up to God." I relaxed and let go.

Trustee Travel

Marilyn M. • Trustee

As I started to think about it, I realized my life's travels had often been the result of alcoholism. By the time I was 15, I had lived in at least 12 homes all across Canada due to my father's transfers and, perhaps, his alcoholism. It was a lengthy road to recovery for me; many years passed before I arrived at the doors of the World Service Office in service.

Travel has been jam-packed with adventure: fraught with zealously inquisitive US customs officers; with snow, thunderstorms, even Hurricane Sandy; with broken airplanes; with random airports and desolate motels arrived at in the middle of the night. Adventure—aka powerlessness! They even lost my carry-on for five days. Not to mention that most of us arrive in Virginia Beach a day late at least once.

But there have been many rewarding times, too. I recall a multi-hour flight in deep conversation with a handsome, thirtyish marketing and communications professional. After discussing his wife's obsession with infant nursing cover-ups, we got on the topic of communication in today's virtual e-world. I walked off that plane with invaluable insights that I could share with the Board about communications, not nursing cover-ups.

There was the time, after a World Service Conference, when a harried, young woman dashed onto the plane and breathlessly plunked down beside me. I felt her anxious energy but shortly, she relaxed and asked me what brought me to Virginia. I replied, "A Conference for Al-Anon Family Groups." Her mouth fell open, backing up as if she had just seen a ghost. I reacted quickly, "What?" Then cautiously, "You've heard of Al-Anon, then?" It took her some long moments to compose herself and then awkwardly explain that she had been told to go to a meeting that very day but she didn't think much of the idea. "Sitting beside you, of all the places on this big plane must be a sign," she mumbled, as though resigned to the universe's idea of a joke. We talked—well, mostly she talked and I got to listen for the duration of the flight.

I have been honored to travel many times on behalf of Al-Anon, as far as Nicaragua and Italy. My experiences always reflect "as I give, I get." I have learned so much, not just about how Al-Anon works, but also about how easily I can roll with my Higher Power. There is no standing still! I meet each moment with gratitude as I continue growing spiritually, serving the program that has really made my life worth living. I wish many moving experiences for each of you... There is no standing still!

Mentorship/Roommates

Karen W-P. • Trustee

When I started thinking about this topic, the first thing that came to mind was a silly thought, but a real fear. I would have a roommate and we would have to share one bathroom. This has always been a challenge for me ever since I had to share this space with my sister. As has been the case many times in the program, when I changed my attitude there was not a problem for me; my experiences with all my Trustee roommates have turned out fine.

My interview roommate. We were so different. While she was out walking on the beach, I was in the hotel, trying to memorize what I would be saying in my ten-minute sharing. I was asleep when she arrived. She later told me that she just had to hope that she was in the right room because I didn't hear her come. When she left from the

interview, I was still asleep and she left me a darling note in the bathroom. We had no problems sharing and we both became Trustees.

My next roommate was my Mentor. My Mentor taught me about the integrity and the confidential nature of our work. She presented herself as all the things that I would aspire to be as a Trustee. She understood the role of a being a Mentor. She helped me with technology, understanding procedures, and just understanding the work of the Board. She was gracious, but firm, and she helped me have a better relationship with my Higher Power.

As a Mentor, I felt very protective of my Mentee and kept her close. I told her she had to sit with me at Board meetings. She needed a Mentor for different reasons than I did. She had a clear understanding of the procedures and processes. I would like to think that I was her anchor. I think she understood that she could talk to me without fear of judgment.

Time Management/Filing

Joan S. • Trustee

As often happens when I need to “organize” my thoughts, the Serenity Prayer comes to mind. As I repeat it over and over, I begin to see how a couple of acronyms describe some of the abilities I bring to my service as a Trustee and how they have changed over the years.

Serenity—I try to minimize the clutter and chaos by keeping my head where my hands are; by doing this, I can really put into practice the saying “only handle it once.” I read and deal with material as soon as I receive it, make notes on what needs to be done and how I feel about the subject and set a timeline for needed action. The hardest part of this is dealing with the panic that surfaces when I approach a deadline and forget that I did most of the work already. This is when I see and feel the serenity that comes from accepting a task on the spot.

Courage—This has been my area of greatest growth during my time as a Trustee. I’ve had to move from my comfort place of organizing facts and figures to the often-nebulous world of words and thoughts. The life and work experience I brought to this service position was stronger with numbers, inventories and customer service, so organizing my thoughts and notes to follow the evolution of our discussions in the Policy Committee and drafting various documents and presentations has been challenging. This is an area where I have seen myself change from thinking as an organizer to becoming a thoughtful participant—giving voice to my thoughts without needing to organize the outcome.

Wisdom—This is where I find my innate ability to efficiently use my time. I began this journey with the belief that I would arrange all my resources and documents in such a way that I would have both paper and electronic materials at my fingertips. My unfolding wisdom has reminded me of the acronym “things I must experience,” or TIME. Looking back on five years of folders and files, I have to acknowledge that my original plan was amazingly on point, but the things I have experienced have helped my system evolve; now I am able to spend less time organizing and more time in thoughtful reflection on my contribution to the conversations.

Different Roles, Including Legal Authority and Accountability

Tina B. • Trustee

As a very scared and frustrated young mother of three small children, I walked into the rooms of Al-Anon looking for answers; I wanted to know how to fix the alcoholic I loved. Thankfully, the Al-Anon members I joined way back then offered me the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service as guides. These tools helped me mature emotionally and learn to live by the spiritual principles they embody.

My move into service started with chairing a meeting. That experience led to many other opportunities, all of which felt like big risks when I first considered them. Serving my group helped me feel like I was a “part of.” Serving my District expanded my Al-Anon family and recovery tools. Serving the Area sharpened my skills, my understanding and my self-confidence, and once again broadened my view of being a part of a program that truly is worldwide in its reach. It is miraculous to have the image of that frightened young person looking for help juxtaposed with the image of the woman who was asked to serve as the Chairperson of Al-Anon’s World Service Conference.

In my role as Conference Chair, my first fear was that I might have the power to screw up all of Al-Anon. I learned, again, that I do not serve alone. When we each do the job we are assigned, we put Concept Ten in action, and we are each accountable for our own part. No one does it all. As a Trustee, I am one of 19 who have the legal authority to work together and to make decisions on behalf of Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, Inc. As one of the World Service Conference members, I work with the full Conference in our traditional role—making decisions and guiding Al-Anon Family Groups, our fellowship.

As I finish my term as a WSO Volunteer Trustee at Large, I have a greater understanding of the service position that has legal authority for Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., and truly is accountable to the whole fellowship of Al-Anon. Legal authority includes more than making sure the bills are paid. It includes being a willing and active partner in the oversight and functioning of the World Service Office. Yes, it is about budgets, financial decisions and the By-Laws of the Corporation. But it is also about the stewardship of the fellowship into the future—that is the accountability piece. Each Board member brings his or her own abilities and performs different jobs as assigned by the Chairperson of the Board. Together, working in unity, we guarantee that our legal obligations are met according to the laws that govern the Corporation. Together, working in unity with you—the World Service Conference—we guarantee that our traditional foundation is secure today and into tomorrow for anyone who reaches out for help.

CHOSEN AGENDA ITEMS

A Chosen Agenda Items (CAI) Task Force, comprised of two Delegates and the Conference Chairperson, combined like items; this resulted in 36 CAIs being combined into 16 CAIs. Concurrently, a Chosen Agenda Items (CAI) Fact Checker Task Force, comprised of two Delegates and the Associate Director—Conference, reviewed the CAIs for misinformation.

Conference members voted for the five topics that were most important to them. This approach identified the natural grouping of overall priorities. The topics that received the first- and second-highest number of votes were discussed in the General Session. The topics that received the third-, fourth- and fifth-highest number of votes were discussed in breakout sessions.

Chosen Agenda Item #3

Topic: When does group autonomy end and an issue begin affecting another group or Al-Anon or A.A. as a whole?

Al-Anon as a whole is being affected by several group practices, especially sponsorship that involves dominance, intimidation (even physical), telling people how to live their lives, and stalking. Al-Anon portrays itself as a safe haven for families affected by alcoholism, but some mental health professionals have complained that their clients are getting sicker after attending such groups. When repeated attempts to educate these groups via Do Not Refer policies have been circumvented, should Al-Anon continue allowing these groups to be registered? Do we need to change this in order to go forward?

Topic: Disruptive members/newcomers, mentally ill members who prey on newcomers as well.

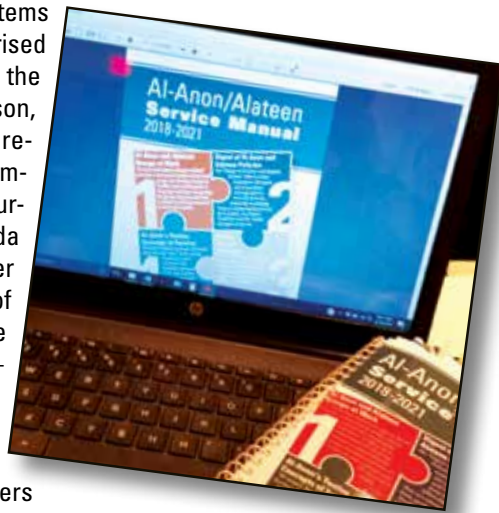
A member who is very interested and dedicated to recovery was approached by a gentleman who had more than a casual interest in fellowship when she was very new. She is afraid to attend any functions other than a regular, closed meeting.

Topic: Welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.

Our primary purpose guides us in retaining newcomers and regular members. Specific examples would help share experience, strength and hope. What can we do as a fellowship to keep the "middle" members' attendance strong?

Following the reading of the Chosen Agenda Item topic, the Conference Chairperson opened the floor for discussion. Conference members responded:

- For concerns in my Area, we found the Assembly discussion in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27), pages 52-53, helpful.
- Whenever we encounter a problem, we need to take it to the service arm it relates to and come up with an action plan, in case we encounter the same situation again. We talked to the police department and are reaching out to other entities.



- This is a large issue in my Area. We voted to have a Thought Force and concluded that we needed a Task Force. We brought it to the Assembly and the information was presented. The end result was asking GRs if they were ready to take a vote to establish a policy in the Area. There was a lot of discussion. Our Area website has a whole policy and procedure that is being used. It is not taken lightly. Our situation does not quite fit and I am learning with everyone else.
- We were at a loss in a District meeting. We contacted past Delegates for experience, strength and hope. We were assured we had the right to a safe meeting. They pointed to our literature. We met and discussed how to handle it. We decided to have two or three members at the door to greet the person and invite that person to find another meeting or after the meeting we would call authorities.
- My Area adopted the idea of building healthy groups years ago. We put that into action and cultivated the idea. It was centered on education and raising awareness. We were able to address issues at the group level through group inventories. GRs had sessions about how to get used to doing this. Districts were discussing group issues while the concerned groups were present and were not afraid to discuss issues openly. Everyone was encouraged to be bold and stick to program principles and call stuff out. We beefed up new GR and DR sessions and workshops to take care of this.
- We have an issue with stalking in the suburbs. The problem has arisen in A.A. groups. A.A. has a safety card put out by their GSO. It gives permission to take action. Maybe AFG, Inc. could create a safety card to hand to our groups.
- At the group level we remind people there are 36 Legacies to work on, not just the Twelve Steps. Being willing to take on projects and to keep meetings focused can help. One newcomer meeting was so focused on newcomers it didn't have a meeting for themselves. A group can make sure business meetings are held even if a committee member is not there that week. It can help to remind people it is a form of service to sit next to someone they haven't sat next to in a while.
- Does the World Service Office (WSO) have a specific policy or procedure for removing registration and what does it take to remove it?
The WSO does not have a policy to delist any registered Al-Anon meeting. The WSO stops giving out meeting information for a group that has been inactive for seven years. We invite groups, Districts and Areas to talk to each other and reason things out. The goal is to encourage members to find a solution.
- One group had issues of dominance and stalking new members. When they came to that realization, someone talked to a past Delegate and a Sponsor and then asked for group conscience. Instead of studying the Steps and Traditions the group is doing a group inventory question by question until it is done. There was so much wrong that those questions applied to. It empowered members of the group who were afraid that if they talked to a Sponsor they were gossiping. Now when dominance occurs, they can speak up because now they are not afraid.

- Groups can encourage meetings on sponsorship and workshops using literature as a foundation. It's important to remember that Tradition Four has a comma, not a semicolon—"Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole."
- Disruptive member: One of the great resources is a request from AFG Connects that got 20 pages on how others deal with it. It's helpful to realize that if a situation is messy, the solution won't be nicely settled. We chose to work through the structure, through the GR and DR, and make them aware; we resolved the issue at the District level.
- My home group had an individual who had a mental illness. We were not afraid of her until she acted out in meeting where newcomers were present; it was frightening. We needed to come up with plan at our business meeting and realized we were not taking responsibility for our group. We stopped the meeting after she left and explained that was not how a meeting should be. We remembered that many of us come from abuse and when something like that happens it can trigger something in someone. Now we have a plan on how to treat the situation.
- Since this is a longstanding problem, do we have a liability in this to come up with a positive plan of action? My group is not in danger, but I don't want your group to be in danger.
- Maintaining members: I have 65 home group members. It is a strong meeting. Step meetings revolve around *Paths to Recovery* (B-24). The format is strong in maintaining members coming to it. I noticed whenever we decide we want other literature attendance fluctuates. Using specific literature helps.
- Some problems are created because we try to avoid problems. We need to address conflict. If we do, we can eliminate problems. We do not allow unacceptable behavior.
- Delisting: I thought that the WSC had decided you could delist a group if you had process to do it and a process for the meeting to be relisted. If it's not pulled out of the WSO list, it doesn't get delisted.
- Thirteenth stepping": We were able to discuss this at the District level. There was a lack of awareness of what the Traditions were. Talking and educating is important. When someone uses other than Conference Approved Literature (CAL), ask if it is in the *Catalog of Al-Anon/Alateen CAL* (S-15). When we know, we have a responsibility to share that information. I care more about my group than what people think of me. We started a Do Not Refer policy based on the 2012 WSC discussion that put it back on the Area.
- If we have disruptive members, the Serenity Prayer can remind us that the wisdom we get from experiences gives us the courage to act.

A Delegate summarized the discussion:

- Al-Anon fear of conflict.
- Use group conscience.
- Have a policy.
- Courage in sponsorship.
- Communication and education.

- *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, pages 52-53, for group problems.
- Have information available.
- Do group inventories to deal with problems.
- *Service Manual*, Traditions.
- Nip it in the bud. We just have to take action and talk with the person who is the problem and deal with it right away.

Chosen Agenda Item # 1

Topic: How do we instill enthusiasm and positivity for leadership positions in our program?

This is important to me because without leadership, Al-Anon will stand still. Who will be there to "carry the message"?

Topic: What kind of new and ongoing training does your Area have for District Representatives (DRs)?

Currently, we have transition weekends for the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) at the beginning of a new panel to "pass the torch"; we also hold DR sharing meetings at Assemblies for ongoing training. Some DRs utilize Service Sponsors. Does your Area have a structured training session? Is DR training/sharing included during Assemblies? If so, what does that include and when do you hold those meetings, etc.?

Topic: How are non-English-speaking members encouraged to be involved in District and Area meetings?

Districts include both English-speaking and non-English-speaking members. Translators and/or translating equipment is not always available at District and Area meetings. We must gain experience handling translation needs, if English-speaking and non-English-speaking groups are combined within the District/Area. What are the disadvantages/advantages of separate non-English-speaking Districts within the Area? Currently, non-English-speaking members in our Area are primarily Spanish-speaking.

Topic: Service beyond the group level.

Some incoming Group Representatives (GRs) who stand for the position of DR have little experience beyond the group level. It would seem that the eligibility requirements detailed in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon and Alateen Service Manual*, page 150, encourage members to stand as Officers and possibly Delegates with very little experience. For example, an Alternate DR who was DR for two Assemblies can stand for Officer/Delegate. Does it do more harm than good to allow members with next to no experience to serve?

Topic: What are the links of service, and are they working?

If members, groups and Districts are not being represented, are the links of service working? How can we strengthen the links of service?

Topic: Complacency and accountability above the group level.

Our Area wanted to do inventory of Officers, AWSC, Assembly and Action Committees. The idea was posted on AFG Connects and received no responses. We can only change ourselves, so letting it begin with us seems to start with an inventory. We have members in recovery who are new or do not follow policy/procedures. How can we look at ourselves and go forward, not standing still by looking at our past?

Topic: How are we addressing the issue of our membership aging and younger members not wanting to be in service?

What plans does our leadership have to make our program attractive to the younger members who cannot or will not serve above the group level? Such as daycare issues, work schedules, time constraints.

Conference members shared the following experience, strength and hope:

New and ongoing DR training

- Last term we had an Area DR breakout session. We have ongoing new and returning GR breakouts, talk about concerns and share experience, strength and hope in those positions.
- We had a Thought Force and Task Force put together an electronic and print brochure. We have DR breakouts at Assembly. We put the same format together for GRs.
- So few attended that I asked our most active District for ideas. We scheduled a transition meeting to pass information on to new members. We had a training checklist to help assure transitioners. We should make sure that they have someone to help them if they do not have enough experience. Be willing to answer questions or be a Mentor/Service Sponsor.
- We have a turnover meeting and try to train incoming GRs and DRs. We call the day Folderol (which means nonsensical, whimsical or fun). It is based on fairy tales; a lot of us dress up as princesses. We offer workshops on how to be a GR or DR. We have workshops on Trustees, also. Anything to educate.
- After my group discussed the difficulties of the transition and took into account our rotation, I did a preparation sheet with DRs as a group. We called it a service journey. It was like they were doing a Step Four inventory on their service. What Steps am I following? What's next? What can I do next?

Enthusiasm for leadership

- We should all be examples, have positive attitudes and show how it can be fun to be in service; we can accomplish this through skits at conventions on Area topics, such as DRs. This makes the experience fun and keeps the audience interested.
- I am doing a workshop next weekend on service sponsorship; those newer in service came to the District asking me to do this workshop. In it, I am going to talk about leadership traits and what traits we see in the people we admire. We need to take newer members by the hand and guide them. It is our responsibility. We need them.

Membership aging and attracting younger members to service

- Each of us has a responsibility to encourage and sponsor younger members. We need to sit with them while they chair their first meeting and help with posters and literature at meetings to make them feel part of.
- We should consider the ramifications of doubling our membership—from contributions to finances. If we increased our membership it would solve a lot of the issues we have today.
- Length of service: Keep an open mind in that Area.
- At the group level, a three-year commitment is more than young and/or older members have time to do. It's good to have an Alternate; they can learn and grow from the position. We educate and cut a little slack when we can.

- I have a responsibility as an individual not to treat younger members any differently than any other members. Alateen is often treated differently. But they are different. For example, they have guidelines and rules that don't apply to us, but they have more potential. I continually take the opportunity to address those members and work with them. I have had many who say, "I'm going to be the Delegate!" There is untapped potential if we take the time to invest in them. Also, teens made cards!
- Having unqualified members in service is a big issue. Our Public Outreach was asked to give a bigger push. If we doubled our membership we wouldn't have the issue.
- Dominance is a big issue. We are looking forward to asking members in groups to reach out to younger members in their early 20s and to be welcoming and usher in more new members.

Accountability above the group level inventory

- In the second year of a term we do an Assembly inventory. It is organized by the Alternate Delegate. We ask someone from another Area to come and do the inventory. We make a questionnaire, categorize it and conduct the inventory. We look at what are we doing well and what can we improve on. For the rest of the term, we focus on resolving the top issues.
- Our AWSC had a workshop from *When I Got Busy, I Got Better* (P-78) that talked about fears in higher level service; five people shared their personal experiences. We will use terms from Concept Nine and huge posters around the room with requirements for positions. One member carries copies of *When I Got Busy, I Got Better* around with him and gives them out.
- This is a two-pronged approach. First, sponsor members into service. Then, sponsor through service with a Service Sponsor. At a job fair we talk to every member of the panel. We give them a few minutes to share. We ask the room what the best part of their job is. We try to demystify being on the AWSC.

Links of service

- Groups have GRs but at Assembly our Chairperson mailed information for the Assembly to GRs that did not have DRs. Don't give up and don't exhaust the opportunities.
- Information doesn't always get pushed to the top of the triangle. As a GR, I felt ignorant and supported at the same time. I want to know GRs have support; I want to trust they will get what they need when they need it. We have a DR meeting after Assemblies to get together and talk to each other. A DR boot camp similar to our GR boot camp made it clear what my responsibilities were.
- It will work as long as we continue to talk about it and do workshops.

Involving non-English-speaking members in District and Area meetings

- Our Assemblies are English-speaking meetings, which presented lots of problems for Spanish-speaking members. We now have our own translation equipment for Spanish-speaking members. As Delegate, how can I pull us back together? Maybe Area Officers can go to Spanish-speaking meetings. I can't speak Spanish, but I believe if they see I am interested in bringing them back, they will come. We also have American Sign Language (ASL) if needed at Assemblies and conventions.

- We have two or three groups in my Area. We were doing fundraisers and decided to get the Hispanic groups involved. It is important to be receptive when an Alateen is coming to meetings. One member has a granddaughter who goes to conventions and is accepted there. I got to listen and not comment too much.
- We have a large number of Spanish-speaking members. We always have translation at Assembly. Then we found out that we had a DR who needed translation. So now we are doing it at our AWSC meetings. It is important that we take care and make sure everyone understands. We spent money on getting more headsets.
- We have a huge Spanish Public Outreach push going and an active Spanish Intergroup. Younger members are getting more liaisons in the District to involve them at the AWSC.
- We had a long discussion not just about translation equipment but also having enough equipment so everyone gets to speak in their first language. So when a Spanish-speaking member gets up, English-speaking members receive translation and hear it in their first language. We translate all documents into Spanish. We have members submit them in advance so they can be translated.

Chosen Agenda Item Breakout Sessions

In addition to discussing two Chosen Agenda Items (CAIs) in the General Session, Conference members met in small breakout groups to discuss three additional CAIs. All Conference members attended two of the three breakout sessions.

Chosen Agenda Item #2

Topic: How can we increase our membership? To reach potential new members, we must raise public awareness.

It's important to reach out because, many years ago, when Al-Anon was recommended to me, I had never heard of it and didn't know what it was. Public Outreach can be done in many different ways to raise awareness of our fellowship.

Topic: Is it time to discuss the wording of Tradition Eleven again, to be mindful of the ever-changing methods of public communication and social media/networking?

Tradition Eleven has been discussed previously. In response to these talks, we amended the Public Outreach section of our "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" (in 2013) to reflect the inclusion of existing additional public media systems. However, would it be prudent to conclude the communication world is constantly evolving? By continuing our conversation about new methods of networking, we communicate with the membership our desire to stay current and demonstrate that Al-Anon is not standing still.

Topic: Should we place World Service Office (WSO) Al-Anon public service announcements on national TV shows?

This may increase public awareness of Al-Anon and its mission; announcements mentioned by a TV personality would likely be cost effective and have a wider impact than local announcements. Announcements placed by the WSO would accompany those placed by groups, Districts and Areas.

Topic: How did we decide to use live actors in Public Outreach media? Concern regarding anonymity seems to be preached, but not practiced at the public level.

Are newcomers aware of our policy of anonymity at the public level when they first attend? What if they see the same actor in a compromising situation? Is it really so important to go with full faces knowing some of our possible membership may be scared away?

Conference members in the breakout shared the following:

- Participate in Area/community events.
- Make sure group information is updated.
- Inform groups of online meetings.
- "Lose" literature at various locations.
- Move announcements/PSAs to web-based platforms.
- Cooperate more with health professionals and A.A.
- **Public messaging:** PSAs, billboards, ads, *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, community fairs, counseling associations booths, beauty shops. We could invite the public—teachers, doctors, counselors, etc.—to open Alateen meetings.
- **Communication:** Follow-up has helped start meetings in private schools and counseling centers.
- **Institutional information:** treatment centers, hospitals, prisons, schools, universities.
- **Assembly workshops:** Transitioning Alateens, Public Outreach with Group Representatives (GRs) and District Representatives (DRs).
- **Group readiness for newcomers:** newcomer meetings, ways to honor cultural diversity for effective communications.
- We like the idea of using live actors in Public Outreach. Do we need a disclaimer that these are actors? Previously we were using side views to avoid full-face presentations, but side views were perceived as the person expressing shame or embarrassment.

The general consensus in the discussion:

The word is getting out about Al-Anon. All Al-Anon members can carry the message to potential new members. Many Areas have committed to continuing Public Outreach and increasing their Public Outreach budgets.

Ideas to consider further/steps to take moving forward:

- ♦ Public Outreach Coordinators at the Area level are key. They challenge, motivate, coordinate efforts and bring ideas from the WSO to the groups and members.
- ♦ Some suggested that we include articles about online opportunities in *The Forum*. Leaving business cards in beauty salons, making sure groups have updated meeting information, and making sure all information is correct on local meeting schedules and updated with the WSO will also help raise awareness.
- ♦ How do we measure effectiveness? Tradition Eleven and the *2018-2021 Al-Anon Alateen Service Manual* guide our Public Outreach efforts.

Chosen Agenda Item #9

Topic: Rural populations and meetings in our Structure.

How do the small groups/meetings in rural America fit into the Board's Vision and Mission?

What is the Al-Anon vision for rural America five, ten and 15 years down the road? What is the Outreach strategy for support-

ing groups/meetings in locations far from large populations? How are the Areas supporting or reaching out to rural populations? How can we learn and apply our experience in this area for the benefit of emerging structures? How can we learn from the successes of emerging structures that have members in rural areas?

Topic: Finding ways to increase and support rural/small town participation in AI-Anon and all levels of AI-Anon service.

AI-Anon membership and service participation beyond the group level is low in these rural areas. Lack of resources, vast distances between communities, concerns about maintaining anonymity and strong social stigmas prevent many from seeking help. Areas with large minority and non-English-speaking populations face additional cultural and language challenges. We are not reaching them.

Topic: Groups in small communities often feel disconnected from their District; consequently, they may be hesitant to take service positions in the District.

Distance between groups, especially in outlying communities, seems to create a barrier that prevents some members from participating in service roles. Declining participation in service positions creates gaps and unfilled positions. What methods are being used to encourage individuals to step into service, so that individuals are able to grow and experience the "joy of service"?

Conference members responded:

- Geography causes loss of connectivity.
- Technology is helpful, but many rural areas have poor or nonexistent internet access.
- Technology will assist us in reaching outlying Areas, but not all communities use technology.
- Out-of-the-box thinking is required. Action is essential.
- Assemblies should be accessible, meaningful and purposeful.
- Use of technology, such as teleconferencing and phone meetings, may help.
- A concerted effort must be made to educate professionals and help potential members overcome bias and fear.
- Language and cultural barriers represent difficult challenges.
- Both personal and service sponsorship are important. They offer vital support and encouragement.
- Members can do Outreach work with the help of technology and face-to-face conversation, and through the service structure.
- How can we strengthen connections?
- How do we communicate effectively with groups in rural areas?
- We can use our links of service (groups, Districts, Area) to gather information and communicate with these groups.
- We can move our Area meetings to more rural areas and reach out face-to-face.
- Sometimes there are financial or time constraints that restrict us from connecting directly to rural groups.

Strategies discussed: Location rotation: Some Areas rotate the location of the Area Assembly, allowing everyone an opportunity to easily attend and network with other AI-Anon members. We should accept the fluidity of service and encourage and help outlying groups and members to participate in service.

The general consensus in the discussion:

Continue the discussion. It is essential to keep talking if we want to reason things out and find a way forward.

Connecting to rural meetings and encouraging service beyond the group level are big challenges for these Districts and Areas.

It would be useful for the Board to consider a Thought or Task Force on if/how the Board's Vision and Mission fit with the needs of the groups in rural locations.

Ideas to consider further/steps to take moving forward:

- ♦ One size does not fit all. It may appear that rural numbers are small but collectively, when combined across our Structure, they represent a vast portion of the US and Canada with unique challenges.
- ♦ We should use technology as a tool rather than a cure.
- ♦ Can we adapt our Structure to meet the community's needs?
- ♦ Can we adopt the "Road Trip!" in our Areas?
- ♦ Could the WSO facilitate web conferencing for Areas to connect to rural areas?
- ♦ We could add a section to *The Forum* specifically for sharings from rural areas.
- ♦ We should have a Coordinator for rural areas and for WSO Outreach to rural meetings.
- ♦ We could create pamphlets targeted at rural groups; for example, we could make one that explains more about virtual meetings or discusses online information in greater detail.

Other ideas from the discussion:

- We should model service connectivity after the Trustee/Delegate calls, and connect Area World Service Committee (AWSC) members to rural DRs and groups.
- We could promote a "get in the car" campaign.
- Technology and phone conferencing help members stay in the loop and in touch with support. Areas can reach out to inactive groups and offer support with travel, financial and any other challenges. Areas also make concerted efforts to communicate with inactive groups and Districts. It was suggested that techniques employed at Zonal meetings might be of value.

Chosen Agenda Item #11

Topic: "Former" A.A. members in AI-Anon service.

We have many A.A. members joining AI-Anon, which is a good problem. However, some who "used to" participate in A.A., but no longer consider themselves to be alcoholics, want to stand for GR. What would be the protocol for handling this situation?

Topic: Revise the *Service Manual* to cover these members—AI-Anon members who were previously in A.A. but aren't currently attending A.A. and wish to hold AI-Anon service positions beyond the group level.

These previously active A.A. members state that they no longer need A.A., they weren't really alcoholics, or believe they stay sober with the AI-Anon program. They bring views from the A.A. service structure, often not understanding/maintaining the separation between the service structures of AI-Anon and A.A. These members are known to have been A.A. members; they bring the A.A. perspective to AI-Anon service beyond the group level and, consequently, their service creates controversy.

Conference members responded:

- Al-Anon policy prohibits A.A. members from serving in Al-Anon beyond the group level to ensure the Al-Anon perspective remains at the core of our groups.
- There is concern about A.A. members seeking service throughout this worldwide fellowship.
- There is a place on the Trustee application asking if the applicant is/was an A.A. member. Could this policy be implemented by the GR, DR, or Coordinator of the Area? Could the DRs ask a candidate for GR or DR if he/she is an A.A. member?
- At our meetings, we must remember to be welcoming to whomever is seeking recovery as a family member or friend of an alcoholic.

The general consensus of the discussion:

There were many opinions. In one group there was consensus that this is a “hot” topic because everyone in the breakout session had this issue in their Area. Another breakout group saw it as a “hot topic” for groups, but agreed that groups need to deal with the issue rather than change the Steps, Traditions or *Service Manual*.

Ideas to consider further/steps to take moving forward:

- ♦ We could recommend that a Thought Force use the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) process to address the issue.
- ♦ We should recognize there are many sides to this difficult subject.
- ♦ Groups could do a group conscience to discuss the topic with a “potential or current, former A.A. person.”
- ♦ Group are autonomous, but they need to pay attention to the Steps and Traditions.
- ♦ When sponsoring a dual member, we must educate them on what they can do in service.
- ♦ We could suggest that the DR ask privately if the candidate has had a background in A.A.
- ♦ In Al-Anon, they are Al-Anon members.
- ♦ We must be aware of our own biases. We don’t want to be judgmental.
- ♦ They could help with sponsorship.
- ♦ Who are we to say they are or are not A.A.?
- ♦ Groups could take a group conscience and communicate directly with the individual.
- ♦ What’s the best way to deal with it? Talk to each other, reason things out. Defer to the *Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflicts* Kit (K-70).

- ♦ All have had a great deal of experience with this issue. Members felt this could cause a great deal of controversy. Issues have stemmed from a lack of clarity; sometimes it is not known whether certain members have ever been to A.A. or when certain members started and eventually discovered they should not be in A.A. and moved.
- ♦ Groups could discuss that it is not about the drinking, but the behaviors. When this happens, the culture changes and many times issues fade away.
- ♦ Autonomy is often misused. The question to ask is, *Will the decision affect Al-Anon as a whole?* If it disrupts our unity, then we should not make it. We are the guardians of the Legacies. Autonomy is not used as a weapon nor a compromise of our spiritual principles. We must take actions that are based on our principles, not our fear.
- ♦ This type of treatment could raise newcomer doubts if they have been exposed to different programs.
- ♦ We should keep other Twelve Step programs separate.
- ♦ We should address the issue now, or there could be issues later.
- ♦ It’s a slippery slope.
- ♦ This is part of our history and Traditions.
- ♦ We need to discuss these decisions with former A.A. members.
- ♦ This causes controversy at group and business meetings in the Areas.
- ♦ Attendance tends to decline when A.A. members try to take over.
- ♦ Al-Anon has a policy that prohibits A.A. members from service in matters that affect policy beyond the group level to ensure that the Al-Anon perspective prevails. It might be good to include this on Trustee applications, and on Area résumés.
- ♦ It’s best to be welcoming, because A.A. members are affected by many of the same problems that affect Al-Anon members.
- ♦ We can take a cucumber and turn it into a pickle but we can’t turn a pickle into a cucumber.
- ♦ Al-Anon protocol is to talk to our members and use the *Conflict Resolution Kit* materials.

FINANCE COMMITTEE PRESENTATION

Jennie McC. • Trustee, Treasurer

The Treasurer began the presentation by stating, “I can tell you this is the highlight of my year—I’m sure it is for many of you, too. It has been such an honor serving as your Treasurer these past few years. It has also been a pleasure because you all are so receptive; you are all willing to expand your minds to understand the various pieces and parts that make up the financial picture of AFG, Inc.

“For those of you experiencing your first Conference, I’m sure you have heard some great financial reports from your predecessors. For you second- and third-year Delegates, this is your chance to listen with an even better understanding of Al-Anon Family Groups’ finances.

“I want to focus on our Conference theme, ‘Al-Anon—There is no standing still!’ What does this mean for our financial discussion?

“Over the 58 years of World Service Conferences there have been many changes. Suffice it to say that today the information is received earlier and the information is complete; all participants have the same information and the body that makes the decisions (all of us) is more informed than ever. Even this year we have delivered as much financial information as was logistically possible, well in advance of the Conference. Improvements in the information delivery system are an example of not standing still, of moving forward to a better experience and more informed group conscience.

“With direction from the Conference, the Policy Committee has revised text to not only more accurately reflect current policy, but to include the spiritual principles that direct that policy. In addition, with input and guidance from the Conference, a Handbook Task Force revised the “World Service Handbook” of the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) to clarify procedures as well as to give the guidance on spiritual principles. You’ve all seen the amazing re-creation of Al-Anon’s website, an effective tool to use when we reach out to those who do not yet know of Al-Anon’s great purpose and wonderful recovery program. The communication tool provided by AFG Connects has transformed information sharing. All these changes and more are indications that ‘There is no standing still!’ Al-Anon is moving forward.

“Moving forward has a cost, as you know. It takes Staff, technology, Volunteers and vision. We are all fortunate in that our members recognize the importance of not standing still and have stepped up their contributions to fund these exciting initiatives. There is always more to do and with your help we can ensure that Al-Anon will continue to move forward and be relevant and vibrant in the future.

“Our focus for this presentation is to have you leave the Conference feeling confident enough about the finances of AFG, Inc. to be able to inform the members in your Area. We have included our breakouts and reports, and will explain them in detail.”

Discussing Our Finances: Helpful Resources

Following the introduction, Conference members met in breakout rooms. The purpose of the small group discussions was to give Delegates the opportunity to become more familiar and comfortable with discussing the finances of AFG, Inc., by solidifying their understanding of the basics of the Audit and Budget Reports. It also gave them a venue to ask questions and receive clarification on difficult topics. A list of helpful resources was provided; it was created to enable Delegates to answer questions when giving their Report and relaying information to their Areas. Six Delegates volunteered to prepare and give short Reports to the Conference as though they were giving their Report to their Area or District. The intent was to hear the message in a variety of voices and provide Delegates with ideas of how to deliver the message in their Areas with their own distinctive voices. While details varied, a common theme in each report was that, in order for Al-Anon to grow, we need member contributions to continue:

1. Your contributions and literature sales reflect the resources necessary for the World Service Office (WSO) Staff to develop and provide new programs and services for 2018 and beyond.
2. We must look to the future but also continue our commitment to our primary purpose.
3. Program services are the largest expense. Our Seventh Tradition contributions provide WSO services to groups. These services are the activities that fulfill the purpose of our Mission. The next time the Seventh Tradition basket comes around, think about how much the WSO does for you as an individual, your group, your District and your Area. And remember \$1 in 1965 equals \$7.90 in 2018! Can you spare another dollar or two?
4. The WSO is improving the ways Al-Anon can reach the people who need it.
5. Our Board of Trustees and WSO Staff do an excellent job making the most of our financial resources by diligently planning and making adjustments as necessary.
6. Wonderful projects that were funded in 2017 include a redesigned website with fantastic meeting search capabilities.
7. We need to remember our spiritual principles in all group money matters.

After giving her reports to the Conference, the Treasurer thanked the Delegates who participated in presenting a report. She said that she appreciated their enthusiasm and willingness to participate and noted, “I hope you got ideas on how to report to your Areas.”

JUST FOR TONIGHT

Bruce F. • Trustee Liaison | Tom C. • Associate Director—Literature

During August and September 2016, the World Service Office (WSO) received three written requests (as well as several phone calls) suggesting the WSO produce a new bookmark using the “Just for Tonight” article from the August 2016 issue of *The Forum*. Below is the article, as it appeared in the August 2016 issue of *The Forum*:

Just for tonight...

By Robin T., Florida

“I have used the *Just for Today* Bookmark (M-12) for many years to orient my thoughts in the right spiritual direction, and to keep me busy through difficult daytime hours. In a recent crisis, it occurred to me I also needed something to help me rest at night when I was feeling troubled. I started cataloguing and examining the thoughts and feelings that were interfering with my sleep, and pairing them with the spiritual principles of the program.

Just for tonight, I will be grateful. As I prepare for sleep, I will give thanks for the passing day—its failures as well as its successes, its sadness as well as its joys, and its pain as well as its pleasures. I will take comfort in the knowledge that no event occurred, or circumstance arose today, that God could not use for my good and the good of others.

Just for tonight, I will accept that I have done the best I could, remembering that my goal is “Progress Not Perfection.” I will let go of any disappointment, shame, or guilt I feel for not having achieved perfection today, or any day in the past. I will offer up my shortcomings to God, in the belief that God can bring about changes in me I could not bring about in myself.

Just for tonight, I will try not to solve tomorrow’s problems or rectify today’s mistakes. I will remind myself that I am better able to receive guidance about right actions and right amends when my mind and body are rested and refreshed.

Just for tonight, I will set aside my fears, frustrations, and aspirations. I will take a few minutes to review the abundance that exists in my life today and place my future in the care of a loving God, trusting my needs will be met at a time, and in a way, which is best for me.

Just for tonight, I will turn my loved ones over to God’s care. I will free myself from trying to do the impossible—changing the actions, attitudes, or future of anyone other than myself.

Just for tonight, I will set aside all anger, resentment, envy, and hurt feelings. I will ask God to bless those whose actions I feel troubled by, and to change my attitude toward them, myself, and all other human beings to one of love, acceptance, and compassion.

Just for tonight, I will try to find a safe, comfortable place to lie down and close my eyes. I will remind myself I am a precious child of God, and that I am both deserving and in need of rest.

I will look forward to awakening to the new day, feeling rested, ready to seek and follow God’s will, and accept the blessings God has in store for me.”

Each member making the request described the article as very powerful and said that it could be a wonderful companion piece to the *Just for Today* Bookmark already included in the *Newcomer Packet* (K-10). In October 2016, after considerable discussion, the Committee agreed that further discussion was needed, but that Committee members should first complete the five Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) questions via the discussion board on AFG Connects.

It was the Literature Committee’s suggestion that the article not be reprinted, but instead made the basis of a bookmark. However, the decision is not the Literature Committee’s; the Committee must execute the will of the World Service Conference (WSC).

The Associate Director—Literature noted that the answers to the KBDM questions were used as a springboard for discussions that continued over two Committee meetings. A summary of Committee responses to the five KBDM questions was sent to Conference members prior to the Conference, to ensure an informed discussion.

Upon opening the floor for discussion, the Conference Chairperson reminded Conference members that this was only a discussion. There was no motion at the time of the conversation. Creation of a motion would depend on where the discussion went.

Conference members commented:

- We canvassed past WSC members and asked them to contact members for feedback. They overwhelmingly thought it was a great idea. However, I may not want to reflect on the words in this if I have received unpleasantness. I don’t want to think about shame or guilt before going to bed at night.
- Members wanted me to stress they loved it. Some thought it was too long.
- Our Area World Service Committee is enamored with it. The two youngest members in the group thought this was very poignant and the kind of thing they were looking for when working Step Eleven.
- I’m concerned about the cost. Do we have too much literature now? Could this be a foldable wallet card or placed on the back of *Just for Today*? Some thought it was too wordy.
- We polled our Area World Service Committee (AWSC) members. They overwhelmingly loved it. As a person with trouble sleeping in the early years, I would have found it helpful. I would like to see a bookmark. I worry about taking away *Just for Today*. Members said do not replace it.
- Given the backlog in translations, is this something that could instead be put in Forum Favorites?
The book on articles from The Forum is still in development. This article could be considered. The book does not yet have a name; it is referred to as THE FORUM BOOK (working title).
- Members are embracing it. I read it while my daughter was almost dying in the hospital.
- We had overwhelming support. New literature produced is revenue when done in-house.
- Don’t include it in the *Newcomer Packet*. Do we need another bookmark?
- “I will try to find a safe place...” they stressed “try.” It should be removed. We had lots of editorial comments.
- A few asked that we please remove the word “God” but said we could use “God of our understanding” or “Higher Power.” They don’t think we need more bookmarks but said to put in THE FORUM BOOK (working title).

- One group is using the article. A member asked if it could be done as an online pamphlet and sold.
- There's concern that the article is already in *The Forum* with the author's name attached. I am hopeful it could move into THE FORUM BOOK (working title) and not be published as literature because the author's name is attached. I think the author should be anonymous.
- Tie the bookmark to Steps Ten and Eleven. One comment in my Area was it was a bit repetitive.
- Too many Gods. It is a great idea as a printed bookmark; paper gives it a tactile feel. We'd like to go to the printed form when studying. But, could the wording be more inclusive? I would love to have it close by so I could be reminded of the love of the program.
I serve on the Literature Committee. The last sentence of the handout Conference members received addresses some of the comments. The Committee will carry a motion to the WSC using more generic wording than "Higher Power." The Committee felt the same as you. They wanted more generic wording. My Area supported this but was concerned about Just for Today being replaced.
- I would like a more in-depth explanation of the author's name being attached.

Most Conference Approved Literature (CAL) does not have names listed. The Committee is not asking to reprint the article, but to base a bookmark on it.

- Please explain in more detail the process for developing literature. I feel some people are unclear on what is meant by conceptual approval and what happens after that.
Some members think Staff at the WSO come up with ideas and write them down. It is more complicated than that. To paraphrase Alice B., an early Literature Chairperson who worked on One Day at a Time (B-6) and The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage (B-4), even though Lois credited her as the author of One Day at a Time, no one person is an author of any one piece of Al-Anon literature because it is such an involved process that includes so many people. My Five-Minute Update (see page 23) detailed the many stages a document must pass through before it becomes CAL. The new document must first go through the Literature Committee, then to this body (the WSC) before the Literature Committee can take it back and work on it.
- I move that we give conceptual approval for the Literature Committee to produce a "Just for Tonight" bookmark.

Following the discussion, the Conference agreed it was ready to vote. A motion that the 2018 World Service Conference give conceptual approval to develop a bookmark based on an August 2016 *Forum* article titled "Just for Tonight" using inclusive language was made, seconded and carried. (See WSC Motion #6, on page 78).

MEGA-ISSUE

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board | Paula B. • Chairperson of the Executive Committee | Vali F. • Executive Director

This year the Board of Trustees, in its efforts to address the Strategic Plan Priorities of the organization (empowering the Al-Anon fellowship and achieving a viable future for Al-Anon Family Groups), invited Conference members into the early phases of conversation between itself and World Service Office Staff. Their discussion centered around the "mega-issue" of how best to address Spanish and French translation needs across the worldwide fellowship. The discourse took place over three days.

The conversation started Tuesday, when the Board began seeking additional insights from Conference members in response to the five Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) questions. From

these insights, the translation problem was refined. Brainstorming and prioritization of potential solutions occurred on Thursday, and identification of the positive benefits and potential risks of the solutions wrapped up the week on Friday.

Since the translation mega-issue conversation is still in its infancy, Conference members were reminded that Staff and the Board need time to discuss the details and possible solutions before any conclusions can be reached. Once a clear direction is chosen, Conference members will be notified and will share the new information with members in their Area.

THOUGHT FORCES, TASK FORCES AND WORK GROUPS

Task Force: Celebrating Our Differences and Our Common Purposes

Rachelle C. • Task Force Chairperson, Panel 56, Minnesota North

For many years, the World Service Conference (WSC) has been discussing topics with a spirituality-based approach; this helps us more effectively communicate information to the membership. At the 2016 World Service Conference, there was a Task Force presentation titled “Acceptance of Communities, Cultures, and Beliefs” (see *2016 World Service Conference Summary*, pages 65-68). As a result, Conference members requested additional ways of applying spiritual principles when they examine how their own biases limit their ability to accept and welcome all potential and current members.

The Task Force presented a skit in three acts to help members identify their own biases (known and unknown) and apply the spiritual principles of the program to move beyond these biases.

It is often difficult to recognize when our own personal biases are preventing us from embracing and welcoming those different from us. Our biases can be triggered by physical appearance alone, but often they can run much deeper.

The Chairperson invited Conference members to listen to the “No More Alone” Al-Anon phone meeting and literally “see” the thoughts of the members as they participated in the mock meeting topic, “Change.” The members had formed biases and opinions based on what they heard in the phone meeting.

Facing our biases

At the mock group’s next business meeting, the announcement of the Al-Anon International Convention came up. The group decided to meet at the International. Conference members were invited to “drop in” as phone meeting members came together for the first time face-to-face. Conference members could hear the mock group members’ responses and see their thoughts on the presentation slides.

Using our spiritual principles

After the Al-Anon International Convention adventure, the skit group identified some of the spiritual principles that assisted them in celebrating their differences and common purposes:

Unity and Participation

Respect and Open-Mindedness

Compassion and Understanding

Facing our biases: taking inventory

Following the skit, Conference members received a handout titled “Facing Our Biases.” The Chairperson asked them to reflect on the questions presented. They were then invited to take their own “mini” personal inventories on their own biases (known and unknown) that prevented them from “celebrating our differences and our common purposes.”

The Chairperson concluded the presentation by saying, “Our diversity is our strength.

Using our spiritual principles can help us build awareness and self-knowledge of personal biases, and can help us to embrace those different from ourselves.”

Conference members were invited to share their insights, observations and experience from the presentation and the inventory exercise:

- We held a Spanish-speaking Alateen meeting at a convent where a 14-year-old Alateen shared more experience than I had. Driving home, I thought maybe I should ask him to be my Sponsor.
- I am going to be more mindful of how my first impressions work in meetings. This was a big thinking moment and I would love to go further.
- A well-dressed lady in my group stood out with a fur coat. I remember thinking that she was different; it seemed funny that she was in an Al-Anon meeting.
- I pay attention to someone’s grammar and reading skills. At a meeting a young man was stumbling over the reading. I asked if he enjoyed reading. He has been coming for three months.
- I hope to put the handout in the hands of every Group Representative and District Representative in my Area.
- I have a reaction when someone new appears. There is a huge homeless population where I live. Sometimes they come to the meeting. My first thought is that they are struggling. I do ask if they are looking for an Al-Anon meeting and say that I hope they will stay if they want to. We have lots of folks with emotional challenges. One time we needed to ask a person to leave because their behavior was over the top and scary. But I hope we gave that person the benefit of doubt by not assuming anything until we had more information.
- We had a presentation from Public Outreach that encouraged us to ask ourselves how we treat newcomers in meetings. They also asked us how we treat members of other Twelve Step programs. We didn’t treat them like newcomers. I pointed out that they are newcomers to Al-Anon. How do I treat members of A.A. who come to my group?
- I am from a small farming community where everyone looks alike. So I know I have personal biases just because of the way I was raised. Growing up, I didn’t know anyone different from me. When I think about spirituality and trust, I think about how I need to be open and willing to change and need to be led to acceptance by my Higher Power.
- I am going back to the beginning. I came with biases against race, financial security, etc. because I was taught this through the disease of alcoholism. I had a bias toward same-sex relationships. Then I got the opportunity to participate in a same-sex sponsorship.
- I grew up where bias was a part of our lives. But today I realized how everyone in the room has the same problem, and I learned how to be aware of my biases.
- I sit in the same chair every week. Ownership is an awareness I just got.
- I was the only guy in a meeting and someone showed up that made Roger (one of the participants in the mock phone meeting) look like a businessman. I did not reach out to him. I can look at the list today and say that through service experience and what I have learned, I can accept my shortcomings with compassion now that I have a program.

Thought Force: Regional Trustee Process

Joan S. • Trustee, Thought Force Chairperson

The Chairperson provided an overview of the current Regional Committee on Trustees (RCT) process and procedures.

She continued, “The Board needs to receive an adequate number of qualified applicants. To achieve that goal, we need the Areas to be proactive in helping members understand the process for submitting a résumé. We determined that more information was needed from everyone. Today we are asking Conference members to participate in the discussion with comments and ideas that might lead to revisions or modifications; our goal is to receive qualified candidates and be proactive in your Areas.”

The Chairperson asked Conference members the following:

What do we know about our members and what do prospective Regional applicants need to know? What is relevant to this discussion?

- All Areas of the service structure seem to be struggling to find qualified members. There seems to be a lack of interest in service work in many organizations.
- Members are not putting in applications for a second term. It would be helpful if the World Service Office (WSO) emailed the Area Chairperson and Delegate when the Trustee’s term was expiring. It would help us plant the seeds now for the future. How do we get the word out to all the Areas in the Region?

- Yesterday we were informed about the Regions that will be electing a candidate for Regional Trustee. Sometimes we assume that because someone is already a Regional Trustee, that person will automatically come to the process and be reelected.

We encourage members at the Regional Delegates meeting to apply. Because the needs of the Board are constantly evolving, existing Trustees may not meet the Board’s needs for the next Regional Trustee term. Making assumptions limits the Board’s ability to grow.

- Having a bullet list of qualifications or needs for the Board would be helpful. What practical skills are needed? In my Area, we are struggling to dispel the myth that you need to be a Delegate to serve on the Board.
- We had a candidate who was interested until they received the information and saw the time commitment. Board members put in a huge amount of time. Can this time be managed better? We don’t want candidates to step away because of the time commitment.
- I know members need help understanding our Structure and links of service. I feel a gap between the WSO Staff, Board of Trustees and the Area. We focus on successes and blunder our way through service, doing things that are easy for us. I would like to see more inward focus from the Board to the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) Officers and more strengthening of our Structure all the way to groups.
- I need to know about time and qualifications. I know we use the same Trustee outline as the Trustee at Large (TAL) on the Conference Committee on Trustees. We, as Delegates, seek out people and suggest them, as do the Trustees and Executive Committee members if they think someone is qualified. We have former Trustees living in my Area and we ask them to speak with potential candidates.

What do we know about the resources and our vision for the organization that is relevant to the discussion?

- In our Area, we have two past Delegates and an Executive Committee member who have brought awareness to our AWSC body. At the Area level we talk of the links of service and the role of the Delegate. If we talk about unity and Concept One, it is a continuation of the links of service. Maybe a PowerPoint would be helpful for Areas to use.
- We have a rich history, so members are educated on the process. I was surprised at how little people in the Region knew. We receive a lot of material about the process before the Conference. The Trustees are trying to reach out and are considering putting out podcasts that talk about what we do at the World Service Conference (WSC).
- I have resources and I have time. It is a commitment, but it can be done. How I use and share my time and energy is in my control. I include my Higher Power, family, employer, Sponsor and my groups as my resources. I share my enthusiasm. It is more than work; it is exciting to grow in my program. It is a continuation of what my program is. It is not just my group.
- We have a lot of members with experience in service who are qualified to submit. We have a Structure that works—Area, District, Assemblies. There are lots of ways to get information out. Everyone knows someone who’s qualified. I love the RCT because we need time to ramp up. Start early to talk about it.
- Our members are resources. Have we articulated what the gap is, what happens when the Board is not full, what happens to the Board? We need more responsiveness than just me educating.
- We elected a nominee, had our Assembly and affirmed our candidate there. Affirming a Regional candidate is the right process. I am uncomfortable with the TAL process because Areas know people and know what they are capable of and believe in the group conscience of their Area.
- In addition to time, financial expectations and resources are important.
We are self-supporting so there is no out-of-pocket expense. Expenses are paid by the WSO when we are traveling.
- We are the conduit of information. Members cannot be excited about something they don’t understand. I am glad we are getting a good understanding of what the implications are for the Trustees and the fellowship. If we don’t understand, we can’t be an effective conduit. Every time I go back and show my excitement, it is infectious. Talk about the excitement of the role of Trustee—it is in our delivery.
- When positions are not filled, the work remains the same. If the Board is full, the work is divided by 19; if two are missing, the work divided by 17.
- We come into the program believing our resources are limited, yet we talk about abundance in finances. Are we doing the same thing today with time—saying “I don’t have enough,” when we should try to change that thinking to abundance—“I have all the time I need.” How are we going to spend it?

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of the world and our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion (considering length of the process, availability of prospective applicants, legal oversight responsibilities of the Board of Trustees)?

- The RCT criteria is confidential, so I have no idea what the fellowship is looking for. I don't understand why the criteria judged should be confidential. I would be much more likely to submit if I knew what was being looked for.
Regarding skills the Board needs do you know whether the person has them: The pro is that Areas learn what the need is at the moment of application. New conversations and discussions at the Board may change the needs. We are not nimble and flexible if we put information out too soon. We look at the information and how it is going out. The Executive Director puts out a letter in June and January that notifies everyone of nominations that are about to occur and in which Regions they will take place. If you look at the letter and it does not make sense, ask for help. Ask for clarity from your Trustee contact.
- The links of service don't talk about the Regional Delegates meeting. That is where a pool for Trustees comes from. Once we learn what being a Trustee is all about, we can take it back to our Areas.
- The Board would like a bigger pool of applicants. There are two different processes. A TAL applicant fills out a résumé and sends it in. In the Regional Trustee (RT) process, an applicant gets a résumé from the Delegate to fill out, then turns it over to the AWSC and Assemblies. Areas have different processes for moving a résumé over. Knowing your Area's process is important.
- Transparency at the WSC is improving. I am getting the information I need to make decisions as a Delegate. Participation at the Area will follow because the WSC is more attractive. I have members asking to help. It takes time to filter down. As transparency gets better, it will happen. We are an aging population. There is a learning curve for us. Passing on information takes time, support and sponsorship at the WSC.
- We need Trustees to come to Assemblies and talk about their exciting work.
- The specifics of the RCT process are not selected until the year of the process, so recruitment is not happening. The WSO should create the RCT a year earlier to allow more time to build awareness.
- We already had our last Assembly before the deadline to bring someone forward. It was difficult as a first-year Delegate. We may not catch it. I feel now I understand the process—I have the resources. There are many forms. Each Delegate has a different capability. I recommend additionally using AFG Connects and *In the Loop* and approaching it like a big job search. The number of good candidates relates to what is happening in our Area: We have an aging population. We need to be working with younger people.

What are the ethical implications?

- Use "I" statements—attraction.
- What language am I using when I speak of service—attraction versus promotion? Be able to talk about the practical benefits in my life and those I met. People are very interested. I am very careful in service of what is posted on websites.
- As of Conference, we have been down three RTs. Two-thirds of the Regions have no RT. The process is ingrained in the history of service. It is important to "Let It Begin with Me."
- When the word "recruit" is used, it does not sit well with me. It is okay when hiring for the WSO, but it gives the wrong impression in the fellowship. We should encourage members to apply.
- As a Trustee elected through either process, you are not representing a Region, but AI-Anon as a whole. It is not how we get here, but that we do get here.

What do we wish we knew and how we can improve?

- What does a Trustee do? The qualities needed for Trustee are in Concept Nine. Do they know that?
The Nominating Committee first considers qualities in Concept Nine as the number one consideration. Can they work with other people? Do they have a broad world view? They have to be leaders with vision.
- Do Areas have workshops regarding the RT and the process in general?
- There are members who are eager to do service. How many qualified candidates that don't make it through the Area process try a second time?
- Based on the application, it looks like so much service. Why would I reach out to Coordinators or the AWSC? Have there been RT and TAL candidates who have not been Delegates? Yes.
- The timeframe for service commitment always comes up. If that were removed, would there be more interest?
- We need a list of the top reasons why people don't apply.
- How many are needed from each Region?
TALs can come from anywhere in the World Service Conference Structure. When we write to those who are not selected, we invite them to consider resubmitting.

The Conference Chairperson reminded the Conference that this is a Board Thought Force. The Thought Force will take the ideas to the Board and come back next year with the information it gathers as a next step.



Policy Work Group: Virtual Meetings

Tina B. • Trustee, Work Group Chairperson

The goal of the Work Group was to explore ways of including electronic/virtual meetings in our Structure. As part of its charge, it needed to bring an outline to the World Service Conference (WSC) and begin conversation on this topic.

What are they?

Al-Anon electronic meetings use different online platforms: digital (for example, email, discussion boards and Skype), social networking (e.g., Facebook) and phone. Each meeting is autonomous in its style, format and entry procedures and, like all Al-Anon meetings, agrees to abide by the spirit of the Twelve Traditions. Meetings focus on Al-Anon-related topics, and participants are required to maintain their personal anonymity. Pictures of Al-Anon members and other pieces of personally identifying information are not posted publicly in the meetings. Some participants may have email addresses specifically for online Al-Anon meeting use; some use pseudonyms.

Each meeting may have its own entry procedures. Some online meetings have an email contact where a “greeter” provides the newcomer with specific directions to access the meeting.

Meetings that don’t list a specific meeting time are held 24/7.

Page 27 of the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) states that:

In 2001, the WSO started registering on-line meetings, and in 2007, phone and other electronic meetings. Electronic meetings offered Al-Anon members a

means of connecting and sharing the Al-Anon program regardless of location.

By 2018 there were over 25,000 groups in 133 countries and 107 electronic (digital, social networking and phone) meetings.

Where are they?

To find electronic/virtual meetings, go to the Al-Anon website (al-anon.org), under the “Al-Anon Meetings” tab.

Pages 88–89 of the 2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (“Electronic Meetings”) state that:

The internet and other electronic telecommunication media are tools for carrying and sharing the Al-Anon program of hope and recovery around the world. These electronic meetings occur globally as well as locally without geographic restrictions. Consequently, electronic meetings do not have a Group Representative and are not a part of any structure. They do, however, have a meeting contact.

When electronic meetings form, they register with the World Service Office (WSO) in order to use the Al-Anon name. Upon registration, they receive support from and have their voices heard and represented through the WSO. Registered meetings may request a license from the WSO to use in text format the Steps, Traditions, Concepts of Service, Suggested Welcome, Suggested Closing and excerpts from Conference Approved Literature (CAL).

The Chairperson continued, "Today's discussion is just the beginning. Electronic/virtual meetings have been registered and have been holding meetings since 2001. Our discussion will include some things we know about the meetings and some we wish we knew."

"We know that face-to-face meetings have a service structure path of member-to-group-to-District-to-Area, and, via the Delegate, to the WSC. We also know that electronic/virtual meetings have a service structure of member-to-meeting-to-WSO and, via WSO Staff, to the WSC."

"Do the electronic/virtual meetings consider this adequate? We don't know."

"We also know that face-to-face meetings have fixed geographic boundaries. Members of electronic/virtual meetings have no geographic boundaries. They can be found anywhere in the world. There are no Group Representatives and the groups are not part of any structure. Email may be the only means of contact. They do have a meeting contact."

For the discussion, Conference members were asked to consider electronic/virtual meetings' similarities to and differences from face-to-face meetings. For example:

- There are active members and "lurkers" (members who join and observe, but do not participate in the discussion): Is this the same as members attending face-to-face meetings who choose to listen, but not share?
- Different: After the meeting is registered, the form for reprint permission is sent to the Current Mailing Address (CMA) of the meeting. Reprint permission forms must be submitted annually. This may be difficult for an electronic, phone or social media meeting to comply with.
- Same: The meeting cannot happen when the person with the "key" for the meeting room doesn't show up. For the electronic/virtual meeting, when the person with the login doesn't show up, the meeting cannot happen.

The Chairperson concluded the introduction by saying, "Our Work Group members have done some outreach to a few electronic/virtual meeting members to allow them to share some of their thoughts. The following questions were asked:

How are they like face-to-face meetings?

How might the electronic/virtual meetings fit into our Structure?

What do we know?

What do we wish we knew?"

The floor was then opened for discussion:

- For six years, my husband was in relapse and my children and I became involved in an online meeting. We had already attended face-to-face meetings for nine years. Those meetings saved my life. I was very conscious of following the Traditions and Legacies. They were the most loving communities. I wish I knew how to find them now. I continue to use technology as a tool rather than a cure-all to solve every problem.
- I was surprised at how easy it was to find them on our website and register.
- We are talking about them in meetings. Many members don't know they exist.
- I wish I knew how secure they were regarding predators. I know we have a setup for this and they are registered. Can they be hacked?

• I know people use them. They are mentioned at meetings. Years ago a woman with two young children wanted to go to meetings, but her husband was not able to watch the children. She found online phone meetings. I cautioned her to go to face-to-face meetings as soon as she could. It is easy to get isolated. When we support virtual meetings, how can we offer information about getting to face-to-face meetings? How can we get that information out?

• I wish I knew how many people we are potentially losing because of their lack of access to face-to-face meetings. I know my home group is 90 miles away. Online platforms helped me stay connected and feel part of until I got to face-to-face meetings.

• As an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS), I asked an Alateen to go to a virtual meeting. I didn't know an AMIAS had to be in the meeting and the Alateen waited over two hours. How will teens know when that meeting starts? Has that been resolved?
Yes, it has been resolved.

• A member discussed this at Assembly and when we used a search engine to find meetings she found resources that were giving the impression that they were Al-Anon when they were not, in fact, Al-Anon.

• I know remote, rural Areas have groups, but because of aging or concern about anonymity, many have chosen to connect through online meetings. If they move, they become strong Al-Anon members because they are able to stay online. They can show up without a reservation. It is a place for people to go at night.

• I couldn't sleep through the night, so I joined an online meeting. Now I have rejoined, and I can tell you they are Al-Anon meetings. It has over 1,500 people around the world. The one I go to is structured. It has a business meeting bimonthly and a Steering Committee. The drawback is that emails can flood my inbox, leaving me with 100 unread messages. It was a problem when I became Delegate. I feel safe and have a Sponsor living in another state. She is a longtime member who can't find anyone to carpool with.

• I went to an online email meeting. I was unable to share everything in a face-to-face setting because I was not used to telling my story and sharing in meetings; I was used to living with an alcoholic. Online meetings helped me tell my story. I could write a document, paste it into a meeting and send and not get thrown out. It played big part in my recovery.

• I have attended a Yahoo group for 20 years. It is an electronic meeting. The Preamble/Closing follows the *Service Manual*. I can post a share based on any open topic.

• I go to a face-to-face meeting once a week. I am working full time with kids. I attended online meetings that were more like a constant blog. When I couldn't get a babysitter, they were lifesavers. Are these 107 registered online groups contributing to the WSO? Why couldn't they send Delegate representation?

• I am a member of an electronic email group. I moved to a small town and needed it. There is a daily digest. They follow the Al-Anon Preamble/Closing and encourage face-to-face

meetings. Online is not enough. I need face-to-face meetings so I can talk directly to people.

- My online meeting has members from multiple international communities.
- I do a lot of traveling. Online meetings are a lifesaver. Knowing there are different ways to participate and reach out 24/7 is helpful. It fits in as an additional meeting. Difficulties come and go fast. How do you know what group is registered? As an experienced member, I know they are following the *Service Manual*. New members might not be able to discern that.
- How will they fit into the Structure and do we know how many members may attend?

What do we know? There are tens of thousands participating. Currently we do not have any registered Al-Anon meetings on social media but we know the Al-Anon name is being used on those platforms. It is not clear what to do to get them to register and join us. We wish we knew why they don't want to. We have had a conversation with the largest unregistered social networking meeting which currently has 28,000 members. Forty percent of those members are less than 40 years old. This social networking meeting does not hold Al-Anon meetings in public. Al-Anon meetings have to be moderated to get in so as to protect members' anonymity. They support online sponsorship and encourage face-to-face meetings. Their representatives stated, "We are following the Traditions and have group conscience meetings." They didn't think they needed anything from the WSO. They do not follow rotation of leadership, so if it was connected we could reinforce the Legacies.

- I have been involved since 1994. How might virtual meetings fit into our Structure? They are here to stay and they believe they are sharing Al-Anon. We are hung up on the

Group Representative (GR) and geography. If we required groups to have a GR in order to register, there would be far fewer meetings. It is not mandatory. I would like to see electronic/virtual meetings have access to all our literature electronically and sponsorship. They are not getting the whole recovery. Are there Step, Legacy and Book Study meetings? Let's try to fit them in.

- Are they being encouraged to work the Steps and get sponsorship? Are those folks bringing it back to the fellowship? We are having trouble getting service positions filled.
- They provide what we want, when we want and how we want it. How can we fit them into our Structure? Our Assembly is offered telephonically. Areas could participate electronically.
- Electronic/virtual meetings are definitely of benefit in my Area. We have no active Alateen groups. There are small towns, but our membership is not savvy about computers. Maybe our Area Officers can have a virtual meeting to connect more.
- My Sponsor for 17 years was part of an email online meeting. Any type of email meeting will get more and more of our aging population. Members in their 30s do not use email. Social media (200 new members a day seeking help and hope) is the area to get into and figure out.
- Electronic meetings are not in competition with face-to-face meetings. I hope to find a way to make a partnership work.
- A personal comment from a virtual meeting member: "What I look forward to most in retirement is visiting as many face-to-face and virtual meetings as I can."

DELEGATES (PANEL 56)

Marty W., Alabama/Northwest Florida

I don't remember mentioning alcohol, or drinking, to the therapist. I was there because Martians were coming to kidnap me! Nevertheless, at the therapist's suggestion, I went to my first Al-Anon meeting in California in May of 1975. I would like to say that I found a Sponsor, worked the Steps, and enjoyed ever-forward movement in my program, but that is not my story. I made a *commitment* to my recovery in January 1984, in Alabama. I would like to say that having a Sponsor and working the Steps, I immediately got active in service at all levels. Again, not my story! I was very active in my home group; however, I was getting what I was interested in from our members and literature. I was aware there were higher levels of service but did not believe they were for me. In the late 90s, due to a work change, I was unable to make my home meeting. I found meetings on the road, but I had no consistency and I soon lost interest. I never left Al-Anon, though! I stayed in contact with my Sponsor until she quit attending meetings. I read my literature every day and shared the message every time an opportunity was presented. I considered myself very active in recovery. I always knew as soon as I could be in town on Wednesday evenings, I would be back in my chair at my home group.

Finally, that day came: December 26, 2001. Having been in my chair just five minutes, I realized I was crazier than I had ever been! *There is no standing still in Al-Anon!* Then, in September of 2006, I got a call from one of the "cool kids," asking me to serve as Group Representative (GR) and District Representative (DR) and that's why, after 22 years, I moved forward in service. The "cool kids" *needed me!* What a journey: One thing that eased the journey is that, due to my hiatus from meetings, I *knew* that if you are not moving forward, you are moving backward—there is no standing still in Al-Anon or in life! This lesson served me well when I stepped out to serve beyond my group. Having learned to rely on my Higher Power for the approval I needed, I was able to serve the positions He brought me to. Love poured through members to me when I screwed up; they assured me that it was okay to not be perfect. When my service as Delegate is complete, I look forward to serving as a member of our Area World Service Committee (all past Delegates are members) and growing through all the new service opportunities my Higher Power leads me to.

Norma F., Alberta/Northwest Territories

Al-Anon—There is no standing still! Those words describe our program and its members so well. From the very beginning, Lois and Anne were moving forward at a remarkable speed. It never ceases to amaze me how forward-thinking they were. They were preparing for 2018 way back in 1951! How could they know what this program would mean to us here at this 58th World Service Conference? Could I even imagine that I would be standing here, addressing this Conference when I attended my first meeting over 35 years ago? I don't think so. At the time, it was a huge effort just to get to a meeting. I didn't drive and, furthermore, I didn't think I deserved to go out by myself, leaving my husband at home to babysit.

At that very first meeting, the ladies in the room welcomed me and told my story over and over. I couldn't believe that they felt the same way I did. I kept touching my lips to see if it was me talking. I found hope in that meeting and knew I had to come back. The first time I met our Area Delegate, a small spark was lit in me that maybe

someday, I could be one, too! My first Sponsor instilled in me the importance of service. I started by making cupcakes for our bake sales and fun nights. I enjoyed the many workshops and special events that were held in our District and Area. I was soon attending Assemblies and was welcomed there as a newcomer again. I love the business of Al-Anon. I love watching our leaders use the principles of the program to inspire us to continue to reach out to friends and families who are affected by alcoholism. Then I was introduced to some of the Trustees and World Service Office Staff. The Al-Anon world kept getting bigger and more inviting. Serving as Delegate for my Area has been an educational and truly wonderful experience.

I feel so blessed to have met so many awesome people, who are all committed to our fellowship. The God of my understanding has had His hands on my shoulders; He was gently edging me towards my true purpose in life. I want to thank all those who have served before me and paved the way for us to continue moving forward. There is no standing still!

Barbara L., Arizona

Someone once told me that the older a person gets, the quicker time goes by. That has certainly held true for this spiritual journey I have been on since I came into the rooms of Al-Anon, and especially for the past two years as I served as the World Service Delegate for Arizona.

Time has certainly flown by. As I stand before you today, it is hard to put into words my gratitude towards Al-Anon. I came into the program hurt, disillusioned, frustrated, angry and feeling like a complete failure. You took me in and opened your arms wide and loved me unconditionally until I could love myself. That is why I am in service. I want Al-Anon to be there for the next person and the next person and the next person. It is my desire that Al-Anon will always be there for the countless hurting individuals who, like me, need the love and support that can be found in these rooms. In Al-Anon, there is no standing still.

In Al-Anon, there is a pathway for growth through working the Steps, using the tools of the program, and doing service work. The first three Steps are about my relationship with my Higher Power; Steps Four through Nine are learning about myself and keeping my side of the street clean. Steps Ten and Eleven are what I continue to do each day to keep my relationships with my Higher Power and everyone else what they should be. Step Twelve tells me that the only way I can keep what this program has given me is by giving it away—by carrying its message to others.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "By improving yourself, the world is made better. Be not afraid of growing too slowly. Be afraid of standing still." Thanks to Al-Anon, my world has been made better. My life today is very different than it was before I came into these rooms. I really don't know where I would be today if I had not found Al-Anon. I know that if I just keep putting one foot in front of the other and doing the next right thing, there is nothing that will stop me from moving forward; I won't have to worry about standing still ever again.

Janis A., British Columbia/Yukon

I first learned of Al-Anon through a Reader's Digest article in 1976. I don't remember anything about the article other than the idea that Al-Anon could possibly help me. When my husband's al-

coholism became painfully public, I finally went to my first Al-Anon meeting. Two years later, I went to my second meeting and found a warm group of people who helped me break out of my isolation. So here I am today, embracing the journey that has given me a life I couldn't have imagined!

This year's Conference theme reminds me of the need to participate in my own recovery. By investing my time in service to Al-Anon, I reap the rewards of personal growth in so many ways. I remember my first trip to the World Service Conference. I had a lot of fear and I wanted so much to learn how to be a "good" Delegate. In the orientation session for new Delegates, I heard, "We want you to succeed." Then, when the Conference started, I was seated next to a beautiful member from Louisiana who was also a new Delegate. The fear started to lessen as I was reminded that my Higher Power brought me here. Throughout my term as Delegate, I learned so much about the process of opening my heart and mind to each topic of discussion. I soaked up the spirit of love and acceptance demonstrated every day. There were some difficult discussions and we listened to all points of view, sometimes stopping to say the Serenity Prayer to remind us to rely on our Higher Power. I learned to have confidence in the process and to have those difficult conversations without fear. When we listen to each other to learn about other perspectives and look for the spirit of Al-Anon in the solution, the answers often become clear. If there is no consensus, no decision is made. In my final year as Delegate, I am humbled by the many people who contribute their time and talents to ensure that Al-Anon has a future.

I try to convey to members in my Area the importance of participating in service to Al-Anon. It seems to me that we are in a period of waning enthusiasm in my Area and perhaps in others. We appear to have fewer members interested in service and the number of groups appears to be declining.

I pray that Al-Anon continues to adapt to the changing needs of our communities and the wisdom of the program becomes evident to those who would benefit from it. Thank you all for your service to this program. We all love and thank you all for your loving kindness to this very grateful member!

Eloy M., Colorado

When my wife came to me to announce she wanted a divorce and she wanted me to pack a bag and leave, I knew there was no standing still. After trying to talk her out of it for about two hours, I realized she meant what she said. She wanted a divorce. Nothing meant more to me than being married, having a family and a home. And now, it was all dissolving.

That was on a Monday night in 2005. I don't think I slept more than eight hours that entire week. I couldn't wait to get back to my Friday night Al-Anon meeting, which was appropriately named "Into Action." After I abandoned that meeting nine years earlier, erosion set in. My insecurities, sarcasm and selfishness all showed up again. That erosion was costing me my marriage. Friday night couldn't come fast enough.

Three things happened when I returned to that Friday night meeting. First, I wept as I shared my story, and they hugged me. Second, I found out there are 15 meetings in town. Third, I knew I couldn't stand still or second-guess my commitment to my recovery. I needed to get to work. I went to every meeting I could find.

I heard you say, "Get a Sponsor." There was no standing still for me. I started looking for a Sponsor. I heard you say, "Find that one authority, a loving God that we talk about in Tradition Two." My God was a religious God who was punitive. I looked for and found a

loving, compassionate, guiding God to whom I would willingly give authority over all my life. I did not hold anything back.

You said, "Work the Steps with both your Sponsor and God." There was no standing still. I got busy by admitting I was powerless and my life was unmanageable. You said, "Find a place to serve." I became the literature person for my home group. Service revealed the spiritual principles we talk about in our Steps and Traditions. Our spiritual principles came to life for me as I learned how to apply them and as I learned how to serve.

You encouraged me to do my prayer and meditation work and continue cultivating my conscious contact with God. Al-Anon gave me the gift of a spiritual awakening; you taught me there is no standing still in Al-Anon.

Renelle M., Georgia

I walked up to the doors of an Al-Anon meeting and hesitated, wondering, *do I go back into the despair of the family disease of alcoholism, or do I muster the courage to move forward?* With trepidation I entered the room. I was met by open arms filled with compassion, understanding and love. For the first time in my life I had found a group of people who understood and accepted me.

A kind and gentle lady took me under her wing, sharing her experience, strength and hope. She became my Sponsor, and we began walking side by side as she encouraged me to take my first Step, then another, and another. Soon I discovered walking beside me was not only my Sponsor, but my Higher Power as well.

I began to grow spiritually. I came to believe that I was a child of God and I was loved. I became open and honest with myself. Humbly, I forgave myself and others. I made amends to those I had harmed.

Trusting my Higher Power, I developed spiritual ears to hear that small, still voice. It was calling me to give back that which had so freely been given to me. I could no longer sit on the sidelines. Was I willing to be of service? Yes! Did I feel capable or confident? No! My Sponsor assured me I had something to give back—to trust the call and know that I didn't have to do this alone. She told me others would be there to help and God would not desert me. My job was to invite Him into each day and ask for His guidance and protection.

My service journey has taken many twists and turns. At times, I veered off the spiritual path, my character defects were magnified, I made mistakes, and found myself wanting to crawl into a hole and hide. During those times I had to dig deep into our spiritual principles and take action. As a result, I grew closer to my Higher Power, I became even more humble, I grew in understanding, my vision broadened, my heart opened up and I experienced God's embracing love.

Al-Anon calls me to serve. When I hear that small, still voice, I stand and say I am willing. I reach out my hand and grab hold of those who went before me, while reaching back for the hand of the newer member. Joined together in harmony, we get to witness miracles and experience the mysteries of God's universe. When I say yes to service I am saying yes to life and to my personal recovery. Today I understand that in Al-Anon, there is no standing still.

Tony S., Maritime Provinces

When thinking about this year's theme, "change" comes to mind. Before, the word "change" put fear in my thinking. The "status quo," although tumultuous at times, was something I felt comfort in.

You see, one night my wife at the time told me she was an alcoholic, and had chosen to seek help. Even though I had grown up in a home where alcohol was abused, I was devastated.

After living in alcoholism for more than 41 years, I decided to

find out as much as I could about “alcohol.” A friend mentioned Al-Anon, which was not anything new as my dad had gotten sober in A.A. by then and I had attended several of his meetings, and my mom helped start the group I presently attend.

Desperate for knowledge, I decided to “stop standing still” and embarked on my Al-Anon journey. That was in the 90s, and I have not stood still since. Shortly after, my wife sought a separation and eventually a divorce. My life turned upside down. To survive, I had to accept this and move forward. I am so grateful for Al-Anon and the wonderful members who took my hand and led me forward through probably the lowest part of my life.

My journey in this program has been nothing short of a miracle; it has allowed little time for standing still. I promptly became involved in service—my way to “fit in” and feel “a part of,” which was what I needed. This path provided an opportunity to serve my group, then District, become involved in the Area and to my amazement, Conference.

Al-Anon has become my life changer. I have been blessed to have found this wonderful program, and fortunate to realize how much I need it each and every day of my life. I am so grateful that I have never thought for a moment that I finally got it all figured out and don’t need the program. This would mean standing still, and I’m sure you all know what would come next.

You see, I found a great travel companion on this journey: my Higher Power, who has opened so many doors for me. My life today is great—not every day, but most—and together, there is nothing we can’t face. I know if I continue doing what Al-Anon has taught me to do, I’ll have some great experiences in my future.

Standing still is not an option for me. Change, though sometimes challenging, opens so many doors for me. My choice is to “hold on” and enjoy all that life has to offer and Al-Anon has to give.

Richard McC., Massachusetts

Standing still: Five days left and I haven’t written a single word. I’m totally blocked and starting to worry. This can’t be happening to me; I’m a third year Delegate.

Hope: I’m here because, while mired in the misery of watching my parents die of drinking, my brother stubbornly Twelve-Stepped me until, moved by grace, I let go and followed him here. A woman stands and shares her story. I don’t remember a word she says, but she is radiant, serene, and free. She tells my story and worse, without a trace of shame or guilt. She’s proof that this program works. She offers me hope and I let it in.

Firewall: Al-Anon becomes my entire life: all my friends, all my time, and lots of meetings. I do the work and life burns bright. My Sponsor says, “Don’t build the program around your life; build your life around the program.” Instead, I build walls and am safe behind them. I think this is all I need; let nothing else in.

Consequences: I’m at a high ropes course, excited for the challenge. I’m up so high; I taste my fear of falling. I stand on a trapeze, trying to reach the next platform. I swing harder and harder. Someone who knows shouts, “Let go and jump.” But my fear just won’t let me, so I remain swinging, just missing, until my legs tire. I slip, I fall and, though safe in my harness, I’m lowered to the ground in defeat.

Moved by grace: It’s the Eastern Seaboard Alateen Conference. The welcoming teen runs up and hangs three balls of yarn around my neck, and tells a story of “warm fuzzies” that become “cold pricklies” if you don’t give them away. My fear slyly says I’ll look okay if I keep these three and don’t play silly games. I hang on until Sunday when I’m feeling cold and prickly, pretending not to know.

Then a vulnerable, courageous teen is sharing her painful loneliness. Her tears touch my heart and without thinking I leap up, hug her, and place three “warm fuzzies” around her neck. Back I sit; my brain catches up and screams, “What have I done?”

Wonder: My fearful mind needs safety and holding on. My open heart sings the joy and wonder of letting go. On this day, as I sit dumbstruck, a teen comes up and gives me a hug and a “warm fuzzy,” then another, and another. The rest of the day, the faster I give mine away, the more I receive. The supply is inexhaustible, the flow unstoppable. And fear stands still as I let go.

Rachelle C., Minnesota North

As I sat down to condense this experience into three minutes of thoughts to share, I was filled with gratitude, wonder and humility. My experience as Delegate has changed me in ways that may take me years to understand. It has widened my view of Al-Anon and deepened my understanding of the Legacies, yet it has brought me back to the simple message of Al-Anon and the importance of working the Steps, trusting my Higher Power and being of service in my own community.

During my first Conference, I was all fired up and ready to use my business and organizational skills to help fix whatever needed fixing in Al-Anon. I was feeling pretty confident that Al-Anon could use my help (reminds me of walking into my first meeting. How can I help all of you?) My Higher Power had other plans, however. I came down with a bad cold the second day of Conference and it took all my energy to just sit in the seat, listen and vote.

My husband died unexpectedly three weeks after my first Conference. I dropped every ball and my fellow Delegates, Area Officers and Al-Anon friends took over all of my tasks. I could not seem to do anything, but you still wanted me to be Delegate. You grieved with me and there was no pressure. I got to experience what it means to be held up in love and support by this fellowship. Yet, there is no standing still.

My Higher Power once again offered me a path to see through the grief to the spiritual lessons in humility, acceptance and letting go of control. I entered my second year as Delegate more openly, a better member of a team. I was less certain my ideas were right, but that felt just fine. I learned that my best is good enough. When I can’t do something, I am giving someone else a chance to step forward and contribute.

As I enter my final Conference, I am excited to continue to learn and contribute. The world keeps spinning and there is much to be done, and yet there is a stillness and contentment in the knowledge that I am enough, and each of us is enough. Our fellowship is strong and vibrant. I will keep walking in service and keep the simple message of this powerful program alive. And when I can’t believe in myself, I’ll jump into the center of this fellowship and I will be supported, carried, lifted up, until I can control my breath and begin to move forward again, and offer a hand to the person beside me when they stumble.

Kathy E., Mississippi

In 1984, my journey in Al-Anon began. As a new mother in an alcoholic marriage, I didn’t know where to turn for help. My introduction to Al-Anon started with an aftercare family treatment program at a local hospital. Al-Anon provided me with the relief and comfort I was seeking. Other members understood my fear, tears, grief and anger. My relationships with other members changed my life. While my marriage ended in divorce, I knew my Higher Power had me firmly in His grip.

In 1987, I moved and immediately found a new Al-Anon group. My mother and I began a new relationship based on honesty and truth. We began healthy, open communication for the first time in my life. I came to understand that I was an adult child of an alcoholic, blaming my mom because I didn't understand how my father's drinking had affected me. The thumbprint of alcoholism as a disease became painfully apparent.

In 1989, I moved again and found a new Al-Anon adult children's group. My participation began to increase as I chaired meetings, shared with newcomers, sponsored others, attended Al-Anon Conferences and occasionally spoke to groups. My child and I attended our first Alateen Conference when she was 12, and at our second Conference, I was elected to serve on the Alateen Board. I got a Service Sponsor who loved sharing the Alateen/Al-Anon message of help and hope as much as I did.

In 2011, I became the Group Representative for my home group. I then served as our District Representative, and then Alternate Delegate. Our Delegate resigned after one year and by default, I became the Area Delegate. It was unexpected. But God was the planner and I was the willing servant.

To me, Al-Anon has been fluid, not rigid or strict. The process of applying the Steps, Traditions and Concepts have provided all that I need to live a simple life and be of service to others. I have participated in at least two meetings a week for 33 years. I have taken what I liked and given what I had to give. While there is no standing still in Al-Anon/Alateen service, I am so grateful to know that I have a chair in which to sit and listen on Monday and Friday nights at my home group; there, I know I am loved and accepted without doing a thing. I can sit quietly, love and accept others and keep coming back. My Higher Power knows how to best direct my path. I am happy today because I became willing to take the first step many years ago.

Elaine D., Montana

Walking into my first meeting, I never thought I would make the journey that has brought me into service as a Delegate. Two years prior to that meeting, I realized I could no longer live with my husband's drinking, and that I had used everything in my arsenal to get him sober. If he could not be sober, I needed to move forward.

Once I let go of him, our Higher Powers were able to work in our lives. He got sober, attended A.A. and I stayed resentful of his serenity and lonely as he was supported by his many A.A. friends.

What was it that they had that I did not? I attended open A.A. meetings with him, seeking what they had. I heard many good things, learned about the disease of alcoholism and had fun! I was, however, once again looking through a window from the outside. I loathed myself. Why did he have a place to fit and I did not? I was still in the same place I had always been.

On a Tuesday in May, my Higher Power escorted me to an open door. On the other side of that door was a fellowship of people who had been through some of the same things I had been through—they had lived with the illusion that I had; that somehow, I had control over things that were not mine to control.

With the help of these beautiful members, I began to move forward. They shared their experience, strength, hope and love. I used the Serenity Prayer, read Al-Anon literature, used the slogans and worked the Twelve Steps. I participated in "meetings after the meetings." I met members who were active in service and I was asked to be of service. I witnessed what the Traditions and the Concepts of Service were doing for them.

Being active in service has allowed me to discover myself and others in ways I could not have imagined. In "spits and spurts" I moved from self-loathing to self-loving, changing my perception of others—learning to love others just where they are. I do not need to be perfect and no longer believe that I must be. What I give returns to me tenfold.

Newcomers stumble into meetings—I love them and admire their courage to come through the doorway their Higher Power has carried them to. I am eager to share my experience, strength, hope and what service has done for me. I see their inner light grow as they find hope and are no longer looking in from the outside. They, too, have found their place. In Al-Anon service, there is no standing still.

Ann Marie Z., New Jersey

I came into Al-Anon when I hit my bottom, not when other people told me I should go. Until that Friday evening it was always "their problem," not mine—my grandfather, my parents, my husband. Then I got the phone call from the juvenile detective in our town who was also the drum line instructor for my son's high school band. He told me about the drinking and drugging my son had been bragging about. While my husband took our son to talk to him, I called the local Al-Anon Information Service Office to find a meeting that would fit into my busy schedule.

I attended my first meeting that Sunday and knew a few things immediately: I knew that I was in a safe place. I knew the people were sharing honestly and openly and they were accepting and non-judgmental. I knew that if I wasn't participating that I would not be changing—I would be standing still. I shared at that first meeting and cried at 99.9 percent of my meetings that first year. The floodgates were opened and the pain came out. I knew I had to face the pain of my past in order to grow and change.

I was only in Al-Anon for seven months when someone from my home group suggested I join him on a ride to the Information Service meeting. He knew my background and thought that I might want to stand for the Treasurer's position.

During my time in Al-Anon, I have identified people who have what I want. I have always thought that if I wanted what they had, I needed to do what they did. So if he was our Delegate and thought I was ready to do service, then how could I say no? It was another growth opportunity—another opportunity not to stand still. I have been serving beyond the group level ever since.

Carol T., North Dakota

What a great ride it's been, Panel 56! I don't know about the rest of you, but my years as Delegate have been some of the greatest for growth, adversity, and gratitude yet! When I peek back at my time growing up in an alcoholic home, I see that there is a true gift in my experience. Without some negative, I would not recognize the positive. I am glad I will never have to graduate from this program, and I will continue to see growth in myself and encourage growth in others! Truly, there is no standing still in Al-Anon.

What I learn, I enthusiastically share. There is always room for me to improve myself, my surroundings and my world.

The lessons I have learned of love, loss, and joy are incalculable. My mother died September 7, 2017. She became ill quickly and passed within a few months. I had a difficult relationship with her; she was quick to criticize. She didn't like my kids, my husband, or my job. I felt the most positive about our relationship if I could escape before she took me to task on something.

But sometimes growth happens in Al-Anon without me knowing

it. When she became ill, my focus changed entirely. I was able to see my mom as I would want to be seen in her situation. My mom was legally blind, and her hearing had faded over the years. We decided to move her back home for her final weeks, so we could visit more often. We made connections not only to mom, but to each other. We sat around her bed, shared memories, and watched baseball. We held the phone to mom's ear when her brother called to say the rosary with her. Concept Four became my focus. Participation was what mattered.

We all grieved mom as we could, right where we were. Her passing from life to death became a celebration of sorts for our family. I invited my kids to spend time with grandma to say goodbye to her however they wished, with words or with silence. She held their hands. We rubbed lotion into her skin and brushed her hair. We said goodbye. We found a home for her cat, we sold her home, and now, with the exception of a few pictures, some recipes, and some photos, she is gone.

I forged a new relationship with my mom those last few weeks. I made it through this time with the help of my Higher Power and many of you—my Al-Anon family. Forward is the only direction that makes sense to me today. As long as I am moving, I am making progress.

Laura D., Oklahoma

I went to my first meeting 20+ years ago. I'd been worn down by my third marriage (the alcoholic) and a couple job situations. There was something comforting in that room.

After hearing my first speaker, I found hope. Within six weeks I asked a woman to be my Sponsor. Then, the group Treasurer quit. I volunteered to take the Treasurer's job so I'd be committed to attending meetings. I attended weekly, helped set up and greeted. My Sponsor guided me through the Steps to service, and my faith started to grow. She suggested I attend the Oklahoma Al-Anon Convention.

I went to the Convention that year and loved it. The speakers and workshops were inspirational, the fellowship was awesome and I saw my first Al-Anon skit. I was hooked. Later, I volunteered to help write the next skit and be in it.

I got more involved and was feeling better. I became Information Service Representative and served on the Information Service Office Board of Directors. My parents had moved in with me and my third husband while I was on the Board.

I served two terms on the Oklahoma Convention Committee and I chaired the Convention the last year of my second term. I helped with and was in skits regularly. I went on to be a District Representative, an Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service and an Alateen Coordinator. Each time I took a position, I learned so much more about the program and the Legacies, and my spirituality grew. When I sponsored someone or worked with an Alateen, I gained as much or more than they did.

Through all of this I gained the confidence and courage to divorce my third husband, and five years later I started dating. I began doing things differently. The year I was Convention Chair I invited the man who became my current husband to the Convention. I wanted him to meet my "family" and see what my life was like, as I had no intention of giving it up. We married in 2010.

I went to the very first TEAM event in New Mexico with my current Sponsor, a past Delegate. She suggested I attend the South Central Regional Delegates meeting. We talked about my interest in becoming Delegate one day. Voila! I stood for Delegate.

I am very grateful for this journey, the opportunity to serve as Oklahoma Delegate and to experience our World Service Conference. Even with various difficulties and challenges (divorce, loss of parents, additional step-children and grandchildren), I was able to go on with courage and confidence in my program, work and life. I was still shaky when I became Delegate, but thanks to my Higher Power, Sponsors and Al-Anon family I have been able to serve and grow.

Cindy E., Oregon

Being elected Delegate was something I had hoped for. I remember when two ladies from the World Service Office attended one of our Assemblies and said that I, too, could go to the World Service Conference. I had hoped to someday be worthy enough.

I moved through the service roles of Group Representative, District Representative and Alternate Delegate but I still had a secret and I cared very much about what people thought of me. I knew the saying, "What you think of me is none of my business," but it wasn't until my actions with a character defect that affected a few people let me know specifically what they thought of me, that I needed to do something different and also practice this saying. After 12 years in the program, I doubted who I was and whether Al-Anon really worked. I asked God for help. Passion is an area of concern for me. Originally, I listed it as an asset in my inventory, but I found that it led me to actions that fed my character defect. Having passion in serving Al-Anon was contributing to hurting myself and others while trying to do only good. Taking time away from service, I worked the Steps again to look for the root of my defect. It helped me feel honest enough to stand for Delegate. I believe God helped me become humble.

Then when I was elected Delegate, doubt came in and clouded my happiness. Was I really good enough? My Area didn't know me very well, and a few longtime members attending knew all of my insides; I didn't know what they thought of me.

I woke up the Monday morning of my first year at Conference with familiar voices: "What have I done? Who in the heck do you think you are?" I panicked. Then with God's timing, the phone rang. My Conference Mentor was asking me to join her for breakfast. Thank you, God. I still didn't feel worthy, but I did feel welcomed.

I made it through my first Conference by retreating often to my room, connecting with another Delegate and talking to God relentlessly. As Delegate, I learned to be proud of my work with my Area. I've learned to love myself no matter what anyone else thinks of me. I've helped to improve my reputation with kindness, acceptance and tolerance.

Where I thought the pinnacle of Al-Anon service was being elected Delegate, I've found another growing opportunity: Trustee. The Conference theme, "Al-Anon—There is no standing still!" means more than ever before. If I've learned this much in two years of serving as a Delegate, I can't imagine all that may be ahead.

Gaston A., Quebec East

To know, to want, to be able to, to act on it! We often say, "Knowledge is power," but this is not really true. The reality is that "knowledge gives power," and to have our dreams come true, *we have to be able to act on them*. Our program, with all its tools—the Steps, the Traditions, the Concepts, the meetings, etc. gives us the knowledge we need to grow and to know ourselves better, so we can have dreams and become able to do what it takes to act on them.

This became true for me when my son suffered from a serious

mental illness, due to abuse of alcohol and drugs. My wife and I knocked on many doors for help and this is how I found Al-Anon. Since this happened nine years ago, I have never stopped attending meetings and getting involved in service.

My son was hospitalized and was never the same after. His life was seriously touched by that episode, so my wife and I decided to keep him at home with us. He has come a long way since. He had a couple of jobs and he finally took a cooking class, with success. Today, he is a pastry chef. He is not using drugs anymore, but he drinks beer, which is progress but not perfection. He is a good person and staying with us is helpful to everyone involved.

I know today that my son's illness has affected me and the family greatly. Thank you, Al-Anon, because I know that I would not be where I am today in my relationship with my wife and my son if it was not for this wonderful program.

At the beginning, I went to meetings, sometimes three times a week. I started to get involved in the group, got elected GR, then DR, and here I am today. Service work has done great things for me and for that I am very grateful.

Being a Delegate was not an easy task for me, as I felt I was not ready for it. However, I surrounded myself with past Delegates, had a good Service Sponsor and never stopped asking questions when I was not sure or simply did not know what to do. I counted a lot on the World Service Office as well, and read everything that I was asked to read. Simply, I did what I was told to do!

With Al-Anon I found hospitality, good communication and respect; I appreciated all these traits very much.

Al-Anon, there is no standing still, so I will continue to serve our great fellowship. I will continue to give back what I have received with such abundance. Thank you for everything you have given me.

Ken R., Vermont

Let me start by expressing my gratitude for the help I've received, without which I don't think I would be alive today.

I was well into retirement when addiction raised its ugly head, and I got a reason to become a member of Al-Anon. It was December 5, 1999, about four in the afternoon. That is the day my youngest child was born. That is the day I lost my wife. I watched in horror as the anesthesiologist struck my wife's spinal cord with a needle. She has been on prescription opiates ever since. I am dealing with a walking corpse.

Fast forward about eight years. My 11-year-old son, unprovoked, attacked me with a golf club, breaking a car window, while his mother watched and stayed silent. Yes, men get abused too. After a year of preparation, I left home. I still remember driving away, having no idea what lay in store for me. I thought *Lord, here I am; do with me what You will. I am Yours.*

Fast forward about three more years. I looked everywhere for help but found none. Then a therapist recommended Al-Anon. I thought Al-Anon was for alcoholics. I had no place else to turn other than Al-Anon. Imagine my astonishment when, at my first Al-Anon meeting, I heard my story as each member spoke in turn. You see, shake both family trees as hard as you want, and there are no alcoholics. I had to be dreaming.

Take this message to others, Step Twelve said. I felt as if my Higher Power was leading me somewhere, but I didn't know where. I stand before you today not as a third-year Delegate, but merely as a symbol of all those whose family and friends suffer from an addiction other than alcoholism. They, like me, may have no place else to turn. Other programs simply don't exist in most rural areas. I beg of you, leave the emphasis on alcoholism while recognizing

the commonality alcoholism has with other addictions. I pray that Al-Anon will find it in its heart to do this. That is my dream. I also pray Al-Anon lives up to its Declaration and truly reaches out to the hundreds of thousands in desperate need of help. There is no standing still. Let's move forward together, doing the most good for the largest number of people possible. I will close by saying that I firmly believe my Higher Power has sent me here to deliver this message today.

Duane F., Virginia

I was a child of an alcoholic. My childhood was filled with abuse, confusion, abandonment and hurt. I came into Al-Anon in August 2005 at the advice of a counselor, feeling unloved, desperate, afraid, angry, and having many resentments and much shame. I was full of hate.

My story and reality started in 1966 when I was three years old. By 2005, I had cultivated a major victim role, and felt completely powerless over alcohol and totally out of control emotionally. I really didn't know the amount of baggage I was carrying, and every attempt to unload it and get help had failed. Three beautiful ladies in the program took me under their wings and encouraged me, loved me and talked me into service. I became an Alternate Group Representative in January 2006 and went to my first Assembly four months later. With their encouragement I found myself raising my hand for District Treasurer, Workshop Chair, Breakfast Chair and District Representative. I loved this program and attended the majority of Districts events, many Al-Anon Information Service events, Area Conventions, International Conventions and out-of-state Conventions.

During this time, I was attending several Al-Anon meetings each week and my life started turning around. I was involved with so many program events every year. I met many wonderful people who had been affected by someone's drinking and they accepted me, loved me, showed much patience, shared their stories, hugged me and made things fun. If I had gone to just my meeting all those years, it would have been good, but I would have missed out on all the hugs, laughter and major benefits of the whole Al-Anon program.

Since May of 2006, I have attended each Assembly in a service role. There are no real "bragging rights" here, just a deep appreciation for the Al-Anon program, which creates an environment of healing and gives us the tools to achieve a healthy life. My despair turned to hope, judgment turned to acceptance, law to grace, drama to fun, quitting to accomplishment, co-dependence to independence, demand to patience, fear to confidence, victim to "overcomer" and hate to love. The challenges of service have been character building; they gave me a chance to put my Al-Anon program into practice. There were always way more opportunities and successes personally in service for me. In 2013, several past Delegates asked me to stand for Alternate Delegate, and in 2016 they asked me to stand for Delegate. This program works; the service component along with a Higher Power adds so much to my Al-Anon experience. It's not just a program; it's a way of life! I have not been standing still and neither has my recovery.

Julie P., Washington

When I came into the rooms of Al-Anon, it was because my husband's detox nurse told me that's where I had to go. I wanted to go to Mexico instead. I didn't know how I was going to get there being very pregnant, with no money and a toddler, but I was going!

Thankfully, I went to Al-Anon instead of Mexico. I was very young when I got here, and I was terribly sick. I had no hope for the future, had fired God and was so painfully shy that I couldn't talk to people. Slowly I began to believe in a Higher Power. Tools like detachment helped me have a good day even when my husband didn't. The Steps, slogans and Conference Approved Literature helped me achieve a small amount of serenity until my husband found long-term sobriety.

My husband and I left the program for a period of years and our marriage fell apart. I came back to the program and this time around I jumped into service with both feet—and loved it! Somehow, I found the time to be a Group Representative, then a District Representative while going to school full-time, working and raising three kids on my own.

One day I took my five-year-old to work with me. He got to see where I worked and was excited that it had a secret door to climb into the area where I worked behind a counter. I was a bartender at a local theatre. It was a great part-time job that my Sponsor got me while I was going to school. A little while later, my son's kindergarten teacher asked him to draw a picture of what his mother did for work. He drew a picture of me making pancakes for Al-Anon! To this day I have never made pancakes for Al-Anon, but he knew what was important to me—service in Al-Anon.

For me, not standing still means, "What can I do today to be of service?" I learned in these rooms that those who are happy are those who have learned to serve. So how can I sum up my life in Al-Anon in a few short words? All I can tell you is that you took a young, broken, angry and painfully shy girl in your arms and loved her when she couldn't love herself. You gave me the courage to face my fears, the dignity to learn from my mistakes and the wisdom of when to speak my truth. You gave me the grace to let the beauty of my heart shine through. I got that courage, dignity, wisdom and grace from you. Thank you for walking this journey with me.

Marilyn M., West Virginia

My involvement in service work started very early in my journey with this wonderful program. I had been going to meetings for about two months when someone at a meeting was talking about an upcoming Fall Assembly; they asked me if I wanted to go. All I heard was "Road Trip," so off I went.

During the two-hour car ride, the members were talking about another member. They talked about her sense of humor, how she had helped so many people in the program as a Sponsor, the fun skits they had done at Assemblies, the love, peace and serenity she had shared with others and the fact that she was a past Delegate, whatever that was! I couldn't wait to meet her.

Then they talked about everyone going to the funeral home to pay their respects to the family of this wonderful woman. She had passed away a few days before. I don't remember much about the actual Assembly, but I remember going to the funeral home with a group of people I barely knew to meet a bunch of strangers. The love and acceptance that I found there was amazing. Everyone was hugging, laughing and crying. Her family was so grateful for all Al-Anon had done for them.

You see, my partner of ten years had recently found sobriety and recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. That was what I had always hoped for, but I was still miserable.

Those members of Al-Anon had welcomed and accepted me in a way most of society hadn't. They understood just what I was feeling. They invited me into every part of this amazing program. They wanted me to see and experience service to others in its purest form. Their only objective in service was to make sure this program was available to everyone, everywhere no matter what kind of relationship they were in.

That was the day that I decided that Al-Anon was a program I needed to commit to. Al-Anon needed me to step up to service, get a Sponsor, work the Steps, get involved, be welcoming to anyone who walked through that door for the first time or found their way back after an absence.

Service has given me so much more than I can ever repay: I am a better daughter, sister, partner and friend through Al-Anon's teachings.

I would like to thank that member, whom I never met but have benefited from, because of her service and a life lived in Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service.

Don B., Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

This challenge of sharing for three minutes is a new one for me. So, let's talk about challenges, in life and in Al-Anon.

In my life there were many challenges—growing up in a home where alcohol was the contributing factor in all that was done. Work, play, where we lived, everything was dominated by my dad's drinking. I remember many loud arguments about who was with whom in the tavern the night before. One time I tried to get in the middle and was pushed out of the way. That's the day I found my Higher Power. My parents divorced, and we moved in with my grandparents on my uncle's dairy farm. These were good years till my mom died of cancer. My brother and I went to live with our dad and stepmother. She was a good woman, but my dad's drinking was his priority. Again, I was in this craziness of living with an active alcoholic. I could tell he was proud of me with my drinking and smoking at 16 years old—following in his footsteps.

Growing up in a home where nothing was ever good enough, I became a perfectionist. In my adult life I worked for a home builder and quickly became the foreman, perfecting my skill as a carpenter. I joined the Army Reserve and went to Drill Sergeant School and became a leader of men. With the barking of one word, 120 men would snap to attention.

I married and had expectations of a wonderful life and family. Things quickly unraveled, however. My wife was an alcoholic. We divorced, and the alcoholism led indirectly to her death.

I found Al-Anon in 1984. Al-Anon saved my life and gave me life. I was blessed to have great Al-Anon friends who were willing to help someone who didn't feel deserving. I was encouraged to work the program and supported along the way. After many years of struggling with the program, my life started to get better and better. I wasn't sure I was ready, but an opportunity came up when I asked, "What is a GR?" I was told, "You are!" My service journey had started. I continued to move forward with each new challenge. The excitement of helping others and personal growth kept me wanting more. I stand here as the outgoing Delegate for Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I feel a great sense of pride in what I have accomplished and the life that I now live. I feel the love and caring of the fellowship. I'm not sure where I will go from here but I do know this: In Al-Anon, there is no standing still!

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Gabriela O., Mexico | Ann W., Denmark

Gabriela O., Mexico

My name is Gabriela, and I am a member of Al-Anon Family Groups. It is a great honor to be here, and it makes me so happy to participate for the first time in this Conference. It is a dream that has come true.

As the wife of an alcoholic, I lived in constant drama by trying to get sobriety in my home; it did not come until some years later. I isolated my family because of the shame this situation implied. My first son was the focus of all my frustration. I demanded that he be a perfect student, and I made him behave like an adult although he was still a child.

My children had a mother at home, but at the same time their mom was absent. I spent many years living this way; it gave me feelings of guilt and sadness until I heard Al-Anon's message. Surprisingly I found joyful, smiling, peaceful people within a secure, harmonious and reliable atmosphere. I found out that every session in Al-Anon stimulates and renews the people who attend regularly.

My children grew up and new experiences came along. As parents in recovery, it was hard for us to admit that a young member in our family had a drinking problem, and another process began. There was fear, guilt and so much pain. The experience caused us to practice detachment and make realistic and objective decisions. My daughter left home at the age of 17. After a month we heard news from her. Her illness was progressing. I confirmed that every member of the family that lives with an alcoholic is affected. We as parents and my children as well. So we attended our meetings to avoid going crazy. In the group we found understanding, strength and courage to keep going. I asked God so many times, why my daughter? Why us? The answer came along later on, and it was: Why not?

I remember those first prayers to God, asking Him for help. He guided my steps to an Al-Anon meeting and got me into service, where I have learned a lot. I have not left service since I started this spiritual path.

Today I am part of the Board of Trustees in the General Service Office (GSO) in Mexico. That has made me conscious of the big responsibility of this service. I am glad to let you know that our fellowship in Mexico has grown. We now have 3,049 Al-Anon groups and 486 Alateen in 38 Zones. Therefore, contributions have increased. We have 16 employees, including the Manager. Currently, our association is listed in the Service Tax Administration with a tax-exempt status for the distribution of our literature. The directory of groups online has improved.

We are creating and updating support materials for service. This year we started with the implementation of the National Project, "Healthy Groups," which consists of Trustees visiting a Zone of each one of the Panels, taking with them a specific agenda. A symposium aimed at professionals was held in March. It was organized by the GSO's Public Outreach Committee. This Committee also organized the first edition of the magazine "Facing Alcoholism Together," which is directed at professionals. It was organized by the GSO's Public Outreach Committee. Inquiries addressed to the Policy Committee decreased considerably; that's a sign that groups are learning how to resolve conflicts. We are continuing with the project "Al-Anon Is Spoken Here," which helps us counter external influences on our groups.

We keep fostering Task Forces. In July we will hold a Regional Seminar of Service in the State of Chihuahua. Each year in September we hold the "National Week: Get To Know Al-Anon and Alateen," where intensive Public Outreach work is done. In October we will hold the 28th Simultaneous National Congress, whose goal is to celebrate the anniversary of the GSO and at the same time promote the unity of Al-Anon through a simultaneous meeting across the entire country, strengthening our love and gratitude.

Thank God for letting me be at this WSC, for letting me meet you all. And thank you to you all for listening to me.

Ann W., Denmark

My name is Ann, and I'm a grateful member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon. I bring you greetings of love and fellowship from Al-Anon members in Denmark.

I attended my first Al-Anon meeting in August 2010. The start of that year had presented me with a failed relationship that had been extremely emotionally abusive. For the first time in my life, I knew I needed help; I had become aware of the constant emotional pain I was living in. A.A. and Al-Anon members at our church shared their friendship and stories with me during that year, and I am forever grateful to them for doing Twelfth Step work with me, inviting me to Al-Anon meetings and taking me to those meetings when I was ready.

The home I grew up in did not have alcohol present. This fact confused me at first, coming to Al-Anon. However, from the first meeting I attended, I knew I had come to the right place for help. Somehow, my heart understood everything that was shared by the other members! I did not have the words myself, but I recognized every single situation put into words by these members. I had been asking the God of my understanding to provide me with a toolbox—to give me hope. In that first meeting I felt Him saying to me: "This is the toolbox. Find someone to show you how to use these tools." And so, I found my first Sponsor and started working the Steps.

Later, I learned that my father was the child of an alcoholic. My paternal grandfather died of the disease, completely estranged from his family after abandoning them years before. My paternal grandmother was addicted to prescription medication. I remember seeing her kitchen cabinets filled to the brim with "medical supplies," as she would call it. My father and his siblings called her "the hypochondriac" behind her back. It was not meant affectionately.

Growing up, our home had a constant atmosphere of suppressed anger, striving, very strict rules and the threat of severe punishment from my father when he was not blindly obeyed. There was a lot of emotional abuse in our home. Both my parents were workaholics and pursuing their individual careers was their first priority. My father's behavior was always a source of great confusion to me. He never touched alcohol and I remember his look of disgust watching neighbors having a single beer. But some years ago I found out, with the help of A.A. friends, that my father's behavior was that of a dry drunk.

Al-Anon has taught me I always have choices and that I am never stuck in a situation. I found friends and a family amongst members. I sense my Higher Power still stretching me each day; our relationship has deepened in ways I never knew existed. I am never alone

and I know that when I feel fear, He is right beside me, supporting me. I love that there is always more to learn; there is always a reason to walk in.

My first Sponsor very quickly encouraged me to do service work in my home group. Today, I see what an impact in my recovery that made. I continue to do the same with the women I sponsor.

In 2015 I was elected as an International Delegate. I sort of stumbled into this position of doing national service work. Today I know it was my Higher Power giving me a loving push in combination with my fellow International Delegate, who saw potential in me. I have become convinced of the importance of service and of putting the common welfare first. For me, it is the way into the fellowship and further recovery. I experience the connectedness and peace of being part of the unity. I learn to use Al-Anon tools and principles in all areas of my life.

Al-Anon Denmark has 43 meetings nationally. In the capital of Copenhagen there is one English-speaking meeting and one Icelandic-speaking meeting as well. In the Faroe Islands there are two meetings, and in Greenland, four meetings. Sadly, we have only one Alateen meeting at the moment.

We do not have a physical GSO or paid Staff members. All service is provided by Volunteers/members, from answering the phone helpline to sending literature. Denmark is a small country and so we do not have Districts or Areas in our Structure. We have eight working committees plus one ad hoc committee working to redesign our website in 2018.

The Danish Service Structure meets twice every year at service meetings; one of these, called the Service Conference, includes all Group Representatives. This annual meeting is the final decision-making body for the Danish Al-Anon Structure.

In order to make administrative decisions more quickly, in 2010 we created an equivalent to a General Service Board, called Hovedservicerådet or HSR, which consists of at least one Representative of each of our working and ad hoc committees plus the International Delegates. The HSR meets at least four times a year.

We are working to encourage and attract more Al-Anon members to service, as well as to attract new members and inform the public of Al-Anon in Denmark. Our coming re-designed website is a big part of this effort.

There's no telling where service work will lead you! I am grateful for being here with you. And I am grateful to Al-Anon Denmark for sending me, for having enthusiastic confidence in me. Many of them told me that they were excited to hear my experiences from this trip; I cannot wait to share everything I have learned with them. Thank you for your love and friendship.

OPENING DINNER SPEAKER

Marsha W., Director of Programs

When I decided to walk through the doors of Al-Anon in 1988, I had no idea that my decision would mark the beginning of the life changes I needed to become the person I had always imagined myself as. I wanted to feel genuine joy, make my own choices and understand how to cope with everyday problems in my life without feeling like I was always in a crisis. Much of my life before Al-Anon was spent trying to find the right words, right thoughts, right person, place or the thing that I believed would magically help me understand what to do! I always thought that all the answers I was looking for would come from any place other than me.

I was born with childhood asthma and I was treated like I would break at any given moment in time. I was constantly being told, "Don't run," "Don't jump too much," "Button up your coat and put on a hat; you don't want to bring on an asthma attack." So naturally I followed directions and I learned to take on the fears of those around me. Because of the constant attention, I was very spoiled and I believed and acted like I was the only granddaughter and niece on both sides of my family. However, I did have approximately 17 cousins because both of my parents came from very large families.

During the earlier years of my life, I remember feeling very secure because my parents were so protective of me. I also felt isolated a lot during that time, so I learned how to amuse myself with books and TV. I escaped through books, which fed my vivid imagination. When I watched TV, I would fantasize that my life was the same as the characters' in the shows I watched. For instance, I created an older brother and sister for myself like the character, Cathy, had in the TV program "Father Knows Best"! So, when my little sister came along, I remember staring at her in my mom's arms while they were both in my parent's bed and not feeling anything but threatened! In my seven-year-old mind everyone seemed to make so much over her and I felt left out—on the outside looking in. This feeling stayed with me for a very long time.

My father was the baby in a family of nine. His mother had a stroke after having him. He told me that he felt responsible for her stroke from the time he could remember. He shared with me a story from when he was nine or ten years old. Because his dad was always working and his siblings were older, if he was outside playing he would stop and go home to see if his mom needed to go to the bathroom, because she was wheelchair-bound after her stroke. She died when he was 13. My father's oldest brother, who was described as the golden child of the family, also died of the disease of alcoholism during his formative years. So, in my opinion these two incidences in my father's life taught him how to take very good care of us. However, these significant losses for him also caused him to be emotionally unavailable at times; his fears drove his suffocating over-protectiveness towards us.

My mother came from a family of seven and she was next to the baby. Her parents divorced because of my grandfather's alcoholism when she was around two years old. She never had a good relationship with her father when she was coming up. She has shared that she was angry with him and blamed him because her mother had to work so hard to keep a roof over their heads.

My parents have known each other since they were kids. My mom shared with me that she admired my father because he was so responsible in taking care of his mother. I'm sure it was one of the reasons she married him. She credits my father with teaching

her the value of family. My mother was a stay-at-home mom and decided to go to nursing school shortly after my sister was born. This decision caused much tension in our household; my father did not want her to work. She seemed determined even though it went against his wishes. Her decision caused a battle of wills. So, although we were always financially secure and there was no physical abuse, emotionally I never knew from one day to the next what to expect at home; one parent was always verbally attacking the other and the other would always react. I grew up listening to those arguments, experiencing feelings of anxiety and fear and listening for the outcome. I never felt like I had anyone I could share these feelings with; the only people I wanted to talk to about my feelings were my parents, but they were unavailable. I think I made the decision that they could not handle my feelings about their arguments, so I buried them.

In my mind, my teen years were horrible, but outwardly I'm sure I presented differently. My feelings of isolation, of not feeling a part of, seemed to blossom even more. Now I also added not feeling pretty or smart enough. I began to select friends based on their popularity and intellect. Somehow I thought I could hide out in a group that had what I thought I lacked. I fell short in my own eyes, comparing myself to everyone. I did discover early on that I had one talent that got a lot of attention—I could make people laugh! So that was my role. I became the comedian in the group. I also learned to use this skill when the opportunities arose at home. I discovered that when I told jokes or acted silly, I seemed to have some measure of control—I could make my parents laugh. Sometimes it worked, and though many times it did not, I began to take this on as my caretaking role for them.

Fantasy in many ways became more realistic than real life. I once told a cousin that a boy she knew was my boyfriend. I shared with her details about our relationship and she totally believed me, until one day she asked him about something I mentioned to her and he told her he did not even know me! She was so angry with me because she was embarrassed. Instead of being upset because I was caught in a lie, I continued holding on to this fantasy. My fantasies felt more comfortable than living in the real world.

When I graduated from high school, I did not think that I was good enough to go to college. I had dreamed, however, of moving away from home. I made the decision to go to a career college, which was really an all-girls prep school. I was living in Washington, DC in 1969 and there was a lot of excitement during that time in the city! There were protests and demonstrations going on almost every day! I was living in an apartment with three other girls. Our school dorm was an apartment complex with a security guard. It was one of the reasons why my parents agreed to let me go to this school. We had one bedroom that had two sets of bunk beds, a dining/living room, a kitchen and one bathroom. At the time I continued putting on a façade with others that I was more mature than my 18 years. I'm sure that they saw right through me but, in my mind, I was street savvy and wise. Then late one night I woke up because I heard a scuffle in the alley outside of our bedroom window. I was the one that got hysterical and started crying and my roommates had to calm me down! Initially I wanted to call my parents and go home after this incident, but my roommates convinced me not to do that. I think it was the first time that I had ever revealed my true feelings to someone.

While at this school I met a young man who later became my boyfriend at one of our dances. He attended a nearby university, ran track, was very straight-laced and respectful. He had aspirations of becoming a doctor. I could not seem to really care for him. I found him too serious and boring! After I broke up with him, I met another young man who was cute, didn't know what he wanted to be and was not that interested in me. I found him exciting and mysterious and I fantasized every day about him! I would discover after doing many inventories in Al-Anon, that this was the type of personality I was most attracted to. If they were emotionally unavailable to me and had an addictive personality, I was drawn to them like a magnet.

After completing my studies at this school, I decided that I wanted to apply to a four-year college. I returned home and lived with my parents and worked. During that year, I found I truly hated living back at home. I had lived with three other people and during our time together, we never seemed to experience the tensions I felt in my parent's household. While living away I had learned how to communicate better with people that were initially strangers and I felt safer around each of them to be myself.

My mom was working full-time as a nurse by then. She and my father seemed to be fighting even more and my sister, who was around 12 years old, had begun getting into trouble. She was involved in fights with classmates a lot. She did not appear to be living in a fantasy world; she was angry. Where I tried to keep my parents in check with humor, she seemed to do everything in her power to keep things upset. I would try to talk to her, but she wouldn't hear me because I was older. She flexed her independence early on. When she was old enough to get a job at 14½ and a driver's permit at 15, she did. She had gone to our priest and asked him to talk to our parents when she was 13 years old because she believed she was old enough to date and she wanted to change the rules! I, on the other hand, followed the rules. I did not have my first date until I was 16, got my first job at 19, and did not get my driver's license until I was 21. So, although I was back home, I was looking forward to leaving as soon as possible.

I began putting in applications and was fortunate enough to receive (early on) an acceptance to a school that I really wanted to attend. I wanted to attend this school because one of my roommates from my previous school also applied. Although we were never roommates at this school, we remained friends for all four years.

My freshman year was very positive, and for the first time I felt like I made the best decision for me. There was pressure to declare a major, but I was not sure what I wanted to do, so I selected something that I thought would not be that challenging. When I shared what I selected with my sociology professor, he tried to challenge me by saying I came to school to major in a hobby! I was horrified at his remark but deep down I knew he was right. I had decided on this major because I knew I would be successful.

During the first semester of my sophomore year, I decided to pledge a sorority; I made this decision based on how I thought the group presented themselves around campus. This was a popular sorority; I selected them because I still believed I had to align myself with the right group. When I was accepted on the fall line, I was happy and content with all my choices for the moment...Until the second semester of my sophomore year when I met him, the boy that would later become my husband. With him, my life would become an emotional roller coaster again and I would be caught up in a whirlwind that I would later understand was alcoholism.

He was from the same city where we attended school. He was so cute, smart, a football player who had received a full scholarship. When we met he was trying to decide whether he was going to

keep the scholarship because he was unhappy that he was not allowed to play the position he preferred—quarterback. During high school he had been an All-American star quarterback. He made the decision to give up the scholarship and get a job to continue school. I admired this decision. I thought it showed him to be a responsible person. I chose to overlook the fact that there were tell-tale signs early on that indicated he abused drugs and alcohol. He once told me he enjoyed getting high so much that if he could look at something to get high, he would try it! Many years later I realized that this should have been my sign to exit this relationship, but I thought he was exciting and was willing to live on the edge and try something that I would not or could not ever do. I drank with him and I realized early on my drinking was a little different than his. I was never comfortable being drunk, especially with him because I didn't like the feeling of not being in control.

Although we had fun in the beginning, I got sicker and sicker in the relationship. I was always feeling insecure when he was not around. I found myself becoming more obsessed with him and his behavior. Once I ended up in our school infirmary because one night, I was laying in my bed and my bed felt like it was spinning; I had not had anything to drink and I could not figure out what was wrong. They kept me overnight for observation but could not find anything. They suggested that maybe it was stress related because of classes, but I really knew it was because of our relationship. However, I was not willing to break up with him because I just knew that I was good for him. After about a year and a half together, he broke it off with me. I was devastated. I believed that he did not give our relationship the opportunity to grow. And when he showed up in my life ten years later, I married him because I was not finished.

During the time we were broken up, we had no contact. He had married, had a child, divorced and gotten a law degree. I had gone back to my parent's home after graduation, gotten a job, been in two bad relationships—both with alcoholics, and was trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. The story goes: he called, I answered, and we were married within seven months.

Within two months of our marriage, I knew that that decision was the biggest mistake of my life. I was finding liquor bottles in drawers. Sometimes when we kissed in the morning I thought I tasted liquor. I had developed headaches and was ashamed to let anyone know how miserable and unhappy I was. I didn't want to tell my parents; I knew my father would tell me to come back home and at this point in my life that was not the path I wanted to take. I did not want to tell any of my friends because I was ashamed; it was important for me to keep up appearances—after all I was a newlywed! When I walked through the doors of Al-Anon almost eight months later, I was confused, depressed and mentally beaten down by this disease.

My first meeting was at a treatment center. I chose this location because I did not want anyone that I knew to see me. (Now I was living five hours away from where I grew up so there was a slim chance that I would run in to anyone.) When I entered the room, I saw a huge round table with chairs. I found a space and one of the women came up behind me, hugged my shoulders and kissed me on my cheek. She said, "Welcome to Al-Anon," and I began to cry. I know those were tears of relief because I felt someone cared. I don't remember much about what was said that night, but I do remember I felt peace while I was there. At some point I heard someone share that they had been coming to Al-Anon for over 20 years and I remember thinking with horror that she must be a slow learner. So my solution was to buy all the books on the table before I left; I was determined to read each one of them to find the an-

swers to our problem, and quick. Even though I heard that night, "In Al-Anon we learn to keep the focus on ourselves," I did not believe that was true for me. He was the one with the problem. My plans were to come no more than a year, which I thought would give me enough time to learn all I needed to—and it will be 30 years this August since I made the decision to Keep Coming Back!

Although I chose to stay in Al-Anon, I did not initially consider that decision as a positive one: My marriage came to an end and I was devastated for a long time. I expected Al-Anon to save my marriage. It didn't. But when it was evident the marriage was over, I knew instinctively that if I didn't remain in the program, I was bound to continue the same behaviors that had me in emotional turmoil most of my life. My Sponsor encouraged me into service when she said, "Don't just be *around* the program; get *in* the program." For those words and her support, I am forever grateful!

Service, for me, was my lifesaver. In service I learned how to listen, to communicate and to respect opinions that were different from mine and I also found a God of my understanding. I learned to trust my Sponsor and the people in my home group. When I returned from the District meetings they wanted to hear what I had to say. They listened attentively and showed me the love and fellowship that I had not ever experienced outside of the meeting rooms. I can honestly say in Al-Anon I grew up. I learned to be myself and you accepted me, warts and all! As I recovered in the program, I realized service was my way to give back after having received so much. Little did I know that my willingness to serve would give me the opportunity to work at the World Service Office and attend 21 World Service Conferences.

When I attended my first World Service Conference in 1997, I reported to the Conference in my role as the Associate Director—International that correspondence received from Russian members (at that time) indicated that because of the "Adopt a Russian Group" project, they were learning so much about the program. I could have never imagined I would have had this opportunity in 1990, as I sat in the District meeting; we listened to the thank-you letter read to us by our District Representative from members in a group in Russia, thanking us for literature that we had sent to them under this same program. Wow!

In 2002 our Conference theme was "Al-Anon's Image in a Changing World: Anonymity—Not Invisibility." I participated in a workshop where we discussed whether anonymity and invisibility were synonymous, and we discussed ways to help Al-Anon become more visible to those who needed it without breaking Al-Anon's Tradition of anonymity.

At our 2007 World Service Conference, the Alateen Traditions became Conference approved. At this Conference, there were requests to give the Alateen Traditions the same status as the Alateen Legacies. Having been an Alateen Sponsor at one time, I was thrilled to be present when this was approved.

And then at the 2010 Conference I had the opportunity to witness the changing of the names of four Areas (Alabama, New Mexico, Manitoba, and Wisconsin). Each had requested a name change so the groups and/or Districts of adjoining Areas that had been accepted into their Assembly would feel recognized as a part of the Area that they served. The Areas requested that the Conference approve these name changes. As a result, the Conference approved the four Areas, which became Alabama/Northwest Florida, New Mexico/El Paso, Manitoba/Northwest Ontario, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

For many, many years my decision to walk through the door of that long-ago Al-Anon meeting has taken me places I would never have imagined—the Assemblies, Conventions, World Service Conferences, Regional Service Seminars, TEAM Events and the opportunity to travel and work with members in international communities!

When I received this invitation to share with you, I felt grateful and humbled at the same time. Those old feelings of fear and isolation came back, like they sometimes do initially when I'm asked to step outside my comfort zone. Then I focused on our theme this year, "Al-Anon—There is no standing still!" And I am forever grateful that because of the experience, strength, hope, and love I've received in this fellowship, I can't stand still. And neither can you!

SPIRITUAL SPEAKERS

Rachelle C., Panel 56, Minnesota North

My name is Rachelle C., Panel 56 Delegate for Minnesota North Area. I am a very grateful member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups. The word “gratitude” does not seem big enough to describe the gift that each of us in this room has been given. Here, as we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us in the service of our fellowship, I am deeply humbled by the opportunity to share my spiritual journey with you.

I was raised in a safe, loving and nurturing home, the fifth child of nine. My parents were not alcoholics, but they had experienced the effects of alcoholism in previous generations. Although alcohol was not present, the family disease was alive and well in our home. But we did not recognize it. We did not talk about it, and we had no tools to soften its impact.

I left home the day after high school, joined the Navy and married a nice sailor at the age of 23. He had a few rough edges—drank a bit too much—but I was sure I could make him into the perfect partner. We fit together like pieces of a puzzle. He needed me and I knew he would never leave me; I was the fixer and he was my project.

In our first years of marriage, I began to notice things in my husband that I was “disappointed with,” things that put a chink in my plan for how life was supposed to be. I began a subtle campaign to change him into the husband I thought he should be—the father my children deserved. I had all the answers if he would just follow my lead. I tried to “model” the right behavior. Watch me, this is how you get into college (as I filled out both our applications). Watch me, this is how you get a job, keep a job, don’t do drugs, don’t raise your voice, don’t drink when you know you always get drunk, etc., etc., etc...

I’ll share with you one small vignette that happened ten years into our marriage that I think captures the state of our relationship, and the hold alcoholism had on both of us. My husband was traveling to and from California for his job and we were living in upstate New York. I was in a car accident on my way to pick up our two-year-old from daycare. I was eight-and-a-half months pregnant. The car was totaled. I broke my arm and several ribs and was very lucky the baby wasn’t seriously injured. I rode in the ambulance alone to the hospital and called a friend to come and be with me. They released me from the hospital about eight hours later and I had my friend drive me directly from the hospital to the airport so I could be standing at the gate when he got off the plane. Pregnant with my broken arm in a sling, I knew I looked very traumatized—clearly a damsel in distress. *This time will be different*, I thought. *This will get his attention. I know he loves me, I know he is a good man and I know he wants this baby.*

But alcoholism had a different idea, and it had a grip on my husband that I could not compete with. He came off the plane that night after having cocktails all the way from California to New York. He did not see a damsel in distress. He saw an obstacle to what he needed. He was mad because I did not have a rental car and he was annoyed that my friend was with me. I don’t remember him even asking if I was alright. Once again, I was hurt, confused and embarrassed. I felt like I must be doing something wrong.

And life continued. We relocated to California once the baby was born. I felt isolated and vulnerable. For the first time in our marriage, I was not working and I was dependent on his job and in-

come. I was spiritually blank. I believed in God, it just did not cross my mind that God could help me with the problems my husband was causing. I was angry and resentful. I thought, *he’s a selfish jerk who lacks willpower; he just doesn’t care*. I was sure *he* was the problem.

An incident happened at work and my husband was sent to treatment by his employer. During treatment they asked each of us what we needed from the other. I can’t remember what I asked for, but I remember clearly what he said. He said it was too much pressure on him to carry all the responsibility for supporting our family. He asked me to go back to work. I remember thinking, “I knew I should have never given up control.”

And then, the miracle started to happen for me. A counselor told me I needed to go to Al-Anon and I did. My education in the disease of alcoholism, the impact on the family and the idea that I could begin to get better even if my husband did not sank in very gradually.

I held on to Al-Anon the way a drowning person clings to the side of a life raft. I used the tools of detachment, boundaries and powerlessness. I felt a great weight lifted when I truly accepted the idea that I could not “fix” my husband. Over the next 12 years he relapsed four times. We had periods of sobriety and calm, followed by crises, relapse and tremendous feelings of shame and foolishness on my part because I did not leave him. Once again I bought into the promises of “this time will be different.” I was hanging on, but I was not in recovery. I showed up for meetings, but I did not get a Sponsor and I never really worked the Steps.

I took back control and jumped into my career. I told myself I had to support my family, I had to take care of everything. I became numb and moved through the motions of life on automatic. I used all my emotional energy out in the world trying to make it look like things were okay. When I returned to my family I could not muster any feelings. I was exhausted physically, mentally and emotionally. I was finally ready to surrender. With the courage and grace of my Higher Power, I got a restraining order. It’s the hardest thing I have ever done. I believed at that time that if I did not take care of my husband, he would die. My best hope was that he ended up in a homeless shelter and someone there would care for him. For the first time in our 22-year marriage, I accepted the fact that my husband was powerless over this disease. Even though I had been in Al-Anon for years, deep down I never accepted his powerlessness. I thought if I was an alcoholic I would go to treatment, I would take action, I would fix this. This time, I saw clearly that he had been powerless to make those choices.

Yet, I had choices. I chose to take care of myself and my children and put my husband in God’s care. I sat on the grass at a roadside park the day the sheriff was at our house removing my husband. For the first time I could remember, I prayed for the strength to follow through and not jump in one more time to save him. I asked God to help him because I could not and I asked God to help me be strong for my children.

I had finally accepted Step One. I was powerless. My husband was killing himself in our home and I was providing the resources to allow this to happen. My children were being held hostage in the grips of alcoholism and I did have the power to help them escape.

And then, the miracle happened. My husband found sobriety and recovery in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.). I finally got out of the way and he did not die. He lived, he thrived and he began to become a different person without me.

My husband, my problem, was out of the picture, taking care of himself and I had lost my mission in life—"to get my husband under control." I was drifting and realized I had hit my bottom. I needed something more than my alcoholic out of my house and a weekly Al-Anon meeting. I needed recovery, too.

I began to listen to Al-Anon speakers, found a new meeting, got a Sponsor, worked the Steps and began my own recovery journey. I let go of my ego, my need to control, the idea that I always had to be right and I always had to be perfect. I was open to accepting that a Power greater than me was at work and I was hopeful that I could become a different kind of person. A person who was happy, grateful. A person able to enjoy life, accept love and give love to others. A person who was not numb and frightened, angry and resentful.

Because of the recovery we found in A.A. and Al-Anon, my husband and I were able to come back together as a family. Our life was not perfect; our children both struggled with drug and alcohol use during their teen years, and I had to accept that even though I was in Al-Anon, we had raised two adult children impacted by alcoholism.

My husband always said that Al-Anon saved his life because it gave me the courage to take away the safety net that had kept him from hitting his bottom. I say A.A. gave me my life because I watched my husband who I had totally given up on, start to recover and become a different person, work the Steps, believe in a Higher Power and live life spiritually awake. I wanted what he had.

For the next 17 years we lived by the same rule book. The spiritual principles and Legacies of our programs and the guidance of a Higher Power became the foundation for our lives. We kept up a happy cadence of meetings, Sponsors, Sponsees, Steps, Traditions, service, fellowship, work and family. Our children married and brought spouses and grandchildren into our lives. We were living in a pocket of deep gratitude and contentment. We knew how lucky we were. Daily we enjoyed the gifts of the people and experiences God brought to our lives. We were "on the road to happy destiny."

Then, one afternoon in May 2016, just a few weeks after I returned from my first World Service Conference, my husband suffered a massive heart attack and died. He was 61 years old. He was teaching me to tile a backsplash in a house we were renovating together. He went home to shower and get ready to go to an A.A. meeting and then he was gone.

Grief for me was like a tsunami that knocked me right over. I went into a fog that protected me from really understanding and feeling the immensity of what had just happened. I was numb again, but it was a comforting numbness. I learned to look at that fog as a gift from my Higher Power, helping me to deal with just what I could, just a little at a time. I clung to the protective bubble of shock, trauma, and grief.

For the first time in my life, I was unable to lead, to control, to decide, to function. I had a very limited capacity to pay attention to anyone or anything, and I instinctively knew that whatever emotional strength I had needed to be reserved for my children, who were also reeling from the loss of their father.

Yet, in the midst of this great sorrow and grief, I understood for the first time what it meant to be lifted in love, what it meant to be carried in the hearts of so many people. I was able to totally surrender to my Higher Power with the assurance that I was powerless and that my plan for life was not needed. I was surely not in control; I had struggled my entire life to feel worthy, to feel that others would love me unconditionally, and here in this moment of unimaginable grief, I knew with absolute certainty that I was loved.

That I was alive, that my husband was no longer here in his body, but was still here with me in his spirit. I was not alone.

My mom died six months later. The two people in my life that I looked to for guidance, acceptance, companionship and support were gone just like that. I totally let go in a way I never had before. Even in recovery, I liked to keep my public image "buttoned up." I didn't like being needy or looking needy. I was the helper, not the one who needed help. After losing both my husband and my mother, I just could not get too "buttoned up" anymore. I had to let others help me pick up the pieces I dropped and learn it was okay to be vulnerable. I could cry and then catch my breath and then go on until the next wave hit me. I understood and accepted that deep sorrow only comes from deep love.

It's now been almost two years since my husband passed. On my good days, I watch my life from the vantage point of my soul sitting with my Higher Power. Like watching a movie, I am involved, I am interested, I need to do the foot work, but I don't have to worry. I don't have to figure out the right plan, the perfect plan. I don't have to make anything happen. My life is truly in my Higher Power's hands. Today, I assume the people I love may not have the capacity to change and I focus on what choices I have, to take care of myself and leave them in the hands of their own Higher Power.

Today I have a different kind of contentment. It is tinged with sadness, yet I am still grateful and excited and happy most days. I know I am loved and that fills me with a sense of purpose. I am surrounded by family and friends. I have the joy of spending time with my grandchildren and passing on to them the gifts I have received. I have the capacity to be of service to others and the guidance of the program of recovery so freely given to me in Al-Anon. There is important work to be done. There is no standing still if we want Al-Anon to be here for those that come after us. I am filled with humility, gratitude and wonder that I can have a small part in sharing our message of help and hope to ease the suffering of the world. One person at a time.

Eloy M., Panel 56, Colorado

My name is Eloy M. I am sponsored, my Sponsor is sponsored, and I sponsor others. I have been attending Al-Anon meetings for 12 years, nine months and 26 days.

My beautiful bride is here tonight. As you can see, I married up! We were married June 11, 1995. I remember that day. It had been a rainy spring. It had been drizzling every afternoon for the past couple of weeks. The morning of our wedding, you know what I did? I went out to breakfast by myself. I had a nice leisurely breakfast, and looked forward to what the day was going to bring. I knew where I was supposed to stand and what I was supposed to say. Between my bride, her mom and her daughter, there was very little for me to do. I knew nothing was going to stop me from marrying her that day. I was 43 years old and still single—I'd never married. But all my life I looked forward to being married, having a home and a family. My bride was a package deal. She had two teenage children. Even the weather wasn't going to stop me from marrying her. The afternoon cleared up. The sun broke through by the time wedding guests were arriving. The music that played as she walked down the aisle announced my bride's arrival into my life.

Ten years later, almost to the day, on Monday, June 20, 2005, I had just gotten home from work. I grabbed something off the stove for supper and I sat down by myself to watch the news. My wife and I had been drifting apart the past several months and I knew it. I hadn't done anything to address it. Then she came over to where

I was watching the news and said, "It's over. I want a divorce... There's no talking; pack a bag and leave."

Let me back up a little; I grew up in northern New Mexico as did my parents, grandparents, great grandparents. I don't know what challenges my dad faced as a boy, as a young man. I knew Dad had his challenges with alcohol. Dad joined the Marines at the start of WWII. He participated in the invasion on the Guadalcanal and Guam. A piece of shrapnel pierced his leg in the conflict in Guam; that ended the war for him. He married my mom in 1947 and they started their family. I am the middle son of their three boys. Some mornings, when I was very young, my mom would tell us, "You boys be your best today. Your Dad had a rough night." When we asked what she meant, she described the nightmares Dad had. Mom described to us how Dad would be sitting up in bed—sweating, eyes wide open—hollering and fighting that war again, all while he slept. Today, I wonder if it threw Dad into his depression. In his drunkenness, there were bumps, bruises and blood along the way. He was rough on us. My mom and my oldest brother caught the worst of it.

Dad was also a binge drinker. He would binge drink to forget that war. That war made him see things he never thought he would see, do things he never thought he would do and become someone he never thought he would become. There would be nights Mom and Dad fought in the kitchen after my brothers and I were in bed. With quilts pulled over me tight, I could hear the fighting; I could hear my father hitting my mother. I would hope it didn't spill into my room. After Dad passed out or went out for more alcohol, Mom would grab the three of us and take us to her mom's—our grandmother's—across town. I kept secrets. I lied to my friends about why we were staying with Grandma. I never learned how to resolve conflict. My selfish fears, guilt and resentments were intact and my best-kept secrets. It is important for me to include that when Dad was sober he was great! He worked as a firefighter in New Mexico. I knew he was awarded medals from his time in the Marines. Dad was my hero and I loved him. When I was in fourth grade, as the end-of-school bell rang, there was a fire truck lined up with the buses. There was my dad waving at me and my brothers to join him at the fire truck. The world stopped spinning for a handful of seconds. My brothers and I ran to him while all the other school kids watched us get on the back of that fire truck with our dad. That fire truck pulled out and drove us home in front of all our friends. There were fishing and camping trips, picnics and a lot of fun times. Our community knew my dad as a hard worker and helpful whenever anyone asked for help. He was generous, he was our protector and provider—when he was sober.

When I married, I thought I understood what it meant to be a husband. I think I mostly made promises with no foundation to be the best husband I could. I didn't have anyone to keep me accountable. I didn't know how to bring a loving and fatherly example to my wife's children, my stepchildren. I had been attending Al-Anon for the last two years before we met. I came to Al-Anon to help the people at the meetings. I attended a Friday night meeting for my three-minute share. I had a Sponsor and we were working through the Steps and I had volunteered to be the literature person for the meeting. I took that literature position because it seemed to be a low-level commitment. I didn't think I needed to take it so seriously—nothing wrong with serving as literature person for a meeting. My reasons for taking that position and my attitude were wrong. I worked my program about as thin and shallow as I could. I came to talk about my hurts and compare them to others and called that Al-Anon. I think my wife saw a man who was working on himself, and she found that attractive. One year later, after we were married I thought, "Mis-

sion accomplished; I'm married." I quit attending Al-Anon. You know what happens when you quit working a program—you show up again. All my selfishness, my fears, resentments and my critical spirit resurfaced. I was better acquainted with guilt and shame than I was with God.

So there I was ten years later. She had asked for a divorce. I knew I had lost my connection with God and the hope that comes with our program. That Monday night I left our home knowing I had to get back to Al-Anon. I remembered my old Friday night meeting and wondered if it was still there. The work week was a mess for me. I gave a coworker a thumbnail sketch and asked him to help me get through my current projects. When Friday came, I went back to that church looking for my old Friday night meeting, looking for a connection to God and looking for hope. I came broken and grieving. They welcomed me and listened to me and held me as I wept. At the end of the meeting we hugged. That night, I found out that there are about 15 Al-Anon meetings in my city. I went to every meeting I could find and attended as often as I could. I prayed like I never prayed before. I prayed honestly and humbly, with a new spirit.

That first weekend away from my wife and my home was miserable. I was powerless and my life was unmanageable. I didn't know what to do. I helped my host family with their yard chores. That's what I would be doing if I was in my home. My host family invited me to attend a new Saturday evening service. I'm not sure if I asked if I could go with them or begged to. I was looking for hope and a connection to a Power greater than myself. So, later that afternoon, I was at a new church I had never been to before. The pastor introduced a guest speaker for the evening. At the end of his message he talked about a loving God and how love overcomes fear. At the very end, he said, "If fear has showed up in your life, I want to pray for you. If a relationship is unraveling, right there where you're sitting just raise a hand and I'll pray for you." It was a big church, about 650 people were there. The lights were dim. We were sitting about three-quarters of the way back from the podium. I was weeping that uncontrollable weeping where you can't stop. I stood up and raised my hand because I wanted to be sure he saw me. He prayed a heartfelt prayer and then dismissed us. God did not make a hard deal with me when I humbly sought Him. The lights were coming up and I didn't want anyone to see me. I was sure I would know someone and I didn't want to tell them my wife and I were separated and heading for a divorce. I sat down and a hand came over my shoulder from the person behind me. I heard him ask, "Eloy, what's wrong?" It was my old Sponsor; I hadn't seen him the last nine years.

I found a Sponsor or he found me. Not sure how that works. We started working the Steps right away. I started sensing a change in me. My desperation and grief made me willing to go to any lengths to recover my life from the loss and sadness I was living in. I was hearing for the first time at meetings that no matter what, God was enough and I would be okay. I was still hoping for reconciliation. My Sponsor guided me through the Steps and taking a fearless and moral inventory of myself. This was the first time I honestly admitted to God, myself and my Sponsor my judgmental selfishness, my critical and sarcastic spirit, my fears and resentments and the rest of it. I continued to sense a new spirit about me that included hope. I was also feeling closer to God. Before this, I used to "pray," telling God what to do, when to do it and how it should look. I think I used to sponsor God. I came to realize God doesn't need a Sponsor, or a business partner or anyone to direct Him. I was ready to have God remove my defects of character.

The court assigned a date in October for me to pick up my belongings at the house and move out. We would be signing papers in November to finalize the divorce. I showed up at the house on that October day with five friends and a big truck. I asked them to get everything in the truck in a couple of hours if possible. My wife was there. She was pleasant and treated this like business. She was never mean or had an attitude. After an hour and a half, I could see we were going to make that two-hour mark and be out of there. I went to find her to let her know. I found her in her sewing room with her face in her hands, crying softly to herself saying, "This isn't right!" Down on my knees, I told her how much I loved her. I was willing to go to any lengths to reconcile and recover our marriage. If she said, "Stop!" I could go back. We could be together and everything would be fine. I wouldn't have to meet my court order to leave the house with my belongings. But she didn't say stop. We finished loading and drove to my apartment.

I am not sure if she called me or I called her that following week. Our visit on the phone was like that first phone call to someone you hope leads to another call. It was clumsy, but friendly. We started calling each other regularly and our calls continued to be clumsy but friendly. In early November on a Saturday, she invited me to the house. It was just like walking up to a door for the first time for a first date. There were long bouts of silence. We agreed to drive to Rocky Mountain National Park, about 45 miles away. We drove to Sprague Lake. There were about eight inches of snow on the ground and it was still snowing lightly. We had the lake to ourselves. We walked in the cold to the back side of the lake. There is a postcard-picture view of the lake and mountains from there. As we stood there, I offered her a heartfelt apology for my shortcomings and made my amends. She apologized for hers and we fell into each other's arms. It was a warm walk back to the truck and we enjoyed a new first date meal in Estes Park. When we got back to town, I dropped her off at the house and I went back to my apartment. We called each other every day. I had a two-week project coming up in another part of the state in early December. We continued to visit over the phone every day. When my project wrapped up in mid-December and I was on my way home, I called her. She invited me to stop by the house for a meal before I went to my apartment. When I got

there, she surprised me by having all my belongings moved back in while I had been out of town. That day to sign off on finalizing our divorce never came.

I vowed to myself I would never step away from a program that holds me accountable. Erosion sets in if I am not working my program.

About a year after this, the words "service and principles" were starting to register in my mind. I didn't really know what they meant. There was an opening for a Group Representative for the Tuesday night meeting. When we had an election, I stood and became Group Representative not knowing or understanding the role or duties. When I met our District Representative, she helped me connect the dots. She spoke about how service helped her discover new principles like having a voice, but not the only voice, to participate but not dominate, to be honest, gracious and humble and so on. I wanted the authentic transformation she spoke about and not just relief for the moment. Service became an integral part of my program. We say, "We work a program." I heard one of our past Delegates say, "The reward is in the work." I understand what she meant.

Sometimes in my mind's eye, I picture myself with only one hand. I see two tool boxes. One has all my old tools—resentment, fear, guilt and shame. The second has my new tools. A loving God, Sponsor, meetings, literature, principles...I can only pick up one tool at a time. I get to decide moment by moment which toolbox I will draw from. When I pick up resentment, I let go of serenity and when I pick up courage, I let go of fear. Every day at every moment, I can only pick up one tool at a time.

Step Eleven talks about seeking only God's will for my life. I am pretty sure God's will for me today is to put down my resentments, judgments, hesitations, guilt and shame, and pick up love, hope, acceptance, courage and wisdom.

Miracles happen in Al-Anon. We may not get the miracle we want, but rather the one we need. God doesn't move the mountains I want moved. He moves the ones He chooses to move. I get to choose which tool I will pick up.

Thank you for letting me carry the message today.

CLOSING SESSION

Debbie G. • Trustee, Chairperson of the Board | Judy K. • Trustee, Conference Chairperson

The 2018 World Service Conference theme, “Al-Anon—There is no standing still!” provided a goal for the week. On the last day of the Conference, the Chairperson of the Board shared the following thoughts and observations on the Conference theme:

“Throughout this week, we openly discussed the challenges and possibilities for tomorrow, inviting all Conference members to participate in being part of the solution. We openly discussed our challenges. We found new ways to identify the roadblocks that are keeping us from moving forward, while ensuring all members see themselves and are viewed by others as equal members of our worldwide fellowship. We visited our initial home and viewed firsthand the groundwork Lois and Anne laid for our fellowship, along with the vision of both Lois and Bill for our future.

“‘Life is all about change. It is about our willingness to be open to this change—to use these opportunities for growth and to fall back on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service to keep the program in check.’

Page 385, Many Voices, One Journey (B-31)

“This week we applied our spiritual principles as a format for change rather than stagnation. We did not stand still.

“On behalf of the Board, and—I believe I can speak for the Staff and our Executive Committee—I wish you, our Delegates, great success in the coming months as you enthusiastically share the message from this year’s Conference. We look forward to reading your postings on AFG Connects. Blessings for your journey home—may the God of your understanding be with you. We look forward to seeing you in Baltimore and on the Spirit of the Inner Harbor for the WSC Homecoming!”

The Conference Chairperson commented, “As this is our last Conference session (excluding our Closing Dinner), it’s time to

briefly consider whether or not we have accomplished our Conference Goals.

“We came here this week to ensure that Al-Anon world services will continually remain available to the Al-Anon membership. We as a Conference needed to participate in the spirit of unity and goodwill in order to accomplish this task. I have seen much evidence of that this week, as we talked with each other and reasoned things out.

Throughout our daily interactions, the Conference tone definitely felt very spiritual, with many core principles in action—among them leadership, cooperation and participation, leading to harmony.

“This Conference did indeed provide guidance to the Board of Trustees and to the World Service Office by discussing and providing insights into the current Regional Trustee Process, brainstorming about translation at the WSO, conceptually approving a new piece of CAL, and carefully considering our Twelve Traditions when discussing the Chosen Agenda Items and how they might affect Al-Anon and its future.

“It is my hope that everyone leaves our Conference with a deeper understanding of our purpose here and the relationships within our Conference Structure. As each of you returns home to your respective Areas, your task ahead is to articulate the 2018 Conference discussions and decisions. Your presence here is just the beginning of making the group conscience available and effective for all Al-Anon. Based on the personal enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated each day, I am confident that you will share with your members what has happened here. Thank you, Conference members, for your daily contributions which made this Conference so productive and so successful.

“There is no standing still!”

STEPPING STONES VISIT

Judy K. • Conference Chairperson

Conference members usually rank their visit to Stepping Stones, the home of Lois W. (our Cofounder) and her husband, Bill W., as one of their peak World Service Conference experiences. For many members, visiting Stepping Stones is much more than just a sentimental journey; it is like a “spiritual homecoming.” Our 2018 WSC theme, “Al-Anon—There is no standing still!” reminds us that Lois started our organization with the hope that others would continue to carry it out. Thus, Stepping Stones is an invaluable link from Al-Anon’s past to our present and future. Chapter 13 in *Lois Remembers* (B-7) contains Lois’s personal reflections about life at Stepping Stones and Al-Anon’s formative years.

The Conference Chairperson “set the stage” for the Conference visit to Stepping Stones with the following historical background and “preview” of what Conference members would see:

“Stepping Stones is Lois and Bill’s cozy Dutch Colonial, three-bedroom home that was built in 1920 as a summer cottage. It sits in the middle of rolling, wooded country, with its barn-like gambrel roof and cinderblock studio. The air is sweet with blooming forsythia; it almost smells as if bread is baking inside, but no one has lived here since Lois died at age 97 in 1988.

“The six buildings on the eight-acre Stepping Stones homestead are intact and unified. Among the highlights:

- ♦ A large living room dominated by a stone fireplace and wall-length French doors.
- ♦ A collection of antiques, glassware, china, photographs, printed materials and Lois and Bill’s musical instruments, including Bill’s cello and Lois’s piano.
- ♦ A winding staircase leading to the second-floor library, which has been preserved as Lois left it when she died in 1988. Lois’s desk is in the home’s upstairs library.

“The house is as Lois left it: wall lengths of books stacked five shelves high, scores of personal collections, a gallery of photos and framed proclamations by dignitaries ranging from Pope Paul VI to President Eisenhower.

“Outside:

- ♦ The garden and its surroundings include antique roses and fruit trees. Bushes and trees grace the hillside.
- ♦ The two-car garage is now a Welcome Center, which has an orientation display, restrooms, and a gift shop. Much of the archival material previously stored in a small hallway is now on display, and the Center is a place to more appropriately welcome visitors.
- ♦ The annual Lois’s Picnic will be held on the grounds the first Saturday in June as it has been for the past 66 years.

“Stepping Stones is an important site for Al-Anon and is designated as a State and National Historic Landmark.”

Conference members then received a questionnaire that asked the following:

Visiting someone’s home affords a personal glimpse into their life. What do you anticipate about your visit to the home of Lois W.? Any expectations?

Conference members shared:

- Possibly feeling a closeness to Lois and some of her energy, and gaining an idea of what her life was like.
- Having a deeply spiritual experience, feeling a sense of adventure in what Lois wrote and touched.
- Feeling spirituality and a warm hug.
- Feeling humbleness and gratitude.
- Being humbled once I see where it started and where Lois lived, and feeling her presence.
- This is my biggest dream and I have no expectations.
- I’m expecting to feel like I am at home—the way I felt at my first Al-Anon meeting.
- I have had many opportunities to go throughout the years and didn’t. I’m afraid of going, afraid it will feel like nothing. My recovery side tells me all will be okay, and that everything is in God’s will.



- Lois’s nightstand: I want to pay closer attention to the books on her nightstand.
- It is so small; I expect to be overwhelmed by its simplicity.
- What was it like to live 40 to 80 years ago and how did Bill and Lois spend their “down time”?

Why do you think time and funds are set aside for Conference members to visit Stepping Stones, the home of our Cofounder, Lois W.?

- So we can see the hard work she did to build the program from scratch with the help of Bill.
- When I was a Delegate I went. I never understood our history until I walked the grounds. I felt closer to Lois.
- To give everyone an anchor and a touchstone to history. It is hard for people today to understand. It was a simple time where people talked to each other.
- So we can look back into history and find out where we come from. Also, so we can feel Lois’s energy.
- To remind me that all she wanted was time and friends.

Following the visit, time was set aside for members to reflect and share their experiences. The Chairperson asked:

What was your initial impression of Stepping Stones as you toured the house and grounds? Were there any surprises?

Conference members shared the following:

- Looking out our bus windows at the hillside was so peaceful.
- I thought of Lois and Bill as my grandparents. All the beautiful pictures of them. I don't remember having pictures in my home. As a photographer I am particular, and their photos were exceptional.
- I waited to stand at Lois's desk at the end of the tour. I stood and listened and she talked to me. She said, "You are in the right place."
- Upstairs the gentleman said Lois set all these things out as she wanted us to see them. She labeled everything. The time she spent putting things out for us to see so many years later was surprising. She thought enough of us to display for us what went on in her house.
- There was a sense of simplicity. She treasured all the heirlooms. They were labeled and laid out with such care. I could imagine Lois standing in the kitchen, cooking for Bill.
- After moving 51 times in two years, I was awed at such a beautiful home.
- I saw things that made me think of my home and my grandma's home—bedspread, knickknacks. It is a modest house, like my grandparents'. Things were so real. On the table in the kitchen there was a piece of paper where Lois was giving Bill "what for" and it reminded me of something I would have said.
- The little chair next to the door—I didn't know I would be moved by a chair. I pictured Lois sitting there, doing needlework. Visiting Stepping Stones, I came to believe that in our homes, like theirs, recovery can happen. Because of the Al-Anon program, I am here experiencing this with all of you.
- A feeling of peace and serenity was everywhere and there were many windows. I see Lois's love of gardening, birds and nature. I was fascinated by everything Lois had tagged meticulously, especially the photos. I felt connected to the real people Bill and Lois were.
- I felt a Higher Power welcoming me by Bill's cello and the Norwegian sheet music, which I helped the tour guide translate. One was of a lullaby my maternal grandmother used to sing to me.
- This is a big, comfortable home. Twenty years ago I read the Al-Anon book that spoke about Lois's house. I never imagined I would get to see the home up close. Now I understand the love that grew in that house and the magic of it.
- I got a sense of peace and serenity. I saw the baby grand piano, which visitors were allowed to sit at and play. So I did. Just thinking those were the keys Lois played! I saw pictures of Lois sitting at that piano with Bill behind her. I can imagine a sing-along at that piano. Lois left all of that for us.
- I felt the humility and humbleness of Bill and Lois. And that needlepoint. I was overwhelmed with the love they had for each other.

- In *Lois Remembers* there were many voices. I am feeling gratitude today. In spite of huge obstacles, Al-Anon survived. The lesson is that we can face every obstacle and there is always a solution. What struck me as I walked through the grounds was how much this woman loved life.
- I always enjoy looking at people's bookshelves. I connect with people and their experiences through their books. I saw *Travels with Charlie* by John Steinbeck. He traveled the country with his dog. Then I saw the pictures of camping gear Lois and Bill had. I recall a story of a reporter who interviewed Lois. He asked her what it was like to ride in a sidecar and she said she had no idea, you will have to ask Bill. I took it that Lois did not want Bill to drive!
- I was struck by the photos and books and how she viewed all people the same way. Pictures of presidents were no more prominent than pictures of a wrestler. The books were diverse, from Ghandi to Stonewall Jackson—anything of interest. They were curious intellectually. I also appreciated the pictures of them over Lois's dressing table, like the one of them standing in the hall, kissing each other.
- I have a greater understanding of Lois and Bill now. I visualize them around the table, having a meeting with multitudes of people. That vision and caring for the fellowship. What is the value of my program? What would I be willing to give to this program that saved my life?
- Lois's preparations for us and other visitors struck me. It is important to look in the rear-view window but more important not to dwell there. It's important to keep moving forward. Windows are about vision. We got a glimpse of history, but looking forward is what Lois would have wanted.
- Land, simplicity, quietness. All the noise, craziness and chaos of living in an alcoholic home is such a contrast to a place like that! And the books on the shelves. I was struck by her having a copy of *The Dead Zone* by Stephen King, and by Bill's "mind map" for the Concepts.
- I contrast what is in frames in my house versus theirs. How proud they were of the program.



2018 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE MOTIONS

Motion #1—Carried

(92 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void)

That the following persons be seated at the 2018 World Service Conference:

With voice, but no vote:

Niketa Bailey

Director of Finance and Operations, Non-AI-Anon Member

Scot Powers

Associate Director—Digital Strategy, Non-AI-Anon Member

Ann W.

International Representative—Denmark, AI-Anon Member

Gabriela O.

International Representative—Mexico, AI-Anon Member

With voice limited to Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) business, but no vote:

Jeffrey K.

Chairperson, ECRPM, AI-Anon Member

Motion #2—Carried

(90 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 1 void)

To end the three-year trial authorizing the use of electronic devices for note-taking starting at the 2015 World Service Conference and adopting the use of electronic devices at this and future World Service Conferences.

Motion #3—Carried

(91 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void)

To approve the 2017 Annual Report.

Motion #4—Carried

(91 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 0 void)

To approve the 2017 Audited Financial Report.

Motion #5—Carried

(88 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 3 void)

To approve the 2018 Finance Committee Report.

Motion #6—Carried

(71 yes, 17 no, 2 abstentions, 2 void)

That the 2018 World Service Conference give conceptual approval to develop a bookmark based on the August 2016 *Forum* article titled “Just for Tonight” using inclusive language.

2017 World Service Office Annual Report

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

OVERALL ADMINISTRATION

The **Board of Trustees (BOT)** 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 services to the membership, publishing and distributing Conference Approved Literature (CAL), and approving the Annual Reports submitted by the Executive Director (ED) and Conference 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, and receives monthly service updates from the Directors and the Executive Director.

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. was incorporated in February 1999 under the Family Group Headquarters (Canada) Inc., which was incorporated in February 1999 under the *Canadian Corporations Act* and has since continued under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. It is a registered charity under paragraph 194(1) of the Income Tax Act of Canada.

The Executive Director is responsible for overall supervision of the WSO Staff (currently about 50 full-time employees) and for administration of the organization's policies. A newly formed Staff Leadership Team collaborates on office-wide projects, provides direct input to budget for the departments, and serve as resources for each other and the Executive Director.

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 (including pregnancy), age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, status as a veteran or any other characteristic to the extent protected by applicable federal, state or local law. Every effort is made to maintain a work atmosphere that is free from harassment.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Debbie G., Chairperson

The Trustees, along with members of the Executive Committee, direct business operations of the World Service Office, observing the By-Laws of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. The Board acts as the chief service arm of the World Service Conference as it guards the legal rights of the Al-Anon fellowship and controls the finances. The Board serves as guardian of our Twelve Traditions, our Twelve Concepts of Service, and the "Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter."

To aid in members' better understanding the actions and duties of the Board of Trustees, it is important to know that Trustees, Executive Committee members, and employed Staff have a fiduciary duty to the organization of AFG, Inc., including duties of Care, Loyalty, Obedience and Foresight. In short, this means they are required to act reasonably, prudently, and in the best interests of the organization, to avoid negligence and fraud, to avoid conflicts of interest and to look continuously into the future.

Duty of Care

- Exercise ordinary and reasonable care in performance of duties
- Exhibit honesty and good faith
- Make decisions based on information not opinion
- Act in the best interest of the fellowship
- Listen to experts, if needed
- Be knowledgeable about fellowship
- Show up and ask questions

Duty of Loyalty

- Undivided commitment to the fellowship
- Faithfulness
- Obligation to be accountable
- Interest of AFG as a whole, not as Region or group
- Supportive of any group conscience decision, despite personal opinions

Duty of Obedience (adherence to)

- Laws and regulations
- Financial responsibilities
- Legal issues
- Articles of Incorporation
- By-Laws

Duty of Foresight

- Strategic legitimacy
- Board stewardship
- Readiness to learn

The Board approved Interim Actions of the Executive Committee:

- To approve At-Large members for the Literature Committee, Audit Committee, Public Outreach (PO) Committee and Forum Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC)
- To accept revised guidelines for the Finance Committee, Policy Committee, Strategic Plan Oversight (SPO) Work Group, Audit Committee, International Coordination Committee (ICC), Literature Committee, *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee, Nominating Committee, Conference Committee on Trustees, Conference Leadership Team (CLT), Executive Committee, Public Outreach Committee and Compensation Committee
- To accept updates and revisions to the WSO Employee Manual
- To approve the cost of Staff travel for the representation of the World Service Office at the Annual Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) General Service Office (GSO) Conference opening dinner
- To approve [a researcher] limited access to Archival material as agreed in advance in adherence to the "Policy for Researchers Using AFG, Inc. Archives"

- To produce *The Forum* magazine in full color on a one-year trial basis
- To offer a commemorative edition of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) with a ribbon bookmark in English, French and Spanish for sale starting at the 2018 Al-Anon International Convention, with a bookplate to be offered only at the Convention, at a sale price of \$15.00 per book
- To print “50th Anniversary” on the cover of limited-run version of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) copy to be available at the 2018 Al-Anon/Alateen International Convention and until supplies run out

The Board, in its legal and financial capacity, took the following actions:

- To approve the 2016 Annual Report
- To approve the 2016 Auditor’s Report
- To accept the recommendations of the Audit Committee to accept the Dixon Hughes Goodman audit firm and letter of engagement for audit services for the financial year ending December 31, 2017
- To approve the 2017 World Service Conference Motions
- To approve the banking resolution for the Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, Inc.
- To elect four Trustee at Large (TAL) nominees, elect one Regional Trustee (RT) nominee, elect the At-Large member of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM) as well as Board Officers, Executive Committee At-Large members, and the Chairpersons of the Executive Committee and ECRPM
- To approve the Committee Chairperson appointments for 2017-2018
- To approve the revised 2017 Budget
- To approve the 2017 Budget Report descriptive text as presented as a handout to the 2017 WSC
- To hold the 2018 World Service Conference in the greater New York City area
- To approve that the Equalized Expense amount for the 2018 World Service Conference be \$1,612 US. The full cost for a Delegate to attend the 2018 World Service Conference is \$2,443 US
- To approve that the Equalized Expense for the 2018 IAGSM to be held in Virginia Beach, Virginia be \$2,113 US per Delegate and the full cost for a Delegate to attend the meeting be \$2,348 US
- To rescind the 2015 WSC approved Motion #9 regarding the adoption of a definition of Family Recovery
- To approve the Executive Director Search Committee Composition and Solicitation as amended
- To limit the employment term of the Executive Director to ten years
- To accept the revised Travel Reimbursement Policy
- To discontinue the mailing of a complimentary copy of *The Forum* to the English-speaking groups permanently
- To amend the By-Laws of Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc. (strikethrough indicates deletion; bold and underlined indicates new text):

ARTICLE V ~ POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE TRUSTEES

- To appoint an Executive Director and a Director of ~~Business Services~~ Finance for the World Service Office; and

ARTICLE XII ~ COMMITTEES

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.

The Board of Trustees shall appoint at each annual meeting the necessary members to complete an Executive Committee for Real Property Management consisting of five persons. The Executive Committee for Real Property Management shall include the Business Manager (~~Director of Business Services~~) (Director of Finance), the Chairperson of the Finance Committee, and three Al-Anon members who are not trustees. The Executive Committee for Real Property Management shall meet at such time as the Board of Trustees may direct but at least twice per year. The Board of Trustees delegates to the Executive Committee for Real Property Management the oversight and the management of the real property owned by the Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. in accordance with Motion 6 of the 2011 World Service Conference. For the purposes outlined in Motion 6, the Executive Director and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees are not ex-officio members of this Executive Committee and may not attend its meetings unless invited to do so. The nomination of the three Al-Anon members, who are not trustees, for the Executive Committee for Real Property Management will be conducted by the Nominating Committee in consultation with the Conference Committee on Trustees. After said nominees receive traditional approval by the Conference, the Board will elect them.

- To appoint a new Executive Director
- To end the Alateen Work Group trial period ending in October 2017 and disband the Alateen Advisory Committee as described in Concept Eleven.
- To accept the revised position description of Executive Director and addendum as amended
- To establish the Registration Fees for the 2018 International Convention be set as follows:

Before December 31, 2017:	\$130.00 USD
Before May 31, 2018:	\$165.00 USD
After May 31, 2018:	\$195.00 USD
- To end the trial of the Trustee Liaison positions and make permanent the Board Liaison to the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee, Public Outreach and Literature Committees
- To offer a complimentary 2018 International Convention registration to any non-assigned WSO Staff member who wishes to attend the Convention
- That the 2023 International Convention be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in July 2023
- To suspend printing the hardcover *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22) in all three languages, for a trial period of three years, with an annual review
- To accept the Investment Philosophy as presented
- To approve the annual meeting with Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP on February 24, 2018, to be held virtually via conference call and with video technology as a one-year trial. An assessment

by the Audit Committee, Director of Finance and Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP will be completed by September 2018. The Audit Committee report to the Board in October 2018 to include a recommendation concerning the meeting format for 2019

The Board, in its oversight capacity, took the following actions:

- To approve the 2018 World Service Conference theme as follows:

Al-Anon – There is no standing still!

Al-Anon – Il n’y a pas de place pour l’immobilisme!

Al-Anon – ¡No hay razón para detenerse!

- To disband the Transition Team that was created in January 2016, as its goal and mission have been accomplished
- To approve the new Trustee Résumé Form as amended
- To approve the 2018 IAGSM Theme:

Leading by Example: Structures Supporting Structures

- To write a Proclamation of Gratitude to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and present it to the General Secretary of A.A. with a commemorative edition of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* during the 2018 Al-Anon International Convention
- To end the trial of distributing the Board Profile and adopting the distribution of the Board Profile to the Nominating Committee, Conference Committee on Trustees and Regional Committee on Trustees permanently
- To distribute the Board Profile to the Board of Trustees annually

Strategic Planning, Board of Trustees

Terry F., Chairperson, Strategic Plan Oversight Work

Strategic planning for Al-Anon began in the 1990s. The Strategic Plan is connected to the Vision and Mission Statements and is the plan for how the Vision and Mission will be carried out. The Board of Trustees strives to focus 80 percent of its work on forward thinking and planning for the future.

The current Strategic Plan of the Board of Trustees of AFG, Inc. is:

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.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

Al-Anon’s spiritual principles permeate our policies and practices; we apply emerging technology and communication options:

- To increase the visibility of Al-Anon so that it is recognized as the number one resource throughout the world for helping friends and families of alcoholics.
- To empower the Al-Anon fellowship to be vibrant, inclusive and flexible.
- To achieve a viable future for Al-Anon Family Groups, the Board will be adaptive and strategic in its use of talents, skills, and abilities.

Under Strategic Plan Priority Three, the Board had formulated a goal with objectives in 2015. The goal is:

The AFG, Inc. Board of Trustees will raise the fellowship’s awareness of the Trustees’ relationship to the Al-Anon groups and WSC, while articulating and expressing the “why” of the Board’s work.

The current objectives are:

1. To empower Trustees to use existing tools to articulate the “why” of the Board (blogs, skits, webinars)
2. Increase members’ understanding that Trustees are Al-Anon members
3. Increase the personal connection of Trustees with the fellowship in order to increase Trustee role education; demystify the role: why BOT meetings are not open, etc.

During 2017, the Board completed the one-year Trustee *Forum* article writing project, begun in October 2016, to address Objective One of the Board’s Strategic Plan Priority Three Goal. The Board has solicited evaluative feedback from the fellowship regarding the Trustees’ *Forum* articles and will use the feedback as it considers next steps.

In October 2017, the Board decided to begin a new project under Objective Three of the Board’s Strategic Plan Priority Three Goal: proactive Trustee visits to Areas. The Board is in the beginning stages of working on this project, and a Task Force will further the work in 2018.

Due to changes in Staff and office restructuring, the Strategic Plan goals and objectives previously carried out by the Staff under the Strategic Plan Priorities One and Two as well as the Strategic Plan timeline remained suspended for 2017.

Staff, the Board and, on certain occasions the At-Large Executive Committee members, held several joint sessions to discuss and evaluate the Strategic Plan and how best to collaborate in meeting the Priorities. A Task Force researched other strategic plans and determined the Board’s Strategic Plan framework was in line with current general standards for strategic plans. Through these sessions, the Board decided that working with a strategic planning consultant would assist in ensuring the Strategic Plan was moving in the right direction for Al-Anon. It is hoped the consultant will meet with the Board and staff during a Board meeting in 2018.

Evaluation of the entire Strategic Plan is an ongoing responsibility of the Board. As the world continues to change, the Strategic Plan must evolve, as must the Board’s thinking to meet these changes. The conversation continues, the journey continues....

Together Empowering Al-Anon Members (TEAM)

Nine TEAM Events were held in 2017: Minnesota South (February 3-5), Florida North (May 5-6), Saskatchewan (June 3-4), Montana/Idaho (June 16-17), Ohio (July 7), California North (September 9), California South (September 16), Nevada (October 7), Washington/Oregon (November 3-4).

Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect

The 2017 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect event was held in Aurora, Colorado on Saturday, October 21, 2017. This was a very successful event bringing in 106 registrants. The event received very positive feedback from the evaluation forms, the Area Delegate and the Board and Executive Committee members in attendance. During the 2017 event, the Board of Trustees selected Texas East’s Houston area as the site for the 2018 Road Trip! event. A contract has been signed with the Houston Marriott-South.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bev A./Paula B. • Chairpersons

The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, is the administrator of the World Service Office (WSO), with legal and financial authority to act on behalf of the Board of Trustees between quarterly meetings. This committee reports all actions to the full Board for final approval no later than the next meeting of the Board.

The seven members of the Executive Committee include the Executive Director, Director of Programs, the Chairpersons of the Policy and Finance Committees, and three At-Large Al-Anon members that are elected by the Board of Trustees. The Chairperson of the Board attends the meeting with voice to bring the perspective of the Board, but no vote. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee is elected by the Board from among the three At-Large members.

The Executive Committee's on-going work includes:

- To approve the minutes and actions of the Finance Committee
- To accept the monthly, unaudited Financial Statement
- To approve special projects for the Board and Staff that involves day-to-day operations
- To receive monthly updates of departmental activities from the Executive Director, Director of Finance, Director of Programs, and insights on how the activities are related to the Strategic Plan
- To review additions, updates and corrections to policies and procedures for the Employee Policies and Procedures Manual of AFG, Inc.
- To review and update policies and procedures regarding the WSO Archives
- To approve Committee Guidelines
- To approve résumés for At-Large committee members and certain thought and task force members
- To review presentations and handouts for the World Service Conference
- To review the annual letter from the WSO's copyright lawyer regarding current trends in copyright laws and the internet
- To approve and receive updates on the progress of Project Approvals and Proposals to Study submitted by the Staff

The following actions were approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees:

- To approve the cost of Staff travel for the representation of the World Service Office at the Annual Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office Conference opening dinner
- To approve [a researcher] limited access to Archival material as agreed in advance in adherence to the "Policy for Researchers Using AFG, Inc. Archives"
- To produce *The Forum* magazine in full color on a one-year trial basis
- To offer a commemorative edition of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) with a ribbon bookmark in English, French and Spanish for sale starting at the 2018 Al-Anon International Convention, with a bookplate to be offered only at the Convention, at a sale price of \$15.00 per book

- To print "50th Anniversary" on the cover of limited-run version of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) copy to be available at the 2018 Al-Anon/Alateen International Convention and until supplies run out
- To print the pamphlet HOPE & UNDERSTANDING FOR PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS (working title)

POLICY COMMITTEE

Judy K./John McL. • Chairpersons | Donna E./Bruce F. • Co-Chairpersons
Claire R./Kerri K. • Secretaries

The Policy Committee is the largest group conscience representing Al-Anon as a whole, with the exception of the World Service Conference (WSC). The Committee is comprised of members of the Board of Trustees, WSO Staff who are World Service Conference members, and At-Large members of the Executive Committee. The Policy Committee ensures that the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" (Policy Digest) contains clear and concise policies based on Al-Anon's Traditions and spiritual principles.

Topics at the quarterly Policy Committee meetings are generated by members of the fellowship, Delegates, and members of the Committee. If the Policy Committee determines that more clarity on a topic is necessary, the Committee then makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. If the Board approves any recommended change to the Policy Digest, that change requires approval by no less than a two-thirds vote at the WSC.

The 2017 WSC voted to amend the text on pages 95-99 in the "Financial Matters" section in the Policy Digest section of the *2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). The motion to accept the amended text was carried.

The 2017 WSC also voted to amend the text on pages 85-86 and 123-124 in the "Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions" section in the Policy Digest section of the *2014-2017 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P24/27). The motion to accept this amended text was carried.

At the Open Policy Meeting during the 2017 WSC, the Policy Committee discussed two topics pertinent to the worldwide fellowship. The first subject was "Autonomy of Groups as it relates to Tradition Four and Warranty Four." A key element of that discussion was how to effectively communicate the idea that freedom implies responsibility and that the groups themselves are responsible for upholding Al-Anon's Twelve Traditions.

The second topic was "Electronic Meetings." This discussion focused on how Al-Anon can extend the spirit of Tradition One to the thousands of Al-Anon and Alateen members who practice the program using new and evolving communication methods, e.g. phone meetings and electronic (online) meetings. In the spirit of Concept Four, the Committee asked how Al-Anon can welcome these members into the service structure. The Electronic/Virtual Meetings discussion, started at the 2017 WSC Open Policy meeting, resulted in a Thought Force charged with conducting a knowledge-based discussion prior to the July 2017 Policy Meeting. The Policy Committee heard the results of the discussion and decided to create a Work Group to explore ways to reach out to electronic meetings and find ways to allow them to fully participate in the fellowship.

At the October 2017 Policy Committee Meeting, a Policy Digest Review Thought Force presented the results of their research into classifying the contents of the Policy Digest as either policies or procedures. Through their discussions, they identified some of each. They also evaluated which portions were written with an emphasis on spiritual principles in the application of policy. In a

spreadsheet summary of their findings, they marked each section as: *Policy with Spiritual Principles; Policy without Spiritual Principles; Not Written as Policy, but Should Be; and Does Not Belong in the Policy Digest*. The Thought Force was thanked for their work and disbanded. Several Task Forces will be created to work on various aspects of the Thought Force's findings.

Since the October Board meeting, two Task Forces have been created to address the Policy Digest Review Thought Force's suggestions. The first is working on the "Membership and Group Meetings" section of the Policy Digest. The second is working on the "Alateen" section of the Policy Digest.

As always, members of Al-Anon are encouraged to submit questions or shared experiences to the Policy Committee for more interpretation according to Al-Anon's basic guides, i.e., the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service. When doing so, consider how the issue might affect worldwide Al-Anon as a whole, remembering that Al-Anon policies are simply interpretations according to principles and not rigid rules.

ADMINISTRATION

Mary G. • Executive Director (interim) | Vali F. • Executive Director

Executive Director

The new Executive Director began her term at the World Service Office on September 5th. She was supported with the transition into the new role by the Interim Executive Director who stayed onboard at the WSO throughout September and attended the new Executive Director's first Board meeting in October in a supportive capacity. The Executive Director has maintained many practices initiated by the Interim Executive Director, including monthly staff meetings and circulation of the Board Brief to Staff, and has created several new programs, such as a monthly technology focus and an office-wide project calendar, in collaboration with the Staff Leadership Team. Her goal is to streamline WSO operations wherever possible through technology to enable the Staff to spend more time on membership and public outreach, fellowship support and the Strategic Plan Priorities.

Staff Leadership Team

To aid the Executive Director in improving efficiency, considering priorities, evaluating and addressing Staff needs, and evolving the WSO structure, a Staff Leadership Team was created consisting of the Directors of Finance and Programs, all Associate Directors, the Digital Strategy Manager, and Administrative Coordinator. This team replaces the Administrative Team formed in 2016. The team meets bi-weekly to discuss current project and financial status, to plan the Staff meeting agenda, and to brainstorm how to address opportunities for improvement from the Staff survey.

Staff and the Structural Transition of the WSO

The evolution of the World Service Office to meet the needs of the membership now and into the future, in alignment with the Board of Trustees' Strategic Priorities, continued in 2017 with the changes and additions to Digital Strategy: a Webmaster position was added, and the Research Analyst position transformed into the Data Analyst role. Both positions were filled in the first quarter of the year. Two other organizational changes included the re-alignment of the Associate Director—Conference and the Archives Coordinator under Programs instead of Administration.

In May, the Magazine Coordinator position, which requires Al-Anon membership, was filled permanently with the WSO's first remote employee. The Magazine Coordinator works in South Carolina and visits the WSO twice a year during peak periods for *The Forum* and *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* content planning. The addition of remote employees has necessitated adjustments in office processes. Technology has been utilized to bridge the distance; for instance, monthly Staff meetings have been held using Skype, which offers video and audio conferencing. Additionally, Skype automatically starts when Staff login to enable others to send quick messages or questions without leaving their office, whether it is in Virginia Beach, South Carolina or on the road. The Executive Director became the WSO's second remote employee, as she splits her time most weeks between working in Virginia Beach and remotely in Northern Virginia.

Several resignations occurred during the fall, including the Controller and three clerks/secretaries. The resignations provided both the Finance and Programs departments the opportunity to evaluate their structure and needs. The Finance department reorganized to provide direct reporting of managers and coordinators to the Director of Finance, thus providing her better visibility into day-to-day activities. The Controller position was eliminated in favor of an Accounting Manager and the new Accounting Manager will start in early January 2018.

In addition to taking the time to congratulate those leaving to advance their careers, Staff took the opportunity to create the first Staff Leadership Team Task Force, charged with determining key gaps in administrative capabilities. Translation coordination and editorial support appeared at the top of the gap list. Given the caliber of work, mid-level positions were defined to replace two secretary positions: a Translation Project Coordinator and an Editorial Quality Specialist. The vacant positions will be finalized and posted in January 2018.

Staff benefits were evaluated and revised to align with market conditions. The Board approved changes were introduced to the Staff in May with more significant changes going into effect at the beginning of 2018. At the end of the year, the Staff completed their new semi-annual evaluation process which provided the Staff and supervisors the chance to evaluate and discuss progress toward goals, ensuring transparency in terms of opportunities for improvement.

In the fall, in the context of expanding the open and collaborative office environment, the Staff Leadership Team agreed to eliminate the need for salaried employees to clock in and out at the start and end of their day and lunch time. This change was met with enthusiasm and its success lays the groundwork for greater flexibility in working arrangements which provides an attractive environment for new and existing employees alike.

General Counsel

To support AFG, Inc. operations, a local General Counsel was retained on a trial basis to assist the office in matters of employment legislation, tax and copyright law. A retainer arrangement was negotiated for a three-month trial starting in July 2017. At the end of September, both parties evaluated the outcome and decided to continue the arrangement. Al-Anon had received more than the paid retainer value in hours and the attorneys agreed the arrangement was mutually beneficial.

One activity the attorneys undertook was a review of the WSO Employee Manual to ensure alignment with current legislation.

These changes along with minor procedural changes, including the elimination of clocking requirements for salaried employees, were approved by the Executive Committee and the new Manual went into effect in December.

Travel & Administration

Due to declining conditions at the current hotel used to house Finance and Executive Committee and Board members who travel frequently to Virginia Beach, Staff explored options for new hotel accommodations. Staff were able to negotiate a good arrangement for room and board at the Holiday Inn & Suites Virginia Beach—North Beach starting in 2018.

In presenting their annual proposal, the WSO's insurance agent proposed the addition of cyber risk insurance, which they were able to add without an increase in cost due to a change in providers. Given the increase in cybercrimes such as email ransoms, the WSO chose to add this insurance.

Trademarks & Copyrights

Re-registration of three trademarks (Al-Anon, Alateen and the Al-Anon [triangle] logo) began in 2017 for the 18 countries where Al-Anon has provided reprint permission. Costs of protecting these AFG, Inc. trademarks were estimated at more than \$100,000, which required funds from the Reserve Fund. After Finance Committee discussion and agreement, work began to protect the AFG, Inc. name. The trademark attorney worked with foreign counsel to re-register trademarks in countries where they have been registered to national structures. Trademarks re-registration was completed in four countries in 2017:

- Iceland, New Zealand, Colombia and Turkey

Many of the trademark efforts begun in 2017 will come to fruition in 2018. Trademarks are generally created for ten years so budgeting in 2027 and 2028 will need to consider renewals.

As the year ended, the WSO discovered several websites suspected of violating copyright. One site appears to be renting an Al-Anon eBook. General Counsel was engaged on the topic of copyright infringement and Staff learned that electronic book copyright law allows a purchaser to loan an electronic book, providing it is loaned to only one person at a time, in alignment with printed material copyright law. Investigation into the discovered sites will continue in 2018.

Electronic Meetings

Staff has been communicating with an electronic meeting platform operator regarding another potential trademark concern. The issue was referred to the Executive Director in December. The site states the Al-Anon and Alateen meetings it hosts have been registered with the WSO; however, the WSO has not agreed to register these meetings. The Executive Director wrote to the operator to ask the statement regarding registration be removed and advised him the site's approach to hosting meetings appears to violate Tradition Seven; conversations are ongoing.

The Staff and Executive Director met in November to evaluate the procedure for registering electronic meetings. Through that discussion, Staff were able to clarify that meetings using multiple formats, for example Skype meetings which can occur using video, audio and chat simultaneously, are consistent with the Al-Anon Policy Digest and can be registered.

Challenges arose regarding several electronic meeting formats as can be expected when using emerging technologies.

- Canadian members seeking to attend US hosted phone meetings discovered they were being charged supplemental fees by Canadian phone providers or could not attend the meetings at all. Canadian members were encouraged to start phone meetings using Canadian phone providers.
- Members setup Facebook Al-Anon meetings using the "closed" rather than "secret" group type, some due to lack of knowledge and others believing they were performing a public outreach service. Al-Anon meetings using social media need to protect the anonymity of Al-Anon members who participate in these meetings which, for Facebook requires the "secret" setting. Staff continues to talk to these groups in the hopes of reasoning things out with one another.

Staff will update electronic meeting guidelines in 2018 to reflect what has been learned.

Facebook and emerging platforms such as WhatsApp are vital channels for reaching younger people who may be experiencing the challenges of a loved one's drinking. The Associate Director—Public Outreach Media and Group Records, Associate Director—Groups, and the Executive Director are participating in the Policy Committee's Task Force on Electronic/Virtual Meetings as part of the overall strategy to enable use of these technologies to host meetings to occur in a manner in alignment with Al-Anon principles.

Working with the Areas

2017 marked the beginning of a new era in collaboration between Areas and the WSO, with the WSO participating in two live video sessions with Area Assemblies. The Interim Executive Director participated in a video conferencing session with California North Al-Anon members as part of a "skit" between Annie S., Lois W. and the ED. Later in the year, the Director of Programs, Associate Director—Groups, Alateen Assistant and the Executive Director participated in a shared responsibility presentation and discussion with the California South Assembly regarding challenges facing their Alateen groups. Participants at the California South Assembly cheered at the end of the discussion and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have the WSO "in the room" for the conversation.

The Director of Finance and Executive Director participated via phone with the Delegates and Trustees from Canada to discuss challenges Canadian members experience trying to donate through PayPal to WSO and receive tax receipts. PayPal does not provide enough information to support creation of a tax receipt; however, the conversation led to several good suggestions to simplify Canadian member contributions to the WSO. Staff is working to implement some suggestions; while others are already available, for example, providing Canadian members the Canadian P.O. Box address so they do not need to buy special stamps to mail a donation cheque (check).

The WSO, like the rest of North America, were very concerned about families and Al-Anon friends when natural disasters like hurricanes struck Puerto Rico, Florida and Texas and fires ravaged California and Montana. Members reached out to the WSO to understand how to help, which provided an opportunity for Staff to define the WSO role as it relates to local disasters. True to its heritage, in these situations the WSO will act as a clearinghouse by reaching out to the Areas to gather local contacts and providing those contacts to members who wish to help.

Universal Understanding of Recovery (UUR)

Staff were asked by a member to provide a timeline for delivery of service material that included the definition of family recovery created by the Universal Understanding of Recovery Work Group and approved by the WSC in 2015. Staff recognized that since the time the UUR Work Group had proposed the definition, a standard definition had been created and AI-Anon's late introduction of an alternative might cause a public controversy. The topic was raised to the Board of Trustees and in July 2017, the Board rescinded the April 2015 motion on the basis that it did not meet the standards of the current professional climate, was outside the purpose of AI-Anon, and could put the organization in the midst of public controversy.

Strategic Planning

To provide greater visibility to the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees regarding the actions taken by Staff in advancing the Board of Trustees' Strategic Plan Priorities monthly, Staff intro-

duced "Insights" sections into the monthly Directors' Report which connect key activities or projects with a specific priority on the Board's plan. These insights help the Executive Committee achieve their oversight responsibilities and provides a great method for the Executive Director and Staff Leadership Team to reaffirm Staff are focused on the Board's Strategic Priorities.

2018 International Convention

Working in an environment of mutual trust, the International Convention Planning Committee brainstormed many creative ideas for enhancing the experience for members attending the 2018 International Convention in Baltimore. Some of the ideas include expanding meeting formats beyond traditional speaker and panel meetings to include book studies, writing workshops and interactive workshops; and offering an AI-Anon-unique archival display for all who attend the Pioneer Luncheon. Other ideas will be revealed as the planning continues. The Staff are thrilled by the opportunity to share fun, fellowship and recovery in July!

PROGRAMS

Marsha W. • Director of Programs

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

2018 International Convention

Baltimore, Maryland, July 6-8, 2018

Vali F. • Chairperson | Marsha W. • Coordinator | Suzanne M. • Co-Coordinator

"Celebrating One Day at a Time" AI-Anon's International Convention 2018 is the theme for this upcoming event.

The registration fee was set at \$130 if received by December 31, 2017; \$165, if received between January 1 and May 31, 2018; and \$195 from June 1st through onsite registration. The price to attend the Pioneer Luncheon, a ticketed event, was set at \$65. The Planning Committee signed a contract with the registration company that managed the registration process for the 2008 and 2013 International Conventions.

AI-Anon.org/international enables members to register online or download an information packet to register by mail for the convention and housing. To encourage attendance, ads and articles were included in the electronic publication *In the Loop* and *The Forum* magazine. All information and registration materials for the Convention are available in Spanish and French.

The Conference Reunion Luncheon is an event at which attendance has been declining. For the 2018 Conference Reunion, the Planning Committee considered ways to make the event more attractive and to offer more time for reconnection. The Reunion will be a cruise aboard Baltimore's Inner Harbor Spirit Cruise Ship.

2023 International Convention

Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 30 – July 2, 2023

Vali F. • Chairperson | Suzanne M. • Coordinator | Kerri K. • Co-Coordinator

Thirteen members of the 2023 Convention Site Committee listened to 13 bid presentations following the 2017 World Service Conference.

The Convention Site Committee was comprised of AI-Anon volunteers and WSO Staff. The volunteers included six Delegates (who were not presenting a bid) selected by lot, two members of the Board of Trustees selected by lot, and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The Staff members included the Director of Finance, the Director of Programs, the 2023 International Convention Coordinator (Associate Director—Conference), and the 2023 International Convention Co-Coordinator (Associate Director—International).

Following the bid presentations, the Convention Site Committee went into Executive Session to determine its top three cities based on the information that was included in the bid when it was submitted and the bid presentation, including the question and answer session.

The Event/Project Manager worked with the three convention and visitors' bureau representatives to set up the one week, three-city International Convention Site Selection trip.

In August, a six-member Site Selection Committee comprised of the 2023 Coordinator, Co-Coordinator, Executive Director, Director of Programs, Director of Finance, and a Trustee selected by lot—visited the top three cities. After the site visits, the Committee went into Executive Session to discuss the merits of each city. During the Executive Session, the Event/Project Manager joined the meeting briefly via conference call to add her insights into the conversation. Following the discussion, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In September, the Chairperson of the Board (COB), the Event/Project Manager, and the 2023 Coordinator visited Albuquerque to tour the Convention Center and the five main hotels and to ask any additional questions to provide the COB with the information necessary to recommend the city to the Board for approval in October. Following the Board's approval, the location of the 2023 International Convention was announced to the fellowship in the COB's Letter.

The 2023 International Convention Planning Committee began meeting to discuss the city of Albuquerque's offer and the numerous hotels (including rates and commitments) in the proposed housing block to start working out the details regarding signing contacts.

New for the 2023 International Convention are shuttle buses! Al-Anon will be providing shuttle buses on peak days to the attendees that are staying in hotels that are not within walking distance of the convention center. This allows AFG, Inc. to offer a good range of hotels in different parts of the city and attract a wider variety of members to attend based on their personal preferences and finances.

CONFERENCE

Suzanne M. • Associate Director—Conference

The Associate Director—Conference facilitated the AFG Connects communities for Past and Current WSC Members, current WSC Members, Area Chairs and District Representatives (DRs). Panel 57 Delegates, Area Chairs and District Representatives were welcomed and received access to their respective communities on AFG Connects, the online system the WSO uses to communicate with trusted servants. Some themes across these active communities include:

- Area Chairs have been discussing: the number of Group Representatives (GRs) attending Assemblies versus the number of groups in the Area; and Area boundaries and service.
- District Representatives have been discussing: District meeting formats; as well as Sponsorship and Service Sponsorship workshops.
- Delegates have been discussing: the various Area methods in place for GRs to bring forth a motion during an Assembly; and whether Areas require a member to be present during an Election Assembly to stand for an Area position.

2017 Conference

Twenty-five Conference members participated in the conference call for new Conference members in mid-January. A recap of the call was emailed the following week.

New Delegates were paired with their Delegate Mentors.

Sixty-four Delegates returned their Opportunities to Serve forms and were assigned to be a member of a Committee or a Task Force, or to attend a workshop. One Delegate opted out. Most Delegates were assigned to their first or second choice; a few Delegates were assigned to their third choice.

Sixty-two Chosen Agenda Items (CAIs) were submitted by the deadline. Two were related to the Prayer for Today discussion; five had to do with Policy discussions, and one had to do with the outcome of the Task Force: Spirituality in Group Money Discussions. Therefore, 54 CAIs were sent to the CAI Task Force to combine like topics. The Task Force was comprised of the Conference Chairperson and two Delegates. Following its work, the Task Force combined like items that resulted in 54 CAIs being combined into 19 CAIs that were presented to Conference members for voting.

The Sharing Area Highlights meeting, an out-of-Conference session that takes place the day before Conference convenes and is organized and chaired by Delegates, met in small groups to share and discuss several topics, which were meant to initiate discussion, which then reported discussion highlights to the whole group. The response to the second year of this new format continued to be positive.

Ninety-two voting members attended the 57th WSC in Virginia Beach, Virginia, April 24-28, 2017. Alternate Delegates represented the Areas of Ontario North and South Dakota; a few days prior to the Conference convening, the WSO learned that the Idaho Area would not be represented. Mexico, New Zealand and the UK & Eire each sent a General Service Office (GSO) Representative to attend the Conference. The GSO in Mexico also sent a translator to assist its Representative. Conference evaluations indicated that the Conference was very successful.

Conference members toured the World Service Office during Conference week. Members of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee facilitated the tours.

All Conference presentations were posted to AFG Connects. The representatives from Mexico, New Zealand and the UK & Eire were given access to the WSC Members community on AFG Connects for one month.

The *2017 World Service Conference Summary* (P-46) was posted to the website in July. The hard copy was available for purchase in August.

2018 Conference

Staff reached a fully executed contract for the 2018 WSC, which will be held at the Renaissance Westchester Hotel in West Harrison, New York, April 16-20, 2018. The following sessions will take place on Monday, April 16th: The New Member Orientation Session, Committees/Task Forces, Sharing Area Highlights, and the Opening Dinner. The Conference will begin Tuesday, April 17th, all Conference members will visit Stepping Stones the morning of Wednesday, April 18th and the Closing Dinner will be held Friday, April 20th.

A fully-executed contract was reached to record the 2018 WSC. A contract with a former Staff member to write the *2018 Conference Summary* was also finalized.

Delegates were invited to mentor a Panel 58 Delegate.

New Conference members were invited to participate in the conference call for new Conference members.

2019 and 2020 Conferences

Following two site visits and numerous discussions, Staff executed contracts with a Virginia Beach hotel for the 2019 and 2020 Conferences.

Conference Leadership Team

Tina B./Judy K. • Chairpersons | Rosie M./Teri M. • Co-Chairpersons
Suzanne M. • Associate Director—Conference

In initial planning for the 2018 WSC, the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) unanimously agreed on (and the Board approved) the 2018 Conference theme, "Al-Anon—There is no standing still!"

The CLT created a Task Force of Delegates for increased Delegate participation in the WSC Agenda. These Delegates were charged with creating presentations to present the Board's Goals for the Conference, the Conference Voting Procedures, the Conference Theme, and Conference Etiquette.

The CLT also created a Task Force for Translation Options at the WSC. This Task Force will explore the benefits and challenges of possibly providing translation to those Conference members whose first language is not English.

Following the CLT's review of the Conference Procedures Booklet, members of the CLT reorganized the content, included additional terms and clarified voting procedures. The Board of Trustees approved the revision.

The Chosen Agenda Item (CAI) invitation letter was posted to AFG Connects. For the 2018 Conference, the Conference Leadership Team invited incoming Delegates as well as outgoing Delegates to submit items. Also eligible to submit topics are members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Executive Committee, and members of the WSO Conference Staff.

The CAIs will be fact-checked by a Task Force that includes two Delegates and the Associate Director—Conference; two other Delegates and the Conference Chairperson will combine the submissions into similar topics for voting.

GROUP SERVICES

Sue P. • Associate Director—Group Services

2017 has been a busy and fruitful year in Group Services. Here are the highlights:

Correspondences

There continue to be common themes that are expressed by the members as issues of concern: crosstalk, group insurance, group bank accounts, problems with family members other than alcohol and service participation by Al-Anon members who are also members of Alcoholics Anonymous. In response, members are encouraged to use the *Service Manual* and to discuss these matters in a principle-based manner by applying the Traditions and Concepts. When appropriate, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents are created and made available to members; in 2017, the group banking issues FAQ was updated to reflect current trends. With the shift from *Group e-News* to *In the Loop*, Group Services became able to share current information along with “how to” articles that tie into the themes extracted from phone calls and emails received.

The Inmate Correspondence Service now has its own email address: ics@al-anon.org. Inmates are now able to use this service, if offered by their correctional facilities, to write to their Al-Anon contacts and the Al-Anon contact can readily respond. It has reduced the wait time between correspondences which appears to be beneficial to all.

Alateen

2017 was a monumental year for Alateen as it celebrated its 60th anniversary. The year started with a call for “Happy Anniversary” cards to be sent to the WSO. As the year progressed, the WSO made collages of the pictures on displays that were included in the Alateen Talk newsletter. The WSO Staff was deeply touched by the many cards, posters and pictures that were sent from the various Alateen anniversary events and conferences. A historical timeline was displayed at the April WSC marking the footprints through the years of Alateen. A special logo appeared on all issues of *The Forum* beginning in March.

Alateen WSO was launched on Instagram in February and on Twitter in March.

Historical information commemorating Alateen history was posted in the Alateen Coordinator community on AFG Connects in collaboration with Archives. Articles appeared in *The Forum*, *Group*

eNews and *In the Loop*. Some Staff members modified their email signatures to include the 60th anniversary logo. The entire Staff took part in the celebration.

Group Services also received requests to share information regarding the 60th anniversary with the Stepping Stones Foundation and National Association of Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) for their respective newsletters.

The WSO requested Areas forward updated Safety and Behavioral Requirements to the WSO. Areas were reminded to refer to the 2003 Alateen Motion when making updates to ensure their Safety and Behavioral Requirements remain in compliance with the Alateen Policy.

To solidify the position of Alateen as part of Al-Anon, the online meeting search for Alateen meetings was modified to clearly state that where no Alateen meetings exist, teens are welcome to attend Al-Anon meetings. In addition, the option to register and participate in Alateen Chat meetings with a link to the registration page was made prominent in the online meeting search feature.

The six Alateen Chat meetings are attended regularly. The instructions were modified to simplify the registration process and clarify the times to call into the chat meeting. As a result of the Annual Alateen Recertification process, the Alateen Chat meeting Group Sponsors and Current Mailing Address (CMA) contacts were updated to reflect rotation of service. A separate listing is maintained for the Alateen Chat meetings.

The conference calls with incoming Area Alateen Coordinators were successful with an 81% participation rate, as were the follow up calls in preparation for Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) recertification. The 2003 Motion was reviewed with the Coordinators and the various service tools available were shared.

Spanish Members

Group Services Staff had an opportunity to participate in a live television broadcast which aired on April 1, 2017 announcing Al-Anon Family Groups on a local community access Spanish-speaking program that has connections to major outlets in the Spanish-speaking TV community. The name of the program is “11 por las 11” which translated means, “11 at 11.” The seven-to eight-minute segment (episode #313) provided Group Services Staff, while protecting their anonymity, an opportunity to explain what Al-Anon is to the Spanish-speaking community, how Al-Anon can help families of alcoholics, where to find and how to connect with Al-Anon. The episode can be found online using Google or another search engine.

For the fifth consecutive year, an Al-Anon/Alateen table was present at Nuestra Feria. This is an event organized by the Hampton Roads Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (HRHCC) which provides outreach to the Hispanic community in the region. In collaboration with the Virginia Beach Outreach Committee, over 100 *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2017* magazines in Spanish and approximately 75 in English were distributed as well as local meeting lists.

Al-Anon Information Services

The annual update was mailed to 201 Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) and 94 Literature Distribution Centers (LDCs). All information was listed on al-anon.org under “Worldwide Al-Anon Contacts.” As the website was updated, new URLs were established. The links were posted on AFG Connects for the AISs and LDCs to update their meeting search links to the new site.

Electronic Meetings

Group Services Staff held two conference calls with 32 representative members of the phone meetings in March. Topics of discussion included the “Dilution of the Al-Anon Program—the Effects of Using Outside Terminology in Al-Anon Meetings,” “Welcoming Newcomers Who Are Affected by Addictions Other Than Alcohol.” Members shared their concerns on the topics and were referred to use several tools such as discussions on Traditions One and Three, the policy regarding use of “Labels” and the “Three Obstacles to Success.”

Canadian and international phone meeting participants notified the WSO about difficulties they were experiencing calling into the phone meetings that originate in the United States. The members were encouraged to explore hosting phone meetings in their countries to avoid disruption of the help and hope offered by phone meetings.

Group Services Staff is participating in the Electronic/Virtual Meeting Thought Force to provide information and establish criteria for electronic meeting registration on the many platforms that are now available to Al-Anon members. The Thought Force is also discussing how to incorporate the meetings and the various platforms into the service structure.

Miscellaneous

Group Services Staff members collaborated with Public Outreach and Digital Strategy to update content that is currently appearing on the al-anon.org website. All social media posts and graphics are reviewed with the intent to attract the newcomer to Al-Anon and Alateen. Snippets that appear on Teen Corner are reviewed and updated at regular intervals with new and fresh articles for the public view. The ability to provide basic information to professionals including downloadable material has been an effective tool that has streamlined work flow.

2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27)

The updated *Service Manual* was posted online in a digital format on December 8, 2017 in English. An announcement was posted *In the Loop* on the same day. The digital version offers direct links from the Tables of Contents to the topic, the ability to print, set bookmarks, search by word/phrase/chapter, document notes and increase readability using zoom. As a result, there is no Index in the online digital version. At the end of the year, a downloadable PDF version was available with plans to provide a downloadable flipbook version in the future when technology permits.

The “Groups at Work” section was completely revised and reorganized to reflect language in keeping with Al-Anon spiritual principles. Revisions to the “Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies” and the “Concepts of Service” that were approved by the World Service Conference since 2014 are incorporated, along with the completely revised “World Service Handbook.”

GROUP RECORDS

Pat Q. • Associate Director—Public Outreach Media & Group Records

The WSO Group Records Department placed 46 groups in “Reported not Meeting” status since the beginning of the year. This new status allows the WSO to stop directing people to groups that may not be meeting. The flagged meetings are temporarily removed from the WSO toll-free information meeting line and the Public Outreach website meeting search results until the status of the meeting can be verified.

Forty-three percent (20 meetings) of the reported meetings were actually holding meetings. These meetings did not have signage within the building to direct people to the meeting room, did not provide location instructions with their group registration or update, or they had moved to another location. Twenty-six percent (12 meetings) were no longer meeting; the groups had disbanded and failed to notify the Area or the World Service Office (WSO). At the end of the year, the remaining meetings were awaiting verification by the Area Group Records Coordinators and District Representatives.

An Al-Anon member from the Peguis Native American Reservation in the Manitoba/Northwest Ontario Area registered a second videoconferencing meeting using Telehealth technology. It allows individuals who live in remote areas to go to a Health Centre, nursing station, or hospital and attend an Al-Anon meeting via conference video. The bi-monthly meeting is an addition to a face-to-face meeting held at the same location.

Group Records Conference Calls and Training Sessions

The new Area Group Records Coordinator and Area Alateen Process Person (AAPP) web conference calls were held on January 28th. The incoming Panel 58 Coordinators and AAPPs were introduced to their new roles using PowerPoint presentations. Eighty-six percent of the Area Group Records Coordinators (19 Areas) and 77 percent of the AAPPs (17 Areas) participated on the call. The remaining Areas were not represented as their Coordinators are currently serving a second term. All participants successfully accessed the videoconferencing platform to view the PowerPoint presentations and some used the chat feature to ask questions.

The Group Records Department held two WSO Online Group Records web conference training sessions for new Area Group Records Coordinators and Area Alateen Process Persons (AAPPs) on February 7 and 9, 2017. Two different time options were offered to accommodate the participants. An average of five Area Group Records Coordinators and AAPPs attended each training session. The smaller groups allowed participants to ask in-depth questions and Staff to go over specific scenarios.

Four regional Area Group Records Coordinator conference calls were held in October. The calls focused on the connection between public outreach and group records and identified broken communication links. WSO Staff asked Coordinators to inform members of the main reason for keeping their group records up to date—so WSO can help newcomers find their meeting. Sixty percent of the Areas (40 Areas) participated on the calls. A follow-up survey on AFG Connects will gather feedback from the Area Group Records Coordinators.

Group Records Updates

WSO Online Group Records Application Upgrade

Group Records released the WSO Online Group Records 4.7 version on August 30th. This latest upgrade contained fixes and improvements based directly on Area Group Records Coordinators’ and Area Alateen Process Persons’ feedback. Highlights include the reactivation of past Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service on the certification tab, and the optimization of the city search field. The application now treats city abbreviations, apostrophes and hyphens between words as spelled out (e.g. Ft Worth, O’Fallon, Saint-Félicien).

2017 Al-Anon Annual Update Sheet

The WSO Group Records Department appreciates the fellowship's efforts to keep their group information up-to-date. Starting in September 2017, the Al-Anon Annual Update mailing included a flyer to encourage groups to verify and update information to help newcomers find their meetings. The flyer highlights the importance of including location instructions and having a Group Phone Contact for the public.

Group Records Forms

The WSO developed web forms to address complaints from members who were unable to save the completed Al-Anon Registration/Group Records Change Form (GR-1). Separate online forms were created for new Al-Anon group registrations and Al-Anon group changes to allow members to complete their entry online. Their updates are then emailed to their Area Group Records Secretary, for verification and data entry, with a cc email to the WSO, streamlining the flow of group registrations and changes. Area Group Records Coordinators received notification of the new process the first week of November, in anticipation of the new forms becoming available in December. Printable PDF versions of the New Al-Anon Group Registration and Al-Anon Group Records Change forms will remain available until no longer needed. The WSO plans to enhance functionality of the forms in future phases.

The total number of Al-Anon & Alateen groups worldwide in 2017 is 24,395:

US/PR/BDA Al-Anon **12,683**

US/PR/BDA Alateen **831**

Canada Al-Anon **1,185**

Canada Alateen **50**

International Al-Anon **9,000**

International Alateen **646**

The total number of electronic (social media, digital and phone) meetings increased a net 8% in 2017 to 170:

- Social media **0**
- Digital **55**
- Phone **115**

Alateen Annual Recertification for Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS)

Sixty-three Areas completed their 2017 Online Alateen Annual Recertification by the July 1st deadline. The WSO contacted the remaining four Areas to offer one-on-one assistance. The affected Areas worked diligently the following days to ensure that their 2017 AMIAS recertification was finalized. The delays did not impact any Alateen groups, since the pending AMIAS were not affiliated with any groups.

•4,354 AMIAS were certified in 2017.

WSO Online Meeting Search

Three Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) contacted the Group Records Department about outdated meeting information listed on the WSO website. These challenges often occur when group changes are reported to only one service structure and the other levels are not informed, for example when a group reports changes to an AIS but not to the Area or WSO. The Staff expect the new online Group Records forms to increase alignment as groups are enabled to enter group updates directly into the WSO database and to have those changes flow out to the Areas.

The Group Records Department conducted an inventory of Area, Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) and District websites. The purpose of the inventory was to provide WSO Staff with valuable information to enhance the WSO meeting locator, and in turn to better meet the needs of the service arms. Improvements to the WSO meeting locator feature will encourage Areas, AISs and Districts to link their websites to the WSO meeting locator so all Al-Anon websites can provide the same up-to-date meeting information.

INTERNATIONAL

Kerri K. • Associate Director—International

Translation

The following items were translated into French and Spanish in 2017:

Magazines

- *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2018* magazine, order forms and marketing tools
- *Le lien* – a French-language publication compiled from *Forum* articles (six issues)
- *en Acción* – a Spanish-language publication compiled from *Forum* articles (six issues)

Presentations

- *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* presentation for Quebec Areas

Guidelines

- *Cooperation Between Al-Anon and A.A.* (G-3)

Pamphlets/Service Tools

- *Al-Anon: Then and Now* (AR-2)
- *Al-Anon, You and the Alcoholic* (P-2)
- *How Can I Help My Children?* (P-9)
- *Al-Anon's Cofounders* (P-87)
- *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93)
- *Getting Started* (S-15R)

Web-based or Digital Media

- Twitter user profiles
- Instagram user profiles
- Group Records change and registration web forms, instructions and email confirmations
- Group Records annual update instructions
- Alateen 60th anniversary tagline
- *Alateen Talk* excerpts published online

- *Le Messenger and En Contacto* – French and Spanish online newsletters published at least bi-weekly
- Website content for release 1.0 (Home, Newcomers, Al-Anon Meetings, Contributions, and Calendar menus)
- 2018 International Convention website registration information, theme, flyer, program, housing information and special event registration information

Other Items

- Appeal letter (quarterly)
- Chairperson of the Board letter (quarterly)
- *News from the World Service Conference* bulletin
- World Service Conference motions
- 2018 World Service Conference theme for use on posters, letterhead and other materials
- Group eNews (monthly through August)
- *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22) revision (French only)
- Triennial membership survey
- “*Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies*” (P-25 of the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual)
- “*World Service Handbook*” (P-26 of the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual)

Al-Anon/Alateen Internationally

The Associate Director—International is responsible for answering correspondence with members and structures outside of the World Service Conference Structure. The position is the primary point of contact for news and information coming in from international structures and is the channel for information that flows from the WSO to support the structures. Specific areas of support include literature (overseeing the process of translation and reprint) and policy (providing guidance and materials). More general topics include logos, contributions, literature, group problems, technical questions about websites, and other subjects. Where appropriate, these categories are used to help classify the information presented below.

Africa

Kenya

Staff received questions from a member in the US about how to provide support to Al-Anon members in Kenya. Some information was shared with the member in the US and those in Kenya. The members in Kenya were also encouraged to get in touch with the General Service Office (GSO) in South Africa since the GSO there does a lot of public outreach across the continent and they are able to distribute literature more efficiently than the WSO could.

South Africa

In April, the GSO notified the WSO of a change in staff—Mariette le R. is the new office administrator, having taken over from Phillipa B. The GSO is building a new website which they hope to launch by the end of 2017. The Board of Trustees elected two new Delegates to the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM).

Literature Support: In the last year, the GSO has been able to print Al-Anon’s three daily readers and the soft cover version of *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22). They requested permission to reprint *Blueprint for Progress* (P-91) and *Reaching for Personal Freedom* (P-92). They also asked for and were sent the PDF version of

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism for reprint purposes. On behalf of their members, the GSO submitted three articles to the Associate Director—International for consideration in *The Forum*. These were directed to appropriate Staff in the Literature department. One of the articles was selected for publication in November.

Policy Support: South Africa’s Literature Committee wrote seeking suggestions and clarification of policies regarding autonomy of local service arms when printing public outreach pieces and service tools. A Board of Trustees member wrote for information about WSO’s bequest policy and how it functions together with other policies at the local level that may be more or less restrictive.

Uganda

In July, the WSO had its first contact with a group in Uganda when a new group registration form arrived from a member of the Kampala Group in Kampala, Uganda. This is the first Al-Anon group to register in this country.

Europe

Denmark

The GSO has almost completed their translation of *Hope for Today* (B-27). It should be available in early 2018.

Denmark requested the raw graphics files for the “Road Sign” bookmark. They adapted it for local use in public outreach.

Finland

Finland established a new office location and a part-time paid employee this year. The previous office was too remote, and the structure worked to find an affordable, centrally-located office. They elected a new IAGSM Delegate at their March service meeting.

France

France elected a second IAGSM Delegate. In previous years, they have only had one.

Germany

Germany hosted the European Zonal Meeting August 18-20, 2017 and their Board of Trustees elected a new Delegate to the IAGSM.

Greece

A new group was registered in Greece and the WSO had their first contact in a long time with this structure.

Literature Support: The Associate Director—International was put in touch with a member of the translation committee in the Greek service structure. She explained that the committee has been recently re-formed with Al-Anon members. In the past, non-members produced translations that were technically accurate, but lacked the “Al-Anon voice.” Now that there are more members who are bilingual English, they are enthusiastic about taking on this service role. The contact listed several pieces they would like to translate. Staff provided her with the correct form and instructions. This seems to be a very cooperative and positive beginning to renewing relations with Greece.

The new contact continued to write with questions about group problems such as women attending men’s meetings and members voting at multiple groups.

Hungary

Literature Support: The Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) office in Hungary was very active this year. They are working to complete translations of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (B-8), *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22), and *Living with Sobriety* (P-49).

The AIS submitted five public outreach posters for review and feedback. It was provided, and they were also referred to the page on the website that provides several graphic design templates that can be modified for local use. This is the first request to review public outreach materials for this structure.

Iceland

Literature Support: The Associate Director—International worked with the Publications Department to provide the correct graphics to the GSO's publisher in Iceland. They are getting ready to print *Paths to Recovery* (B-24) for the first time.

Policy Support: A member from Iceland wrote to the WSO with questions and concerns about the summertime closure of the GSO in Reykjavik. The member wanted to know what was "normal." Information was provided to the member to explain that there is a great deal of variety in the business hours of GSOs around the world and that some do have seasonal closures, but all are responsible for providing services to their members in accordance with the memberships' needs and the GSO's financial abilities.

Italy

Literature Support: The GSO in Italy translated and prepared to print *A Guide for the Family of the Alcoholic* (P-7), *Youth and the Alcoholic Parent* (P-21), *Facts About Alateen* (P-41), and *Service Sponsorship: Working Smarter Not Harder* (P-88).

Staff provided the Public Outreach Committee for the GSO with the WSO's TV PSAs. They reviewed them and are considering using them after re-recording in Italian.

Luxembourg

The Associate Director—International was contacted by an English-speaking Al-Anon member in Luxembourg for the first time back in March. There was a second conversation in November. The member called to request information about other meetings in her area. Because Luxembourg has no structure of any kind, the WSO is the only place to find this information. Discussion focused on strategies for public outreach and cooperating with professionals and Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) as ways to increase attendance at the meeting. There was also a discussion of group finances, Tradition Seven, and the idea of being self-supporting in Luxembourg, where the government provides free meeting space to non-profit groups.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands completed a translation of *Hope for Today* (B-27).

Norway

The WSO was contacted by a member in Norway who operates the website for the GSO. This is the first contact the WSO has had with a service volunteer in over a year. Through this member, the WSO was provided updated contact information for Al-Anon members serving the GSO in Norway. Following this, Staff made its first contact with the new office manager and learned that the GSO recently relocated their office and plans to buy some literature from the WSO in the coming months.

Policy Support: Norway wrote to the WSO to ask for permission to translate *Forum* articles to print in their newsletter. (Every issue of *The Forum* contains several articles that include a statement saying the articles can be reprinted in local service arms publications provided the required copyright credit is used.) Norway asked if this waiver included permission to translate and then reprint. After confirming the policy, Norway was informed that permission to translate is included.

Staff was also contacted by the newly-elected Alateen Coordinator for Norway. Norway does not yet have Alateen but is interested in getting meetings started. A response was coordinated with Group Services Staff. Most recently, the WSO has been asked to provide guidance about using social media for Al-Anon and Alateen public outreach.

Poland

The GSO in Poland requested permission to translate and print 11 books and pamphlets this year. They are also translating and printing articles from *The Forum* in their local newsletter.

Policy Support: The GSO wrote to ask permission to distribute *Courage to Change—One Day at a Time in Al-Anon II* (B-16) in electronic format. This process is not currently supported by the policy for permission to translate and print but will be referred for additional review at the WSO. They also wrote to ask permission to sell Polish literature outside the geographic borders of Poland. This is also not currently supported by policy.

Russia

The Russian Service Board, an AIS, is getting ready to print *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22) for the first time. The Literature Committee worked on the translation for five years. They had copies ready in time for their Service Meeting in November. They continue their work on developing a website and public outreach materials at the national and Area levels. They determined St. Petersburg would be the site for their 2018 anniversary celebration and that this would be held in conjunction with their very first TEAM event.

Policy Support: The Service Board is thinking of forming a Policy Committee and was provided a copy of the Policy Committee Guideline and referred to the *Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies* for additional research.

The Russian Service Board has written to the WSO to ask about public outreach website creation, translation updates, what to do to transition out-going service members, TEAM events, participation in the European Zonal Meeting, and a variety of other topics.

Literature Support: The AIS is conducting an inventory of all "translate and print" paperwork and revising some of their previous translations. They asked the WSO to support this process. As part of that support, they were provided with guidance on when and when not to re-submit paperwork for revised translations. At year-end, they requested copies of permission forms for 16 titles to be able to update their records.

Slovakia

The WSO International Coordination Committee recommended to its Board of Trustees that reprint permission be granted to the AIS office in Slovakia and this was approved at the January Board meeting.

Slovenia

The GSO in Slovenia requested permission to translate and print *Courage to Change* (B-16) and *A Guide for the Family of the Alcoholic* (P-7). In August, they sent two copies of the newly printed translation of *Courage to Change* (B-16). This is the first time Slovenia has translated and printed a book.

Spain

The GSO in Spain requested permission to translate and print *How Al-Anon Works* (B-32).

UK & Eire

The General Secretary for the GSO in UK & Eire attended the 2017 *World Service Conference* (WSC). (See the *World Service Conference Summary* for more information.) The GSO requested permission to reprint *How Al-Anon Works* (B-32) and sent two copies of the completed work in November.

Staff spoke with the UK & Eire GSO after being contacted by a member of a group that had fallen away from the structure and did not know how to get reconnected. The member asked a variety of questions about group issues and policy. Staff were able to help bridge the gap between her group and the GSO.

Asia

India

Literature Support: The GSO in India requested permission to reprint *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29), *Alateen's 4th Step Inventory* (P-64) and *Blueprint for Progress (Revised)* (P-91). A Board member also wrote to the WSO to request permission to create a special edition 50th anniversary cover for the *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) book. Since this is not permitted, the Board was provided with an alternative. They were also notified that the WSO is offering an anniversary edition. India, and other structures with reprint permission, can request reprint permission.

Staff in the International section answered questions about public outreach and fundraising that came from members in India through the WSO's Facebook page. The GSO asked questions about incorporation and taxes and were referred to local experts to provide advice on those issues.

Iran

The Group Records Department received updated group registration forms for 56 groups in Iran. These included Al-Anon and Alateen groups.

Mongolia

An A.A. member in Massachusetts contacted the WSO to find out about Al-Anon meetings in Mongolia. He sponsors an A.A. member there who says there are spouses in need of Al-Anon meetings. He was provided with appropriate contact information to share with the A.A. members with whom he is in touch.

South Korea

The GSO in South Korea wrote with questions and to request registration information for the 2018 International Convention. They plan to send several representatives. If so, this will be the first opportunity for the Associate Director—International to have face-to-face contact with members of this structure.

Policy Support: A member of the Board in South Korea wrote to ask questions about the permissibility of A.A. literature in Al-Anon meetings. They were provided an answer consistent with Al-Anon's policy.

Turkey

Policy Support: A member in Turkey wrote to ask whether teens can attend Al-Anon meetings if there are no Alateen meetings available. Staff consulted with the Group Services Assistant for Alateen because the language in the *Service Manual* says only that Alateens are welcome to attend Al-Anon meetings when there are no AMIAS available for the Alateen meeting. It does not specifically say teens can attend if there are no Alateen meetings. Staff response to the member in Turkey focused on Tradition Three and the limits of anonymity in meetings when minors are present.

Australia/New Zealand

Australia

Australia sent copies of two new pieces of literature they printed – the *Al-Anon Is/Is Not* bookmark (M-44) and a supplemental recovery piece they developed for doing a Step Ten daily inventory. Two different Areas in the structure have adapted the WSO's public outreach tools for local use, per the information available on the WSO website. The General Secretary of the GSO helped to oversee the incorporation of one of the Areas in the structure. Lastly, Australia's Board of Trustees elected two new IAGSM Delegates.

Literature Support: The GSO in Australia requested permission to reprint the bookmark *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover* (M-78).

Policy Support: The General Secretary asked questions about the WSO's policy on "Limited Permission to Sell Literature." The policy was designed to be used between fully formed and evolving structures, but the question is whether it can be broadened for use between two fully formed structures, one of which does not generally find it cost effective to reprint. Research is ongoing.

Staff answered a series of questions for the GSO in Australia about planning and facilitating TEAM events. After discussion over several service meetings, the structure has decided to try these. The first one will take place in 2018. Staff also recently reviewed four draft television PSAs and worked with the Publications Department to supply the correct logo graphics for these.

New Zealand

The General Secretary in the New Zealand GSO attended the 2017 WSC (see the *World Service Conference Summary* for more information). This structure is also in the early stages of trying TEAM events. The Board of Trustees elected two new IAGSM Delegates.

Literature Support: The GSO in New Zealand generally buys literature from the WSO instead of reprinting. In the past, sales of the soft cover *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22) were prohibited outside of the WSC Structure (because the soft cover was considered an outreach tool). With the suspension of the hard cover version, international structures are now permitted to sell the soft cover version, an option the New Zealand GSO is interested in pursuing.

The Americas

Belize

The registration process for establishing the first AIS office in Belize was completed. A welcome letter was sent, and changes were made to add Belize to the "Find an International Meeting" page on the Public Outreach website.

Cayman Islands

Staff has had several conversations and email contacts with members in Cayman Islands as they researched several possible avenues to strengthen their structure. (Cayman Islands currently does not have a national structure.) Staff provided them with applicable guidelines and answered questions about the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) process and the responsibilities associated with various service arms, e.g., Areas, AIS offices, Districts, and GSOs. After thorough discussion over a period of months, the members came to a decision and dissolved their KBDM. At present, they are focusing on public outreach as a way to attract new members and strengthen their structure from within.

Costa Rica

Policy Support: Costa Rica has reason to believe that inappropriate online sharings of excerpts of literature are affecting their literature sales. They wrote to the WSO with questions about what to do. GSOs that have been granted reprint (or translate and print) permission are responsible for enforcing copyright provisions within their structures. The GSO was encouraged to develop a policy, if they didn't already have one, so that members would know what kinds of things would and would not be appropriate to share online.

El Salvador

El Salvador was successful in its bid to host the next Central American Zonal Meeting. It will take place in 2019.

México

The GSO in México requested permission to reprint *Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions* (S-72), *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts Within Al-Anon* (S-73), and *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93). Representatives of this structure attended the WSC (see *World Service Conference Summary*), the Central American Zonal Meeting, and the Ibero-American Zonal Meeting. México was successful in its bid to host the next Ibero-American Zonal Meeting. It will take place in 2019.

Brazil

The GSO requested permission to translate and print *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31). They sent a courtesy copy of their General Service Conference Summary and copies of a new pamphlet they developed for public outreach. The translated title is *The Alcoholic Drinks and the Family Gets Dizzy*.

The General Secretary wrote to ask a question about newcomer packets. No one in the structure had seen one before one of their Trustees brought one home after a visit to the US. She was provided information about the different newcomer packets the WSO offers and how to go about getting permission to translate and print something similar.

Ecuador

The GSO in Ecuador received permission to print 15 titles this year. This is, by far, the most this structure has ever printed. Their structure is on much more stable financial footing since they began reprinting their own literature rather than purchasing from other structures as they had in the past. Ecuador hosted the Ibero-American Zonal Meeting in October.

Uruguay

Literature Support: After a long time without contact, the Associate Director—International was introduced to a member of Uruguay's structure at the Ibero-American Zonal Meeting. She followed up with reprint requests for a combination of five books and pamphlets.

Zonal Meetings

A Zonal Meeting is an informational meeting held every two years for countries with General Service Offices or evolving service structures.

Central American Zonal Meeting

The Central American Zonal Meeting was held May 18-20, 2017 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Kerri K., Associate Director—International, and Judy K., Trustee, attended. The theme of the meeting was "Many Voices, One Journey." Seven structures from the

Region were present, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala (host structure), Honduras, México, Nicaragua, and Panamá. All delegations and the WSO representatives participated. Delegates from each structure made presentations that included the history of Al-Anon in the structure; weaknesses and achievements since the last meeting; upcoming/proposed projects; and an overview of the structure, i.e. number and type of national committees, number and type of local service arms, and number and format of groups, including whether the number is increasing or decreasing.

European Zonal Meeting

The European Zonal Meeting was held August 18-20, 2017 in Essen, Germany. Marsha W., Director of Programs, and Debbie G., Chairperson of the Board, attended. There was active participation by General Service Offices as well as representatives of evolving structures. The European Zonal Meeting is a mature meeting and the discussion reflects that. Questions tend to be less about processes, such as reprint permission or public outreach, and more about roles and responsibilities, such as the role of some of the Board's sub-committees.

Ibero-American Zonal Meeting

The Ibero-American Zonal Meeting was held October 14-15, 2017 in Quito, Ecuador. Kerri K., Associate Director—International, and Joan S., Trustee, attended. The theme of the meeting was "Together we are More." Seven structures from the Region were present including Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, México, Paraguay, Perú, and Uruguay. Delegates presented on the Concepts of Service and how they are applied in each respective structure's service activities. Discussion at this meeting echoed some of that heard at the Central American meeting in that many structures are facing problems with members inappropriately using social media. This results in breaches of anonymity in some cases and potential copyright infringement in others. Many smaller structures are also still trying to figure out how to take advantage of the possibility of purchasing literature from larger structures in the Region.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Marilyn M./Karen W.-P. • Chairpersons | Karen W.-P./Rosie M. • Co-Chairpersons
Kerri K. • Associate Director—International

The International Coordination Committee (ICC) met three times in 2017. Its primary purpose is to support international growth and perpetuate worldwide unity of Al-Anon and Alateen groups. The ICC coordinates the biennial International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM). It also considers first-time requests for permission to reprint Conference Approved Literature outside of the WSC Structure.

At the January meeting, members reviewed a request to grant reprint permission to Slovakia. The decision to allow it was recommended to the Board of Trustees and later approved. The ICC also initiated planning for the 2018 IAGSM to be held in Virginia Beach, VA. The theme will be "Leading by Example: Structures Supporting Structures."

Throughout the year, the ICC has continued to plan the agenda for the IAGSM, including identifying general session topics and presenters, identifying workshop topics, locating a facility to host the event, revising the orientation based on attendee and ICC feedback, and making improvements to evaluations based on attendee and ICC feedback.

At present, there are 36 General Service Offices, each of which

can send two Delegates to participate in the IAGSM. The IAGSM is a closed meeting, only attended by IAGSM Delegates and members of the ICC, and it is jointly funded by the WSO and the structures that attend through an equalized expense funding mechanism, similar to that used for the WSC. The 2016 *IAGSM Summary* is available online.

The Associate Director—International also provides the ICC with reports of Zonal Meetings, other international travel assignments, and international activity.

LITERATURE SERVICES

Tom C. • Associate Director—Literature

Literature

NEW DAILY READER (working title)

The WSO has received over 1,258 sharings from the fellowship so far for this book which is adequate to plan for hiring a freelance writer/editor Al-Anon member in 2018 to begin reviewing the material. Requests to Literature Coordinators and notices in WSO publications continued throughout the year, including an “Inside Al-Anon Family Groups” article highlighting the difference between a story for *The Forum* and a daily reader sharing.

INTIMACY IN ALCOHOLIC RELATIONSHIPS (working title)

The WSO hired a freelance writer/editor who is an Al-Anon member to write introductory text and select from among the 1,307 sharings received for this book. The Literature Committee reviewed and unanimously approved the manuscript, which then underwent policy review as well as final review by the Executive Director. The book is expected to be ready for introduction at the Al-Anon International Convention in July 2018.

PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS OF YOUNG PROBLEM DRINKERS (working title)

The WSO hired a freelance writer/editor Al-Anon member to compile the PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS OF YOUNG PROBLEM DRINKERS (working title) pamphlet from the 255 sharings submitted. After the draft received unanimous approval by the Literature Committee, it was reviewed by members of the Policy Committee and the Executive Director. The Titling Committee recommended the title, *Hope & Understanding for Parents & Grandparents*, which the policy reviewers approved. The pamphlet has been designed and is now undergoing translation into French and Spanish to enable introduction at the 2018 World Service Conference as planned.

Paths to Recovery Workbook (P-93) and Paths to Recovery Set (K-31)

Announcements for the new *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93) and *Paths to Recovery Set* (K-31) were posted on AFG Connects, on AFG Announcements, and in the January issues of *The Forum* and *Group eNews*. Complimentary copies of the workbook were given to all Conference members, Literature Coordinators, and the five At-Large members of the Literature Committee.

THE FORUM BOOK (working title)

Members have submitted over 748 titles and publication dates of past *Forum* articles they consider the best of recent years. The WSO welcomes additional suggestions.

Literature Coordinators

Regular literature updates were posted throughout the year on the Literature Coordinator community of AFG Connects. In October, two hour-long conference calls were held with Area Literature Co-

ordinators to continue enhancing communication and cooperation regarding their role.

Magazines

Magazine Coordinator

In July, Mark S. joined the WSO Staff and began training in the new position of Magazine Coordinator. His work includes responsibility for selecting and editing *The Forum* and *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, as well as serving as Staff Liaison to the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee and the *Forum* Coordinators.

Forum Coordinators

With the introduction of the new Magazine Coordinator, regular updates were posted throughout the year on the *Forum* Coordinator community of AFG Connects. Plans were put in place to revamp the *Forum* Sales Report, which will be posted monthly beginning in 2018, and to improve communication and cooperation among the Coordinators through a trial *Forum* Coordinator conference call.

“Serving from the Heart” in The Forum

The yearlong series of articles written by members of the Board of Trustees concluded in September, which was followed by a survey in October to understand whether the articles helped the fellowship understand that Trustees are “simply members.”

Revised Forum Writing Guideline (F-1)

Staff revised the document in keeping with direction of the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee. Once designed, the Guideline was posted to *Forum* Coordinators on AFG Connects as well as on the WSO website. In addition, it was included as an insert in the November issue of *The Forum*, where an “Inside Al-Anon Family Groups” article encouraged members to submit sharings for *The Forum*.

New Look for The Forum

Throughout its 60-year-plus history, *The Forum* has continued to grow and change. Beginning in September, the magazine introduced a new design for a fresher look, as designers experimented with different elements. As comments from the readership arrived, adjustments were implemented so that a happy medium could be reached between modern visuals and easy-to-read stories.

The Finance and Executive Committees approved the decision to undertake a one-year trial of printing *The Forum* in full color to enable color pictures to be printed in color and to support the use of colors to improve readability. Using full-color helps make *The Forum* attractive to new and existing members who have many magazine choices and are accustomed to the vibrancy of the digital world.

Service Materials and Reports

CAL Quotations

Once again, 20 quotations from a variety of Conference Approved Literature appeared in the Announcements community of AFG Connects. Areas and other service arms are invited to use these in their 2017 fundraising calendars without having to obtain written permission.

World Service Conference Report

The “News from the WSC” article giving a brief overview of the 2017 Conference was posted on the Members website in June, with a link included in the June and July issues of the Group e-News and a full-page ad in *The Forum*.

Literature Committee

Linda B./Stuart H. • Chairpersons
Tom C. • Staff Liaison, Associate Director—Literature
Leona W./Bruce F. • Trustee Liaison to the Board

The Committee currently consists of ten Delegate members, five At-Large members (including the Chairperson), the WSO Staff Liaison, and the WSO Trustee Liaison to the Board. It continues to meet quarterly by conference call, with intermediate correspondence occurring using emails and the AFG Connects discussion boards.

The most exciting aspect of the Committee's work this year was review and approval of near-final drafts for the PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS OF YOUNG PROBLEM DRINKERS (working title) pamphlet and the INTIMACY IN ALCOHOLIC RELATIONSHIPS (working title) book. The Committee unanimously approved both manuscripts, which now continue in the approval process to become Conference Approved Literature.

The Committee received 22 suggestions from the fellowship for new literature or revisions to existing literature. It held lively discussions on several of these ideas and decided to continue discussing a suggestion for a piece on Al-Anon's spiritual principles. It will begin by answering the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions on this topic. The Committee also agreed to recommend revision of the Suggested Alateen Preamble to the Policy Committee.

The Committee also continued discussions from last year of two other suggestions, after completing the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions for both items. Following further study, the Committee agreed to ask the 2018 Conference to discuss a "Just for Tonight" bookmark, based on an article in the August 2016 issue of *The Forum*, but remained undecided regarding a newcomer pamphlet about spirituality in Al-Anon.

The Committee also continued to discuss the development of the NEW DAILY READER (working title), and what the Committee members saw as goals for the book.

Forum Editorial Advisory Committee

Brian R. • Chairperson
Mark S. • Staff Liaison, Magazine Coordinator
Tom C./Claire R.N. • Staff Liaisons (interim), Associate Directors
Annette T./Joyce B. • Trustee Liaison to the Board

The *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC) currently consists of five At-Large members (including the Chairperson), the Magazine Coordinator (who serves as the Staff Liaison), and the Trustee Liaison to the Board. This year, two Associate Directors also served as Interim Staff Liaisons until the Magazine Coordinator position was filled. FEAC continues to meet quarterly by conference call, with intermediate correspondence held through emails and the AFG Connects discussion boards.

Based on the Committee's recommendation, in January the "Instant Meeting" department of *The Forum* began including a set of questions focused on the Step of the month. The Committee agreed that the questions gave additional food for thought to members who use the articles for meeting discussions. This addition was well received.

Each FEAC member receives 50 unedited sharings per month. A manuscript review guideline is provided to offer direction to the reviewers in completing their assignment. The guideline was revised this summer to include more insight into the importance of each reviewer's comments provide in the editing of sharings. Reviewer comments help Staff know where edits are needed and assure that every possible sharing can be used. Even sharings given too low

a grade to publish are searched for any small nugget of wisdom, especially for the "One 'Quote' at a Time" department.

The Committee reviewed a draft of recommended changes to The *Forum Writing Guideline* (F-1) and made additional suggestions, including placing more emphasis on the need for sharings about the Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service.

In October the Committee began discussion of THE FORUM BOOK (working title), a project given conceptual approval by the Conference in 2015. FEAC has yet to recommend a particular format or length of the book. Because most of the FEAC members were not yet on the Committee when the motion carried, they asked Staff to post the Conference discussion from the 2015 *Conference Summary* on AFG Connects prior to the next discussion.

Overall, the Committee has been very pleased with the direction in which the magazine has been heading over the year.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Pat Q. • Associate Director Public Outreach—Media & Group Records
Claire R. • Associate Director Public Outreach—Professionals

Media

Throughout 2017, Al-Anon volunteers and WSO Staff provided extensive content to support the new al-anon.org website in English, Spanish and French. The new website automatically fits the dimensions of smart-phones, tablets, laptops and computers. They also evaluated content from the password-protected Members' website since No password is required to gain entry to the new website and the contents are completely searchable.

Public Outreach messages including social media, public service announcements (PSAs) on television, radio and movie theaters, service arm websites, podcasts, billboards, posters and news releases can easily attract visitors to the al-anon.org website. The meeting locator feature on the website attracts newcomers, professionals and visitors to local meetings throughout the US and Canada. The availability of meeting information increases the need for members to report all changes in meeting days, times and locations promptly. All service arm websites need accurate information to help people find local meetings. After newcomers find their first few meetings, they will receive local meeting lists, but first they need up-to-date meeting information online.

Public Outreach Coordinators and volunteers throughout the fellowship continue to conduct a variety of local public outreach campaigns to attract families and friends of alcoholics. As outlined in the "Public Outreach" section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*, members submit graphic designs for WSO review. Staff verify contact information on submitted materials to help assure newcomers a successful experience when they reach out for help. Campaigns are encouraged to include local and national contact information, so families and friends of alcoholics can reach Al-Anon and Alateen, whether they are residents or visitors traveling through the area. National contact information also helps residents find help for loved ones who live outside the immediate area. As a convenience, the WSO provides a variety of graphic designs for local adaptation and use and members are welcome to submit their original designs for WSO review.

Public service announcements (PSAs) for TV and radio are available free of charge. If members submit to the WSO the name of the station, the name and phone number of the station representative who expressed an interest in broadcasting the PSA, Staff will arrange for an electronic delivery in the format that the station requires. The easiest way to preview PSAs for station managers and

members is to go to al-anon.org, scroll down the page to “Media Kit,” and select “Public Service Announcements.”

The Al-Anon Declaration invites all Al-Anon and Alateen members to practice Step Twelve. “*Let It Begin with Me*. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and — *Let It Begin with Me*.”

Professionals

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism (AFA)

Members purchased and distributed a total of 357,225 copies of English, Spanish and French *AFA 2017* magazine issues. This amount was 30,200 copies less than the record-breaking 387,425 copies for the 2015 issue. However, the 2017 campaign showed an increase of 3,150 copies, which is a 3.5 percent, above the *AFA 2016* campaign. Although this was a minor increase, the *AFA* magazine project continues to be the largest fellowship-wide public outreach activity in the service structure since the WSO began publishing the magazine in 2006.

Staff work with professionals and visits to conferences and events in 2017 identified a significant shift in media publicity, professional, government, and nonprofit organizational activities and budgets toward the opioid, heroin, fentanyl crises in the US and Canada. Al-Anon remains one of the few organizations continuing to draw the attention of relatives of alcoholics, the public, professionals, and the media to the importance of family recovery from the effects of alcoholism and the availability of Al-Anon as a resource. This trend inspired Staff efforts to expand distribution of and to improve *AFA* attractiveness and influence.

To encourage member participation in this vital outreach project, additional *AFA 2017* marketing tools were created for Area Public Outreach Coordinators, District Representatives (DRs), and Al-Anon Information Services. These include an English, Spanish and French presentation for Area and local service arm meetings. The *AFA 2018* presentation was updated to include a slide explaining the difference between *AFA*, an outreach tool to families of alcoholics and anyone unfamiliar with the Al-Anon program, and *The Forum*, a magazine designed for members already attending Al-Anon and applying the program to their lives.

Area recaps of the number of copies and orders placed for the 2016 and 2017 campaigns were also provided to Area Public Outreach Coordinators who confirmed their usefulness. In June, special vanity website URLs were created so downloads of *AFA* order forms and placement of orders could be tracked.

The *AFA 2018* cover was redesigned to shift the focus to the Al-Anon purpose and to identify the magazine as a “free take home copy.” This modification responded to members’ requests for a change in the cover format to place less emphasis on the year of the publication.

The 2018 magazine articles have been compiled, including two stories from Canadian members, increasing Canadian representation in the magazine which is distributed in both the United States and Canada, and three articles from US professionals who presented the diversity of relationships which can lead someone to Al-Anon.

In addition to announcements for trusted servants on AFG Connects, WSO print and online publications are utilized to remind the fellowship of the two deadlines to order the *AFA* magazine. The *Le lien* and *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* newsletters, and the *En Contacto* and *Le Messenger* announcements continue to play an important role in providing *AFA* information to Spanish- and French-speaking members.

2018 Membership Survey

The WSO’s new Data Analyst prepared questionnaires, articles and ads and tear-off tab flyers for the WSO’s triennial English, Spanish and French survey of Al-Anon members, which provided a cost savings to the fellowship. To ensure credibility, an outside vendor will be used to verify the findings.

The 2018 study is Al-Anon’s 12th Conference Approved survey conducted since 1984. Survey findings are used for the WSO’s communication with professionals who seek data that quantifies the effectiveness of the Al-Anon program and improvements in members physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. For the first time, separate rather than combined reports are planned to present the US (including PR and Bermuda) and Canada results so that the information is specific and appropriate. The online survey will be open to members in January and February 2018.

Participants are being asked to report their ages when they attended their first meeting. The desired outcome is to provide more accurate information about the ages and age ranges, i.e. 20s, 30s, and 40s, of newcomers and members rather than the mean age 59.8 years old reported in the 2015 study.

Cooperation with the US Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), National Recovery Month planning meetings

The WSO continued its role as resource and representative of Al-Anon/Alateen as a mutual support group program for families and friends of alcoholics during the 16th consecutive year for National Recovery Month. Attendance and participation in the planning meetings in Rockville, MD and conference calls provided the WSO an opportunity to communicate with more than 100 organizations. AFG, Inc.’s presence along with other family support group programs has helped Recovery Month to broaden its outreach to the needs of family members and children in the recovery process. The annual theme of 2017 Recovery Month was “Join the Voices for Recovery: Strengthen Families and Communities.” Family recovery was also referenced in CSAT’s public service announcements for TV and radio.

The UT Area Public Outreach Coordinator was successful in arranging for Salt Lake City Al-Anon members to set up and staff an Al-Anon information table at the National Recovery Day Kickoff event on September 9, 2017. The WSO provided bilingual exhibit banners, English and Spanish *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazines and outreach bookmarks (M-76 and SM-76) to support local members with this national event. More than 4,000 attendees were estimated to have attended the event.

Recovery Day Canada

The sixth annual Recovery Day Canada event was held during the month of September. Canadians in recovery from alcoholism and other addictions and their families celebrate the positive role that recovery plays in their lives, workplaces and communities. Twenty-three cities across Canada hosted events such as breakfasts, lunches, picnics, concerts, 5K runs or walks, and forums with speakers sharing their recovery stories.

Canadian Public Outreach Coordinators were provided with information about Recovery Day Canada events taking place in cities in their Areas. They were asked to provide follow-up by sharing the information with local service arms, who in turn could contact the sponsors of the events to inquire if Al-Anon could have a presence at them.

Writing Guide for Incarcerated Al-Anon Members

Advancing a recommendation by the Public Outreach Committee at the 2016 WSO, the Writing Guide was finalized and posted in the Public Outreach section of the WSO website. Members serving as the contacts of the 53 correctional facilities groups were provided with copies of the Guide and asked to help the WSO to obtain sharings. Twenty-three sharings from incarcerated Al-Anon members (16 males and 7 females) have been received to date.

The Staff will use the sharings to develop public outreach tools for incarcerated members, such as flyers with information on how to obtain Al-Anon meeting information when sentences are completed or on how to attract more newcomers to existing Al-Anon correctional facility meetings.

A Public Outreach Committee Task Force was formed, consisting of two Delegate Committee members familiar with Al-Anon meetings at correctional facilities, and was charged with creating an online tool for Al-Anon members or families of alcoholics in transition from the correctional facility to society. The tool will be developed in a manner that meets correctional facility regulations.

Communication and Cooperation with Professionals

Professional inquiries

Most professional inquiries were received from the digital postcard in the “Resources for Professionals” section of the WSO website. Professionals identify their field, e.g. mental health, addiction, clergy, healthcare or education, and are sent an automated reply targeting their field of interest and a welcome newsletter to replace postal mailings of literature. The WSO received no postal mailings from professionals in 2017.

When professionals call or email the WSO, they usually ask to have their supply of *AFA* magazines replenished and to understand how to obtain meeting information. Although the WSO sends an interim supply of *AFA* magazines, Area Public Outreach Coordinators are asked to follow-up with local members to address requests for ongoing supplies and replenishment of *AFA* magazines, literature, and print meeting schedules.

Feedback from professionals about the WSO website meeting search feature was positive because they can print or download a meeting schedule for a specific city, county, or zip/postal code to give to a client or patient.

Al-Anon presentation at Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Seminar, Irving, TX

A California North Al-Anon member provided a presentation to emphasize the importance of family recovery from alcoholism to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals from 45 US airline companies and to inform the FAA that mandated treatment for alcoholic airline employees should also include EAP support for family members.

National Association of Children of Alcoholics (NACoA), Kensington, CT

Staff provided NACoA with *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2017* magazines and other Al-Anon service material, which were included in the organization's two Clergy Training Seminars involving spiritual leaders from a variety of denominations. The NACoA Executive Director inquired if Al-Anon literature covered the topic of suicide and Staff provided a list of Al-Anon and Alateen books that include the topic.

NACoA continues to follow the WSO's social media posts on Facebook. This organization was also provided notice of Alateen's

60th anniversary and invited to follow and retweet posts from the new Alateen Twitter account.

Research requests, student doctoral dissertations and master's theses

Researchers requested three Al-Anon members residing in three US cities to serve as research subjects. Members were interviewed to provide follow-up and corroboration of the findings of the 2013 Intensive Referral to Al-Anon: Benefits to Concerned Others and Their Drinkers study. This study and its current follow-up are being conducted by the Center for Health Care Evaluation, Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System and Stanford University Medical Center, Palo Alto, CA.

Staff review of a doctoral student's dissertation proposal (part one of the WSO “Collaboration with Researchers” procedure) did not fulfill the purpose (“Al-Anon cooperates with researchers who are studying the effects of alcoholism as a family disease”). Subsequently, staff contacted an Area Delegate to assist with locating 12-25 members to respond to questions for a dissertation about Al-Anon Sponsorship. The doctoral candidate informed the WSO the interviews helped her to complete her dissertation and she received her doctoral (PhD) degree.

First Native American Al-Anon Conference, Albuquerque, NM, May 5-7, 2017

More than 180 members attended this first conference. The WSO provided the newly revised *Al-Anon's Path to Recovery* (S-67) pamphlets for distribution to newcomers and professionals attending the conference and participated in preliminary conference calls held by the New Mexico/El Paso Area to organize the event. Staff posted event information on the WSO event calendar and wrote a *Group eNews* article announcing the conference was open to all Al-Anon and Alateen members regardless of their ethnicity. The conference agenda included Native American Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. speakers, recovery workshops and a workshop focused on how to form an Al-Anon group.

Staff Travel

National Conference on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) Conference of Affiliates, Alexandria, VA

About 55 representatives, e.g. Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Board Chairmen, from local NCADD affiliates attended the conference. Local Al-Anon members staffed the exhibit table, which supported the Associate Director—Professionals' one-to-one networking with attendees such as the President of the National Association of Recovery Schools in the US; a New York North High School Assistant Principal, who supervises seven Student Assistance Program counselors; and the President and Vice-President of the NCADD Maryland affiliate which has a family program.

Staff shared Membership Survey results regarding Al-Anon members receiving treatment for depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Syndrome with two attendees who specialize in developmental science research. Other requests for local Al-Anon literature and information from attendees were referred to Area Public Outreach for additional follow-up.

Mental Health for All Conference, Toronto, ON

Staff, attending as a “person with lived experience,” participated in the conference sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) for the second consecutive year. The conference combines substance use and mental health for addicted individuals

and their family members as a behavioral health issue, which is the same approach being utilized in the US.

Attendance at the conference provided Staff with the opportunity to explain to Canadian professionals from national and provincial nonprofit, government and First Nations/Indigenous people organizations that Al-Anon is a registered charitable organization in Canada and that groups meet across the country. There was also the opportunity for one-to-one conversations with professionals who coordinate Recovery Day Canada events.

Copies of AFA magazines were provided to numerous workshop presenters, professional attendees and exhibitors.

Issues of Substance Use Conference, Calgary, AB

WSO Staff attended this biennial conference hosted by CCSA for the first time. The conference agenda was set up to provide an equal focus on alcohol and drugs. Although Canada has a similar opioid, heroin, and fentanyl crisis/epidemic as the US, it was noted that Canada's "drug of choice" is alcohol and that more than 75 percent of the Canadian adult population consumes alcohol.

Besides plenary sessions featuring the Minister of Health, the Executive Directors of the CCSA and CMHC (Canadian Mental Health Commission), Staff attended workshops of panelists highlighting "best practices" of three professionals in various provinces or territories. Special focuses for alcohol were on teenagers, college students, indigenous people, and senior citizens. There was also a workshop about alcohol and sexual abuse on college campuses.

In addition to networking with professionals from across Canada, Staff spoke with parents who had recently formed support groups for parents of children who died from alcohol and/or drug addiction. Their support groups help them with grief as well as advocacy for improved public understanding of addiction as an illness. AFA magazines were provided to them; Al-Anon purpose and local meeting information from al-anon.org was presented via mobile device.

CCSA staff were glad to know about Al-Anon plans for a separate Canadian and US Al-Anon Membership Survey Report results.

Public Outreach Committee

Maria N. • Chairperson

Pat Q. • Staff Liaison, Associate Director Public Outreach—
Media & Group Records

Norm W. • Trustee Liaison to the Board

The Public Outreach Committee includes Delegates from all three current panels and up to five At-Large members, including the At-Large Member Chairperson, a Trustee Liaison to the Board, the Associate Director Public Outreach—Professionals, and the Associate Director Public Outreach—Media & Group Records, who acts as WSO Staff Liaison. The Committee meets three times per year via conference call and as needed.

During 2017, the WSO Public Outreach Committee formed a Thought Force to explore attracting people from a variety of cultural backgrounds into the program. The Committee also formed two Task Forces. One Task Force met to recommend ways of providing public outreach messages to post on WSO social media. A Task Force also formed regarding the development of literature to assist incarcerated Al-Anon members who are re-entering society. The Committee reviewed scripts for new TV and radio public service announcements and approved posting signage for groups to add the day, time and room number that would help newcomers find their Al-Anon and Alateen meeting.

ARCHIVES

Joe T. • Archives Coordinator

Archives began to preserve "other than paper-printed content," such as items posted on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and other platforms. Website and social media content along with plans for a virtual archive with secure, cloud-based storage are in the early stages of development. Archives introduced two new retention procedures that are intended to preserve a few archival units until guidelines are established. Emerging technology continues to challenge the Staff with ongoing concerns regarding storage and retrieval solutions.

The WSO Mail/Copy Clerk and Archives Coordinator began a joint scanning project in the last quarter. New settings on high speed scanners were introduced for preservation purposes. Digital images of *The Forum* were captured, and ongoing scanning of documentation and photos is currently scheduled for completion the last quarter of 2018. All digitized work is maintained inside the archives. Staff verified the disaster recovery plan to retrieve and to hold the archives offsite in case of a flood or any other type of emergency was active.

Due to light exposure, over 100 photos throughout the World Service Office were beginning to deteriorate. Funds were provided to contract with a professional photographer and all photos were preserved through digitalization.

With the Areas concerned about preservation, the Archives Coordinators discussed options to scan and retain digital holdings. A variety of techniques, operating systems, hardware, software, and storage options were researched. After the comments were recorded and suggestions were reviewed, the Coordinators discovered that the scope of a one size fits all guideline would be too narrow and the project ended. Members continue to exchange ideas on the AFG Connects and use the platform as a clearinghouse.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Niketa Bailey • Director of Finance (Non-member)

In 2017, the Finance department worked on various projects during the year to help streamline operations and increase efficiencies throughout the Organization.

- Updated meeting phone line system to allow callers to hear three meetings when calling the toll-free line.
- Revised supply chain and inventory ordering procedures which reduced cash flow and increased available space in the warehouse.
- Designed and implemented a disaster recovery plan to ensure continued operations in the event of a natural disaster.
- Implemented Square card reader to accept credit cards at World Service Conference and the 2018 International Convention.
- Implemented a travel website that facilitates the booking of flights and hotels for Volunteers and Staff members. The platform allows for parameters that adhere to the WSO travel policy.

Finance Committee

Jennie McC. • Chairperson

Niketa Bailey • Director of Finance (Non-member)

The Finance Committee meets monthly and reports to the Executive Committee immediately following the Finance meeting. During the Conference, the Finance Committee reports directly to the Board.

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 AFG, Inc. 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 letters for the quarterly Appeal to Members.
- Review handouts on previous year's contributions received from the US and Canada for distribution at the World Service Conference.
- Recommend to the Board of Trustees the Equalized Expense amount to send a Delegate to the World Service Conference.
- Review, revise when appropriate, and submit recommendations for the Investment Strategy Goals to the Board of Trustees for approval.

- Review each department's budget with the Director of that service in preparing the Preliminary 2018 Budget for presentation to the Board of Trustees in January.
- Review the Audit Report and Management Letter.
- Review Investment Philosophy.
- Review the 990.
- Review Finance Committee Goals and Objectives.
- Review the Investments in the Reserve Fund.
- Meet with the Investment Managers twice a year.

Other non-routine actions included:

- Reviewed and modified the Travel Reimbursement Policy for Board members and staff.
- Approved the pricing and financial feasibility of the pamphlet HOPE & UNDERSTANDING FOR PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS (working title).
- Worked on the Finance Committee presentation for the 2018 World Service Conference and discussed various ways to make it more meaningful and helpful to Conference members.
- Reviewed and analyzed packing and shipping charges to ensure the fairness and validity.
- Recommended to the Board of Trustees to design and produce a foil-stamped embossed cover commemorative edition (with a ribbon and bookplate) of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) in celebration of its 50th Anniversary for sale at the 2018 Al-Anon Convention.
- Recommended to the Board of Trustees to suspend printing the hard cover of *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22) in all three languages for a trial period of three years with an annual review.
- Offered *Courage to Change* (eB-16) eBook through third party vendors in English, Spanish, and French in one part and set the price at \$9.99.
- Offered the books *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31), *Discovering Choices* (B-30), and *Al-Anon Family Groups—Classic Edition* (B-5) at a reduced price of \$5.99 for a limited time to help spread the message of Al-Anon.
- Recommended to the Board of Trustees extending the opportunity for another investment adviser to invest a portion of AFG Inc.'s funds in equities.
- Approved pricing of Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism for 2019.
- Suspended printing of the Seventh Tradition Pamphlet temporarily while it is being revised.

DIGITAL STRATEGY DEPARTMENT

Scot Powers • Digital Strategy Manager (Non-member)

In 2016, the Board decided to create a Digital Strategy team responsible for digital platforms. The team began with the hiring of the Digital Strategy Manager (DSM) in September 2016.

The DSM evaluated the projects and resources available and made the following recommendations to the Interim Executive Director:

- Grow the social media presence for public outreach by dedicating a full-time position to social media.
- Repurpose the Marketing Information Analyst position to be more technical to allow Staff to better measure and understand the impact of WSO digital efforts. The new role was given the title of Data Analyst.
- Add a position of Webmaster to build and maintain the Al-Anon website and other digital properties.

Effective January 2017, the Communications Secretary was promoted to fill the position of Social Media Specialist. The position is responsible for creating content, posting it to the various social media platforms. Additionally, the position is responsible for responding to direct requests for information.

Social Media

The Digital Strategy Team is responsible for managing the on-line platforms, a critical component of the Al-Anon public outreach strategy in an age when many people are going online to conduct their own research and to find solutions to their problems. By maintaining a consistent presence on social media, in search engines and through the Al-Anon website, the WSO is generating awareness for those who have not heard of Al-Anon Family Groups.

The WSO social media footprint has grown over the past year, through the addition of Instagram and a presence in the Spanish and French social media scene. Members and non-members alike are very active in carrying Al-Anon's message of help and hope by sharing posts and tweets. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have over 386 million users in US and Canada, which makes these and other social media platforms important large-scale vehicles for carrying the Al-Anon message. In 2017, over 14 million users (4.6% of the potential audience) were reached in 125 countries, 6 continents, speaking 98 different languages.

One newcomer commented on AFG, Inc. social media, "It's time for me to go to a meeting. I cannot stand the lies and constant excuses. I need healthy boundaries." Comments are hidden to protect anonymity.

Another member commented, "These messages give hope to our community; pass it along... thanks."

Expanding awareness and carrying the message will require continued collaboration in 2018 across Areas, Districts and members through the sharing of posts, pictures and memes created by the WSO.

Data Analysis

Historically, the WSO has used a third-party vendor to create and execute the triennial Membership Survey. This year, the addition of the new Data Analyst role enabled the project to be brought in-house giving the WSO more control over the process and providing a cost-savings.

Website Conversion

By mid-March, the Digital Strategy team was fully staffed. The biggest project for the first half of the year was the redesign of the Public Outreach (PO) website. Prior to the launch of the new PO website, it was agreed the PO and Members' websites would be combined into a single WSO website: al-anon.org. The project is being completed in several phases:

- Phase one – build a new PO website with the ability to easily expand to increase content – This phase was completed on July 31, 2017.
- Phase two – transfer existing Members' website content to the new site – This phase was completed at the end of 2017.
- Phase three – build more content based on the needs of newcomers and members alike – This phase will begin in 2018 and be ongoing.

In April, a mobile app was tested by Delegates at the World Service Conference. The response was very positive, and new features will be considered for the 2018 Conference as well as for the 2018 International Convention.

In August, a new page on the website was introduced called "News from your WSO," which is a collection of articles sent to the groups via *Group eNews*. These articles are available for anyone to read.

2017 Stats

Website Visits –	Social Followers –	Toll-Free Calls –
2,946,238	74,392 (+31%)	34,451

In the Loop

In September, the WSO took another step towards embracing technology by launching a redesigned email newsletter titled *In the Loop* for English-speaking members. Additionally, for the Spanish and French-speaking members *En Contacto* and *Le Messenger*, respectively, were launched. The emails were designed to be quickly reviewed and to link to relevant pages on the WSO website including articles on "News from your WSO." *In the Loop* replaced *Group eNews* and *AFG Announcements* creating a single email program to keep all members and groups informed of the latest information from the WSO. Current Mailing Address (CMAs) contacts, both new and those who previously received *Group eNews*, were automatically enrolled to receive *In the Loop*. All members are eligible to sign up directly at al-anon.org/emailme to receive *In the Loop*.

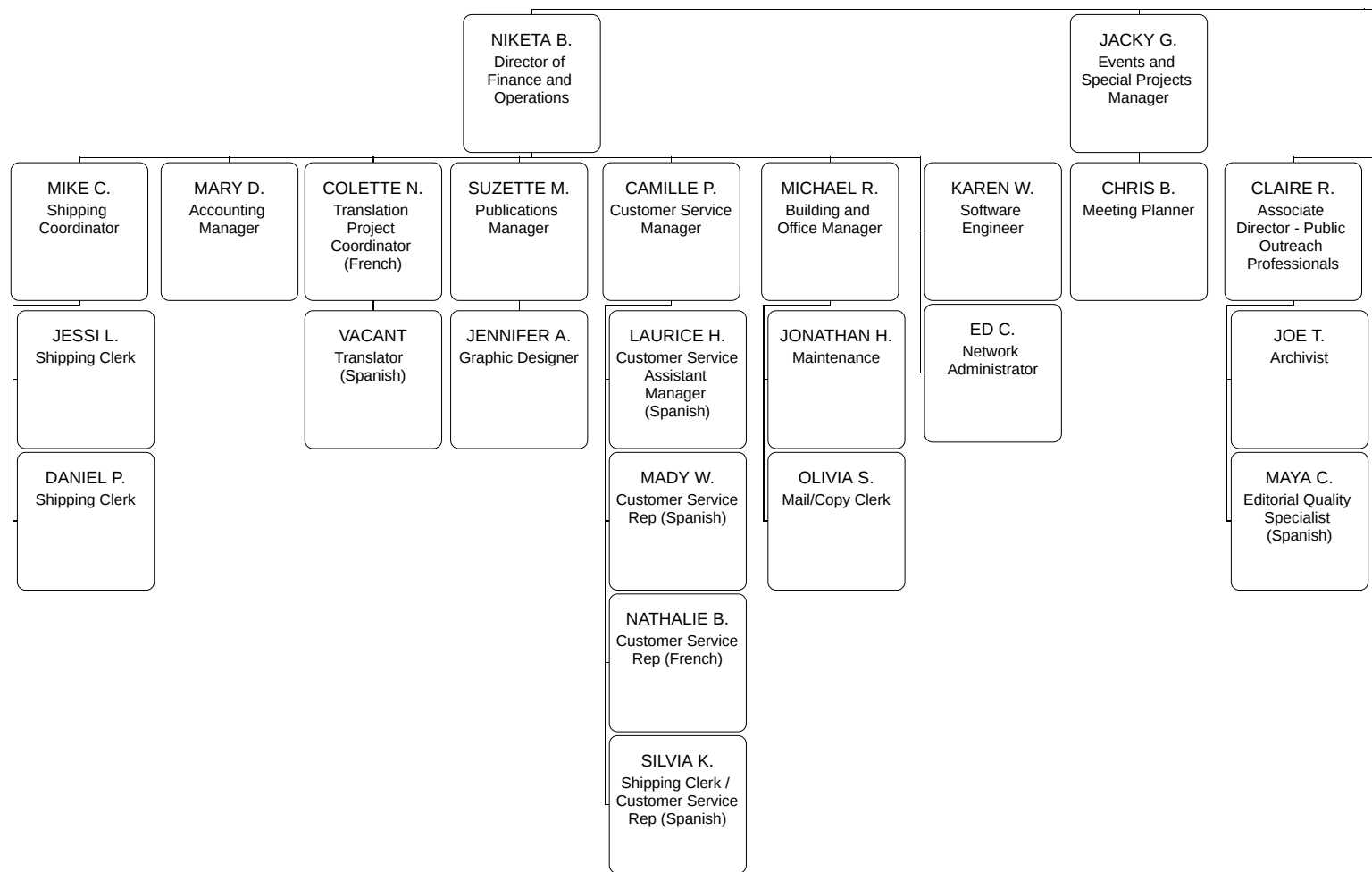
Group Records Online Forms

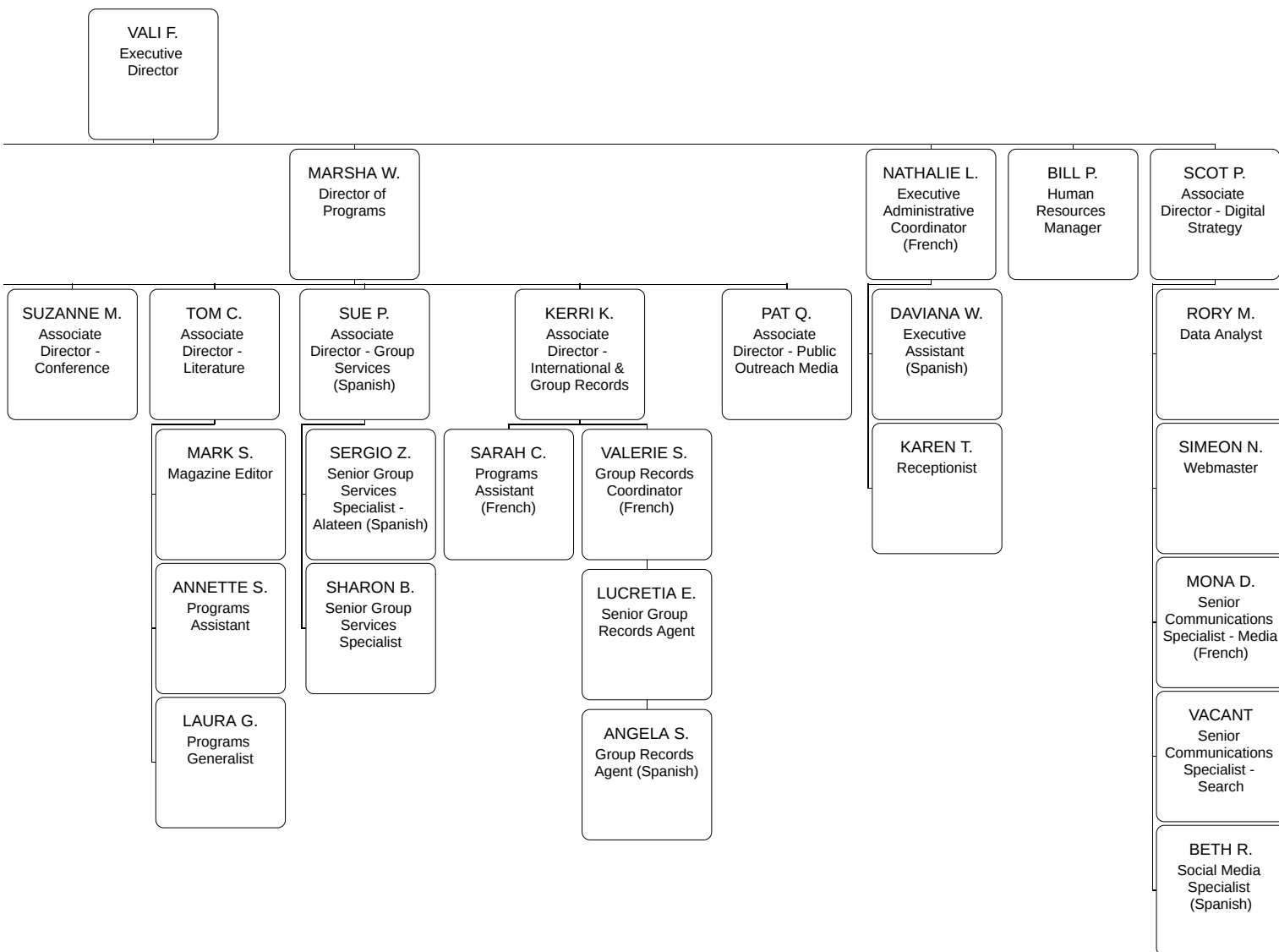
The Digital Strategy team along with the Communication Specialist completed Phase Two of the website project which includes new on-line forms for submitting changes to Group Records. While members submit changes via the WSO website, they are being routed to the appropriate Area Group Records Coordinator to update group records.

Meeting Search 2.0

The Digital Strategy Manager along with the Software Engineer and WSO Group Records Coordinator have been working on a new meeting search feature for the website which will resolve many of the limitations that exist with the current meeting search feature. It is planned for go live in early 2018.

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. Organization Chart





As of: May 31st, 2018

The World Service Office has aligned our organizational structure to reflect current talents and membership needs. The WSO organizational structure is expected to continue to evolve as we seek opportunities to support the fellowship and ensure AI-Anon Family Groups is available for anyone, anywhere. The changes are not intended to suggest the need for Areas to change their Assembly structure.

2018 CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Trustees at Large

Tina B.	Jennie McC.	Rosie M.
Terry F.	Teri M.	Karen W-P.
Judy K.	John McL.	Norm W.

Regional Trustees

Bruce F., US Southeast	Marilyn M., Canada West
Thérèse S., Canada East	Joyce B., US Southwest
Joan S., US Northeast	Debbie G., US North Central

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Vali F., Executive Director
Debbie G., Board Chairperson (ex-officio)
Jennie McC., Treasurer
John McL., Policy Chairperson
Connie H., Member at Large
J.P. M., Member at Large
Marsha W., Staff member
Jeffrey K., Executive Committee for Real Property Management Chairperson**

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Vali F., Executive Director
Niketa Bailey, Director of Finance and Operations*
Marsha W., Director of Programs
Claire R., Associate Director—Public Outreach Professionals
Kerri K., Associate Director—International
Pat Q., Associate Director—Public Outreach Media
Sue P., Associate Director—Group Services
Scot Powers, Associate Director—Digital Strategy*
Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference
Tom C., Associate Director—Literature

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Gabriela O., Mexico
Ann W., Denmark

AREA DELEGATES

Mary Jo Y., Alabama/ Northwest Florida Alternate Delegate	John I., Nebraska
Terry T., Alaska	Janet P., Nevada
Norma F., Alberta/ Northwest Territories	Angela D., Newfoundland/ Labrador
Barb L., Arizona	Nancy D'A., New Hampshire
Gail F., Arkansas	Ann Marie Z., New Jersey
Janis A., British Columbia/ Yukon	Stephanie S., New Mexico/ El Paso
Rosanna H., California North	Molly C., New York North
Marcia M., California South	Taaj J., New York South
Eloy M., Colorado	Deborah H., North Carolina/ Bermuda
Gail L., Connecticut	Carol T., North Dakota
Kim C., Delaware	Theresa M., Ohio
Cindy J., Florida North	Laura D., Oklahoma
Cheryl A., Florida South	Debbie C., Ontario North Alternate
Renelle M., Georgia	Sue G., Ontario South
Patty P., Hawaii	Cindy E., Oregon
Kathy B., Idaho	Jeffrey F., Pennsylvania
Christine W., Illinois North	Mabel M., Puerto Rico
Tim E., Illinois South	Gaston A., Quebec East
Miriam B., Indiana	Claudette D., Quebec West Area Chair
Beth K., Iowa	Barbara H., Rhode Island
Phil G., Kansas	Jean H., Saskatchewan
Sherry H., Kentucky	Dave B., South Carolina
Carmen O'M., Louisiana	Sue C., South Dakota
Sonya M., Maine	Leah L., Tennessee
Mintie G., Manitoba/Northwest Ontario	Kay C., Texas East
Tony S., Maritime Provinces	Kay M., Texas West
Idalia R., Maryland/ District of Columbia	Nancy W., Utah
Richard McC., Massachusetts	Kenneth R., Vermont
Ann M., Michigan	Duane F., Virginia
Rachelle C., Minnesota North	Julie P., Washington
Betty A., Minnesota South	Don B., Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan
Kathy E., Mississippi	Madeline S., Wyoming
Sarah S., Missouri	
Carol S., Montana Alternate Delegate	

*Non-member, non-voting **Non-voting

Reflections heard at the 2018 World Service Conference:

“Thank you for listening to the Delegates,
involving us and increasing our participation and input.”

“I had many people tell me how amazing Stepping Stones would be.
I heard wonderful things and wondered if I would be disappointed.
I found myself in the house of someone who was very special to me.
At the top of the stairs it hit me that I was home.”

“A housekeeper at this hotel stopped me and asked about our meeting.
I told her we help friends and family members of alcoholics.
She said, ‘I think you are the most spiritual people who have been here.’
What we do shows everywhere we go.”

“I am full of gratitude for all the Executive Committee and Trustees
have done to help us move forward. I appreciate your hard work as well
as the hard work of the WSO Staff.”

“Thank you for the invitation. We don’t speak the same language,
but our hearts communicate.”

“I will never forget seeing WSO Staff at the podium as members of the fellowship.
It had never occurred to me that we are all in the same fellowship.”

“This was an empowering Conference. I can’t wait to share this with my Area and
try to make it as interactive and as much fun as it was for me.”

“What an experience this has been. My last Conference has gone by so fast.
Now I am looking back and thinking, where did that time go? All the changes we
have seen—the Delegate participation, technology, Staff energy and enthusiasm.
Together we are better; the fellowship is in good hands.”