

World Service Conference 2017

(Note: My presentation at the June 3, 2017 Assembly included two PowerPoint presentations with many pictures and a video. Therefore, since those pictures and video are not included, what you read below is not the "full" report that was presented.)

Good Morning Everyone. My name is Phyllis and it was my privilege to represent you as Rhode Island's Delegate at the 2017 World Service Conference in Virginia Beach, VA, April 25-28, 2017.

There are 3 parts to my presentation this year:

PART ONE: A visit to OUR World Service Office

On Tuesday afternoon under gray skies, we loaded onto busses and headed for our tour of the World Service Office. Just as our busses pulled up in front of WSO, the clouds parted and the sun came out. As we exited the busses we were greeted with sunshine, hugs, and "welcome home" by the Board of Trustees.

The first order of business was to take our Panel pictures. Here is my panel, Panel 55.

The tours began in the lobby where not only is there an Alateen timeline on the wall, but also a giant shoe where visitors can leave donations.

In the lobby are portraits of our co-founders, Lois W. and Anne B. We all took turns having our pictures taken in front of Lois and Anne.

The architecture of the building, both inside and out, incorporates the Al-Anon logo of a circle within a triangle. The entrance to the building is a triangle. The logo is displayed on the outside of the building. In the lobby there is a model of the building. When you look at it from above you can see the triangle and circle themes in the building design, including the skylight in the lobby. Even the light fixtures are circles and triangles. Behind the building is "Lois's gazebo", a circle within a triangle and beyond that is a small pond which they call "Lois's pond".

A large portion of the WSO building is the warehouse where literature is stored and orders are filled and shipped, including materials in a variety of languages such as boxes of ODATs in Russian and En Accion, a Spanish newsletter that is published six times per year, which features sharings from The Forum, sharings on our three Legacies, an Alateen page, and Inside Al-Anon Family Groups. There were even boxes of Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2018 in English, French, and Spanish!

There is a boardroom which is used by the Board of Trustees, the Policy Committee, and the Executive Committee when they meet at WSO. On our tour, all of the Panel 55 Delegates were invited into the Boardroom for a presentation on becoming a Trustee.

The building includes an exercise room and a lunchroom. On Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. there is an Al-Anon meeting in the lunchroom.

The building includes a climate controlled archives room where documents, pamphlets, books, photographs, and other items that pertain to the history of the fellowship are preserved and protected.

There are individual items on display both inside the archives room and throughout the building. Examples of what we saw included:

- An early expense report showing expenses paid by Lois and Anne
- A 1948 letter to AA asking for literature for the wives of alcoholics and the response directing the writer to contacts for non-AA wives groups.
- A 1950 letter acknowledging the formation of an “auxiliary group” in Bakersfield, California.
- Lois’s Story video in English and Lois and the Pioneers video in French and a painting from Japan in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Al-Anon
- The one millionth and 5 millionth copies of the ODAT
- A photograph of Lois.
- Tools used to carry the message of recovery throughout the years including a manual typewriter.
- A reproduction of the original “Conference Approved Literature” logo designed by the son of a long-time volunteer, Evelyn C. The logo was approved by the Conference in 1962.
- A resolution adopted by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous at its October 31, 1988 meeting paying tribute to Lois.

60 years ago, the first Alateen groups were registered with WSO. This year, in celebration of Alateen’s 60th Anniversary, many of the displays in the World Service Office are focused on the history of Alateen.

An important part of visiting WSO was meeting the staff. Over the past year, the World Service Office was reorganized to make the composition less top heavy and to allow for more communication and cooperation between departments and individual staff members. There are now two director positions - Director of Finance and Director of Programs.

In addition, it has become apparent that for Al-Anon Family Groups to remain relevant, it needs to focus on technology. To that end, instead of relying as much on contracted vendors to handle the technology the decision was made to hire a Digital Strategy Manager, a Webmaster, and an Electronic Media Specialist.

I am happy to report that, at the present time, the WSO is fully staffed.

Here are a few key staff that we met:

- Mary G. assumed the position of interim executive director a year ago. At that time she signed a contract for 18 months. Currently, the Board of Trustees is searching for a permanent executive director. The position description is posted on the Al-Anon members website. The deadline for applying for the position is June 15th. The Board of Trustees anticipates announcing the new Executive Director to the fellowship by mid-August.
- The finance team: Niketa B. joined the WSO last December as the Director of Finance; Ken P. is the Controller; and Camille P. is the Customer Services Manager.
- Marsha W. is the Director of Programs. She was promoted to this position last June from her previous position as Associate Director – International.
- Claire R. is the Associate Director – Professionals.
- Sue P. joined the WSO last December as the Associate Director – Groups, which includes Alateen.
- Sergio Z. is the Group Services Assistant – Alateen.

- Kerri K. joined WSO as Associate Director – International when Marsha was promoted to Director of Programs.
- Suzanne M. is the Associate Director – Conference and is responsible for keeping us all on track during Conference week.
- Tom C. is the Associate Director – Literature.
- Scot P. joined the WSO staff last December as the Digital Strategy Manager. He oversees all aspects of technology and innovation. Throughout the week new ideas were constantly being referred to Scot for consideration.

PART TWO: Conference

The theme for this year's World Service Conference was "Our Members: Our Hope for the Future".

On Tuesday morning, we started the Conference, much as we do in our Al-Anon group meetings and here at Assembly, with introductions. This year, they decided to mix it up a little, by giving each of us a sash to wear when we did our introductions.

2016 Budget Report

The 2016 Budget Report showed actual expenses were \$4,954,117 and actual revenue was \$5,033,270, which resulted in a net gain of \$88,153.

The good news is that the total operating expenses in 2015 were approximately \$59,971 below the projected amount. The even better news is that contributions exceeded our projections and expectations by such a large margin that we ended 2016 with a surplus.

Literature sales totaled \$2,714,877, which was \$114,877 above the projected amount of \$2,600,000.

Contributions totaled \$2,098,098 which was \$298,098 above the projected amount of \$1,800,000.

Forum subscription income totaled \$251,900, which was \$1,900 above the projected amount of \$250,000.

Rhode Island Contributions

I am happy to report that members in Rhode Island responded to the WSO's need for increased donations last year. In 2016, 73.1% of our groups donated to WSO in comparison to 65.4% in 2015. The average donations per group increased from \$103.59 in 2015 to \$145.99 in 2016. Total group donations in 2016 were \$5,548 compared to \$3,522 in 2015. Other donations also increased from \$151 in 2015 to \$549 in 2016.

Thank You!

2017 Proposed Budget

The 2017 Budget estimates expenses to be \$5,229,500 and revenue to be \$5,240,000. Overall expense is budgeted to increase by approximately \$284,383 over last year's actual. This increase is due, primarily, to the filling of all vacant positions and the hiring of a Webmaster.

Income from literature sales is projected to be about \$14,877 less than last year and *Forum* subscription income is expected to be about \$1,900 less than last year. Contributions are being budgeted at \$2,100,000, which is \$1,902 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. The 2016 reserve transfer has been set at 4 percent. Last year we were able to not take any money from the Reserve Fund because our revenues covered all our expenses. Wouldn't it be great if that happened again in 2017? Here's how we can help make that a reality.

The average annual cost of services per group provided by WSO is \$261. This is the amount I would ask you to take back to your groups and, if possible, make it a group goal.

When we send contributions to WSO, it does come back to us in the form of direct services that WSO provides for all of Al-Anon!! In other words "where the money goes"! Approximately 2/3 of our contributions provides Member Services and Communication Services, with the other 1/3 supporting Public Service Announcements, Conference, Volunteer Oversight, and Toll Free Numbers.

At the conclusion of her budget report, Jennie M., our Treasurer and a grateful member of Al-Anon, summed it up as follows:

"If we, as members, show our support as we did last year the World Service Office will be able to offer great support, outreach and more great projects that are dependent on technology. We are projecting a small surplus of \$10,500 but as always, we and the success of Al-Anon Family Groups Inc. are dependent on our members. We hope we all are able to share our abundance in gratitude for what Al-Anon has given us."

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism Magazine

Al-Anon members ordered a record number of copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2017* during the second printing in February. In total, 184,625 copies were ordered, which represents a 19% increase from the AFA 2016 second printing orders and also exceeds the previous record quantity of second printing purchases by members in 2012 by 125 copies.

For the first time, the WSO is able to provide Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2016 and 2017 reports for each Area. The reports are organized by language and country.

Here are the totals for the United States English versions, for 2016 and 2017.

In 2016: 2,287 orders were placed for a total purchase of 286,585 copies.

In 2017: 2,091 orders were placed for a total purchase of 292,525 copies.

Here are the totals for Rhode Island:

In 2016: 11 orders were placed for a total purchase of 700 copies.

In 2017: 11 orders were placed for a total purchase of 825 copies.

In the words of Claire R., the Associate Director – Professionals "the true meaning of each AFA magazine printing is that it represents members' involvement in this Public Outreach project. Al-Anon's message

of help and hope found in the contents of each *AFA* magazine is literally and figuratively reaching more offices of professionals and public places where families of alcoholics can learn about our program.”

Thank you for putting the 12th step into action.

Prayer for Today

As you may recall, last year I reported that the Literature Committee had recommended to the 2016 World Service Conference that we remove the Prayer for Today from the *Just for Today* bookmark and wallet card, and from *How Al-Anon Works*. After much discussion at the 2016 Conference, it was the consensus of the Conference that the Delegates go back to their Areas for further discussion and that we revisit the Literature Committee’s recommendation at the 2017 World Service Conference.

In preparation for the 2017 World Service Conference, the Delegates were presented with 2 questions:

1. What format(s) did your Area use to discuss this issue?

My responses were:

- a. I presented the issue as part of my Delegate’s Report at the Area’s Spring Assembly.
- b. I requested that GRs take the information back to their groups for discussion and that members email me their comments.
- c. I posted items related to this discussion on my Delegate’s Corner webpage.
- d. I sent items related to this discussion to the RIAFG announcements listserv requesting members’ feedback.

2. What did you learn from your Area’s discussions that would help expand the Conference’s discussion of this topic?

My response was:

I receive a total of 32 responses; 24 to keep the prayer as is; 5 to remove it; 3 to change: either by removing the Christian references or replacing it with the Serenity Prayer.

After hearing input from everyone, the 2017 Conference voted to stop the discussion for now and remain open to new ideas coming forward in the future.

International Convention

At last year’s Conference we began the countdown to Al-Anon’s 6th International Convention, to be held in Baltimore, MD, July 5-8, 2018. That’s just 1 year, 1 month, and 2 days from today! Al-Anon and Alateen members from around the world will come together for fun and fellowship. In addition, A.A. will participate by holding daytime meetings on Friday and Saturday July 6 and 7. Beginning in September, the WSO will provide information to the fellowship in a variety of ways. Articles will appear in *The Forum* magazine, the Group e-News, AFG Announcements for members, the WSO Members’ web site, and print and electronic group mailings. The 2018 International Convention will have its own web site beginning September 2017! Al-Anon and Alateen members and their A.A. guests will be able to register for the convention. Members will also learn about and sign up for housing.

Everyone is encouraged to register early to save money. Registration fees are:

\$130 before December 31st, 2017

\$165 between December 31st, 2017 and May 31st, 2018

\$195 after May 31st, 2018

Once you have registered to attend the convention, you can:

- Reserve a hotel room – Al-Anon has reserved a certain number of rooms at a guaranteed rate with several hotels in the area. If you book an “Al-Anon” room, you will receive the lowest possible rate, and be supporting the convention.
- Register to march in the Language of Love Parade
- Purchase tickets in advance for the Pioneer Luncheon (limited seating/first come, first serve)

According to the custom of the World Service Conference, outgoing Delegates share a 3-minute message with the Conference. We were asked to focus our talk on the 2017 Conference theme. I gave my talk on the afternoon of the last day and I also shared it at the Assembly.

PART THREE: Fellowship

During my time as Delegate, not only have I had the privilege of representing all of you at the World Service Conference, I also had the opportunity and privilege to spend time with and get to know and love Delegates from all over the United States and Canada, Trustees who voluntarily devote enormous amounts of time and energy to the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon, representatives from Al-Anon around the world, and fantastic staff who work every day to make sure that Al-Anon is always there for all of us and for the newcomer.

Since this was my 3rd and final Conference, I wanted to share some of that amazing camaraderie and fellowship with you.

Fellowship begins and is always present in the hospitality room. Here is where the boxes and boxes and boxes of “love gifts” are opened and shared with everyone.

The Al-Anon Works if You Work It group in East Greenwich provided some wonderful love gifts which were grabbed up by thankful conference members in about 10 minutes.

We had three international representatives at Conference this year. Maria M. from Mexico, Kim A. from the United Kingdom and Eire and Arnold H. from New Zealand.

It was a real pleasure to get to know and work with the Board of Trustees.

Every year, the agenda includes one day when we have lunch outside, weather permitting. My first 2 years it was too cold and windy to do lunch outside. With this week starting off cold and rainy I didn't have much hope that it would happen this year either. Much to my surprise, on Thursday the sun was out, the weather was warm, and there was only a mild breeze, so we had lunch outside!

Also, on Thursday we were given a free half hour after lunch to “network”. So, we “networked” on the beach, we posed for pictures, we said the serenity prayer together, and we enjoyed the beach and water.

After the closing banquet on Friday night, conference tradition is that the outgoing panel of delegates provides some sort of “entertainment”.

In our first year, Panel 55 chose "Panel 55 Spiritually Alive" as our "logo". We decided to do a song and a dance and a video for our grand finale.

Thank you for allowing me to learn and grow so much by serving as your Delegate.

Phyllis H.
Delegate, Panel 55
Rhode Island
