

World Service Conference 2016

Good Morning Everyone. My name is Phyllis and it was my privilege to represent you as Rhode Island's Delegate at the 2016 World Service Conference in Virginia Beach, VA, April 11-15.

The theme for this year's World Service Conference was "Realizing Our Spiritual Potential". On the first day, the Panel 56 Delegates had an Orientation and the rest of us met with our Committees, Task Forces, and Thought Forces. The actual Conference proceedings began on Tuesday. As we walked into the meeting room, we were greeted with a slide that said:

Dear God, I need to make some BIG decisions. Can we talk?

For me, it set the tone for the week's work and reminded me that I am not doing this alone.

Alateen Survey Report

The first major item on the agenda was the Alateen Survey Report. The WSO conducted an Alateen survey March 1-20, 2016. The focus of the survey was:

Is the current model of Alateen the best model for current Alateens.

The goals of the survey were:

1. Ask the teens what he or she thinks; is it working or not working.
2. Conduct an alateen survey before the 2016 WSC and share the results at the conference;
3. Continue the discussion.
- 4.

Due to vacancies in key staff positions at the WSO, the survey was conducted later than they had wanted and therefore was open for a relatively short period of time in order to meet their goal of conducting the survey before the 2016 WSC.

There were 292 respondents; 44 did not complete the survey and 131 were removed because they did not meet the age or membership requirement. So the survey results are based on the responses of the 117 alateen members who completed the survey.

The average lower age allowed at Alateen meetings was 10.25 and the average upper age was 18.74; 82% of the respondents agreed with the age range of their group; 19% had an Alateen personal sponsor; 17% said they heard about Alateen from their parents and 10% said they heard about it from a professional; 80% said they don't attend chat meetings, but more than half said they are interested in chat meetings; 61% said the Alateen literature was very important; 43% said Public Outreach was very important to the success of Alateen; 9 people said they wished there were meetings in school or after school.

In the comments section, people was the most favorite thing about Alateen. Other favorite things were being able to talk to people I trust, talk about things in our household, I am not alone, have a group to talk to when times are tough, share stories without judgement, understanding people, we all relate, love and camaraderie, support and friendship.

The results of the survey will be posted after the May Board meeting in “Group E-news” and “Alateen Talk”.

Zonal Meeting Reports

There were three International Zonal Meeting reports presented at the Conference. Zonal meetings are held not as decision-making bodies, but as a way for the participating countries to support each other and share information. WSO representatives attend to serve as a resource, to communicate with the various countries without having to travel to each country individually, and to use the Zonal meetings as an opportunity to share with them what is happening at the WSO.

The Central American Zonal Meeting was held in Managua Nicaragua in November 2015. There were 17 delegates in attendance from 6 countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Panama. Although there are multiple delegates, only one delegate from each country has a vote.

The European Zonal Meeting was held in Brugge, Belgium in August 2015. It was held at a monastery where the participants attended silent lunches and dinners with the monks. There were 21 participants from 14 countries: Austria, Belgium - French-speaking, Belgium - Flemish-speaking, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland - French-speaking, Sweden, UK & Eire, and Ukraine.

The Ibero-American Zonal Meeting was held in Asuncion, Paraguay in November 2015. There were 16 delegates from 8 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador. Two members from each country attended with one serving as delegate.

A wide range of topics were discussed at these meetings including the problems that the Central American countries are faced with which includes limited ability to start new meetings due to gangs and violence in the countryside and that literature orders are frequently lost in transit, probably due to theft. Other topics were modern communication; service in our respective structures, declining number of members and contributions, literature translation and shipping costs, dual members providing service and emphasizing the big book, pricing of literature not supporting financial needs of the structures, copyright information and that they need WSO's permission before they translate and sell literature, Alateens and technology, finance and legislation, Tradition 4, conflicts at conferences (repetitive topics and dominance), minority appeals, and conflict resolution literature.

Memorial Contributions

Last year, at the 2015 Conference, there was a lengthy discussion about the WSO accepting memorial contributions from non-members. The 2015 Conference asked the Policy Committee to prepare and bring a motion to the 2016 Conference on this matter. I am happy to report that the motion to amend the Memorial Contributions policy by adding the following statement was approved.

The World Service Office accepts contributions in memory of deceased AI-Anon members from “family” who are not AI-Anon members. The Fellowship recognizes that accepting such contributions can give comfort to families as described in Tradition Five.

The World Service Conference defines family as anyone who has a close relationship of loving care and concern for another. The individual donor defines his or her relationship to the deceased Al-Anon member.

This one time gift of gratitude is limited to an amount no greater than \$500. Memorial contributions by non-members are not solicited.

Concept Eleven

The other piece of business that was held over from the 2015 Conference was the motion to amend the descriptive text of Concept Eleven. The text was updated to reflect the current World Service Office structure while preserving information that is helpful to Areas and international structures that continue to use the former structure. The text is rather lengthy and we did not have enough time to complete the review and vote last year. This year, we picked up where we left off, completing the review and discussion before voting unanimously to approve the changes. I will send an email to the announcements list and post the changes on my Delegate's Corner webpage once the revised Service Manual pages are available.

"Meet the Board" Event

The purpose of "Meet the Board" is to take the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee members to a local Area, hold its "Board Week" there, and then on one day of that week meet with local members. The Board meetings are attended by Board members only, but the extra day for "Meet the Board" is an opportunity for the WSO volunteers and Area members to share a day of connection.

The second "Meet the Board" Event was held in July 2015 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. There were 60 pre-registered attendees and the feedback was positive.

The day's format included 10-minute Snapshots that provided glimpses into the Finance Committee, Executive Committee, Thought Forces, Task Forces, and Work Groups; presentations on International structures, TEAM events, and Area visits; round-table discussions that focused on new members, remote groups, and Al-Anon's Legacies and spiritual principles; and a Gallery Walk that featured 8 different tables for members to rotate among and learn about the work of different WSO Committees.

Feedback from the participants included: members had a greater understanding of the work of the WSO, they were more aware of the Board's role and its dedication to world service, they appreciated what they had in common with the Board as members, and they recognized how everyone can grow through service. Many participants said that local members missed a rare opportunity to learn so much more about how Al-Anon works.

"Meet the Board" has been a three-year trial: 2014, 2015, 2016. Since this is year 3, the Board carefully evaluated all factors and feedback, seeking answers to the following questions:

- Did we meet our goal and accomplish the purpose of the event?
- Did members, as well as the Board, benefit from it?
- Is the event financially feasible to continue in the future?
- Does the event further our mission and vision for Al-Anon Family Groups?

Based on their information, the Board voted to extend the trial another three years, from 2017-2019, to build upon the lessons that have been learned in the first 3 years, and to adapt and modify as necessary.

At the Spring Assembly last year, I asked the GRs if we should submit a request to host the 2016 Meet the Board event, and they voted unanimously to do so. 21 Areas submitted request forms last year and, in keeping with past practice, the Board drew the winning host Area from a hat.

Although Rhode Island was not selected last year, I would like to propose that our Area submit a request form to host the 2017 Meet the Board event. If selected, it would be a wonderful opportunity for our members, as well as members from nearby areas, to meet and interact with the Trustees and Executive Committee members; to discuss items of importance to the fellowship and to the organization of Al-Anon; and to realize that we are all Al-Anon members, working in different capacities, for the good of the fellowship. What makes this event ideal for Rhode Island is that WSO does most of the work. All we would have to do is:

- recommend several area hotels that meet the criteria for hosting the event.
- publicize the event if we are selected.
- provide transportation between the hotel and airport if there is no free hotel shuttle.
- provide an Area contact person.

The 2017 Meet the Board event will be held on October 21, 2017. If you are in agreement to doing this then I am willing to Chair a committee to put together our Request Form and send it in to WSO. So my question to all of you is "Should we toss our name into the hat to host the 2017 Meet the Board event?"

2015 Auditor's Report

The 2015 Auditor's Report showed actual expenses were \$5,115,291 and actual revenue was \$4,754,267, which resulted in a net loss of \$361,024.

The good news is that the total operating expenses in 2015 were approximately \$1,700 below the projected amount. The bad news is that the net loss was due to reduced income and investment losses.

Literature sales totaled \$2,822,801, which was \$227,199 below the projected amount of \$3,050,000. The continuing decline in Literature sales is perplexing, especially since E-literature has not been sufficient to account for the decline in the printed literature sales.

Contributions totaled \$1,649,227, which was \$50,773 below the projected amount of \$1,700,000.

Forum subscription income totaled \$230,714, which was \$19,286 below the projected amount of \$250,000.

The Reserve Fund balance at fair value was \$3,829,572 at the end of 2015, which was \$586,545 below the fair value at the end of 2014.

Rhode Island 2015 Contributions

In 2015, 65.4% of the groups in Rhode Island contributed an average of \$103.59 for a total of \$3,522. This is down from 2014's contributions of \$3,699.

Other individual donations totaled \$151 in 2015 which is down from 2014's contributions of \$1,166.

2016 Proposed Budget

The 2016 Budget estimates expenses to be \$5,057,000 and revenue to be \$4,873,000. Overall expense is budgeted to decrease by approximately \$58,000 from last year's actual. Income from literature sales is projected to be about \$123,000 less than last year and *Forum* subscription income is expected to be slightly higher. Contributions are being budgeted at \$1,800,000, which is about 9% more than last year's actual amount.

Beginning in 2008, the Board agreed to transfer up to 4% of the average balance of the Reserve Fund over the prior 36 months to the General Fund. In 2015 the transferred amount was reduced to about 1.1 percent. The 2016 reserve transfer has been set at 4 percent.

During the budget discussion, several of the delegates shared interesting ways that their areas used in collecting contributions last year. For example:

- Iowa groups passed a can for loose change along with their regular donations basket and submitted the proceeds from the cans to WSO in place of making love gifts for the Conference.
- Rather than reading the quarterly appeal letters, Hawaii groups passed a can to collect "quarters for the quarter" and sent that money to the WSO each quarter.

One of the things I mentioned when I got up to the mic to share on the budget, was how I regularly give to several different non-profit organizations each year. However, until a couple of months ago, it had never occurred to me that I could include the WSO as one of those non-profits. When that light bulb went on, I made a decision to send a contribution to the WSO each year.

I am encouraging the members of this Assembly to think about ways that Rhode Island's grateful members of Al-Anon can increase our donations to the WSO. Should we adopt Iowa's idea of passing a can for change in place of love gifts? Or Hawaii's idea of forgoing reading the quarterly appeal letters and collecting "Quarters for the Quarter"? Or come up with our own creative ideas about how to express our gratitude for all that Al-Anon has given us?

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism Magazine

Al-Anon members distributed 387,425 copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* in 2015.

Professionals have been contacting the World Service Office saying thank you for the distribution of these magazines and are asking for more copies. Members are being asked to either leave contact information so professionals can request additional copies from them or to check back from time-to-time to see if additional copies are needed.

Thank you for putting the 12th step into action.

Prayer for Today

During its June 2015 meeting, the Literature Committee began discussing requests from two different members in different Areas for changes to the "Prayer for Today." This prayer is on the *Just for Today* Wallet Card and Bookmark, as well as on page 101 of *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics*. The first member felt that although it is beautiful, it is clearly a religious prayer, and should be revised or discontinued. The second member requested that the words "O, Divine Master" in the second paragraph of the prayer be changed to "God." Because the prayer is included in the Newcomer Packet, she felt it could give many newcomers the idea that Al-Anon is a religious program.

The current wording of the "Prayer for Today" is as follows:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light, and where there is sadness, joy.

"O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we
receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life."

Using the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process (KBDM), the Literature Committee continued their discussion on this topic in October 2015. After a thorough discussion of all aspects of the information from the KBDM document, the Literature Committee reached a unanimous consensus to recommend removal of the "Prayer for Today" from the *Just for Today* Bookmark and Wallet Card, as well as from *How Al-Anon Works*. The Committee also decided to brainstorm ideas on what, if anything, it would recommend to replace the prayer where it is featured.

At the Literature Committee's December meeting, it recommended that, if the Conference agreed to remove the "Prayer for Today," the text on the Bookmark and Wallet Card could be enlarged without adding any other material, and that page 101 in *How Al-Anon Works* could end with a quotation from the last paragraph in *When I Got Busy I Got Better*.

During the discussion at the World Service Conference, several of the Delegates shared that they had discussed this in their Areas and that their members had strong objections to the removal of the prayer. After much discussion, it was the consensus of the Conference that the Delegates go back to their Areas for further discussion and that we will revisit the Literature Committee's recommendation at the 2017 World Service Conference.

Should the "Prayer for Today" be removed from the Just for Today Bookmark and Wallet card and from How Al-Anon Works?

I will be sending this request out on the RIAFG announcements email list. Please take this discussion back to your groups and forward comments to me at delegate.riafg@gmail.com so that I can adequately represent Rhode Island's views on this topic.

Conventions and Other Events

At a Delegate's request, the topic of what could be announced at meetings was first raised at the July 2013 Policy Committee meeting. The reason for this request was that some members work around policy to suit their needs, e.g. renaming a retreat a "workshop" so it can be announced at meetings.

The Policy Committee presented a motion to amend the "text on pages 85 to 86 of the "Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions" section beginning with "Conventions" in the 2014-2017 Service Manual. After much discussion the Conference consensus was to send the motion back to the Policy Committee to revise and resubmit to the 2017 Conference.

Diversity

The issue of diversity in our fellowship was addressed in several ways at this year's Conference.

A Task Force was charged with developing a workshop that includes ways and ideas for group members in welcoming and giving comfort to newcomers from all communities, cultures, and beliefs while keeping the focus on Al-Anon's primary purpose of helping friends and families of alcoholics.

I was particularly struck by the following paragraph from their presentation:

We may never be able to entirely eliminate our own prejudice, bias, and discrimination but, if we use the "spiritual principles of the program," guided by our Higher Power, these may be noticeably reduced. By practicing being open-minded, welcoming, and non-judgmental, by assuming goodwill and by stepping outside of our own comfort zones, we may become more open to other communities, cultures, and beliefs.

The agenda item chosen by the Delegates asked several questions about diversity including:

- How do we adapt and evolve to attract and retain younger members (under 40) while staying true to our purpose, traditions and concepts?
- Are we as inclusive as we could be whether potential newcomer or member has religious belief or not (the agnostic)?
- How can Al-Anon attract younger, more diverse members beyond the current Al-Anon member being a 62-year-old heterosexual white woman, to maintain and increase Al-Anon's current membership?
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The cover picture on the 2017 *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* shows an african-american mother and son.

The discussion on the "Prayer for Today " included the issue of diversity.

The Literature Committee is still collecting sharings for a new daily reader that focuses on the diversity of our fellowship. For more information on how you can contribute to this book, please contact our Literature Coordinator, Barbara H.

The Forum

For several years, every Al-Anon group has been receiving free monthly copies of the *Forum*. This service, provided by the World Service Office, costs over \$100,000 a year.

As a cost saving measure, the Finance Committee decided to suspend the free monthly copies for one year beginning with the April 2016 issue. All groups received a letter to that effect with their March issue.

I am happy to report that since that announcement, *Forum* subscriptions have increased 45%. Unfortunately, less than 10% of the Fellowship receives the *Forum*. We have gone from a high of 64,000 subscriptions in 1989 to 18,000 today.

I have been encouraging groups in Rhode Island to purchase subscriptions and I am also encouraging members to do the same. The cost is only \$11 per year. For more information on how to purchase a subscription see our *Forum* Coordinator, Denise A.

Task Forces

Throughout the year, Delegates, Trustees, and WSO Staff work together on a Committee, Thought Force, or Task Force. This year's Task Forces were all charged with preparing workshops and/or presentations that Areas, Districts, and Groups can use to address specific issues. Anyone interested in seeing these materials should feel free to contact me.

The first Task Force was Acceptance of Communities, Cultures, and Beliefs. Their charge was to develop a workshop for a(n) district/Area that includes ways and ideas for group members in welcoming and giving comfort to newcomers from all communities, cultures, and beliefs while keeping the focus on Al-Anon's primary purpose of helping friends and families of alcoholics.

The second Task Force was Communication and Strengthening the Links of Service. Their charge was to develop a presentation that assists trusted servants in better communicating information using spiritual principles as guideposts while empowering members to use the links of service and make their needs known.

The third Task Force was Meeting Types. Their charge was to develop a list of potential types of meetings that meet a variety of group needs while remaining consistent with Al-Anon Legacies. Then develop a workshop to assist a group in determining the type of meeting that is acceptable to the group conscience, while encouraging the use of *Groups at Work* and Conference Approved Literature by group members.

The final task force was Technology and Anonymity. Their charge was to develop a presentation that can be used in Areas that helps to clarify for members how to successfully use technology, including social media sites, for personal usage and for Al-Anon business while maintaining Al-Anon/Alateen anonymity. I was on the Technology and Anonymity Task Force. I hope to include that presentation at the next Assembly.

WSO Staffing Changes

The Chairperson of the Board updated us on staffing changes at the World Service Office. Ric B. has retired from his position as Executive Director. The Board of Trustees has hired an Interim Executive Director, Mary G. Mary, who started in the position on April 10, has been an Al-Anon member for nearly 40 years, 39 of them in service. She has served the fellowship as a Delegate, a Trustee, and as a member of the Executive Committee. She chaired the Literature Committee, the International Coordination Committee, the Policy Committee, and the Conference Leadership Team. She was on the Finance Committee for 5 years. In her professional life she was an educator and administrator where she developed skills in communication and strategic planning. Mary is an active member of the Monday Morning Miracles Group in Venice, Florida.

With Ric's retirement, the Board is poised to move forward into WSO's next exciting chapter. The first step they are taking is to change the WSO organizational structure so that there will be increased communication between departments and streamlined activities. Subsequently, there will be two new positions. The positions are Director of Programs and e-Platforms Manager.

The Director of Programs will be responsible for participating in the development, implementation, and evaluation of all World Service Office activities that serve members and potential members. This position has been posted on the Member's website. I urge you to look at the position description and encourage members that you think are qualified to apply for the job.

The e-Platforms Manager will oversee all aspects of technology and innovation to expand services and products to the fellowship, professionals, and the general public. When this position description has been finalized it will be posted to the Member's Web site and I will send out a notice on the announcements list.

International Convention

There was a lot of excitement at the Conference as we began the countdown to Al-Anon's 6th International Convention, to be held in Baltimore, MD, July 5-8, 2018. That's just 2 years, 2 months, and 4 days from today!

WSO 65th Anniversary Celebration

Dean flew down to Virginia Beach at the end of the week and joined me for the 65th Anniversary Celebration, which took place on Saturday, April 16.

There were tours of the World Service Office in the afternoon. Julie P., the Delegate from Washington joined Dean and I on our ride from the hotel to the office and on the tour.

All of the World Service Office Staff were in the office on Saturday. They talked with us, explaining their jobs, and seemed really happy to have so many members visit for the Anniversary. Next year, as part of Conference, we all will be going to the World Service Office, and I will share more about the WSO at next year's spring Assembly.

On Saturday evening, there was a banquet at the hotel. There were approximately 400 people at the banquet. There was a countdown which revealed that there were members in attendance ranging from 9 months in Al-Anon to 60 years. The first speaker, Mary R., has been in the program for 57 years. She

shared her path to and through recovery including meeting Bill and Lois and being a minority in the program. The second speaker, Sandra F., was asked to share her path in recovery and her experience working at the WSO both in New York and when it moved to Virginia Beach. She also told us the story of how Virginia Beach was selected as the site for the WSO. She was on the selection committee and after visiting all the sites and reviewing the information, there was vote which resulted in a split vote – 3 for Virginia Beach and 3 for Dayton, Ohio. Sandra suggested that they put the two locations in a hat and draw the winner. Needless to say, the name that was chosen was Virginia Beach.

It was a wonderful experience being there with so many people who had traveled many miles to celebrate Al-Anon's 65th Anniversary.

I would like to end my presentation with a picture of me standing between portraits of Al-Anon's co-founders, Lois W. and Anne B. which are on display in the WSO lobby.

Thank you for letting me serve as your Delegate.

Phyllis H.
Delegate, Panel 55
Rhode Island