

2024

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding

Notre cheminement vers la grâce, l'unité et la compréhension

Nuestro camino hacia la gracia, la unidad y la comprensión

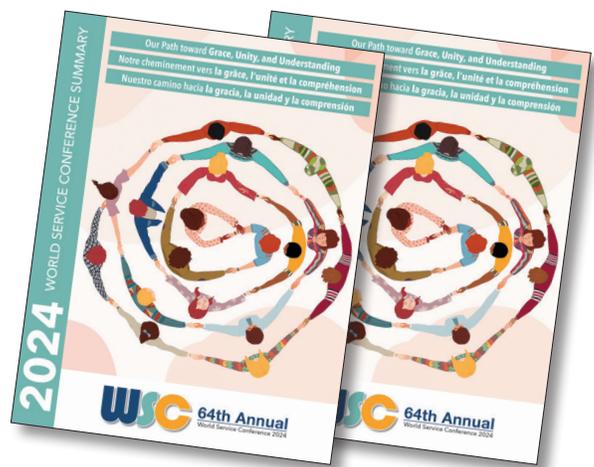


64th Annual

World Service Conference 2024

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS 2024 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

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“Our World Service Conference (WSC) is the active voice and the effective group conscience of our society in world affairs.”
2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3, page 184

VISION

Families and friends of alcoholics find hope and encouragement to live joyful, serene lives.



MISSION

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. is a spiritually based organization that helps the families and friends of alcoholics connect and support each other through barrier free meetings, information, and shared experiences.



DOMAINS & GOAL STATEMENTS

Members: AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics.

Recovery & Service Tools: AFG, Inc. develops and publishes materials to share the collective experience of the families and friends of alcoholics.

Awareness: AFG, Inc. builds public and professional awareness of the Al-Anon program.

Financial Sustainability: AFG, Inc. encourages membership and organizational self-support by aligning resource allocation with its core purpose and strategic priorities.

Global Engagement: AFG, Inc. invests in each new generation of trusted servants to preserve our legacy and improve our structure and operations to meet the needs of the global landscape.



Concept Two

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

The 2024 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.

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PRE-CONFERENCE

2024 ASSIGNMENTS FOR SELECTED COMMITTEES, THOUGHT FORCES, AND TASK FORCES

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 62 (2022-2024)	Panel 63 (2023-2025)	Panel 64 (2024-2026)
Conference Committee on Trustees	Pamela C., Chair, MT Aileen W-M., NC/BDA Joanne F., WIUPMI Linda H., MN(N) Owen H., BC/YK	Carol G., Chair Elect, ME Pat G., NY(S) Renaë B., SD	Anna A., TX(E) Carol C., NY(N) Kathy D., FL(S)
Literature Committee	Diane G., AB/NWT GW W., LA Katharine R., WA Marti P., AR	Barbara O'D., SC Dave B., UT Donna W., WY Rose R., OH	BJ M., TX(W) Cindy B., RI Teresa F., CA(S)
Public Outreach Committee	Elliott B., WV Emily C., OK Jane P., MA	Darcy A., ND Kate M., NH Mari J., AK Marilyn McC., NF/ LAB	Chris M., CA(N) Colleen D., MN(S) Irene F., TN Pauline W., KY
Thought Force: Revitalizing Archives to Enhance Our Recovery	Burt P., GEA Gene T., AZ Katie O'C., NJ	Becky V., IA, Chair Carol W., IL(S) Lourdes C., PR	Jason W., ON(S) Joan K., KS Theresa S., MI
Task Force: Conference Member Visit to Stepping Stones 2025		Sue K., MO, Chair Mary C., SK	Gretchen S., FL(N) Kauï P., HI Ralph H., PA

THE BOARD'S GOALS FOR CONFERENCE

Prior to the start of Conference, the Board's Goals for the Conference were posted to AFG Connects, as follows:

The Conference, Al-Anon's largest group conscience, will act in the spirit of unity and goodwill to assure that Al-Anon's world services are continually available to the Al-Anon fellowship.

GOAL 1: The spiritual tone of the Conference will prevail by the demonstration of Al-Anon's core principles in action.

GOAL 2: 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.

GOAL 3: Conference members will understand the purpose of the Conference, relationships within the Structure, and be able to articulate Conference discussions and decisions.

Conference members were asked to select one Goal and share how they will strive to support the Goal they selected during the Conference week.

GOAL 1

Conference members reflected on the spiritual principles and Legacies that best applied to the aims of Conference, such as the common welfare of members (Tradition One), protection of the minority voice (Concept Five), the guidance of a Higher Power (Step Eleven), personal leadership (Concept Nine), the process of Knowledge-Based Decision-Making, and the principles of unity, mutual trust, respect, listening, and obedience to the unenforceable.

GOAL 2

This option prompted members to discuss the responsibility of Delegates to carry the voice of the groups and members in their Areas to Conference and vice versa. The different positions and roles present at Conference, including Delegates, Trustees, Executive Committee members, and voting members of the WSO administrative Staff, and the balance of authority and responsibility along with autonomy were also noted in many members' responses.

GOAL 3

Many new Delegates chose to respond to this Goal, sharing their hopes for carrying out their roles at Conference and in their home Areas, absorbing information, forming relationships, and keeping an open mind during discussions and decisions. Some returning members also reflected on the knowledge they gained from previous Conferences and hoped to bring to the 2024 WSC and to the rest of the fellowship.

SHARING AREA HIGHLIGHTS

Owen H., Panel 62, British Columbia/Yukon

Linda H., Panel 62, Minnesota North

Jane P., Panel 62, Massachusetts

"We can embrace change by looking at where we're going and not where we've been."

Prior to the opening of the 2024 World Service Conference, Delegates held a session to share Area experiences, strengths, and challenges. All other Conference members—WSO Volunteers (Trustees and Executive Committee members) and WSO Staff—were invited to attend as guests with no voice.

The session began with a warm-up inviting Delegates to share their hopes and fears for Conference. Then, Delegates took part in a spiritual walk exercise, with half the participants seated in a circle while a second group walked to each member to whisper a quote from Conference Approved Literature. Once all participants heard the quotes, everyone switched places and repeated the exercise. At the end of the session, participants received a copy of the CAL quotes that were used.

After the warm-up exercises, Delegates were given a list of suggested questions to discuss at their tables, then shared their answers with the group. Many tables shared their experiences and knowledge regarding attracting members to service positions, including creative uses of technology to support hybrid service meetings and Assemblies, educating members about service through outreach to volunteers and Legacy study groups, and campaigns to increase participation from underrepresented groups and Districts. Delegates also shared about the ways their Areas have adapted to change and embraced the benefits of hybrid and electronic groups, such as efficient Seventh Tradition electronic giving, more frequent communication with trusted servants, and flexibility leading to increased participation and attendance from new and established members.

After selecting three Chairpersons to plan the 2025 Sharing Area Highlights session, the 2024 Chairs closed with the Serenity Prayer and Al-Anon Declaration.

OPENING LUNCHEON

Jayme C., Trustee, Conference Co-Chairperson

Prior to the start of the 2024 World Service Conference, Conference members and WSO support Staff attended an opening luncheon. The Conference Co-Chairperson welcomed Conference members by reading the Conference theme, "Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding," and reciting the Serenity Prayer.

Following lunch, the Conference Chairperson invited Conference Mentors to "pin" the new Panel 64 Delegates and any other first-time Conference members. David B., Chairperson of the Executive Committee, was the opening speaker. His sharing can be found on page 29.

The Conference Co-Chairperson closed the luncheon with the Al-Anon Declaration.

Al-Anon Declaration

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.*



Al-Anon Family Groups®
hope for families & friends of alcoholics

GENERAL SESSIONS

CONFERENCE THEME AND OPENING REMARKS

Kathi M., Trustee, Conference Chairperson

“In the Steps, I learn to love myself; in the Traditions, I learn to love others; and in the Concepts, I learn to love the world as it is.”

2024 World Service Conference Chairperson Kathi M. began her opening message with a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer. She introduced the 2024 Conference theme, “Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Acceptance,” and stated the Conference members’ responsibilities: to listen, discuss, and make decisions as part of Al-Anon’s largest group conscience.



After sharing about her own introduction to the Al-Anon program in Anchorage, Alaska, the Chairperson read a quote from *Paths to Recovery* (B-24) about the Al-Anon logo and its connection to the three Legacies:

“The three sides of the triangle symbolize our three Legacies: Recovery through acceptance of the Steps, Unity through the acceptance of the Traditions, and Service through the acceptance of the Concepts.”

Her welcome emphasized the importance of acceptance and its role in recovery and in the goal of the World Service Conference: to ensure that Al-Anon Family Groups can continue into the future and carry its message of hope to the friends and families of alcoholics.

The Chairperson finished her message by tapping the gavel to open the 64th World Service Conference of Al-Anon Family Groups.

WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jeri W., Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

“As we gather at WSC, I picture our Cofounders sitting down with us today, and every day, as we do the work that started so many years ago and that continues in earnestness and love today.”

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board, welcomed Conference members to the WSC on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. Her welcome concerned the spiritual principles linked to the words of the Conference theme, “Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding,” and the work of the Conference.

The Chairperson connected “grace” to the spiritual principles of clarity, love, flexibility, and freedom from judgement; “unity” to the principles of teamwork, participation, shared responsibility, cooperation, and kindness; and “understanding” to listening with open-mindedness, honesty, mutual respect, critical thinking, and reasoning things out with others. She encouraged Conference members to use these principles, passed down from Cofounders Lois W. and Anne B., as guideposts as they proceeded with the path and work of Conference, and closed with the words, “This is your place, and these are your people.”

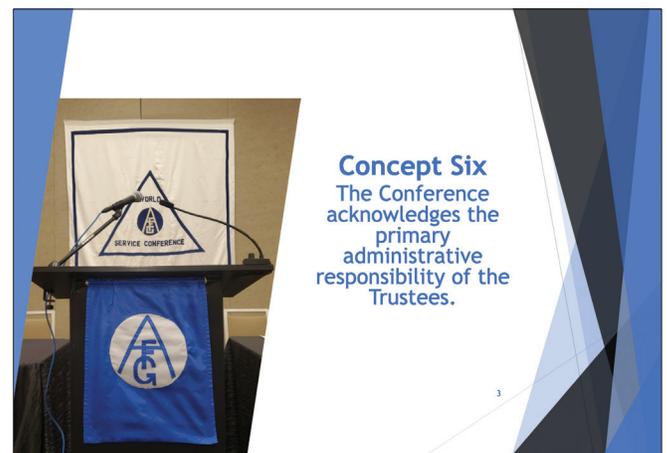
INTRODUCTIONS (ROLL CALL)

Kathi M., Trustee, Conference Chairperson

After the welcome from the Conference Chairperson and Board of Trustees, Conference attendees were asked to introduce themselves by stating their name, their service position, and, if desired, their home group. This introduction served as the official roll call for the 2024 World Service Conference.

CONCEPT SIX REVIEW

The Conference Leadership Team presented this session for all Conference members to review Concept Six: “The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.” The World Service Conference is the traditional authority for Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc., and the Board of Trustees is the chief service arm of the Conference. Concept Six recognizes that the Trustees are the active guardians of our Twelve Traditions and are charged with upholding and applying these principles.



The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility for planning the World Service Conference to the Conference Leadership Team (CLT), made up of Trustees and select World Service Office (WSO) Staff members. The CLT evaluates which issues to include on the agenda during the limited days of Conference prior to submitting it for Board review and approval.

Conference is attended by Area Delegates, WSO Volunteers (members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee), and voting WSO Staff. All Conference members are charged with listening to, participating in, and voting on discussions of matters related to Al-Anon as a whole. Conference members are expected to prepare and inform themselves on all issues in order to thoughtfully participate in the group conscience.

SEATING MOTION

The first order of business for the 2024 Conference was approval of a motion brought by the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) to seat selected non-voting participants who could provide critical information to the Conference. The motion carried. (See WSC Motion #1, page 35).

APPROVALS

2023 Auditors' Report

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (non-member)

Prior to Conference, a copy of the audit, including the opinion letter of the auditors, was posted on AFG Connects for Conference members to review. The Director of Finance & Operations presented an overview of the audit process and the 2023 results.

She explained that an audit is an investigation of an organization's finances conducted by an independent accounting firm. Auditors review accounting and financial records such as check stubs, invoices, timecards, receipts, and bank accounts; obtain written confirmation of accounts by banks; and test internal controls. The annual audit for 2023 was conducted January 15–20, 2024, by the Brown Edwards LLP audit firm, and reflected Al-Anon's financial records for 2023. The firm issued a clean opinion, which means all records were found to be in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The audit report's four main sections—statement of financial position, statement of activities, statement of functional expenses, and statement of cashflows—reflect the organization's performance in 2023. Due to high contributions and literature sales, thanks in large part to the introduction of a new daily reader, *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34), Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. had a surplus at the end of the fiscal year. Investment income also contributed to an increase in the Reserve Fund, as the market experienced gains over the year.

The organization's expenses also increased in 2023, particularly for programs and literature distribution, which make up 70 percent of expenses. Consistent contributions and literature sales are still necessary to support the work of AFG, Inc.

Conference members had the following questions about the audit presentation:

- What is the investment philosophy of AFG, Inc? Can a statement of investment philosophy be provided for Conference members to read?

The organization's investment philosophy is conservative, investing in moderate stocks without large margins of risk. A statement of philosophy is provided to our investment managers.

- This is the first year with a new audit firm; how was their performance? Is the report peer-reviewed, and does Al-Anon have an Audit Committee to review and work with the audit firm?

The firm does use peer review and works with the organization's Audit Committee; their work for 2023 was very thorough.

- How does the World Service Office determine how much literature inventory to stock?

The WSO's formula is to stock inventory representing 19 to 20 percent of literature sales.

A motion to approve the 2023 Audited Financial Report was made, seconded, and carried. See Motion #4 on page 35.

2024 Finance Committee Report

Ann Marie Z., Trustee, Treasurer of AFG Inc.

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (non-member)

The Treasurer opened this report with a short explanation of the purpose and goals of the Finance Committee. The Committee is made up of the Treasurer, the Chairperson of the Board, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, the Executive Director, a Volunteer member of the Board or Executive Committee (in 2023, the Chair of the Policy Committee), and the Director of Finance & Operations, who is an ex-officio member, which means she attends with voice but no vote. Its purpose is to oversee the finances of the World Service Office (WSO), review budget proposals, set literature prices, develop plans to increase revenue, and ensure that the organization's money is used in alignment with Al-Anon's spiritual principles.

The budget is determined every year based on estimates submitted by each department at the WSO. Important considerations for the 2024 budget included holding Conference and the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) in Virginia Beach; the 2024 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect in Columbia, SC; the release of a new booklet, *Healing within Our Alcoholic Relationships* (P-95); and WSO Staff salaries. The preliminary 2024 budget was approved by the Board of Trustees in January.

The Director of Finance & Operations then presented the 2024 budget. A surplus budget is predicted in 2024, despite higher projected expenses, thanks to increased revenue anticipated from literature sales and contributions. Strong sales from the new daily reader, *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34), are expected to continue into the first half of the year, and *Healing within Our Alcoholic Relationships* will be released in the fall. Though literature sales will decrease slightly from 2023, which was the strongest year for literature sales in history, sales are still projected to return to pre-pandemic levels. Contributions are also expected to fall slightly from the previous year but to reflect increased giving overall compared to historical levels. Consistent contributions and sales are still required for the WSO to reach its budgeted goal.

2024 expenses are projected to increase five percent over 2023. Expenses include increased Staff labor costs and upcoming projects such as the 2024 IAGSM and Next Generation AFG Records. Increased operating costs also include Volunteer and Staff travel, building occupancy costs, postage, technology, and professional fees.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, INC. 2024 BUDGET

	2024 Budget	2023 Actual
Revenue		
Literature Sales	4,105,600	4,403,745
Less cost of goods sold	(1,149,570)	(1,186,115)
Contributions	2,643,700	2,916,398
Magazine Sales	265,000	262,050
Subscription Income	53,000	54,634
International convention - net	-	187,468
Investment Income	55,000	71,855
Fund Transfers	225,600	-
Other - currency adjustment		(51,841)
Total cash revenue	\$ 6,198,330	\$ 6,658,194
Noncash contributions		\$ 244,657
Total Revenue	\$ 6,198,330	\$ 6,902,851
Expenses		
Salaries	3,385,550	3,153,205
Benefits	504,950	487,437
Payroll Taxes	255,920	245,443
Occupancy	290,640	304,265
Packing & Shipping	(85,000)	(111,668)
Postage	172,250	161,901
Telephone	54,810	53,530
Stationary & Supplies	46,220	49,352
Technology	321,760	295,179
HR/Training/Consulting	65,600	49,211
Repairs	12,000	17,711
Travel & Meetings	194,770	175,986
Conference Costs	119,820	45,331
Professional fees	121,900	82,129
Printing	165,530	163,124
Canadian Office	2,030	1,954
General services meeting	39,240	359
PSA Campaign	96,000	95,050
Bank and Credit Card fees	133,000	132,249
Miscellaneous	15,130	16,754
Retiree Health benefits	66,000	61,292
Depreciation	100,660	100,776
Total cash expenses	\$ 6,078,780	\$ 5,580,570
Noncash expenses		\$ 244,657
Total Expenses	\$ 6,078,780	\$ 5,825,227
Revenue over Expenses	\$ 119,550	\$ 1,077,624

Conference members had the following questions:

- Why were the Conference costs listed in the audit different from the projected costs in the 2023 and 2024 budgets?

The WSC budget is set in July the year before Conference, using estimates for airline expenses and Equalized Expense contributions. In 2023, airline costs came in lower than anticipated, and some Areas paid more than the Equalized Expense, leading to a lower overall Conference cost.

- Is the increase in salary expenses due to empty positions being filled or current Staff taking on new or different roles?

It reflects a combination of new roles and increased responsibilities. The budget also accounts for the addition of some temporary Staff to assist with one-time projects.

- Does the cost per group include electronic and Alateen groups?

Yes, it includes all groups in the WSC Structure.

- Is there an item in the budget to reflect the updates to the old software system?

The system upgrade is expected to occur over at least two years. The salary budget includes fees for consultants to examine the current systems.

Following the presentation, a motion to approve the 2024 Finance Committee Report including the 2024 Budget was made, seconded, and carried. See Motion #5, page 35.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

After the 2023 Annual Report was posted to AFG Connects, Conference members were invited to submit any clarifying questions prior to Conference. All questions and answers were compiled and posted for Conference members to review. At the World Service Conference, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and World Service Office (WSO) Staff members gave a series of updates on the work of the Board and WSO departments in the four months between the drafting of the Annual Report and the week of the WSC. Summaries of those updates can be found under each speaker heading below.

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees

The Nominating Committee of the Board of Trustees is at work evaluating and revising the Trustee application process and the Executive Committee application. The Board also gave an update on the terms used by the Nominating Committee, which, as a result of feedback from the WSO Human Resources manager, has renamed the document used by Trustee candidates from a “resume” to an “application.” This wording change will be reflected on the Trustee application on al-anon.org after August 16, 2024.

The Board also participated in a succession planning workshop given by professionals as part of their review of the Executive Director Succession Planning Process. After the removal of the ten-year term limit as discussed in the 2023 Annual Report, the Board has approved new goals to progress the succession plan and ensure continuity.

Executive Director

WSO Staff positions have continued to transition; in addition to the expanded roles for two Staff members discussed in the Annual Report, the WSO also celebrated the retirement of the Associate

Director—Literature and the promotion of two more Staff members into the roles of International Services Manager and Associate Director—Literature. These transitions have also left vacancies, and the WSO is currently seeking applicants for the following positions:

- International Assistant (in-person)
- Part-Time Legal Assistant (member preferred, remote, intellectual property experience preferred)
- Group Services Specialist (member, in-person)

In addition to two International Conventions and the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting, in 2024, Staff will be undertaking the following seven Strategies as approved by the Board:

- Next Generation AFG Records
- Electronic Alateen Validation & Implementation Planning
- *Healing within Our Alcoholic Relationships* (P-95)
- Revamping the Trustee Application
- Online Store 2.0
- eBooks Globally
- CAL Globally

The aim of the eBooks Globally Strategy is to find an approach to the sale of electronic literature that supports the WSC Structure, WSO operations, and the Al-Anon international structures that rely on CAL sales to be self-supporting but do not currently have permission to sell ebooks. The CAL Globally Strategy focuses on creating legal agreements that mutually support international structures in buying and selling literature between their countries; the first agreement, between two Spanish-speaking countries and the WSO, has recently been signed.

Director of Finance & Operations

Since the Annual Report, the WSO Operations teams have updated eight English, eight Spanish, and eight French Al-Anon Guidelines, available on al-anon.org. Trilingual translation of the preface for *When I Got Busy, I Got Better* (P-78) was completed, and translation and cover design of the new booklet *Healing within Our Alcoholic Relationships* (P-95) is in process. The Online Store is also being evaluated by an outside vendor to identify how to implement improvements such as expanded contribution methods.

Director of Programs

The Programs Department celebrated the promotions of the new International Services Manager and Associate Director—Literature and the hiring of multiple new Staff members, as well as the retirement of the former Associate Director—Literature after more than 20 years of service. The archives displays at the WSO, one of the elements of the WSO Tours available for booking on al-anon.org, have been reimagined. The Director of Programs also encouraged Conference members to invite WSO Staff members and Volunteers to fellowship events and Area Assemblies in the upcoming year.

Director of Communications & Community Awareness

The Communications & Community Awareness Department has begun development to modernize the code on the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* to improve the user experience of its 145,000 registered members and 118 weekly meetings. The new Public Service Announcement (PSA) platform, which places audio and video PSAs and static banners on various digital and streaming sites, has continued to be successful, and the video PSA has been updated

with a continuous display of the website address and the toll-free meeting line number. al-anon.org had its millionth session in 2024 earlier than the prior year by 11 days, due in part to an increase in traffic in January after a celebrity interview mentioning Al-Anon Family Groups.

Associate Director–Community Relations

Two significant conferences in 2024 will be attended by members of the Community Relations Team the Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE) National Collegiate Recovery Conference in June and the Association for Addiction Professionals Conference (NAADAC) in October, at which Al-Anon will be an exhibitor. The Community Relations Team also coordinated with two Areas that were participating in the Symposia on Addictive Disorders, ensuring a coordinated and cohesive approach to public outreach. This approach was expanded when WSO Staff met with 20 Area Public Outreach Coordinators to share Area-specific professional contacts and discuss best practices.

Associate Director–Group Services

Since January 2024, the Group Services Team has supported the Global Electronic Area (GEA) AWSC and Districting Task Force in its rollout of District boundaries accepted by the GEA Assembly. Four Areas have successfully completed Area Alateen Recertification as of April 12, 2024, and 28 new Alateen groups have registered with the WSO. Group Services conducted Information Service Meetings, supporting Al-Anon Information Services (AISs), Literature Distribution Centers (LDCs), and AIS/LDCs, and participated alongside the International Team in a Global Gathering on the topic of Alateen.

Associate Director–Conference

In February 2024, the WSO released the third version (v3) of the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) in English, French, and Spanish, available on the website along with replacement pages to support members in updating their printed copy to reflect the changes. These changes include the 2023 WSC approved updates to the Announcing Events Policy text. As part of a new practice, a Staff Task Force has formed to review "Groups at Work" to identify any changes necessary to that section to ensure consistency with the revised Policy.

An updated approach to the *World Service Conference Summary* (P-46) was also announced, in which Conference sessions and presentations are summarized rather than reproduced verbatim, producing a more readable and concise *Summary*. Conference talks, however, are still printed in their entirety, allowing members to read the recovery sharings as in previous years.

Associate Director–Literature

The new Associate Director—Literature began her position in March 2024. Since the beginning of 2024, the Department has completed work on the new booklet *Healing within Our Alcoholic Relationships—A Collection of Insights from Our Shared Experience*, which will be available this fall for \$4 US, in English, French, and Spanish. New Literature Coordinators and Literature Committee members completed orientation in January and February, and a new workflow template for the CAL Process was completed. In early March, the WSO posted 20 quotations on the Announcements community of AFG Connects for use in 2025 service arm fundraising calendars.

After the 2023 WSC gave conceptual approval to the

SPONSORSHIP/SERVICE SPONSORSHIP PIECE (working title), the Literature Department designed and translated a writing guideline to collect sharings for the piece. The guideline was posted on al-anon.org/sharing and on AFG Connects communities for dissemination throughout the fellowship, and the Team has begun collecting sharings for the piece.

International Services Manager

The newly promoted International Services Manager shared insights and experience from members on her team. This included a reflection on the growth of the Dominican Republic service structure, which began as a single member and has since expanded widely enough to register an International AIS/LDC, members of which spoke with the International Team at their most recent meeting.

The International Team has also been soliciting independent reviewers over the last year to assist in the translation process of CAL internationally. This recently resulted in a surprising victory for Romania, a structure that had been struggling to find members fluent in English and Romanian, when the Director of Programs met a member originally from Romania who was inquiring about meetings there. From this meeting, Romania received an independent reviewer, and the member was able to learn about the progress made in building the Romanian service structure. The International Team is still looking for reviewers for translations in many languages; members who read and write in any foreign language are encouraged to email international@al-anon.org for more information on how they can serve.

Conference members had the following questions about the Annual Report updates:

- Does the World Service Office oversee the meetings on the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App*? What is the average attendance for those meetings?

Al-Anon groups that meet over the Mobile App are part of the Global Electronic Area (GEA). The Alateen meetings on the Mobile App are linked to specific Areas within the WSC Structure, and are part of a pilot for electronic Alateen meetings. Alateen meetings are monitored by Al-Anon Members in Alateen Service (AMIAS) from those Areas, as well as the WSO.

Mobile App groups range from 30-40 attendees to the Mobile App's technology cap of 300 attendees per meeting.

- How much progress has been made regarding the approval of Alateen Behavioral and Safety Requirements (ASBRs)?

Though there's no current estimate for when all outstanding ASBRs will be approved, Staff are continuing to prioritize ASBR approvals and allotting consistent time for work on that process.

- Do independent reviewers of Conference Approved Literature (CAL) translations need to be Al-Anon members? Can the reviewers be involved in Area service in addition to serving as reviewers?

Independent reviewers do need to be members of Al-Anon. They can be involved at any level of service and can work remotely from anywhere in the world. This service role is also open to Alcoholics Anonymous members who are members of Al-Anon.

- Has the WSO looked into using artificial intelligence (AI) tools for translation?

The Global Electronic Meeting Search (GEMS) does currently use

AI software to automatically translate meeting search results into the 18 available languages. Projects like translation of CAL require more in-depth work to translate elements like specific AI-Anon terms and phrases, so a human translation team is needed to meet that higher standard.

- Since the *World Service Conference Summary* (P-46) will be in a new, shorter format this year, will trilingual versions of the *Summary* be available?

The WSO recently evaluated whether we could translate the WSC Summary. As a result, we expanded translation to include WSC Policy discussions. We have no plan to extend further at this time.

- Do purchases of CAL from online retailers like Amazon and Barnes & Noble support the WSO?

The WSO uses Amazon's ebook platform to host their ebooks; revenue from those purchases does go to the WSO. However, revenue from sales of physical CAL by third-party retailers does not support the WSO.

- What would be the ideal number of Staff to meet the needs of the WSO?

Business considerations lead the WSO to employ no more than 50 Staff at any time, which would constitute a full Staff. Currently, the WSO has the budget to hire multiple new Staff members and a short-term contractor for the Next Generation AFG Records project, but finding new hires to meet the needs of the WSO takes time.

A motion to approve the 2023 Annual Report was made, seconded, and carried. See Motion #7, page 36. The complete report can be found on pages 37 - 95.

2024 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

The Director of Communications & Community Awareness began this presentation by emphasizing the importance of the triennial Al-Anon Membership Survey in cooperating with professionals in a position to recommend Al-Anon and Alateen. The survey results provide data-driven information about the impact of the Al-Anon program on members' lives, and sharing this data with professionals and researchers helps spread the message of recovery.

The 2024 Membership Survey will launch June 20, 2024, in English, Spanish, and French, and will close in mid-July. Members can participate by taking the 10-to-15-minute survey themselves, encouraging other members to complete the survey, and publicizing the survey with ads and flyers provided by the WSO. The survey is completely anonymous, and the results will be compiled into a report to paint a picture that validates Al-Anon as an effective resource for anyone affected by someone else's drinking.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

2023 Al-Anon International Convention with A.A. Participation Update

The Associate Director—Conference gave this post-Convention update for the 2023 Al-Anon International Convention, held June 29–July 2, 2023 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Convention hosted more than 3,800 in-person attendees from 33 countries, as well as 700 virtual attendees from 13 additional countries, for a total of 4,500 attendees from 46 countries. Highlights of the Convention included the Trailblazers Breakfast, featuring talks from members who broke new ground for Al-Anon throughout its history; a pre-Convention Day of Connecting featuring two General Sessions, various workshops, and one working lunch with a talk from professionals about their work with Al-Anon; and a Party on the Plaza, daytime Al-Anon and A.A. sessions, and three Big Meetings.

2025 A.A. International Convention with Al-Anon Participation Update

The Director of Programs announced the 2025 Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) International Convention with Al-Anon Participation, taking place in Vancouver, British Columbia, July 3–6, 2025. The Convention's theme will be "90 Years—Language of the Heart," and Al-Anon meetings in English, Spanish, and French will be held during the daytime. When Convention registration opens in September, tickets will be \$160 US and will increase to \$185 US a few months before the event.

2028 Al-Anon International Convention with A.A. Participation Update

The Executive Director described the current stages of planning for the 2028 Al-Anon International Convention. The WSO has received 14 bids from Areas interested in hosting the Convention, from which a location will be selected and approved by the Board at their October meeting. The final location will be announced at or before the 2025 World Service Conference. Staff have also contracted an event planning company to handle the site selection process to provide the best Convention experience for attendees.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Jean L., Trustee, International Coordination Committee Chairperson

"It is important for me as a member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon to listen and learn from the international structures. Although we may have similar challenges, there may also be unique solutions."



The ICC is an advisory committee to the Board of Trustees which makes recommendations about issues affecting Al-Anon structures worldwide and connects the WSC Structure with worldwide Al-Anon. The ICC coordinates the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) and supports the WSO International Team which communicates regularly with groups, evolving and national structures globally. ICC and Staff members attend geographically-organized Zonal meetings coordinated by local structures.



In 2023, the WSO held a total of 112 regularly scheduled meetings with over 60 structures. To reduce the volume of meetings and expand the opportunity for shared experience between structures, the WSO's International Team began holding topic-specific, Global Gatherings every two months. These Gatherings are open to international General Service Offices (GSOs), AI-Anon Information Services (AISs), evolving structures, and groups and provide the opportunity for trusted servants globally to discuss questions and concerns with the WSO and each other.

Zonal meetings take place on years when an IAGSM is not held; their purpose is to bring structures together across a geographic area, and they may be attended by GSOs, evolving structures, AISs, and groups with no formal structure. ICC members attended one virtual and two in-person Zonal meetings in 2023, one for each geographic Zone: Europe, South America, and Central America. Conference members heard from ICC members about their experiences and takeaways from attending each of these meetings.

IAGSMs take place once every two years. IAGSMs are attended by up to two Delegates from each international structure with an established General Service Office; including the WSC Structure; and the members of the ICC and select WSO Staff. The 2024 IAGSM will be held September 25–28 in Virginia Beach with the theme, “Nurturing Communication, Cooperation, and Connection Worldwide.”

The ICC is also responsible for considering translation requests for Conference Approved Literature (CAL). Translation requests are usually made by AISs internationally, though structures of any size can request translations in new languages. The WSO usually grants translation permission once the group or AIS has an adequate membership to financially sustain the translation and publication processes; once granted, the international structure becomes the only legal distributor of that translated CAL in their country. Currently, CAL has been translated into 37 languages, and in 2023, the Board granted first-time translation and reprint permissions to five more countries: Bulgaria, Latvia, Mongolia, Romania, and Thailand.

After their presentation, the ICC held a workshop for Conference members called “Remembering the Future,” originally presented by Finland at the European Zonal Meeting. The workshop asked members to imagine possible futures for AI-Anon by combining a favorite AI-Anon activity, an important person they would like to see in AI-Anon's future, and a favorite place they have been. Once Conference members had been given time to imagine their invented scenarios, they were asked to consider the possible paths they might have taken to lead them to that imagined future. The presentation ended with an invitation for members to share their imagined futures and the steps that might be taken to realize them.



ROAD TRIP! YOU AND YOUR BOARD CONNECT

The Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect Work Group presentation took the form of a short skit performed by the members of the Work Group about the process for Areas to apply to be the next location for Road Trip!

Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect provides an opportunity for members, WSO Volunteers, and WSO Staff to connect in service. All members of the Board of Trustees and At-Large members of the Executive Committee travel to a selected Area for their October Board meeting and host a day of interactive presentations, activities, and fellowship.

Areas interested in hosting the next Road Trip! event in October 2025 must fulfill the following requirements:

- A city with an airport that supports the major airline carriers serving the US and Canada.
- A full-service hotel with affordable airport transportation.
- An event space large enough to comfortably seat up to 200 attendees. Meeting space for Board Week must accommodate up to 22 Board and Executive Committee members.

Eligible Areas can fill out the Road Trip! application form and submit a Request for Information (RFI) to at least two hotels that meet the above requirements. The completed application, with signatures from both the Area Delegate and the Area Chairperson, and the RFI must be submitted to the World Service Office by mail or email by Friday, September 20, 2024. There is no limit to the number of times an Area can apply to host Road Trip!, as long as their Area has not hosted the event previously.

Once an Area is selected, the Board of Trustees is responsible for hosting the event in their city, and WSO Staff are responsible for logistics, registration, and publicity. The selected Area's Welcome Committee is responsible for encouraging attendance and sharing information about the event with local members.

The Area selected for the 2025 Road Trip! will be notified in early 2025, and the location city announced in the January Chairperson of the Board letter.

SELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT)

Pam C., Panel 62, Montana, CCT Chairperson

“As the nominees are brought forward for affirmation, you can be assured as Conference members that the vetting process has been very well thought out and thorough.”

The Chairperson of the Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT) described the work of the CCT for Conference members.

Each year's CCT is composed of six to 11 WSC Delegates from all three panels and elects its own Chairperson. CCT members are responsible for reviewing all resumes submitted for Trustee at Large (TAL) and Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM). Resumes are scored based on applicants skillsets, current

needs of the Board of Trustees, and applicants answers to the Board's question. CCT members forward their comments and scoring sheets to the CCT Chairperson, who compiles the material into a consolidated scoresheet for the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee considers the consolidated CCT and its own member scoresheets to select candidates for Board consideration. After Board approval of the candidates, individual CCT members may file objections to any candidate selected until December. After candidate interviews during the January Board meeting, the Board chooses nominees. Trustee at Large nominees are given traditional approval by the WSC, after which they and the ECRPM nominees may be elected by the Board of Trustees.

In 2023, the CCT reviewed 15 candidates for TAL and one candidate for ECRPM, with each member keeping all information confidential. To maintain principles above personalities, members perform their work for the Committee alone, receiving guidance only from their Higher Power.

The Chairperson concluded her report by announcing Carol G., Panel 63, Maine, as the 2024 CCT Chair and Anna A., Panel 64, Texas East, as the 2024 Chair Elect.

Nominating Committee and Trustee Affirmations

Lynette K., Chairperson of Nominating Committee

“The Trustee nominating process is one of the most spiritual processes I have been involved in. My Higher Power was with me at every step.”

Before the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee (NC) began her report, members of the Committee performed a short skit illustrating the application and selection process for Trustee. The Chairperson of the Nominating Committee then reviewed for Conference members the nominee selection process for Trustee at Large, Regional Trustee, and At-Large members of the Executive Committees.

All Trustee applications are submitted to the WSO. Regional Trustee resumes are automatically sent to the applicant's Area for vetting and approval through that Area's process; the names of Trustee at Large applicants are reported to their respective Areas so that any potential objections to their application can be noted. The Trustee applications are then reviewed and scored by the appropriate Nominating Subcommittee: Trustee at Large applications by the Conference Committee on Trustees (CCT), and Regional Trustee applications by the members of the Regional Committee on Trustees (RCT) specific to that applicant's Region. Feedback from those Delegate Committees is brought to the Board for discussion by the Nominating Committee.

After their October meeting, the NC informs the CCT and RCT of the candidates chosen for interviews and invites their members to voice any objections. The candidates are interviewed by the entire Board in January, using a new interview format that consists of a 15-minute personal and service share and PowerPoint presentation followed by specific interview questions developed by the NC for each candidate. The Trustee nominees presented at Conference were chosen by the Board following these interviews. During the WSC presentation, Conference members were provided the opportunity to voice any objections or critical information about the nominees before voting.

Before presenting each nominee for affirmation, the Chairperson discussed the important role of each trusted servant's Higher Power in the selection of nominees and asked each Conference member to invite their Higher Power into the process of affirmation.

The following Trustees and Board Officers were affirmed by the 2024 WSC:

Trustees at Large:

David B., first three-year term
Kathi M., second three-year term
Rachelle C., first three-year term
Marco R., remaining two years of a three-year term
Phil G., remaining one year of a three-year term

Regional Trustees:

Debbie P., Canada Central, second three-year term
Cindy H., Canada West, first three-year term
Craig M., US Northwest, first year of a remaining two-year term

Board Officers:

Kathi M., Chairperson
Diane B., Vice Chairperson
Ann Marie Z., Treasurer

The Nominating Committee Chairperson announced the Board's 2024-2025 Executive Committee appointments:

Executive Committee

Carol M., third one-year term, Chairperson
Jeff F., second one-year term
Angela A., first one-year term
Sarah S., Director of Programs

Executive Committee for Real Property Management:

Lori H., three-year term
Sue C., one-year term as Chairperson

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT (2025)

The 2025 World Service Conference will be held in Windsor, CT. Delegates are scheduled to arrive April 23; Conference takes place April 24–27, 2025, and the Stepping Stones visit will occur Monday, April 28.



DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

ELECTRONIC ALATEEN VALIDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

The process of expanding Alateen meeting availability to electronic platforms began with the creation of the Electronic Alateen Group Feasibility Strategy in 2021. At the 2022 World Service Conference, the Project Team provided an update on their pilot project involving Alateen meetings on the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* and communication with international structures about electronic Alateen feasibility; that report can be found on page 31 of the *2022 World Service Conference Summary* (P-46).

The results of the work on the pilot project, feedback from 2022 and 2023 WSC members, and input from our international partners were presented to the Board of Trustees in October 2023. They approved the suggestions of the Electronic Alateen Group Feasibility team which prompted creation of a new strategy: Electronic Alateen Validation & Implementation Planning. The Team reached out to Conference members to invite them to gather and share feedback from their Areas at the 2024 WSC about the new strategy.

During the Conference session, the Team introduced two new terms which will be used in future discussions regarding electronic Alateen: **Global Electronic Alateen Safety Minimums (Global EASM)** and **WSC Structure Electronic Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements (WSC EASBR)**. The Global EASM represents the minimum safety requirements which must be incorporated in Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements created by all national Al-Anon service structures before electronic Alateen groups can be registered and meetings held. It offers the flexibility necessary to meet international laws. The WSC EASBR represents the *proposed* Alateen Safety & Behavioral Requirements for supporting electronic Alateen meetings within the WSC Structure. The WSC EASBR has been drafted considering the current legal requirements of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda.

In future, these global minimums and WSC requirements could allow electronic Alateen groups to be recognized as Al-Anon Family Groups and be connected to their service structure with vote and voice. WSC Areas and international structures would retain the autonomy to decide whether they wanted to host electronic Alateen groups.

The Team brought the WSC EASBR to the 2024 WSC members to gather feedback on the following questions:

- Do you understand the minimum requirements and duties described in the WSC EASBR? Is it clear?
- What questions does the WSC EASBR raise about the possibility of electronic Alateen groups taking place in your Area?

The most positive feedback came from Areas with state laws similar to those laid out in the WSC EASBR. States and provinces that had already instituted mandatory reporting and background checks for Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) reported enthusiasm from members about implementing electronic Alateen groups. Some Delegates reported that their Areas had less interest in electronic Alateen groups and preferred physical meetings. There were many questions from Areas about the possible new requirements for AMIAS; the WSO clarified that

existing requirements for in-person AMIAS would not change, but that AMIAS would have the opportunity to opt into the Al-Anon Member Involved in Electronic Alateen Service (AMIAS-E) role if desired. Opting in would require them to adhere to the WSC EASBR in addition to their Area's ASBR requirements. The WSO also confirmed the WSC EASBR would not require major changes to existing Area Safety and Behavioral Requirements (ASBRs), only the addition of a section on AMIAS-E certification requirements for Areas that chose to support electronic Alateen groups.

Another frequently discussed question was the pre-screening requirement for electronic Alateen meetings. The Project Team addressed concerns about anonymity and described the work they had done to ensure AMIAS-E requirements help maintain Alateens' anonymity while also weighing the increased potential for harm and legal risk inherent to online spaces. Some Areas also expressed concern about the requirement for Alateens to show identification before participating in electronic Alateen meetings and the possibility that this requirement might pose a barrier to younger members who might not have access to IDs.

Conference members also had the following questions:

- If our Area opts into the WSC EASBR, can Alateens from other Areas join our electronic Alateen meetings?

Because the WSC EASBR ensures consistent requirements, teens from any Area can join a WSC Structure electronic Alateen meeting. If a teen located in the WSC Structure wants to attend an international electronic Alateen meeting, they must adhere to the requirements of that structure's EASBR.

- Can Areas decide on the specifics of their pre-interview process?

The WSO will provide suggested guidelines for Area pre-screening processes as part of training that will be developed, but Areas have autonomy about the specifics of the process.

- Since mandatory reporting is part of the WSC EASBR, will the WSO provide training for mandated reporters?

The current training modules for AMIAS already include some information on mandatory reporting. If the WSC EASBR is approved, training for AMIAS-E will be expanded to include more comprehensive mandated reporting training and will invite Areas to consider including free state or province developed mandated reporting training in their AMIAS-E certification process as well.

- The chat feature is a safety concern for some interested in electronic Alateen meetings; are there safeguards in place for text communications?

The WSC EASBR requires a minimum of two AMIAS-E to be present at all electronic Alateen meetings; one reason for this requirement is to ensure one AMIAS-E will be available to monitor the chat feature. Once developed, training for AMIAS-E would likely incorporate the need for Alateen Group Sponsors and the group's Alateens to decide on the use of the chat during electronic Alateen meetings, since AMIAS-E cannot monitor "private" chats taking place between individual participants.

CHOSEN AGENDA ITEMS

Prior to the World Service Conference, Conference members were invited to submit topics for WSC discussion as Chosen Agenda Items. This year, a task force consisting of the Conference Chairperson and Co-Chairperson and three Delegates was formed to review and consolidate the submissions. The Conference members were then asked to vote on 38 possible topics submitted as Chosen Agenda Items (CAIs) with the stipulation that the Topics and Rationales had not been fact-checked, edited, or proofed. The two items with the most votes, both of which brought together multiple CAI submissions on similar topics, were discussed in separate Conference sessions.

Chosen Agenda Item I

“Our literature says, ‘Look to the past to protect the future.’ If we keep the focus on our unity of purpose, which is helping families and friends of alcoholics, we won’t stray from it.”

Topic:

Membership and unity of purpose. When is something diverting us from our purpose and spiritual aim?

Rationale:

This idea arose from comments regarding keeping the focus on Al-Anon and Al-Anon principles as we expand our membership to include individuals with a wide range of life experiences and perspectives. Our common purpose is to help families of alcoholics and to grow ourselves through the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. Ways to keep Al-Anon focused included chairing meetings on Al-Anon tools, the importance of sponsorship, and avoiding outside influences.

Topic:

Retaining groups in Areas

Rationale:

How can we retain, regain, and increase the number of groups in our Areas?

Topic:

Is Al-Anon able to fulfill its primary purpose going forward?

Rationale:

The world has changed due to the pandemic, and Al-Anon has, too. The disease of alcoholism is stronger than ever. Is Al-Anon’s current spirituality strong enough to meet the needs of members and newcomers going forward? Has unity eroded? Has isolation increased? How will our future trusted servants learn the skills they need to lead in this new world? What spiritual principles must Al-Anon strengthen or even rediscover to fulfill its primary purpose?

Following the reading of the Chosen Agenda Item Topics and Rationales, Conference members had two minutes at the microphone to share their thoughts.

- Discussion of this Chosen Agenda Item focused on ways to approach challenges as opportunities for growth, both personally and as a fellowship.
- Members shared their experiences with embracing outside changes, such as electronic meetings leading to increased attendance and diversity, members having more opportunities for remote sponsorship and connection, and using the tools of the program to cope with challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic
- Conference members also discussed strategies for strengthening the Al-Anon fellowship amid challenges.

- Many spoke about finding guidance in the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and in Conference Approved Literature like the daily readers and *How Al-Anon Works* (B-32), as well as using these resources to attract new members and educate existing members.
- The value of communication was emphasized, both on the member level through sponsorship and welcoming newcomers, and on the group and Area level by reaching out to provide assistance to unrepresented Districts and increasing accessibility of meeting locations and times to attract a more diverse membership.

Chosen Agenda Item II

“We have amazing resources, and we can find an answer to everything if we pause to look it up together.”

Topic:

Concept Ten: “Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority.”

Rationale:

How do we balance service authority and service responsibility? When out of balance, what spiritual principles can we use to bring us back into equilibrium?

Topic:

Concept Nine: What spiritual principles help define good personal leadership?

Rationale:

Bill W.’s essay on leadership in the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) v3, p. 200, describes good personal leadership well. How can I participate and be part of the solution when leadership ceases to function well?

Following the reading of the Chosen Agenda Item Topics and Rationales, Conference members had two minutes at the microphone to share their thoughts.

- Many members expressed the importance of this topic and shared personal experiences with leadership issues within their Areas.
- Members shared strategies for using program tools to encourage good leadership, such as applying the slogan “Let It Begin with Me” and the principle of attraction not promotion, listening to the minority opinion, practicing detachment, and accepting members where they are.
- Other practical solutions shared by members included running leadership workshops at the beginning of new service panels, creating Area guidelines on conflict resolution and Knowledge-Based Decision-Making to reach an informed group conscience, reaching out to trusted servants outside the Area for outside advice, and sharing tools from the *Service Manual* with other members.

DELEGATE PARTICIPATION ON CLT (CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP TEAM)

“The difference to me would be the increased feeling of unity and knowing that our collective voice was heard.”

Prior to Conference, the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) posted a framing to AFG Connects that described the topic of Delegate participation on CLT as it was submitted to the 2023 WSC. Since the Conference voted there was not adequate time to discuss

in 2023, the CLT brought the topic forward to the 2024 Conference agenda. (See the *2023 WSC Summary* for further details.)

The CLT framing included the questions, “What is missing on the WSC agenda that Delegates would like to include?” and “What would having a Delegate or Delegates on the CLT give you that you aren’t getting now?” WSC members were able to submit their responses and read a compilation of other members’ answers before the discussion at Conference, during which they shared their thoughts on the two questions presented by CLT. A summary of the discussion of both questions is provided below.

“What would having a Delegate or Delegates on the CLT give you that you aren’t getting now?”

- Multiple Delegates expressed the opinion that adding a Delegate member or members to CLT, even with voice and no vote, would increase the harmony through participation of the Conference as a whole.
- Since the Conference agenda is set by CLT, many members felt that the inclusion of a Delegate in this process would provide a more current representation of the voice and needs of the fellowship, as well as a greater feeling of unity and common purpose among Conference members.
- One member described the agenda-setting process of their Area World Service Conference (AWSC) as an example, which by including the input of District Representatives (DRs) allowed for increased trust, participation, and practical knowledge among DRs as their service work progressed.
- Though the discussion of this question focused primarily on the principle of participation on CLT, rather than specific elements of the Conference agenda, some Delegates named length of sessions, demand of the Conference, and attractiveness of service work to future Delegates as potential practical discussions that could benefit from a Delegate voice.

“What is missing on the WSC agenda that Delegates would like to include?”

- As in the discussion of the first question, most Delegates expressed that the presence of a Delegate voice in agenda-setting was of greater importance to members than any specific missing agenda items.
- Some referenced the process of Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM), which asks the question, “*What do we wish we knew, but don’t?*” Answers to this question included the background information and reasoning behind CLT decisions, as well as any items that were potentially considered and not included on the agenda.
- Other Delegates named transparency, delegated responsibility, and the spiritual principle of trust as missing from the agenda-setting process.

Following this discussion, a motion was proposed, seconded, and carried to form a task force of the Conference Leadership Team and a minimum of three Delegates charged with proposing how Delegates could be selected and participate on CLT to contribute to WSC agenda development.

DOES IT WORK IF YOU WORK IT?

“I know the program works because love is a verb, not a noun, and when I participate in those elements, I’m putting love into action.”

The Task Force introduced this discussion inspired by the doctoral dissertation of PhD candidate Jayne Kenney, titled “Does It Work if You Work It?” which was based on data from the 2018 Al-Anon Membership Survey. The dissertation examined the psychological benefits of the Al-Anon program and the elements of participation in Al-Anon most associated with positive mental health changes. The four key elements identified by the dissertation were: attending meetings, being spiritually motivated, working with and serving as a Sponsor, and engaging in service.

In recognition of the elements named by the dissertation and the value of the Membership Survey for proving the efficacy of the Al-Anon program, the Task Force presented the following questions for Conference members to discuss:

1. **In what ways can we convey the correlation between meeting attendance, participation in recommended activities, and increased well-being?**
 2. **How can we encourage increased participation and focus on the continued growth of members who are no longer “newcomers” but may have settled into the comfort zone?**
- Many members spoke about the value of encouraging others in service work by sharing their own joy in service, modeling Al-Anon principles, creating attractive service events and opportunities for fellowship, and presenting service as an opportunity rather than a job.
 - Some shared their strategies for increasing service participation in their Areas, such as approaching potential volunteers at the beginning of service panels, asking for help from other members to contribute to service, doing “in reach” about the efficacy of the program to existing members as well as public outreach, and encouraging longtime members who may be burned out by attracting new members to service and presenting new ways of doing things.
 - Speakers also affirmed the value of service to their recovery and in combating feelings of helplessness and powerlessness.

FOUR-DAY WEEK WSC –THREE-YEAR TRIAL

In May 2021, the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) recommended, and the Board approved, a three-year trial to hold the World Service Conference (WSC), including the pre-conference day, over four days instead of five. This trial was proposed in response to insights the CLT had gained from holding Conference virtually in 2020 and 2021 as well as from the Board of Trustees’ generative discussions about attracting younger members to service. While the Team agreed with Delegate sentiment that holding the WSC in person was vital to achieving ongoing unity in service, it also identified some agenda items that might be effective if held virtually, including Finance Committee informational sessions and Thought and Task Force kickoff meetings. Holding these sessions virtually provided the flexibility to change the in-person Conference week from five days to four. As part of the conversation, the CLT had also reflected on the possible benefits of holding Conference over the weekend rather than only on weekdays to reduce vacation time required for participants to attend. The CLT concluded that a four-day Conference week, occurring partially over the weekend, might be more attractive to Delegates working or parenting full-time,

thus making the Delegate role and world service work in general more attractive to younger members, which led to the trial.

To help evaluate the effectiveness of the four-day WSC week trial, the Board facilitated an information-gathering session at Conference asking members to respond to two sets of questions. A summary of these responses is below.

Part I:

1. **What are the challenges you have experienced with the shorter Conference week?**
2. **What are the opportunities you have enjoyed as the result of the shorter Conference week?**
 - Many Conference members described the increased demand they experienced because of the shorter week, which required more tightly packed workdays and allowed less time for fellowship and discussion during sessions; while others felt that the shorter week, with less idle time, made the Conference experience more engaging.
 - One benefit of the shorter week expressed by members who traveled to Conference from different time zones was the opportunity for more time to adjust to jetlag before and after WSC.
 - Other members said that, while the shorter week required less time off from work, the more strenuous days led them to take extra vacation to recover, making the benefits negligible.

Part II:

1. **What are the challenges you have experienced with having the Conference occur over the weekend?**
2. **What are the opportunities you have enjoyed as the result of having the Conference occur over the weekend?**
 - Some WSC members who had experienced both four- and five-day Conference weeks shared that they had historically used the weekend after WSC to rest, while the weekend Conference required time off from work to do so.
 - Members also felt that traveling to and from Conference on the weekend was more affordable and convenient than the weekday travel required for a weekend Conference.
 - As in the discussion about the shorter Conference week, members generally felt that, despite the intention to increase accessibility for working members, the weekend and weekday Conferences in practice required similar amounts of time off from work.

GENDER NEUTRAL POLICY DISCUSSION

The Policy Committee posed a question originally submitted by a District in the WSC Structure: “Is the gendered language in the Steps and Traditions in alignment with Al-Anon’s Legacies?”

The Policy Committee discussed the question posed at its July 2023 meeting. To gain a wider viewpoint on the topic, the Policy Committee asked for input from the 2024 World Service Conference, seeking insight and perspective rather than policy decisions.

All Conference members were asked to consider the question thoughtfully and prayerfully, to review and study the Legacies from an unbiased perspective, and to understand that no decisions were being made during discussion. The Policy Committee also affirmed that the conversation would not alter the boundaries established by the Al-Anon World Service Conference Charter, which states there will be no changes to the Legacies without written consent of three-quarters of the Al-Anon Family Groups.

At the end of the session, the Policy Committee Co-Chairperson thanked the Conference members for their contributions to this ongoing topic.

INCLUSION—THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES DESCRIBED THROUGH OUR LEGACIES AND MISSION

“If I widen my circle and you widen your circle, the circle of Al-Anon widens, and that’s how we become more inclusive.”

The Board of Trustees brought this discussion topic to Conference members as part of their ongoing discussions about increasing diversity and inclusion on the Board of Trustees and in the WSC Structure. The conversation at Conference focused on how Al-Anon’s spiritual principles and Legacies reflect the principle of inclusion.

Conference members were asked to consider the following quote as a starting point for discussion, from “Groups at Work” in the 2022-2025 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) v3, pg. 8: “Al-Anon is a unique fellowship that unites members of different backgrounds in an inspiring endeavor.”

- Many Conference members shared their own experiences with inclusion within Al-Anon, including times when some felt a lack of inclusion in Al-Anon meetings due to minority identities or experiences.
- Some spoke about problems with diversity of the Al-Anon fellowship as a whole as well as in their own Areas and suggested ways to, as members, promote diversity and the spiritual principle of inclusion.
- Referencing the principle of “attraction, not promotion,” members spoke about examining their own attitudes to new members in meetings, reflecting and working on personal biases, doing Fourth-Step work on the principle of inclusion, and modeling attractive recovery to increase membership and attendance.
- Members also shared their Areas’ attempts to model inclusion, such as holding meetings at times more accessible to young people and parents; providing transportation and childcare for members; doing group inventories on the principle of inclusion; and increasing outreach to communities in multiple languages.

LITERATURE DISCUSSION

Finances in Recovery

In August 2023, the Literature Committee voted to recommend discussion at the 2024 WSC of a piece of literature about finances in Al-Anon recovery. This suggestion was first proposed by a Delegate at the 2022 Conference, along with a framing that noted the following discussion topics:

1. Al-Anon literature states that the disease of alcoholism impacts us physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially;
2. While the topics of personal and group finances are discussed throughout Al-Anon’s Three Legacies, Al-Anon does not have one piece of CAL dedicated solely to exploring our relationship with finances in recovery; and
3. Financial responsibility is often not taught in alcoholic homes, but it can be learned.

After answering the four Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions, the Literature Committee agreed the piece would likely be well-received by the fellowship, after which the proposed literature topic was brought to the 2024 Conference members for discussion.

- The response to the proposed piece at Conference was generally positive, with many members sharing on the different ways the disease of alcoholism can affect personal finances both practically and emotionally.
- Some members discussed their own experiences doing inventories on their fears and feelings around finances, as suggested in *Blueprint for Progress* (P-91), and noted that a dedicated piece of literature would help members complete similar inventories in the future.
- Others reflected on the ways the Al-Anon program can be used in a spiritual approach to finances and how a piece of literature on the topic could help bring attention to this overlooked element of the program.
- Some questions raised by the Conference concerned the timing of the piece and the capacity of WSO resources to produce another new piece of literature.

The Literature Committee noted that since the WSO is already working on developing a comprehensive piece on personal and service sponsorship based on sharings submitted from Al-Anon members and currently has a reduced Staff in the Literature Department, another piece of literature would likely take until 2025–2026 to begin development.

After the discussion, the Conference voted on and passed the motion to create a new piece of literature focusing on finances in recovery. (See Motion #2 on page 35.)

NEXT GENERATION AFG RECORDS



Vali F., Executive Director

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

The Next Generation AFG Records presentation included a wrap up for the Transforming Electronic Groups project, which began in 2021 and focused primarily on the Global Electronic Meeting Search (GEMS) and updating the Geographic Meeting Search to display both physical and electronic meetings. These goals were both met in 2023, with GEMS launching in March and the update to the Geographic Meeting Search launching in June. Staff reported that 56 WSC Structure geographic Areas were supporting electronic groups, with the remaining 11 in the process of creating procedures to accept groups meeting electronically.

To support trusted servants as their Areas' transition to supporting electronic groups, AFG Records Staff created a new set of training materials for Area Group Records Coordinators (AGRCs). The recorded training session, flowcharts, and PowerPoint presentation were all made available for trusted servants via AFG Connects. Staff are also developing new tools for the Online Group Records application, including features for searching and retrieving details about physical and electronic group records together.

The Transforming Electronic Groups Team originally planned to develop a new electronic group registration workflow as the first step in the project. However, while developing this WSC update, the Team learned that the next generation workflow technology for the WSO's existing association management software (AMS) would not be able to support trilingual workflows. Continued research led to the conclusion that, in order to build a new workflow, the entire AMS system would need to be replaced. The current AMS supports nearly all business conducted by the World Service Office, in addition to group and member records, Area World Service Committee records, international structure records, AFG Connects login authentication, online store transactions, inventory, and the Global and Geographic Meeting Searches.

Due to the scope of this work, the timing of the Next Generation AFG Records project is now estimated at two years or more. Implementing a new AMS system will also allow for new possibilities to simplify and improve group records workflows for Staff and AGRCs alike. With this in mind, the Team asked Conference members for their input about the benefits of a simplified group records process and any other improvements they might envision.

Many Conference members confirmed that the manual entry system in the current AGRC workflow was inefficient and led to errors in group records, as well as increased workload for the AGRC, making that service position less attractive. Possible features suggested included a tool for exporting group records data, improvements in accessibility and ease of use to allow for smoother rotation of service, and expanded permissions allowing more members access to view and update group records.

OPEN POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Pennie K., Trustee, Chairperson of the Policy Committee

Conference members were invited to observe an open meeting of the Policy Committee, which provided an example of the Committee's approach to their work interpreting Al-Anon's basic guides, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service.

After opening with a reading of the Serenity Prayer and the AFG Strategic Plan, the Policy Committee introduced the topic for discussion, which invited participants to think about how they can keep the focus on unity and belonging as individual Al-Anon members and avoid becoming attached to external identities.

- Committee members noted the relevance of the topic to multiple conversations held during Conference and discussed ways to increase discussions of inclusion throughout the fellowship, such as chairing meetings on the Concepts or on Conference Approved Literature, such as the *Paths to Recovery Workbook* (P-93), that discusses unity and inclusion in Al-Anon.
- Members also shared about their own experiences with inclusion, such as attending meetings where they were in a demographic minority or not included in a group's focus, the process of embracing anonymity around others' personal

experiences or identities, and creating strategies to ensure a meeting is welcoming to all newcomers.

After the conclusion of their discussion, the Policy Committee invited outgoing Policy Committee members to share on their experience. Tom C., Associate Director—Literature (Retired), was invited to share a goodbye message about his 23 years on the Policy Committee.

The meeting closed with the Al-Anon Declaration.

POLICY DISCUSSIONS

Choosing a Group's Name

The Choosing a Group's Name Task Force Chairperson introduced this discussion of proposed changes to the "Choosing a Group's Name" portion of the Policy Digest. The topic of group naming policy was originally brought to the Policy Committee by the Staff Policy Implementation Round Table (SPIRiT), which has the responsibility of reviewing any new group registrations containing names that may not adhere to Al-Anon policy. SPIRiT Staff reported they had seen an increase in proposed names that could be considered potentially not welcoming to the newcomer, reflected affiliation, and/or focused more on identifying differences than similarities and Al-Anon principles. After discussion, the Policy Committee created a thought force, then a task force to revise the "Choosing a Group's Name" text portion to more thoroughly interpret the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service, reflect the fellowship's shared experiences, and identify the spiritual principles on which the policy is based.

Conference members were presented with the proposed edits to the "Choosing a Group's Name" Policy and asked to approve the changes. The proposed changes included language clarifying that the only requirement for membership in Al-Anon is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend and that the names of Al-Anon groups should take care to be "inviting, attractive, and avoid public controversy."

Some discussion took place about the implementation of these changes and how they would affect existing groups with participant designations such as children of alcoholics. The Task Force offered that the new Policy is designed to help trusted servants communicate about how Traditions apply to group names and the importance of welcoming all potential members to the group.

After determining that all Conference members were ready to vote, a motion was held and passed to approve the proposed changes to the Policy Digest. (See Motion #3 on page 35.)

Local Services

The Local Services Task Force Chairperson introduced this discussion about proposed changes to the "Local Services" portion of the Policy Digest. The Local Services Task Force (TF) was created in November 2018 and originally charged with reviewing select sections of "Local Services" to determine whether they belonged in the Policy Digest, and if so, whether they needed to be rewritten as policy rather than procedure. After extensive proposed edits to different sections of "Local Services," this charge was expanded in 2021 to review all sections of "Local Services" for any recommended changes. The charge also gave the TF the opportunity to change the name of the "Local Services" section if needed.

Prior to Conference convening, the TF recommendation was to eliminate the "Local Services" section of the Policy Digest and move all the sections contained in "Local Services" to different parts of the Digest. It also contained changes to the text of some of those

sections, including:

- "Naming a Service" was rewritten as "Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) or Intergroups," considering both WSC's and international structures' uses of the term.
- "Answering Services" and "Information Services (Intergroups)" were removed, as they were considered procedure rather than policy.
- "Employees in Al-Anon Services" became "Service Participation by Employees in Al-Anon Services" with minor edits.
- "Autonomy of Groups" became "Meeting List Publishing" with some text modified and new paragraphs added.

Following the April 2024 Policy Committee discussion of Delegate feedback received and a minority opinion expressed, the Task Force presented revised text to the 2024 WSC for approval. The revision included restoring "Autonomy of Groups" under "Local Services" and deleting draft "Meeting List Publishing" verbiage with the understanding that a future Policy Task Force will review this remaining section under "Local Services" to determine next steps.

After discussion and clarification of the exact changes being made to the Digest, the Conference passed a motion to approve the changes. (See Motion #6 on page 35.)

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Before the opening of Conference, while Panel 64 members attended the Orientation for New WSC Members, Panels 62 and 63 were charged to create presentations on specific topics to deliver during Conference.

Panel 62 gave a presentation about how to focus on worldwide Al-Anon while attending the WSC. Their ideas included:

- listening to international representatives and Delegates,
- sharing international issues with their Areas,
- focusing on the Conference theme,
- attending electronic meetings around the world,
- increasing trilingual readings of the Legacies, Serenity Prayer, and Al-Anon Declaration,
- and keeping in mind the worldwide effects of Conference decisions.

Panel 63's presentation focused on tips for keeping Alternate Delegates informed about the World Service Conference. Members suggested:

- keeping up regular communication with Alternates,
- sharing the *World Service Conference Summary* (P-46) and Chairperson of the Board letters,
- developing mentoring relationships and encouraging service sponsorship,
- and sharing important information from AFG Connects.



STEPPING STONES—BEYOND THE 2025 WSC

“There is a cost, but the benefits for the Delegate and the Area are priceless.”

The Chairperson of the Stepping Stones—Beyond the 2025 WSC Task Force introduced this discussion, which was intended to gather information and feedback for the Board of Trustees to incorporate in their decision about the location of the World Service Conference after 2025.

Historically, every three years, Conference members have visited Katonah, New York, to tour Stepping Stones, the birthplace of the Al-Anon Clearing House and the home of Bill W. and Lois W., Cofounders of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups, respectively. After the World Service Office moved from New York City to Virginia Beach in 1996, this visit required the WSO either to hold Conference in New York or Connecticut or to provide Delegates with a separate trip from Virginia to New York before or after Conference. In 2015, Delegates were given the opportunity for a post-Conference trip to New York and Stepping Stones, from which 14 of 67 Delegates opted out. In 2018 and 2022, Conference was held in Westchester County, NY. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 Conference was held virtually, and the WSO arranged for WSC members to watch a virtual presentation about Stepping Stones presented by its Executive Director.

Hotel, meals, transportation, and other event costs in New York and the surrounding states is significantly higher than in Virginia Beach; therefore, holding the WSC triennially in New York or Connecticut leads to a significantly increased net Conference cost. This increase impacts the WSO operating budget as all Conference costs not covered by the Areas’ Equalized Expense payments are paid from the WSO General Fund. These financial considerations, as well as the discussion of the topic at the 2023 WSC, led to the Board of Trustees creating a one-year trial for the 2025 WSC, in which the Conference will be held in the New York area and a team of Delegates will organize, coordinate registration, and handle the logistics for a visit to Stepping Stones immediately after WSC.

With all these considerations in mind, Delegates were asked to gather feedback from their Areas and participate in a generative conversation about four questions posed by the Stepping Stones Task Force. The discussion of those questions is summarized below.

Do the groups in your Area believe it is important for their Delegate to visit Stepping Stones? If yes, how do they see it helping their Area?

- Most Delegates described feedback from their Areas as being largely positive about the Delegate trip to Stepping Stones.
- Many Areas, particularly those in locations further from the New York area, felt that the chance to visit the home of Lois and Bill provided a spiritual experience for Delegates that impacted their dedication to service and made service work more attractive to members.
- Some Delegates reported that their Areas had mixed reactions to the question, finding other elements of service to be more important for the members than a Stepping Stones tour.
- Overall, though the triennial trips led to increased Conference costs and therefore higher Equalized Expense payments for Areas, Delegates expressed that most members in their Areas felt this increase to be a worthwhile cost, even in cases where other Area expenses had to be cut back to afford the Equalized Expense payment.

What are the most important elements of the visit to maintain?

- Many Delegates expressed that maintaining the unity of the Stepping Stones experience as a whole was essential to preserving the spiritual tone of the trip.
- Those who had attended the tour in past years recalled the chance to bond with other Delegates, physical details of the home such as Lois’s piano and her personal library, and the overall sense of history and spirituality as elements of the tour that contributed to its significance.

How might it be best to cover the additional cost of Stepping Stones and a New York visit?

- A number of Delegates who had polled their Areas reported that, despite the increased costs, Areas would be willing to pay a higher Equalized Expense, either for the specific year of the New York visit or spread out over the three years of a Delegate’s term.
- Some expressed that their Areas’ finances had improved since the Stepping Stones trip in 2022, which, combined with members’ enthusiasm for the Delegates’ experience, could increase contributions.

What ideas do you have for administratively making this happen? Do you want the WSO to administer the process? Do you want Delegates to be involved?

- Most opinions expressed during discussion were in favor of the WSO taking charge of the trip administratively.
- Current Delegates felt that WSO Staff were more familiar and knowledgeable about the process and could provide a better experience.
- Some suggested past Delegates as an option for Delegate participation in the process that would not overly increase current Delegates’ responsibilities.

The Chairperson of the Board will share this information with the Board for continued consideration.

TASK FORCE: PERSONAL AND SERVICE SPONSORSHIP

“I have come to understand that clear communication is vital. Whether I am the Sponsor or the sponsee, I need to speak up.”

The members of the Task Force on Personal and Service Sponsorship were charged to create a workshop for Areas, Districts, and groups on the topic of sponsorship. At the 2024 Conference, they presented an outline of three different workshop agendas (full day, half day, and 30 minutes); handouts with quotes from Conference Approved Literature on five different topics relating to sponsorship; and five skits relating to these topics for use in workshops.

The five topics identified by the Task Force were: “How to Get and Use a Sponsor”; “How to Navigate the Relationship”; “Challenges of Getting and Using a Sponsor”; “Service Sponsorship”; and “I Want to Be a Personal/Service Sponsor.” After a brief PowerPoint introducing these topics, the Task Force led a 30-minute workshop demonstration with Conference members as the participants.

The demo workshop focused on “How to Navigate the [Sponsor/Sponsee] Relationship” and began with two sharings from Task Force members on their experience and sponsorship in general. Conference members were then invited to share their own experience with sponsorship. The discussion covered topics such as negative and positive relationships with past Sponsors and sponsees; setting boundaries and expectations in sponsorship relationships; the importance of confidentiality; the difference between teaching and sharing experience, strength, and hope; and ending sponsorship relationships with respect.

After listening to the sharings, the Task Force presented an example of a four-minute skit about sponsorship, featuring a discussion between two fictional Al-Anon members navigating their Sponsor/sponsee relationship.

TASK FORCE: REVITALIZING ALATEEN

The Revitalizing Alateen Task Force (TF) introduced this presentation by stating the charge given to their task force: to develop an action plan to support revitalizing Alateen among groups, Districts, and Areas in the WSC Structure. The TF came to a consensus that the most effective approach to this charge would be to create a public outreach campaign aimed toward developing relationships between Alateen service arms and professionals in their communities in the position to recommend Alateen, such as therapists, school personnel (nurses, health teachers, guidance counselors, prevention coordinators), teen center directors, and emergency health services.



The final product of this campaign was a resource packet designed for customization and use by Alateen service arms across the WSC Structure and international structures. The packet consists of step-by-step instructions for trusted servants implementing the outreach campaign, an action plan for creating local task forces to carry out the outreach to professionals, a letter for professionals about the purpose and benefits of Alateen, a customizable flyer for distribution in the community, a PowerPoint presentation and speaker notes to deliver at events with relevant professionals, and a document about Alateen literature and links to resources.

During discussion,

- Many Conference members shared their experience with Alateen outreach and agreed that recommendations from outside professionals have become an increasingly common way that many teens find Alateen.
- Members also shared the ways their Areas have found to inform professionals about Alateen, including creating their own local outreach campaigns and attending conventions for professionals in education and mental health services.

The Task Force also informed Conference members that because the materials are intended to be used for national public outreach for which the WSO is solely responsible in accordance with the National and International Public Outreach: Roles and Responsibilities Policy, the package requires review by the WSO. Once the WSO review is completed, the final package will be posted for all WSC members and service structures to use.

THOUGHT FORCE: ELIMINATING REGIONAL TRUSTEES

The Thought Force (ThF) on Eliminating Regional Trustees described their charge from the Board of Trustees: to conduct a Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) process to determine what is known and unknown about the current approval process and ongoing relevance of the Regional Trustee (RT) role, then create a presentation for Conference about the results of the KBDM.

The ThF then provided an overview of the history of the Trustee role for Conference members. After the incorporation of Al-Anon Family Groups, Inc. in 1954, the Board of Trustees consisted of up to 11 local New York-based “In-Town” Trustees. In 1969, the Board created three Regions within the WSC Structure—US East, US West, and Canada—from which additional Regional Trustees would be elected.

In 1984, the Board changed the In-Town Trustee title to Trustee at Large (TAL), which also expanded the geographic representation on the Board by eliminating the requirement for Trustees to be based in New York. The WSC Regions also continued to evolve over the years, reaching a total of nine by 1989. The makeup of the Board expanded to 19 possible members: nine Trustees at Large, who may live anywhere in the Structure; nine Regional Trustees, who must live in their designated Region; and the Sustaining Trustee. These roles held the same status and responsibilities on the Board but required different processes for election. Both TAL and RT applications must be submitted through the WSO, but RT applicants also must be approved by their Area’s vetting process before being accepted.

The Regional Trustee role has seen very few applications in recent history, leading to frequent vacancies on the Board. The number of RTs on the Board has been in decline since 2004. As of 2023, there were six Regional Trustees and seven Trustees At Large out of the potential nine for each role. In 2024, all TAL positions will be filled while three RT positions will remain vacant.

The Thought Force shared the current knowledge they gained by completing the KBDM process. Factors leading to under representation of RTs were described as including potential Trustee applicants lack of understanding about the Area RT approval process and fear about possible Tradition Twelve violations during Area approval processes. The ThF also acknowledged that the Board desires all vacancies to be filled to prevent overburdening Trustees and that there was a misconception that RTs are expected to represent the opinions of their Region on the Board of Trustees.

The potential benefits of eliminating Regional Trustees, as identified by the Thought Force, included simplifying the Trustee application process, making the process more “democratic in thought and action” (Warranty Five of the Conference Charter), and balancing the work for Trustee trusted servants by filling more empty positions. In the category of “what we wish we knew but don’t know” about the RT process, the Thought Force posed the following questions:

- Is the current Regional Trustee process keeping members from putting their resume/application forward for a Regional Trustee position?
- Why do some Regions have members applying for RT while others don’t?
- If the Board consisted of only Trustees at Large, would the Board still have regional diversity?
- Does the need to have a full 19-member Board of Trustees outweigh the desire or need for regional representation?
- Currently, there are no Trustees at Large from Canada. Without Regional Trustees, is Canada guaranteed to have proportional representation on the Board of Trustees?
- Would one simple, streamlined process for all Trustees increase the number of applicants?

The Thought Force asked Conference members to consider these questions and the additional information provided by the presentation, then opened the floor for discussion. Input from Conference members indicated that:

- Many Delegates, especially those in Canada, do feel that geographic diversity on the Board is important; however, there was uncertainty as to whether the Board might still achieve regional diversity if the RT process was eliminated.
- Some members noted the benefits of the Area approval process for RT, such as specific information the Areas might have about candidates, but others felt the process added unnecessary work for Area trusted servants and created difficulties around separate Area and WSO deadlines.
- Multiple members confirmed the Thought Force’s conclusion that there is confusion among the fellowship around the Trustee application process, particularly for RT applications, and felt all members would benefit from clearer and more in-depth communication about the different processes.

SHARING OURSELVES

DELEGATES (PANEL 62)

Laura M., Alabama/Northwest Florida

My path to recovery started on September 29, 2002. The choices I'd made up until that beautiful Sunday afternoon had left me in confusion and despair. So, I called my friend who had been suggesting that I go to Al-Anon for probably two years. That day, there was a meeting starting in less than an hour and not far from my house. This is God's grace.

There were three little ladies there to welcome me. I don't remember what was said but I do remember the feeling of calm that I felt during the readings and the safety in the structure of the meeting—keeping the focus on ourselves. I was not allowed to hijack the conversation as I was used to doing. This was my first experience with unity in the group and Tradition One. I'm so very grateful for that.

Before Al-Anon, my tombstone could have read "She died of explanation." *Oh, to be understood...if you would just listen...maybe I should say it again or in another way.* Fast forward to today: we get three minutes at the mic, but each one of us has a voice. My voice may be the majority or the minority, but one is not louder than the other. There may or may not be a vote. We all have one vote. I have learned to accept the outcome, and sometimes, if I'm lucky, I get to go to lunch or dinner afterward with the group. Here we have Knowledge-Based Decision-Making, not chaos and confusion. Dear God, please help me set aside everything I think I know so that I may have a truly open mind and that I might have a new experience with these things. Please help me see the truth. This is our path to understanding.

Our recent past Delegate told me that this would be the easiest job I ever had in Al-Anon. There have been times that I thought that either it really is the easiest job I ever had, or maybe I'm just not doing it right. My inability at times to keep a calendar to balance my home, work, and recovery commitments has been humbling. My first Sponsor used to say, "Al-Anon doesn't just happen." She took me to my first Area Assembly, and I believe that she is cheering me on in heaven today as I participate in this 64-year conversation.

Diane G., Alberta/Northwest Territories

When I first came to the rooms of Al-Anon, I had no inkling of what or where this program would take me. I began to unlearn the behaviors of my past. I learned new approaches and different ways to see and react to the world around me. I began accepting the truth and recognized that I had to learn to live in the truth. With each step, I began to understand who I had become. I was given tools to learn how to change and be who I wanted to become. Most importantly, I had to embrace my Higher Power and learn to rely on God to guide me on my new path of life.

I met many people along the way and have rejoiced when I realized they too were on this path with me. I learned the common threads that united us and how we need to embrace the principles that allow us to be individuals while being a part of something so much bigger. Through service in this program, the opportunities to grow and be the best person I can were numerous. I still welcome the opportunity to meet others who are on the same path, but at a different location than I am. Sometimes it was challenging, and sometimes it led to a forever friend. For these experiences I will be forever grateful.

Though I have learned, I am still learning. I know this path leads me to serenity. I have tasted it, and I am reassured that with this program I will have more serenity. I pray for others still struggling. I pray that I recognize the guidance to handle the challenges in my life with grace and kindness, understanding without judgment those around me and treating myself as well as others with dignity and respect.

You told me when I first walked through the doors of Al-Anon, "I am not alone." I was not convinced.

Today I know: *I am not alone.* You have proven that to me. I now have an Al-Anon family.

Al-Anon: you have made my heart sing and my soul soar. Thank you for giving me the tools to change myself; the members to encourage me; and, with God's guidance, the ability to change.

Gene T., Arizona

When my therapist told me to go to Al-Anon, who would have ever think I would be standing here today!

I had never even heard of Al-Anon!

I was introduced to service almost immediately. Some might say I was pushed right into it!

The days and years of commitments have led me here today.

When I was becoming a Delegate, many people shared their experiences and thoughts. My thought was to go with an open mind and open heart, to form my own thoughts, and be part of something greater. To honor everyone at Conference...grace.

Trying to move forward with integrity toward a common goal. Remembering that together we can serve Al-Anon...unity.

By asking questions and listening to others, I begin to have a greater understanding of our primary purpose.

In my first year, we welcomed the Global Electronic Area (GEA). I arrived thinking the Area was not ready yet. I kept an open mind, listened, and, while not agreeing, I tried to understand and listen to others. Grace and understanding. The GEA was welcomed and become one with all of Al-Anon. Unity.

My second year, there were discussions of the Stepping Stones visit and Delegates' involvement in setting the Conference agenda. Okay, there were many other topics discussed: diversity, Chosen Agenda Items, ICC, new literature, etc.

The point being, in each Conference, much is discussed. In each Conference, everyone is invited to voice his or her opinions. In each Conference, I try to listen to each voice, to fully understand each conversation, and to apply the discussions to create unity at the WSC and deliver the unifying message to Arizona.

Is it easy? No. Today, I still may not agree with everything; however, I can still have the grace to honor everyone, because what I have learned and try to understand is that we all care for Al-Anon...unity.

Through service, today, I can say, with gratitude and with the grace of the God of my understanding, I have received love. I am grateful to have met so many wonderful people and have formed so many new friendships that will be with me for the rest of my life. I understand more about the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and more about myself. Today I am experiencing grace, unity, and understanding that I have never experienced before.

Owen H., British Columbia/Yukon

Standing in front of you today, I ask myself, “Did I ever think I’d be speaking in front of 100-odd people feeling nervous and at ease?” When I got to Al-Anon I was a confused, scared little boy, a little boy of some 40 years old. I thought grace was something other people said at special dinners, and I understood nothing about unity.

I thought everyone knew how to live life, and I was never going to understand or feel comfortable in my own skin. I recall, early in recovery, my first understanding of a spiritual awakening. I was driving and was nearly hit by a semi-truck. My thought was, “God, I hope he doesn’t hit me.” That was the first time I remember knowing I wanted to live. Until then, I had always wanted my life to be over.

I believe what gave me that new and unfamiliar feeling was my Higher Power and the Twelve Steps as studied in the Al-Anon Family Groups.

At that time, my journey and my life in Al-Anon took off, and I was on a recovery path, a new life I never dreamed possible.

With a Sponsor, my growth and setbacks moved hand in hand. My Sponsor kicked me in the ankle, and I learned to say yes when asked to do service. I arrived early, set up chairs, put the kettle on, and shared a cup of tea to be united in our recovery, with each member sharing experience, strength, and hope.

My home group didn’t have a Treasurer. The bag got heavier and heavier until it reached \$1200. I let my Sponsor know that bothered me. He said, “I guess you’re taking the bag home, organizing it, and becoming the Treasurer.”

Our GR was unable to attend Assembly one year and asked me to go. I was hooked.

My time as Delegate comes to an end, and my life will be forever changed.

I found grace through having a voice in Al-Anon service, and I learned to understand it was ok to be nervous, comfortable, and make mistakes, all at the same time.

Because of you, I was able to be with my father when he passed, hold his hand as he took his last breath, and, at his service, to share, “My name is Owen, and I’m proud to be my father’s son.”

Kari O., Colorado

Wow. The word that stuck out to me most in our Conference theme is “path.” This is a journey.

On a weekend excursion during a monthlong business trip in Spain, I was yet again telling my sad story to the wife of a coworker. She said that I sounded like her kids and that, when back in Texas, I needed to go to Al-Anon. That woman became my first Sponsor.

I arrived with no voice, not caring if I lived or died.

I left Texas and started doing service in Georgia, was my home group’s GR, and struggled with the pace of Assemblies. My Sponsor did a lot of service and told me that she figures she’s there anyway, so she might as well listen. I started participating. Then I stood for DR.

Fourteen years later, I moved to Colorado and knew that to get connected, I had to get back into service.

I found a community that supported me through some of the most challenging times of my life. As the disease continued to progress in my home, I learned from my community about the spiritual principles of love and integrity. I learned about the lies that I tell myself and others and about the grace of the program.

I learned about what it means to expand my circle. I was afraid of alcoholics. Today, through serving in Al-Anon and cooperating with A.A., I am learning about encouraging and understanding alcoholics. Today, my ever-expanding circle includes sober members

of A.A. I learned about the importance of having and using my voice. I learned to listen to the minority opinion. I learned to honor the group conscience, even if I don’t agree with it. I learned to seek unity and about our common welfare.

Service is not something extra I do; it’s an essential part of my recovery. When I am spiritually fit, grace, unity, and understanding are all available to me.

A former Sponsor told me that if I’m not working the Traditions and Concepts at home, I’m not working them.

In service, I have also learned how to cherish and be cherished.

In Al-Anon, I’ve learned that it’s a journey, “One Day at a Time.” If I knew the outcome, I would’ve made different choices and would’ve missed so many opportunities on the way, including the opportunity to be here with people who cherish this program as much as I do.

Char G.F., Georgia

Sharing reflections on this year’s WSC theme sums up my experiences as a Panel 62 Georgia Delegate. This term of service has offered me so many opportunities to practice “grace”—first with myself, then with others. It has yielded many benefits, and the most important is “God’s ease and balance,” which has allowed me to “flow day by day” throughout my term. (Adapted from *From Survival to Recovery* [B-21])

Grace has been the gateway to unity, and unity has opened new doors of understanding of how I can continue to recover from the impacts of the disease of alcoholism. There have been many times during this term that I had to yield to not knowing, not agreeing with, or not wanting to do something, both in my Area as well as here at Conference. But grace came to the rescue when I could remember to call on it, allowing me to surrender to God’s ease and balance.

We often say that this is not an “I” program but a “we” program. I’ve found this to be very true during my term as Delegate. As I interacted with many of you in different ways, you encouraged me, either directly or indirectly, to give myself grace. It’s so easy for me to forget to do this as I move through the “business” at hand, either in my Area or here at WSC, but you encouraged me to take care of myself and told me that I don’t have to do anything alone.

I often share how one line on page two in *When I Got Busy, I Got Better* (P-78) has dramatically changed the way I view my service in this program. It says, “Service and recovery, then, are not independent of each other.” Serving as the Panel 62 Georgia Delegate has offered me the gift of continued recovery while I serve. It has expanded the way I offer the gift of grace to myself as well as to you, so that together we can increase unity and understanding as we recover from the impacts of alcoholism and carry this message to those still suffering.

My heartfelt thanks to all of you—those I know well and those I just met—for your service to my recovery. See you along the service and recovery journey!

Burt P., Global Electronic Area

I attended my first Al-Anon meeting in 1976. For some reason, my “six meetings before you decide” were spread out over decades. But I kept coming back—and eventually, I stayed. For this I am eternally grateful.

Let’s unpack this year’s WSC theme, “Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding.”

“Our Path.” When I got serious about my own recovery and began attending regularly, I was introduced to service. Then, I heard whispers about service beyond the group. Eventually, I served at District, AIS/Intergroup, and Area levels, and now I’m on the path to the 2024 World Service Conference. An amazing trip it has been.

And you have been with me every step of the way. This is indeed our path “toward grace.” Whenever I feel that I understand a Concept or a suggestion in our *Service Manual* (P-24/27), no matter how keen my thinking or insightful my perspective, there is so much more than what I have been aware of. This “more” often comes to me in unexpected ways—but always, however the awareness arrives, it is accompanied by a large dose of my Higher Power’s compassion and love. This is grace.

“Unity.” Before Al-Anon, I was very lonely, even when I wasn’t alone. You told me that things could get better and that I was loved. You told me I mattered and that our similarities were more important than our differences. You claimed that I had the same right to be here as the 40-year longtime member. And that, in time, I might come to understand these things. I simply could not fathom how that could be. And yet, of course, you were right. I was beginning to experience unity.

“And Understanding.” When I arrived, my vision was cloudy, and my hearing was distorted. Yet, I was certain that I knew everything and told you all about it. You patiently encouraged me to “Keep Coming Back.” You told me to say “yes” to service. And you inspired me to work the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, all of which I am doing. And, slowly, I have gained understanding.

I am grateful beyond words for the “Grace, Unity, and Understanding” I have witnessed with you on “Our Path” together. In this, you and I have experienced the divine. More will be revealed as we work together. “Together We Can Make It!”

Jane P., Massachusetts

Thank you, members of the WSC, for your attention and for the love that I feel radiating from each one of you. This has always been the most healing part of this program for me.

I arrived in New York in 2022 feeling somewhat intimidated, because I am most comfortable when I know what I’m doing. Being vulnerable, feeling overwhelmed and a bit lost, and being willing to ask for help are risks for me. I not only asked for help but was able to get myself up to that microphone and ask a question or state my opinion! All attendees were so willing to lend an ear and give a suggestion when asked. Being a Delegate has asked me to live on the very edge of my growth in Al-Anon.

In year two, I was asked to chair a Task Force, and my first thought was, “Who, *me*?” I have been on and chaired many committees, but this Task Force work taught me the grace to poll each member on a decision, aim for unity, and ensure that we all were fully knowledgeable about our charge from the Executive Committee. There was no dominance, every Delegate did their work, and the spirit of cooperation created such a calm, connected, and productive experience.

This year, I have been given the opportunity to share often! I will present the Task Force work product with the team, do this three-minute talk, be in a skit (God help you all if I’m singing and acting), and will be facilitating Sharing Area Highlights, another experience of cooperation and joy in service. My leadership skills continue to grow because of this Delegate service position. Grace is being quiet when it’s called for and speaking up after a discerning pause. Unity comes from understanding and hearing all information before making a decision, with Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) being a shining example of this approach. These were certainly not my true north pre-program!

As I exit stage left, I know that my recovery has deepened. May I have shown grace in moments that asked for it, unity in our purpose, and understanding of my role as Delegate, and shared my joy and laughter, of which there has been so much. And, more importantly, I bring these spiritual practices back to Massachusetts and continue

our efforts to keep Al-Anon Al-Anon and not dilute this effective and incredibly successful program.

Thank you.

Linda H., Minnesota North

Today, I am grateful for the miracles in my life that I would not have experienced except for coming to Al-Anon. I attended Al-Anon during the first two years of my marriage, but walked away. Sixteen years later, my marriage ended, and in despair I returned to Al-Anon. I started to heal. As a single mom, raising my son alone because his father was either in jail or not working, I got a second job so I could give my son the life he deserved. While I was faithfully attending meetings, I could not and would not commit to service. I did like hearing from our GR about what was happening at our District and Area level—but I was too busy and determined *never* to be a Group Rep.

At the start of a new panel on a cold snowy January night, when no one stepped forward in my Home Group to be GR and with the first District meeting a few days away, I grudgingly said, “All right, I’ll be a Group Rep.” I cried through my first Assembly and knew if I didn’t stay in service, I would miss these people. The people in Al-Anon are the hook for me.

I took safe jobs and used my work training to be the Area Secretary and the Area Treasurer. I knew how to perform in those positions, and I was good at it. But I would never stand for District Rep because I didn’t want to qualify in our Area for Delegate. I was afraid to fail.

Over time in service, I was growing, and miracles began to happen. I became friends with my former husband (now in recovery), whom I was determined to hate. My son grew into a good man with a solid marriage and now a son of his own. An old boyfriend—the love of my life from my early 20s—confessed to me on his deathbed that he loved me and wished he had married me (confirmation that our feelings for each other had been true). I believe these and other miracles would not have happened except for being in service.

I have truly received “Grace, Unity, and Understanding” in my path of life, and it happened because of Al-Anon.

Leigh R., Mississippi

My life today would be very different had I not accepted this position as World Service Conference Delegate two years ago. This has been the most eventful two and a half years of my life, not because of being a Delegate to the World Service Conference of Al-Anon, but because of the disease of alcoholism.

The first day of my first Conference, I heard someone say, “We have all been damaged by alcoholism.” Shocked at first hearing that, I realized then just how damaged I am and why. Being at Conference with so many others sharing their experience, strength, and hope in so many areas and ways has opened my eyes to the nuances that passed me by before. I am so grateful for the blessings you share with me at Conference. Becoming more present and seeing and hearing more clearly have taught me to listen intently, with more interest in what you say and how you express yourself.

This “Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding” has ensured that I give my attention to the things that not only require my time but that are also joyous and entertaining, beautiful and painful, heartfelt and enraging. I have learned that I must listen to the smallest and the loudest voices, to the minority and the majority. If I am to understand God’s will for me in service or in my personal growth, I can only be willing to serve and be served. I can take these opportunities for growth in all areas of my life to demonstrate the grace and unity with others that we all deserve.

At my first WSC, I sat in the large room in awe at the many people there and the importance of the Conference meeting and wondered, “How did I get here?” This is the largest group conscience in the world! It brought me to tears. It felt so spiritual; to be a part of that was enormous. The hair stood up on the back of my neck. I knew I was where I was supposed to be. *“This is my place, these are my people!”*

My life is still in chaos, but I have Al-Anon. I have wanted and needed to quit this job, but I held on because I knew it would see me through like nothing else. We are in this together, and we are never alone. All we must do is reach out our hand and the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen will always be there.

Pamela C., Montana

My journey started very young; I grew up with an alcoholic father. In my 20s, I met the man with whom I would have two wonderful children. He was an alcoholic, an addict, and abusive. One day, he called me up when we were separated and shot himself while we were talking on the phone.

Little did I know at that time that my life would change forever. I attended Al-Anon meetings for a couple years. It wasn't until almost 22 years ago that I found myself in these rooms again and the real journey began. I had been attending and working with a Sponsor for about five years when I became the GR for my group. I followed this up by becoming the DR for the next three years.

During the election year at our Area Assembly, I was going to step out of service work. My Higher Power had other plans for my service path. I was nominated for Secretary. This was followed by my becoming Area Treasurer, Alternate Delegate, then ultimately where I am today: Area Delegate.

The grace, unity, and understanding I have found on my journey in service is unimaginable. I have grown not only in the Al-Anon program, but in my personal and business life too.

There have been some struggles in the Montana Area, and I have had to dig deep to understand why God has put me on this path. I have had to give myself grace and understand I need “Progress Not Perfection.”

In the last two-plus years, I have experienced the unity in these rooms of the Conference. I have seen Al-Anon at work. I have seen members who disagree but know that we are all here for the greater good of Al-Anon. I feel confident that Al-Anon will be here for generations to come.

The grace I have received both in and out of the Conference room by fellow Delegates is humbling. I have seen growth in myself and in others around me. If I were to be asked about my experience as an Area Delegate, I would have to say it has been the most exhilarating time of my life.

As I heard when in Albuquerque at the International Al-Anon Convention, “this is my place, these are my people!”

But there by the grace of God go I!

There is love in service!

Katie O’C., New Jersey

When I was growing up, my mother sometimes used the expression, “but for the Grace of God go I.” I didn't understand what she meant at the time. I didn't know what a Higher Power's grace was. I started regularly going to Al-Anon meetings on a recommendation that I try Al-Anon again for my own sake and not just to get the alcoholic to stop drinking. I feel this was my Higher Power's grace at work.

My Higher Power's grace gave me an understanding of Step One: “admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” Like me, group members often said it was

their Higher Power that led them to Al-Anon. Our collective belief in a Higher Power's grace was our unity.

I began doing small service work for my Al-Anon home group by taking my turn, arriving early, setting up chairs, putting out literature, making coffee, and picking up literature at the Literature Distribution Center. I occasionally babysat in the meeting's nursery so other members, especially new members, could go into the Al-Anon meeting. These small services being rotated among the members established unity in our local group. I was flattered in meetings when I shared my story and a newcomer would comment that he or she could relate. Our mutual understanding became “alcoholism is a disease.”

After seven years actively in Al-Anon, I relocated back to New Jersey. By my Higher Power's grace, I eventually found a new home group and started attending weekly meetings. When the group needed a Group Representative, I jumped at the opportunity. My path to recovery beyond the group level began.

Just four months later, my District Representative asked me to rideshare with a group of other members to New Jersey's March Assembly. Riding in the van, I had such a feeling of unity with the other members.

The New Jersey Assembly was in need of a Treasurer, and I raised my hand to stand for the office. I was elected. I learned so much and achieved a better understanding of Al-Anon from the other officers, coordinators, District Representatives, Liaisons, and Group Representatives. I subsequently held numerous Area service positions. I hoped to eventually become Delegate. Along the way, my path has crossed with other Al-Anon members. Together, we're united.

Thank you to those of you whom I have served with and to my Higher Power.

Aileen W-M., North Carolina/Bermuda

“God doesn't call the qualified. God qualifies those who are called. Am I listening?” (*Hope for Today* [B-27], p. 101)

I didn't understand this statement until I participated in service beyond the group level. Over time this expression became my truth in every service position I held.

In 2015, after three years in Al-Anon and one year working the Steps with a Sponsor, my sister took her life. She was 55 and I was 54 at the time. My life as I knew it changed forever.

In the depth of my grief, I felt God nudge me to stand for the role of GR in my home group. It was the only three-year service position available, and I believed at the time it would keep me safe and alive in Al-Anon. Today, nine years later, I find myself on a path filled with grace, purpose, fulfillment, and new understandings at every turn.

Service continues to grant me endless gifts, often wrapped in sandpaper, that repeatedly bring me face-to-face with my true self. I discover my passions and talents as well as the parts of me that need healing, compassionate acceptance, and courage to change.

Held by the care of a loving God coupled with a personal Sponsor, a Service Sponsor, and a worldwide fellowship to lean into, I grow daily while being seen, heard, encouraged, and supported.

As I discover my primary purpose to be of service to my Higher Power and my fellows, I learn that the conflicts and discomfort of today become the new understanding and ability to be of service for tomorrow.

Every service position started with minimal understanding of the role, its purpose, and how to fully live into it.

With the help of our membership and growing conscious contact with God, I continued to discover and develop new skills, courage to change, and the gifts of pausing, letting go, and not taking things personally!

One of my favorite offerings from the WSC is the practice of “having difficult conversations,” inviting God to the table in three languages, and feeling grace enter the room and our hearts as we all grow in our ability to listen to one another without judgment, seeking unity, peace, and understanding.

Thank you all for your brave willingness, commitment, and dedication to living the Al-Anon principles on our path to recovery.

In deep gratitude and love of service.

Darcy A., North Dakota

My journey started as a fragile, struggling mid thirty-year-old mother and wife. I entered the walls of Al-Anon completely exhausted and ready for “something.” My two Sponsors, thrust at me by my husband’s treatment center, loved and listened to me during this phase.

Little did I know that was the start of my path toward grace, unity, and understanding.

One definition of grace is “an excellence or power granted by God; an unmerited gift from God.” I constantly use the Serenity Prayer for guidance of “Thy will.” I need to tap into the directional stream of energy flowing throughout our universe. If I follow “self-will,” I will struggle. This takes faith and practice. This is a life journey, and no one graduates.

One of the pieces of guidance mentioned in *How Al-Anon Works* (B-32) is: “Perhaps we can approach large projects and challenges slowly, step by step...rather than all at once.”

I believe I am a large project. In order for me to grow, I need to read CAL daily in order to gain an understanding of myself. Recovery cannot occur in isolation. The safety and atmosphere of trust within the group allows me to grow. Even though there are many differences among us, there are many opportunities to seek out commonalities. “Keep an Open Mind” is a good slogan for unity. I love the tool of conflict resolution in working through differences and gaining understanding.

When I took the risk to do service work, I grew in each service position. New opportunities for using the tools of the program came with each task. I learned to reach out to and for help. Sponsorship and mentoring are wonderful gifts of the program for building self-esteem and tackling challenges.

I know how important service work is. My self-worth has grown in my life. I watch the newcomer enter our meeting, struggling like I did years ago. They can do the footwork and get into the flow of God’s powerful energy. Once I quit doing “self-will” and reach for God’s will, internalizing it and acting on it, my fear and doubts turn into faith and serenity.

Life throws many “learning curves,” and we don’t graduate. As I use my Al-Anon program and take each task one at a time with my Higher Power, I’ll stay on the path toward grace, unity, and understanding.

Emily C., Oklahoma

I am, through grace, a grateful member of the Al-Anon Family Groups. For the last 18 years, I have experienced a gradual and beautiful understanding of the program, which has enabled me to be of better service to my fellow path-walkers.

Service is many things to me, but the heart of it lies in our individual decision to be the hand that anyone, anywhere can use to find connection. Being entrusted to be a Delegate was (and is) one of the most humbling gifts of my life. The entire Al-Anon community of the great Oklahoma Area unified to ask me to be their trusted servant. My first year as a Panel 62 Delegate was ushered in by the

death of my brilliant, beautiful daughter. She was a victim in so many tragic ways of this disease that connects all of us here. The first people on the scene of our tragedy were our Twelve Step family, who enveloped us in love, peace, understanding, and delicious casseroles and baked goods. Their spiritual strength buoyed us and held us up until we could do it for ourselves.

There are many things in life that cloud our vision, interfere with our serenity, deter us from our path. I found comfort, strength, and hope in my program even when the days and individual moments were heartbreaking. Indeed, my heart was broken. But lying about me were all the tools I needed to repair, recover, and renew my journey and rebuild that heart. The tools were fellowship, meetings, literature, slogans, sponsorship, being sponsored, and, paramount, service work. In one quarter, I logged almost 2,000 miles traveling to District meetings, group meetings, and workshops to share my hand and to reach out.

One of the most difficult parts of this adventure is practicing the idea of “attraction not promotion.” I want everyone I know to experience the serenity I have enjoyed as I walk hand in hand with my fellow panelists, WSO Staff, and my many friends in recovery. Thank you for being a part of my path.

Joanne C., Oregon

Hello, hola, bonjour.

I can’t believe I am standing here before all of you. I, a shy and self-conscious girl from a very small town in Montana, am here at the World Service Conference podium. What a journey these last three years have been!

With God’s good guidance, I think back with such joy to the opportunities He has given me. I remember the Delegate’s Reports I gave, the commitment it took to be a Delegate, the conferences I attended, the friends I made, visiting Stepping Stones, being in awe after meeting the people at WSO, and the growth I have enjoyed. I have so much gratitude for this experience and everyone who played a part in it. Panel 62 is so special.

As a newcomer to Al-Anon, unity was not in my vocabulary until I saw it displayed in Al-Anon service. For this I thank my first Sponsor, who loved service, “voluntold” me into service, and taught me to love it, too. Like many of us, I was amazed to see people calmly agree to disagree. There were no raised voices, and, afterwards, even though they disagreed, they were still friends. Wow! These were the kinds of relationships I wanted, and I stayed in service.

But I had only a limited understanding of the huge reach of Al-Anon until I was in a room with Delegates from all over the US and Canada. Being Delegate opened up a new world I didn’t know existed. It has been exciting to watch and be a part of the GEA coming to existence.

LIS: “Love in Service.” Many members use those initials when signing off an email or a letter. Service is love: love for the program and everyone in it. The last paragraph on page 32 of the *2020 WSC Summary* (P-46) is a beautiful writing by an unknown Delegate. This Delegate feels the same way about service as I do. Service is a way of life to me.

Johanne S., Quebec East

Good morning to all of you members of the Conference.

Since I’ve been a member of the Al-Anon Family Groups, I’ve never stopped growing. I overcame several challenges through service that led me to understand the program. Indeed, I have had the grace to know Al-Anon because I have lived and still live with loved ones affected by the disease of alcoholism. It was still this same grace that led me to be elected Interim Delegate of the Area Quebec

East in 2019 and re-elected Delegate in 2022. Indeed, in 2019, as the Delegate resigned, I agreed to replace her. My term of office will therefore have lasted five and a half years when I end next December.

I must tell you that it is because of the unity and support that exists within the fellowship that I have been able to get through the obstacles that have come my way, including the pandemic and the development of a policy to integrate Al-Anon electronic groups into our service structure. This has created a lot of resistance to change and required a lot of adjustments within our Area. I then developed a great understanding of members who were put off by all this and wanted to stay in their comfort zone. But through patience, tolerance, listening, and discussion, I have come to enlighten the group consciousness well so that we can all walk toward grace, unity, and understanding. This has allowed our Area to move forward and grow in the unity of Al-Anon.

I know that there are still challenges ahead of me between now and the end of my term, but I am confident that my Higher Power will always be there to guide me. Today, I have developed my potential, I have gone beyond my fears, and I have overcome my personal limits.

In closing, I would like to thank all the members of the Conference for their welcome, support, and open-mindedness. I especially want to thank the interpreters who have accompanied me throughout my journey and who have made it possible for me to do all this, and, above all, in my own language. I will keep a great memory of them because I now consider them my friends whom I genuinely love. Thank you also to the Delegate from Quebec West, who kindly agreed to travel with me and allow me to do so safely.

Laura A., Vermont

I love our first four Steps in Al-Anon. Step One taught me to stop focusing on my alcoholic husband and focus on myself. Step Two taught me to wait for solutions and trust that they would be revealed. Step Three taught me to go to my Higher Power when my willfulness creates misery. Step Four taught me that efficiency, one of my greatest assets, is my greatest defect when it operates in excess.

I move fast. I lurch when I walk. I twitch when I sit. I cut people off when they're speaking, ready to finish their thoughts and propose solutions. That extra energy gets fast results. It's what people love about me. And it's what gets me in trouble. True story: I champion walking and biking to school and put out lawn signs reminding drivers to slow down for a safer town. I wear a banana costume to teach that yellow is the best color to see from a distance and the color that warns us to slow down. Distracted and fast driving causes accidents. I was driving on a winter night in harrowing weather, returning home with these lawn signs to show and tell our town's efforts to calm traffic, when I was stopped for speeding. Apparently, I relaxed as the wide, flat road opened before me, with my foot on the accelerator doing what my head was doing—racing. That was a spiritual awakening.

Now, when I place and see those "SLOW DOWN" lawn signs about town, they help me to remember to slow down and regain balance. Same with traffic signals. They remind me when to "stop," "wait," and "go" toward my recovery and serenity. I gaze at stop signs now and think of the argument diffusers that have preserved my sanity—responding to the active alcoholic by remembering the helpful phrases that each letter represents and saying "S: Sorry you feel that way," "T: That's interesting," "O: Oh!," or "P: Perhaps you could be right."

I love being reminded of Al-Anon wisdom, especially our first four Steps. I named my car "Grace." I keep a frog token in my coat pocket to remember to "Fully Rely on God." My password is one of our slogans. My cell phone cover is green, reminding me to go forward in my recovery by giving away in service what's been given to me.

Katharine R., Washington

Hiking is one of my favorite pastimes. The most memorable recovery walk I've taken was on the hillside at Stepping Stones, the home of Lois and Bill W. It was an amazing experience to go up to Bill's writing studio knowing that I was on the same ground that Lois and Bill walked so many times. How many of those protruding rocks did they stumble on, and did they sometimes stop to listen to the birds? It seems appropriate that the first piece of Conference Approved Literature I purchased was *Paths to Recovery* (B-24). I wanted to dig into the questions, to work the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, to grow, and to discover my own path to recovery from the effects of others' drinking.

Working my program has helped me to grow in grace toward my loved ones: my mom, whose social drinking after her stroke turned her into a puddle of slurred speech and compromised mobility; my brother, who dealt with his personal issues by giving in to addictive tendencies; my son, who, despite my very polite requests, would not tell me when he'd come home or return to school. With grace, I've learned I can love those people and recognize that it was a disease that affected their behavior.

In the rooms of Al-Anon, I meet people who are on paths like mine. Although we have different experiences and expressions, our personal recovery brings unity in fellowship. Words cannot express the gratitude and respect I hold for every member, for the openness with which they share their lives in our rooms.

Service gives me opportunities to work together with others in the business of Al-Anon and Alateen. Sitting side by side as we discuss details and craft motions for consideration, each of us brings a unique perspective, background, and style. Our program helps us to seek to understand one another so that every member contributes to the common welfare, and the result is greater than the sum of individual parts.

Now, my Al-Anon service has brought me to this bend in the path, my last year at Conference. It has been my joyful privilege to serve as a Delegate, to interact even a little bit with everyone here today and with so many outside of these walls. Thank you for walking with me on our path toward grace, unity, and understanding!

Elliott B., West Virginia

I came to Al-Anon broken and desperate, with a father dying from brain cancer and an 18-year-old daughter slowly killing herself via alcoholism. For the first time in my life, though, I found myself confronted with two problems that were utterly beyond my control, that I could not fix no matter how hard I tried.

But then, I found a room full of people who had been there and done that, but who miraculously had found a way to smile, laugh, and share. While I could hardly say my name without sobbing, these strangers, people I had never even met, offered me hugs, kindness, laughter, and the eternal wisdom of our program.

For me, the light really came on through my take-home reading, our literature, when the profoundly simple and life-changing words of our daily readers connected with me in a way that nothing else had. In fact, I quickly came to see that our meeting rooms were filled with fellow travelers, people who had survived life-changing circumstances and came out the better for it. The magic of the program somehow takes battle-weary, broken people like me and turns us into life-affirming, thoughtful champions of recovery with all that a newfound sense of hope brings.

And I have found that service is the best way to carry that message forward. For me, service started with finding a Sponsor—who

happened to be a man who, ironically, I'd never met before but lived just across the street—and slowly and painfully began working the Twelve Steps. However, working the Steps has helped me to live more fully in the present, by moving beyond my past regrets and future fears, which, despite some initial reluctance, eventually gave me the courage to grow in my program by taking on service roles.

Since the time my Sponsor first encouraged me to run for Group Treasurer, each new role I've taken on has helped me to develop the confidence to bring our message of recovery and resilience to more and more people. Self-doubt still rears its ugly head when I am asked to do things like give a lead at a conference or run for and serve as an Area Delegate, but as one of our spiritual authors noted in one of our daily readers, "Courage is just fear that has said its prayers."

Joanne F., Wisconsin & the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

For my final words as a member of Panel 62, it was suggested that I speak on this Conference's theme and what it means to me.

Grace is an instance of kindness, according to online dictionaries. I always had more kindness for animal life than for my fellow humans, especially when the alcoholic was deep in his drunkenness. I, at one time, even physically abused him and thought of pushing him down the basement stairs. HP intervened and made me realize that he could survive the tumble and the tumble would not cure him of his alcoholism.

Understanding, to me, is close to empathy. If you feel or attempt to feel like someone else, you have a better understanding of what they are going through. It means to walk in someone else's shoes. The ability to be understanding or empathetic to the one who has the disease of alcoholism, like my kindness toward my alcoholic, was nearly nonexistent. Why couldn't he stop drinking if he loved me?

For unity to exist, you must have grace and understanding working together. I had lacked grace and understanding, and therefore my spirit was always in turmoil. I bickered with my daughter, some of my neighbors, my parents, and my in-laws, just to name a few. Unity did not exist in my relationships with other people.

In the rooms of Al-Anon, be it with three people, 4,000 people, or when traveling with some fellow members from Al-Anon on a long trip to Albuquerque for the 2023 International Convention, I was able to learn and practice grace, understanding, and, more importantly, unity. I found grace, understanding, and unity not only through sharing at meetings, but also through being of service on the group, District, and Area level; by letting others speak without interruptions from me; by listening to others with a mind that concentrates on what they say and not allowing my mind to wander off to other places.

I said learn and practice because there are times I fail to learn and/or practice, but I always found forgiveness from all of you, my adopted Al-Anon family, when I was not able to forgive myself. Thank you for always being there.

And I pass.

OPENING SPEAKER

David B., Chairperson of the Executive Committee

Courage.

What makes a King out of a slave? Courage.

What makes the flag on the mast wave? Courage.

What makes the elephant charge his tusk in the misty mist or the dusky dusk? What makes a muskrat guard his musk? Courage.

What makes the sphinx the 7th Wonder? Courage.

What makes the dawn come up like THUNDER! Courage.

What makes the Hottentot so hot? What puts the "ape" in ape-ricot? Whatta they got that I ain't got?

Courage!

You can say that again.

Or at least you could, before I found my courage through my Higher Power in the Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups.

I'm glad to be able to share some of my story with you. I will apologize now if you have heard me speak before—I've only got this one story. I thought about making up something more exciting, but it's an honest program, so I'll stick with this one.

It seems like some of you recognized that speech I opened with from the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, which I'm pretty sure is not Conference Approved Literature. I hope you'll give me some leeway with that brief reference, because the Cowardly Lion was me before Al-Anon—full of bluster and roar, but in reality paralyzed by fear. My story is one about fear, because that's what drove my life as far back as I can remember. Most of the time, my fears weren't based on reality, but rather on something I projected. I was afraid of what people would think about me if I did something they didn't like or made a mistake. I was afraid of what people would think about me if I didn't do something I thought they expected me to do. I tried to control everything around me so that I would feel safe. It was the fear—of not belonging, of not being worthy, of not being loved—that was the driver of most of the behaviors that led me to Al-Anon.

I didn't grow up in a family with an obvious alcohol problem. Somehow, however, my parents developed behaviors very appropriate to those whose lives have been impacted by alcohol: a father with anger issues and a mother who tried to control everything in her path. So, I learned several dubious skills as a result: stuffing feelings until they exploded in misdirected anger, manipulating to gain love, needing to control outcomes, and making everything look good to the outside world. All I needed was an outlet to use these skills.

I found that outlet in high school with my first job. I walked a pretty girl who started talking with me. Now, you may find this hard to believe, looking at the full package here before you today, but I have not always been successful with the ladies. I have always been shy around people I don't know and, particularly in high school, with pretty girls that I didn't know. She helped me out a couple of months later by asking me out. So, I went on my first date without having to find the courage to ask someone out. I learned she grew up in an alcoholic home, and I was the stability and security she craved. She was the person I could take care of and whose life I could direct. I found the alcoholic I didn't know I was seeking, starting our 25-year journey together.

We developed a pattern that came to be very familiar. I would help her when she ended up drunk or sick, then I spent my time studying for hours, trying to achieve perfection and prove I was a worthwhile person. Looking back now, we loved each other, but I made the decisions and worked outrageously hard to get praise and recognition, while she felt stifled and trapped in our sick relationship. Neither of us had the courage to recognize that we could make a change.

So, instead, what did we do? We got married. After school, we moved to Chicago for my new job. We knew no one there, so she had to try to find her way, while I threw myself into my new job for the same long hours that I had spent studying in college. She ended up alone a lot, with the latent alcoholism emerging. In the next few years, we had two children together. As her drinking increased, I followed all kinds of tried and true strategies to stop her: reasoning with her, arguing with her, ignoring her, punishing her, even getting

drunk with her. Nothing worked. Throughout it all, I was afraid that someone would find out what a mess we had in our home, afraid that someone would find out that I was a bad husband because I couldn't fix this problem, afraid that I would lose the person who meant more to me than I meant to myself.

To escape, I increasingly turned to work. It gave me a place to have order instead of dealing with the growing chaos in my home. I could better control what was happening there, and things turned out much more like I expected. I was recognized for doing a good job at the office, so I took on increasing responsibility to get more praise and recognition to build the self-worth I was lacking, including staying in a job I didn't like because I was too scared to move on. I even had the dream Al-Anon job, "Controller." Now, who could ask for a better job than being paid to be a "controller"? I was a natural.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the miracle occurred. My wife decided that she really needed help, so she checked herself into a treatment center. She came home and started to go to A.A. meetings. I just knew our troubles were over. Somehow, everything wasn't better. She resisted even more the things I was sure needed to be done. I was still afraid of what others thought of me and of what might happen in the future. I still worked like a fiend and still had a lot of misplaced anger. She didn't need me in the role I had played in our relationship for over 20 years, and I didn't know what to do or how I felt about it.

So, one day she came home from an A.A. meeting and told me there was an Al-Anon group meeting at the same time. I didn't see the need to go since she had stopped drinking, so I resisted. She kept suggesting it, so I gave in and went to my first Al-Anon meeting. Full of fear (as usual), I walked through the door into a room with a group of strangers and was amazed to find myself at home. Over time, I came to learn that we all have the same story; only the facts were different. Others did even crazier things than I had done to try to get the alcoholic to stop drinking. To get better, they told me, people with these issues needed to learn to keep the focus on themselves. In other words, I needed to stay inside of the imaginary hula hoop surrounding me. I was to do this by turning over my fears and concerns, my very life, to a Power greater than myself to get out of the craziness.

I haven't mentioned anything yet about my spiritual beliefs, so let me go earlier in the story. From childhood, I was taught a view of God as a fact. Here is the podium, there is a chair, there is God. I never really questioned it—I accepted God even if I didn't understand how it all worked. Even as a child in church, I gravitated toward positions where I got praise and recognition for what I was doing. As an adult, I led the first half of worship on most Sundays. Over time, I started to question some of the things that I was saying as part of the worship service. My doubts grew until I realized I was a hypocrite for telling the congregation things I was no longer sure I believed, and I had to stop. I still believed in an idea of God, but it faded into the background for me. This experience left me feeling isolated as the alcoholism at home spiraled downwards.

Now, fast-forward to my early Al-Anon experience, where the idea of a Higher Power fit exactly into my beliefs, starting my reconnection with God as I understood Him. The program started to take hold in my life, but my relationship with God was still mainly on an intellectual level—the way I related to most things at that point. For years, I heard the voices in my head, the infamous "committee," urging me to do one thing or another while fretting about the consequences of making a particular choice. Occasionally there would be a small, clear voice that would say things like, "Do this," or, "It will be okay." I eventually came to realize that, for me,

that one voice that could cut through all the noise and confusion was from God, patiently waiting to be heard.

I wasn't ready yet to truly listen to that voice, however, because I was working the Program in my own fashion. I knew my life was unmanageable and accepted that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. However, I was skirting around the difficult things that required an emotional commitment, like Steps Four and Five...and Steps Six and Seven...and Steps Eight and Nine. I had not accepted the key part of Step One—that I was powerless over people, places, and things as well as alcohol—and I wasn't working Step Three. It was still *my* will and *my* life on *my* own terms, not my Higher Power's will.

When I started working the Steps instead of skipping around them, the little voice I was hearing could bring the God of my head and the God of my heart together. That allowed me to release my fears and to find the courage to learn some valuable lessons by following God's plan instead of my own. It worked best when I was open for whatever God had in mind and trusted that things will work out not as I wanted them to be, but how they were supposed to be. When I am truly connected with my Higher Power, I can turn over any issue. I say, "I surrender," and I feel a sense of peace wash over me and know what I need to do. I have rarely been disappointed when I follow this approach, and I have the courage to deal with whatever I encounter as a result.

In Al-Anon, I've learned that we continue to get the lessons we need to learn until we learn them, and I still had some big lessons to learn before the program really took hold and I could fully hear what my Higher Power had to say to me. In the unabridged version of my story, I share what I learned through a divorce, raising my children, interrupting a 20-year career, trying new things like studying history and doing voiceovers, and finding a new life partner who is also an Al-Anon member. In the interest of time, I will focus on one lesson: trusting others.

My trust issues stem from a misplaced sense of my own infallibility and that fear of making a mistake and looking bad to others. Al-Anon again rescued me through the opportunity to do service work. This year's Conference theme, "Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding," conveniently summarizes the lessons I have learned through service. I have grown much walking my service "Path," from the group level, through District and Area roles in Illinois North, to my experience on the Executive Committee over the last three years. You all repeatedly demonstrated "Grace" as I slowly learned that I don't have all the answers, and that's okay. Your words and actions show me I don't have to do everything perfectly—you will still like me, and I can try again. I have seen "Unity" in practice in realizing I do not have to be in charge. I can just be part of something and let others lead the way. I have gained great "Understanding" of myself and others as I see we all have our character defects, even after many years in program, and it's not my job to correct someone else nor to solve their problems. I need to detach with love and let them find their own way through their Higher Power.

I come to the next bend in my service "Path" this week, as the full Conference and then the Board of Trustees consider my nomination for Trustee. I do not know what my Higher Power has planned for me around that bend, but I know that I will never be alone and will find the "Grace, Unity, and Understanding," and the courage, to deal with whatever I encounter on that Path. Service is how I pay forward the experience, strength, and hope that I have received from others. That way, the program will be here for the fearful newcomer seeking aid I was when I first walked in and when I still need that help today.

My experience with the Al-Anon program is summed up with our slogan “Let Go and Let God.” When I get full of myself, thinking my way is right, how do I get back on track? I “Let Go and Let God.” When my old shyness rears its ugly head and I want to run and hide, how do I stand my ground? I “Let Go and Let God.” When someone I love is hurting and I want to make their pain go away, how do I detach? I “Let Go and Let God.” When I can’t sleep at 3 am, regretting things I’ve said or done or worrying about what’s going to face me in the day ahead, how do I regain my serenity? My friends, you know what I do—say it with me: “Let Go and Let God.”

So, in the future, whenever you find yourself alone and afraid, confronting the disease of alcoholism or anything else over which you have no control, remember the experience, strength, and hope we just shared in those few, powerful words: “Let Go and Let God.”

And now, I close with a disclaimer from my voiceover training: The opinions expressed here have strictly been those of the person who gave them, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen as a whole. Take what you like and leave the rest. And when you experience a conscious contact with the God of your understanding lasting more than four hours, do not call your doctor—instead, rejoice, for you are finding serenity.

SPIRITUAL SPEAKERS

Char G.F., Panel 62, Georgia

I want to begin this spiritual share by thanking the Conference members and the CLT for inviting me to share at the closing of our 2024 WSC. I’m both grateful and humbled. It took some time for me to focus on the aspects of my “spiritual” journey in this program that I wanted to share, because for me, *all* of it has been and continues to be spiritual. As I reflect, all of my life experiences connected to both A.A. and Al-Anon I would say have been spiritual. So, I began by focusing on what “spiritual” means to me so that I could pull together my thoughts. One dictionary definition states that it means “relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.”

Absolutely, my “human spirit” has been affected in so many places throughout my lifelong connection to Al-Anon. Growing up in a recovery household, seeing my dad and other A.A. members impact the lives of so many alcoholics through Twelve Step work, and tagging along with my mom to AWSCs and Assemblies as a preteen greatly impacted my spirit. It’s clear now that the principle of service was implanted onto my spirit because of this.

What also came to mind was the term I’ve often read in our literature, “spiritual awakening.” I wondered, like the chicken or the egg metaphor, which comes/happens first? My human spirit being affected then having a spiritual awakening, or the reverse? Hmm. I know you’re probably thinking I may have way too much time on my hands if I sit around trying to figure this out. Actually, I don’t have a lot of time on my hands, but I do wonder about these types of questions from time to time. Preparing for this share offered me another opportunity to wonder some more. So, a bit unusual, I know, but that’s me—partly thanks to you and Al-Anon.

When I was an Alateen, I experienced a freedom of expression that was free from criticism, judgement, or shame. I remember feeling fully accepted when I was in the Alateen rooms. This was a feeling I did not always experience in many places as a young African American girl growing up in the 60s who usually spoke up about how I felt, what I liked, and didn’t like, especially about any type of injustice. As an adult, Al-Anon has offered me the same freedom of expression. One of the most important lessons Al-Anon

is *teaching* me (present tense) is to allow space for others to have the same freedom of expression, free of criticism or judgement. So perhaps “freedom of expression” without fear of judgement is key to how my spirit is affected and is one way I experience a “spiritual awakening”? Hmm...more to wonder about.

What I am certain of is what it *feels* like to experience a *spiritual awakening*. I now believe it has happened to me many times because I was willing to be open to having my human spirit affected through living the Twelve Steps. One such very profound awakening happened a few years ago. One day, I remember feeling as though I really needed to get to a meeting. It was not on a day that my home group met, so I began to search for meetings close to me that met during the day. I found a group that met in downtown Atlanta that I think I had only been to once, years ago.

As I arrived at the church where the meeting was being held, I noticed no one was there, so I asked the person in the office if the Al-Anon group still met there. She said, “Yes, go down the hall to the first door on the right.” So I went to the room, sat there for about 15 minutes, and no one showed up.

As I began to leave, a well-dressed white male came into the room. He asked if this was where the Al-Anon meeting was. I said, “Yes, but no one is here yet from the group.” We introduced ourselves by first name and decided to get started, so we set up the literature that we saw in the cabinet. By then it was at least half past the hour, and it was clear no one was going to attend, so we opened the meeting and began to share on why we came today.

I went first, and he listened and encouraged me. Then he began to share, first rambling a bit, then saying, “I really need to say this.” He took a pause, then shared, and when he finished, he said, “Wow, I’ve shared something with you that I haven’t even shared with my wife, but I needed to say it so I could know what I need to say to her.” We both got quiet for a moment, then thanked each other for being there. We closed and wished each other well and went our separate ways.

As I drove home, I remember a feeling coming over me that I instantly recognized as the special gift of a spiritual awakening, because it involved the last part of Step Twelve: “we tried to carry this message to others...” So what I’ve come to realize is that having my spirit affected and having a spiritual awakening are not just for me, but to carry and embody this experience so that I can be *in place* when others need to connect with me, and we can both experience our spirits being affected on deeper levels and have spiritual awakenings. You remind me all the time that this is a “we” program, not an “I” program.

What happened in that room could not have been possible if *both* of us were not willing to have our spirits affected! I mentioned that he was a “well-dressed white male” because for me, this made this encounter even more profound. Where else in this world besides Al-Anon can an African American woman and an apparently middle/upper class white male who never interacted with each other before share so deeply about something so personal without any fear of judgement or criticism? On that day, in that moment, we were two human spirits supporting each other; in that moment, nothing else mattered.

So, this brings me to our 2024 Conference theme, “Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding.” When I first saw this theme, the word “path” jumped out. I thought about what it means to be on a “path”—who’s on the path with me? How are we connecting while on the path? What’s the goal or the destination? I think the second part of the theme answers the destination question: the goal is grace, unity, and understanding of self and others. But I wondered what the criteria was for beginning the journey, being on the “path.” Perhaps it’s being

willing to have your spirit affected along the way so that together we can experience mini and large spiritual awakenings with each other. The main tool we carry in our backpacks is the grace we offer each other as we stumble on rocks, slip on leaves, or completely fall down and get up again. As we work together to build along the way, we experience unity of purpose, and as we finish one leg of the journey on the path, we leave with a better understanding of self and others.

As I close, I reflect on all the cheerleaders who were with me along my Panel 62 Delegate journey. My wonderful Georgia Area members were always lined up along the way, cheering me on, and offering their experience, strength, hope, and encouragement, especially when I felt discouraged.

My Panel 62 friends reached down to pick me up when I stumbled and offered me a bounty of grace when I was not able to be a full participant in “path” meetings due to my work schedule. The WSO Staff and Board of Trustees have always made themselves available when I had questions or needed any type of support along the trail.

All of you have been with me on the path toward our destination of grace, unity, and understanding. My mom and dad were also there with broad smiles of love and pride all over their faces. There were so many spiritual awakenings on this leg of my service journey that were not possible without all of you.

Along the walls of the hallway in our home are pictures of family and people close to me who are still here and those who have passed on, and I say as I touch their faces each morning, “Thank you so much.” I will add for those who’ve passed on—mom, dad, grandparents, brother—“Thanks so much for always supporting me on my spiritual journey and all my journeys. I couldn’t have done it without you.” Because I believe those who have passed on are still with us, I will continue to look for them on the path, seeking their experience, strength, and hope as they cheer me on and encourage me to get up and “Keep Coming Back.”

The last two photos are of Bill W. standing next to my dad, Louis R., and my mom, Mary R., standing with Lois W. I offer a special thanks to both Bill and Lois. I always wonder where my family and countless other families would be had they chosen to do something else with their lives. They had choices, but they chose the “path not taken,” not just for themselves but because they clearly understood the family illness of alcoholism and what was at stake for those still suffering and for future families of alcoholics. My deepest gratitude to you, Bill and Lois.

I’m humbled and filled with gratitude for this opportunity to reflect on my journey and my wonderings and to share it with all of you.

Thank you all for listening.

Jane P., Panel 62, Massachusetts

My name is Jane, and I am a deeply grateful member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen.

I am the granddaughter of a man who desperately tried to get sober in the late 1940s and early 1950s in NYC and Bedford, New York, a town near Katona where Bill W. and Lois lived. In my mind, my grandfather went to meetings with Bill W., and he still died as a direct cause of the disease of alcoholism. This truth was not kept from me, and I always knew that alcoholism can kill. I am the daughter of two alcoholics who died active. I have one sibling, a brother, who today is sober in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I was the only one in my family who was not alcoholic, but oh, was I deeply affected. The theme of my existence before coming to Al-Anon was “look good, act natural.” I was a good student, did not get into trouble, took care of my chores and everyone else’s, got lots of education, succeeded in my chosen profession, was on the board at both my kids’ schools, and so looked

like I had it *all* together. The inside of me was a very different story. I was always plagued by self-doubt, self-loathing, and deep shame, and there was a constant inner dialogue cataloguing my shortcomings: too tall, not pretty enough, too skinny, don’t have enough friends, don’t have a boyfriend, not smart enough, not funny enough—generally, unlovable and a total loser. It didn’t help that I grew up in a town filled with people who looked to me like they had it all.

Because I felt so unlovable when it came to finding a partner in life, it just never occurred to me that I should have a set of criteria, some wishes and wants, when I was dating. If you asked me out, I went. When I met my husband, he was kind and smitten. (I kept looking behind me to see if he was looking at someone else. In fact, I had come to this party with a woman, and he kept talking to her, so I figured he was after her. She was his sister!) He was very clear about how much he liked, then loved, me. And he was, of course, an alcoholic, who on our first date said, “I drink too much. I need to cut back.” Well, thought I, he’s on top of that!

Our marriage started deep down the rabbit hole of alcoholism, and we just tunneled deeper and deeper. And we brought two beautiful children into this mess, innocent hostages in a cold and silent war that I waged against my husband—to no avail, of course. My rage at my husband was because I believed that he could and should stop drinking. If he was more of a man, stronger of character, less selfish, more of who I knew he should be, then all would be well and off into the sunset we would go. There was no weapon I didn’t use to coerce him into changing. I begged, pleaded, yelled, wept, shamed, manipulated, and threatened divorce over and over and over again. I had no understanding that I was trying to change the course of a disease and the manifestation and symptoms that were a part of it.

The most frustrating part of this all was, for me, that he insisted he was fine. It was the disease that told him he didn’t have one. Now, I just love what he said to me once, although at the time I was murderously enraged. He said, “Jane. I don’t have a drinking problem. *You* do. You can’t handle my drinking.” The thinking of active disease is just audacifying (a word someone with whom I worked created), and today I laugh. Not then.

Against this background I want to share with you three seminal spiritual awakenings that I have had since coming to this wonderful program. Before Al-Anon, I was alone. Now, alone is different than lonely. “Lonely” means I miss someone who’s in my heart, but I feel full and feel their presence in my heart. “Alone” is the tumbleweed flying along in the desert, bereft of any feeling of connection. It is an awful feeling, and I was subsumed by it.

I have given some thought to this phrase: spiritual awakening. What is that, really, for me? I have come to understand that it has been, and will be, those times when a HP does for me what I just cannot do for myself, and does it without my asking. It is born from deep angst and suffering and a good dose of hopelessness. I have never asked for these awakenings. They have come, and I have experienced the generosity, wisdom, and compassion of them in hindsight.

On a Friday the 13th, I walked into my first Al-Anon meeting. Yes, I had been to one meeting in 1989 and flew out the door. “What is *wrong* with these people? On their knees? And they’re way too nice. *Not* my people!” The spiritual awakening, which for me was experienced as a tiny diminution of my shame, was found in our opening: “We become irritable and unreasonable *without knowing it.*” Oh, I’m not the only one who’s become so awful, and it’s not my fault! Next, I heard, “*Living with an alcoholic is too much for most of us.*” I’m not a failure. It’s the disease. I started crying, and my shoulders eased a bit. Much more importantly, my experience of myself as alone got

challenged. Everything that I was carrying on my shoulders was still there, but I saw others who had carried this burden, and they were smiling and were so kind and loving to me.

My husband and I were separated, lawyered up and ready to go. I held him in utter contempt, I felt so abandoned and frightened, and I was desperate, thank goodness. The spiritual shift came from feeling connected to these strangers. Their eyes said it all. They looked at me with compassion and understanding, and I felt not one ounce of judgement—and believe me, I had a keen ability to sense a mere hint of contempt. In fact, they made me feel special, and you know what? They even gave me a book! I felt so special, not understanding the care and love we shower on newcomers. I thought I got the Oscar! I left that meeting feeling, for the first time, some relief from an effort I had made to get help, and I went to five meetings a week.

The second spiritual awakening that was remarkable to me, leaving me with a feeling of awe, was the night my mother died. I had been in program for only six months, but life is on life's terms, including death. I got a call from my sister-in-law that hospice had said that my mother had one to three days left. When I arrived, I did what I did best: I took charge. My mother was struggling with choking and gasping, not acceptable by anyone's standards, but not something I was willing to allow. Medications were added, but this put my mother to sleep until she died. But before she went under, I knew I needed to say something to her. I said, "Mom, I know you did the best you could, and I will miss you and I love you."

My mother was a bitterly resentful person, having grown up in alcoholism and watching her father die, and she was active. The very last things to pass my mother's lips were vodka and orange juice, and I had enough program to know that I wasn't going to stand in the way of her and her drink. I thought I was being so spiritually mature in my last words with her, but she was so furious. I now understand the arrogance of those words. The true moment of feeling the spiritual presence and generosity of HP came her last night as we held a vigil, watching her breathe two breaths a minute. My brother was going through her dresser drawers and found a copy of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6)! My mouth was agape and my eyes wide as I saw what he pulled out. What? My mother knew about Al-Anon? That was a secret she kept from us, but the sense of wonder and awe filled me. Maybe my poor mom had gotten even one ounce of comfort from this little book. I certainly hadn't offered her much. I had spent a lifetime trying to get love from someone who had little to none to give, and then I returned that treatment in kind.

Seeing that *ODAT* provided the first bridge that allowed me to deeply feel a compassionate connection with my mother. I had been given the gift of love, one that I could not get to on my own, in a moment of grief, despair, and incredible vulnerability. Because, you see, at the very moment my mother passed, my husband left me in a drunken rage. So not only did *ODAT* provide comfort to my mom, but it was also a tie to Al-Anon and all the love from you. And the story continues. I gave that copy of *ODAT* to my daughter, who was in Al-Anon at the time. She still has that book, although she does not attend meetings. Seeds have been planted, though.

With the third spiritual awakening, I knew it when it was happening, I was fully present in it, and I had a kind of gratitude that filled my heart and soul. I had been coming now for ten years. I knew what I knew and was humble enough to be really clear on what I didn't know. And I knew the disease of alcoholism would always win. Always. No matter what I did, said, or thought, it was going to win. My husband was in a relapse, his second since joining Alcoholics Anonymous in 1989, and it was a deadly one. He was going downhill fast and hard. I stepped back and waited to hear the

think of him hitting bottom, and my Al-Anon women held me up, supported me with such love, and allowed me to feel safe during a very frightening time. I'm not sure even today how my husband lived given what he was doing to himself. This wasn't a short slip; this was a five-year, all-out campaign based on his feeling that living wasn't worth it. Was I perfect during this time? Most certainly not, and I am here to tell you that I told him I hated him once, and that's not the only time I felt that way. The denial of "No, that's not true" when I tried to share my fear with him was *my* slip.

I have made amends to my husband for taking so long to hit my own bottom and for waiting for him to hit his. The end came for me. But it took him to precipitate it. For some reason the amount of prescription drugs he was abusing didn't penetrate, but on a Thursday morning, he was downstairs very early for him, and he was really "high," I thought. I went into the kitchen, and on the counter was a half empty bottle of 100-proof scotch. If he wasn't drinking, I hung on. I was deluded. So, I marched upstairs and found a tumbler of amber liquid on the night table. We were in separate parts of the house at this point. I thought, "Is he trying to kill himself? Is this anti-freeze?" because it smelled like rocket fuel. Denial and delusion were alive and well.

So, what did I do? I took a sip! My slip number one. Next, I sternly said to him that he was drunk. "No, I'm not," he said. My final slip that morning came when I told him he needed help. "No I don't. I can do it myself." My husband had been in A.A., and, when sober, knew this was a lie. But he was not sober, and I was trying to reason with a drunk and very high man. I called my Sponsor, who asked me what I would normally be doing that day and told me to do it. I went to work, and I absolutely did not think about all of this until I got in the car to return home. And from a still, small voice came the words, "Get help or get out." I had *never* thought of this before, and I consider myself a reasonably intelligent woman. My HP gave me those words and did for me what I absolutely could not. I was given a loving, firm boundary that I could abide by, instead of what I had always said in these circumstances: "*Get out!*"

As the weekend progressed, I stuck to the phrase that was given to me: Get help or get out. I cannot and will not live with active disease anymore. My husband claimed he couldn't find a rehab. In Massachusetts, you can spit and find two. He continued to claim he could do this on his own, and, you know, there was *still* this thought in my mind that maybe he could! But again, I would hear, "Get help, or get out." Finally, on a Sunday, I went into his room crying and said, "I'm done." I was waving the white flag in tears. I totally surrendered him and his disease and gave up. I asked him to not be home when I returned from chairing the Convention Committee meeting.

When my husband received his first-year chip again, his A.A. Sponsor said, "Al-Anon saved this man's life." Yes, and the constant, loving, ever-present spiritual presence I have and trust today was the real hero in this piece. This isn't something I worked on or for. This isn't something I read about. This isn't something I heard about and said, "Well I'll try that." This has been effortless. This is beyond my reach of human understanding, and I don't try to make that reach. I feel held, understood, cared for, safe, and loved, and I do not have to earn this. But I strongly feel that, given this blessing, I must give back. I spread compassion and wisdom. I work hard to ensure that this program lives on, undiluted. I embrace newcomers and give them love and understanding. No matter what life throws my way, I will be held by the loving arms of my HP, who will provide.

Thank you all for your compassionate presence tonight. I love each and every one of you in a very special way and will miss you terribly.

IN CLOSING WE WOULD LIKE TO SAY...

CLOSING SESSION

Jeri W., Trustee, Chairperson of the Board

Kathi M., Trustee, Conference Chairperson

“What I observed were the principles of honesty, respect, humility, clarity, faith, and a love for one another and Al-Anon Family Groups.”

The Chairperson of the Board began by reflecting on the many discussions and presentations held throughout the 2024 World Service Conference and how they formed the “path” of the Conference theme, “Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding.” She highlighted the principled conversations seen in sessions such as “Stepping Stones—Beyond the 2025 WSC” and “Delegate Participation on CLT,” during which Conference members were able to express diverse points of view and tackle complex issues while still honoring the principles of understanding, respect, and unity. Beginning with the spiritual exercise that occurred during the “Sharing Area Highlights” session and ending with the Policy Committee’s open discussion of unity and belonging, she identified the way each session of Conference contributed to the members’ shared path of recovery.

The Conference Chairperson’s closing remarks reflected on how these sessions led to a deeper understanding and respect among Conference members and strengthened the common purpose of the fellowship. Using the image of the three-sided Al-Anon logo, she described how Conference members used the three Legacies in all conversations to create a balanced and effective group conscience, which will be carried back to the Areas and the fellowship as well as to all those seeking help in the future.

That evening, the Conference Chairperson opened the Closing Dinner with the Serenity Prayer. Following dinner, outgoing Panel 62 Delegates and members of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, as well as a retired Staff member, received a certificate of appreciation for their service to Al-Anon Family Groups. The Spiritual Speakers, suggested by the previous year’s Conference—Char G.F., Panel 62, Georgia, and Jane P., Panel 62, Massachusetts—then shared their stories. (See pages 31-33.) At the end of their talks, members and their guests made a circle around the perimeter of the room and closed with the Al-Anon Declaration.

2024 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE MOTIONS

MOTION # 1 – (85 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions, 1 void) – CARRIED

That the following persons be seated at the 2024 World Service Conference:

With voice, but no vote:

Niketa Williams: Director of Finance & Operations,
Non-Al-Anon Member

Tracey S.: International Services Manager, Al-Anon Member

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

Sue C.: Chairperson, ECRPM, Al-Anon Member

That the following World Service Office Staff members be seated to observe at the 2024 World Service Conference as designated, with no voice and no vote:

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Annette Shorter: Programs Assistant, Non-Al-Anon Member

Colette Norman: Translation Manager, Non-Al-Anon Member

Friday, April 19, 2024

Valérie Stump: AFG Records Manager, Non-Al-Anon Member

Karen Wolff: Software Engineer, Non-Al-Anon Member

Camille Peters: Associate Director – Customer Service & Shipping, Non-Al-Anon Member

Suzette McKinney: Publications Manager, Non-Al-Anon Member

Sunday, April 21, 2024

Rory Mulford: Senior Data Analyst, Non-Al-Anon Member

Anne P.: International & Legal Specialist, Al-Anon Member

MOTION # 2 – (84 yes, 4 no, 2 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To approve the creation of a piece of literature, possibly a pamphlet or booklet, about our relationship with finances in Al-Anon recovery.

MOTION #3 – (81 yes, 6 no, 3 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To accept the revisions made to the “Choosing a Group’s Name” section of the “Policy Digest” in accordance with the changes recommended by the Policy Committee and adopted by the Board of Trustees.

(Strikethrough indicates deletion; double strikethrough indicates text was moved; underlined indicates new text; double underlined indicates new location of moved text.)

Choosing a Group’s Name

~~Having~~When choosing an appropriate Al-Anon or Alateen group name is very important because it is included in local, consider the welcoming and online comforting focus of Tradition Five. Anyone affected by someone else’s drinking is welcome at an Al-Anon meeting directories. It is vital that group names are inviting, attractive, and avoid public controversy. Our spiritual growth has its roots in the principle of anonymity, to enhance the sense of belonging and unity.

~~A group’s name may be a potential member’s person’s first impression of Al-Anon.~~Al-Anon. Consider the lasting impact the group name can have on newcomers, members, the public, and professionals. The group’s name should be inviting to all and reflect Al-Anon and meeting information may appear on local meeting lists, printed materials, websites, as well as other venues for sharing public information. (see “Publicizing Meeting Locations” in the “Policies” section of this Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual).

~~Members weigh the guidance of the spiritual principles.~~A group’s name should found in the Twelve Traditions when choosing a group name:

Common welfare and unity for the greatest number in Al-Anon Al-Anon does not imply affiliation affiliate with or endorse any outside enterprise, such as, other Twelve Step group groups, self-help group, commercial venture, agency groups, religious group groups, rehabilitation facility, or other outside enterprise even if the name facilities, or commercial businesses.

~~The only requirement for membership in Al-Anon is associated with its location—e.g., “the ___ Church AFG” or “the ___ Hospital AFG.”~~that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.

~~To help avoid confusion with other entities, it is suggested that groups~~The name does not impact affect another group, Al-Anon, or A.A. as a whole. Al-Anon has no opinion on outside issues.

~~Members honor the policies out of respect for Al-Anon unity and the group conscience process.~~

~~Groups are encouraged to spell out their full name and include the letters “AFG” for Al-Anon Family Group to avoid confusion with other entities or outside agencies.~~

~~The Policy Committee and the World Service Conference have delegated authority and responsibility to the WSO for reviewing proposed group names for adherence to Al-Anon policies and principles.~~The WSO will review proposed group names for adherence to Al-Anon principles.

~~(See “Considerations When Starting Either an Al-Anon or Alateen Group”: “Naming the Group” additional guidance found in the “Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work” section.)~~of this Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual and the guideline for “Starting an Al-Anon Group” (G-12) and “Starting an Alateen Group” (G-19) posted on the Members tab at al-anon.org.)

MOTION #4 – (88 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To approve the 2023 Audited Financial Report.

MOTION #5 – (88 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To approve the 2024 Finance Committee Report.

MOTION #6 – (86 yes, 2 no, 2 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To make the following changes to the “Local Services” section of the “Policy Digest” of the 2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3:

- Eliminate the subsections “Naming a Service” and “Answering Services” from the Policy Digest
- Move the updated “Information Services [Intergroups]” subsection to the “Public Outreach” section and rename the subsection as “Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) or Intergroups”
- Move the updated “Employees in Al-Anon Services” subsection to the “Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions” section and rename the subsection as “Service Participation by Employees in Al-Anon Services”

in accordance with the changes recommended by the Policy Committee and adopted by the Board of Trustees.

(Strikethrough indicates deletion; double strikethrough indicates text was moved; underlined indicates new text; double underlined indicates new location of moved text.)

[Page 86]

Multiple Group Membership and Office-Holding

Al-Anon members who attend several groups *regularly* and *participate fully* in all of them, may consider themselves members of all those groups. Most members, however, consider one group their home group.

Membership entitles a person to vote and hold office. Whether members may hold office in more than one group is a matter of group autonomy, although it does deprive other members of the privilege of serving and growing. No member may, however, be Group Representative (GR) of more than one group at the same time.

Service Participation by Employees in Al-Anon Services

Tradition Eight states that "Al-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional." Therefore, any Al-Anon member who is gainfully employed in an Al-Anon service center does not serve as a volunteer in a policy-making position, such as Group Representative (GR), District Representative (DR), Area Assembly Officer or Coordinator, Delegate, or WSO Trustee/Volunteer.

Service Participation by Members of Al-Anon Family Groups Who Are Also Members of Alcoholics Anonymous

Al-Anon Family Groups and Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) share a common spiritual legacy in A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Before Al-Anon was founded, family groups met with, and beside, A.A. groups. In 1951, various family groups banded together and agreed to organize Al-Anon Family Groups, a program dedicated to helping the friends and families of alcoholics. Over the years, Al-Anon developed its own service structure, based on the model provided by A.A.'s experience and guided by the Twelve Traditions.

[Pages 110 - 111]

Local Services

Naming a Service

Al-Anon Information Services (AIS) call themselves Information Services, Service Centers, Information Centers, or Intergroups. The name "Literature Distribution Center" (LDC) is used for services that provide Al-Anon/Alateen members with access to Al-Anon/Alateen materials. A combined AIS and LDC will be given one registration number at the WSO.

The term "Al-Anon Central Services" is reserved for AIS/LDCs serving entire states, provinces, or Areas. Al-Anon General Services refers to structures serving countries other than the United States and Canada.

Answering Services

The term "answering service" is usually used for service entities that handle only Twelfth Step telephone calls. The decision to implement and support this service is within the autonomy of the groups it serves.

Information Services (Intergroups)

Requirements for Registration at the WSO

The WSO registers an Information Service (Intergroup) when it meets the following requirements:

has a title indicative of the nature of its operation, e.g., "Al-Anon Information Service"

acquires a PO Box number or an office address

maintains a listing in the local telephone directory

conducts activities in addition to Twelve Step telephone calls (for example: works with local Al-Anon/Alateen service committees, arranges group exchange meetings, publishes meeting lists, and performs any other function as outlined in "Groups at Work").

Getting in Touch with Al-Anon/Alateen

Al-Anon Information Services and offices worldwide that meet the above requirements are listed on al-anon.org. Since individuals' names, addresses, or telephone numbers are not disclosed, this listing can be used by the membership as well as the public and professional community. (See "Membership and Group Meetings/Conventions"; "Meetings"; "Locating Meetings" and "Conference Approved Literature and Service Tools/Materials"; "Other WSO Publications"; "World Directories.")

Cooperation

Chairpersons of local service committees should communicate with the respective Area Coordinator.

Employees in Al-Anon Services

Tradition Eight states that "Al-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever nonprofessional." Therefore, any Al-Anon member who is gainfully employed in an Al-Anon service does not serve as a volunteer in a policy-making position, such as Group Representative (GR), District Representative (DR), Area Assembly Officer or Coordinator, Delegate, or WSO Trustee.

Autonomy of Groups

In keeping with the Traditions and Warranty Five of Concept Twelve (see "Concept Twelve" in "Al-Anon's Twelve Concepts of Service"), local, Area, or WSO service entities have no authority to close a group or engage in other punitive actions against a group because they disapprove of the manner in which a group practices the Al-Anon program.

[Page 121 above Local Public Outreach: Roles and Responsibilities]

Al-Anon Information Services (AISs) or Intergroups

In keeping with Traditions Four, Six, Eight, and Nine, an entire Area, or Districts or groups that have the support of their Area or international structure, may agree to establish a registered Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) or Intergroup. In keeping with Tradition Seven, the AIS or Intergroup operations are sustained by the groups, Districts, or Area which it serves. (See the guideline *Al-Anon Information Services [AIS] [G-4]* and the "Al-Anon Information Service [AIS/Intergroups]" section of this *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* for information on being or registering as an AIS.)

MOTION #7 – (86 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions, 2 void) – CARRIED

To approve the 2023 Annual Report.

MOTION #8: – (84 yes, 2 no, 4 abstentions, 0 void) – CARRIED

To form a task force of the Conference Leadership Team and a minimum of three Delegates charged with proposing how Delegates could be selected and participate on CLT to contribute to WSC agenda development.



Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

2023
WORLD
SERVICE
OFFICE
ANNUAL REPORT

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Greetings & Thanks

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees (Trustee)

David B., Chairperson of the Executive Committee (At-Large Member)

Vali F., Executive Director

2023 was an important year for the Al-Anon program. We lived our World Service Conference theme of “Love, Laugh, and Grow Together” in many ways throughout all 12 months. Throughout the Annual Report that follows, you will read about the accomplishments of the World Service Office through its Board of Trustees, Executive Committees, and WSO Staff, including:

- Over 4,000 people from around the world gathered together either in person or (for the first time) virtually for the seventh Al-Anon International Convention in Albuquerque.
- There was overwhelming demand for the first new daily reader in over 20 years, *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34).
- The fellowship strongly supported the operations of the WSO—financially, through both literature purchases and contributions from members, as well as in all segments of the Links of Service.
- Exciting progress was made in support of the needs of the Global Electronic Area and electronic groups generally, with 80 percent of Areas within the WSC Structure accepting electronic groups as the year came to a close.
- Additional growth occurred in the breadth and depth of support for Al-Anon’s structures in countries all around the world, both through increased contact in various formats as well as services offered.
- WSC members were “welcomed home” to the WSO during Conference to see the facility and meet the Staff in person.
- One key area of focus for the Board of Trustees was in the area of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, where the Trustees collectively held the mirror to themselves to see how their thoughts and actions in this area impact the fellowship that they serve and the decisions that they make as Trustees.

We thank the dedicated Staff of the World Service Office for their tireless efforts throughout the year. Change is a constant theme for all of us, and the WSO is no different in that it experienced Staff departures and arrivals, retirement of a long-time Staff member, and the unfortunate loss of another who was a servant and friend to many past and present WSC members. Yet through it all, the 45 WSO Staff members remained steadfast in their work to ensure the Al-Anon program remains accessible and growing for those who need it.

Who We Are: Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan

VISION

Families and friends of alcoholics find hope and encouragement to live joyful, serene lives.



MISSION

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. is a spiritually based organization that helps the families and friends of alcoholics connect and support each other through barrier free meetings, information, and shared experiences.



DOMAINS & GOAL STATEMENTS

Members: AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics.

Recovery & Service Tools: AFG, Inc. develops and publishes materials to share the collective experience of the families and friends of alcoholics.

Awareness: AFG, Inc. builds public and professional awareness of the Al-Anon program.

Financial Sustainability: AFG, Inc. encourages membership and organizational self-support by aligning resource allocation with its core purpose and strategic priorities.

Global Engagement: AFG, Inc. invests in each new generation of trusted servants to preserve our legacy and improve our structure and operations to meet the needs of the global landscape.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Members:

1. Provide access to the Al-Anon program for all
2. Advance support to underserved and diverse communities
3. Understand member and group needs

Recovery & Service Tools:

1. Create attractive, new content by gathering, processing, and disseminating pertinent information
2. Communicate the message of hope in a way that is current, appealing, and widely available
3. Reduce barriers to accessing information created by cultural and linguistic obstacles

Awareness:

1. Identify and reduce the effects of biases that may be preventing effective outreach
2. Validate the effectiveness of the Al-Anon Family Groups program in helping our members
3. Educate the public and professionals about who we are, what we do, and why
4. Build relationships with the media, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and professionals

Financial Sustainability:

1. Align resources to support the needs of the fellowship in accordance with Al-Anon's spiritual principles
2. Create opportunities for members to support AFG, Inc.
3. Improve transparency of the financial needs of AFG, Inc.
4. Manage risk to reputation, operations, and assets

Global Engagement:

1. Reinforce the process for passing experience on to incoming trusted servants using effective approaches for the new generation
2. Communicate leadership skills required for trusted servants and create development pathways
3. Collaborate globally to share knowledge and evolve our programs and communications

Our Intentions

Strategic Plan

In January 2023, as in the last several years, members of the Staff Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)¹, Board of Trustees, and Executive Committee gathered at the January Board meeting to agree on priorities for the World Service Office (WSO) and its Staff and Volunteers for the coming year. SLT presented a vision, referred to as the WSO Projects Landscape, which outlined Strategic Plan Strategies it proposed undertaking or carrying on in 2023 as well as major project initiatives not directly identified as Strategies. These initiatives included hosting the 2023 Al-Anon International Convention with A.A. Participation, connecting with World Service Conference Structure Area and international structure trusted servants to define a potential concept for registering electronic Alateen groups globally that would protect Alateens and the Al-Anon Family Groups name, and continuing the technical development and implementation necessary to support electronic groups seeking both global and local audiences.

Strategic Plan - Board of Trustee Initiatives

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees

David B., Chairperson of the Executive Committee

Vali F., Executive Director

While Staff have primary responsibility for executing the Strategic Plan Strategies outlined in the WSO Projects Landscape, the Board of Trustees and its Committees continued Strategic Plan initiatives to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Board and the service structure and to increase the transparency and approachability of the Trustee application and selection processes. Some of these initiatives evolved as a result of the Strategic Plan Refresh undertaken in 2021.

2021 Strategic Plan Refresh Impact on our Work

Lynette K., Vice-Chairperson of the Board (Trustee)

Work on refreshing the Strategic Plan began in 2021, and the current Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees (Board) in January 2022. This refreshing of the Strategic Plan gave the Board and Executive Committee (Exec) members a nudge to look once again at the work we are doing and think about which Domain of the Strategic Plan—Members, Recovery & Service Tools, Awareness, Financial Sustainability, or Global Engagement—our work fits into.

That nudge also reminded me of something a previous outside consultant employed by the Board had once said: that as Board members, we should look at the work we are doing. If our work does not fit into or move the Strategic Plan forward, then we should reconsider that work. This makes perfect sense. The Board sets the direction for Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. through our Strategic Plan. Why would we want to continue with work if it is not moving the Strategic Plan forward?

Earlier this year, Exec recommended that each Board Committee or Work Group incorporate into its Guideline a statement about how the work of that Committee or Work Group supports the Strategic Plan. What a brilliant idea! For the committees that I am serving on, the recommendation gave us an opportunity to think about how our committee's work is supporting the Strategic Plan and what work, if any, could be let go. Additionally, this work gave me the opportunity to reflect on the idea that no matter what Al-Anon service role I am serving in, I am working to make sure Al-Anon continues to be there to support the families and friends of alcoholics.

¹The Strategic Leadership Team consists of the three Directors, two Associate Directors and a Manager. Its primary purpose is to deliver the strategic priorities of the organization as defined by the Goal Statements and Strategic Objectives established by the Board of Trustees.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

In 2023, a significant strategic focus for the Board of Trustees was honoring its commitment to incorporate discussions and workshops related to diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of every Board meeting agenda. To accomplish this goal, the Board relied upon both external and internal resources, including two consultants who each brought different perspectives and ideas for how the Board could continue its efforts to improve inclusion both within the Board and throughout the Al-Anon service structure. As with most journeys, progress has not been without missteps. Thankfully, the message from Bill W.'s Leadership Essay contained in the descriptive text of Concept Nine of the *Service Manual* encouraged the Board to continue to experiment and explore despite challenges:

"Of course we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part, but that is better than to refuse to think about it at all."

Insight - The Board's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Journey

Debbie P., Chairperson of the Envisioned Future Workgroup (Trustee)

As a Trustee, I recognize that, without exception, we all have the same goal and intention for Al-Anon Family Groups: to support and foster growth so that, as our Vision expresses, "Families and friends of alcoholics find hope and encouragement to live joyful, serene lives."

In the past, the Board of Trustees and the World Service Conference have periodically discussed the lack of diverse representation in our Al-Anon groups and around the Board of Trustees table and questioned *why*. In 2023, the Board of Trustees decided to seek new directions with which to address the concern and answer the question.

At our January Board meeting, we participated in a workshop that encouraged each of us to become aware and gain new perspectives on our own understanding and beliefs around diversity, equity, and inclusion. The workshop invited the Trustees to examine and consider our individual unknown biases. We were collectively and powerfully affected—shocked by new personal insights and awareness—and yet still uncertain how to use this new awareness to help the fellowship. After much reflection and thoughtful discussion, the Board reached the consensus that there was value in bringing this workshop forward so all World Service Conference members could participate in the workshop and gain insight into the continued Board efforts regarding DEI. Despite concerns that there could be some resistance from those who consider this topic an outside issue, the Board concluded the workshop could be beneficial. In fact, Conference members' reception and understanding of the Board's motives was mixed.

The Trustees continued our education at the October Board meeting by participating in another workshop facilitated by a professional DEI consultant who was also a past Trustee. We were all encouraged when the consultant confirmed for us that looking at ourselves was a good way to begin the process of expanding inclusivity. Now, we are energized to develop ideas from this workshop.

I am excited and inspired to be part of this Board, which is fully committed to moving through discomfort and exploring what actions we can take to move forward.

2023 Strategies Update

Staff Strategic Leadership Team

In 2023, SLT consisted of the Executive Director, Director of Finance & Operations, Director of Programs, Director of Communications & Community Awareness, Associate Director–Community Relations, Associate Director–International, and the Publications Manager.

While unable to anticipate some challenges involving the International Convention, including the hotel reservation and July North American airline travel crises, the SLT efforts “to make good estimates” in 2023 allowed us to either complete or make incremental progress on all but one Strategy proposed to and approved by the Board of Trustees at its January meeting.

Domain: Members

AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics.

- Transforming Electronic Groups
- 2023 International Convention with A.A. Participation (IC2023)
- Alateen Electronic Group Feasibility

Domain: Recovery & Service Tools

AFG, Inc. develops and publishes materials to share the collective experience of the families and friends of alcoholics.

- eBooks Globally Strategy Refinement (reflecting international structure self-support)
- CAL Globally
- Translated WSO Guidelines
- al-anon.org Redesign Feasibility
- *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* Code Refresh

Domain: Awareness

AFG, Inc. builds public and professional awareness of the Al-Anon program.

- Public Outreach Toolkit Launch
- Longitudinal Survey (year two)

Domain: Financial Sustainability

AFG, Inc. encourages membership and organizational self-support by aligning resource allocation with its core purpose and strategic priorities.

- Phone System Replacement
- Improve the Online Store
- WSO Staff Emergency Texting System
- Member Guidance: Bequests

Domain: Global Engagement

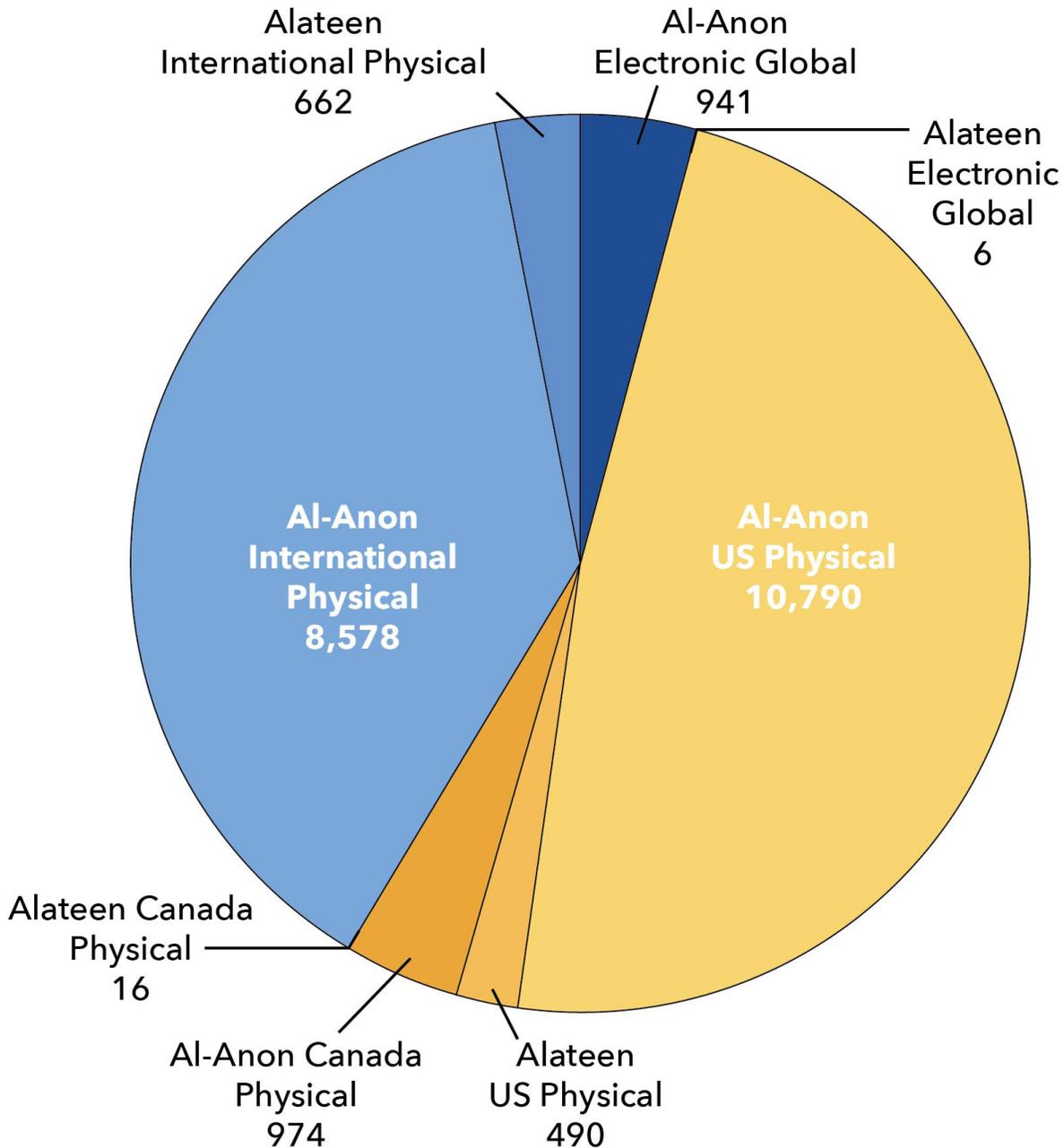
AFG, Inc. invests in each new generation of trusted servants to preserve our legacy and improve our structure and operations to meet the needs of the global landscape.

- Global Gatherings Launch

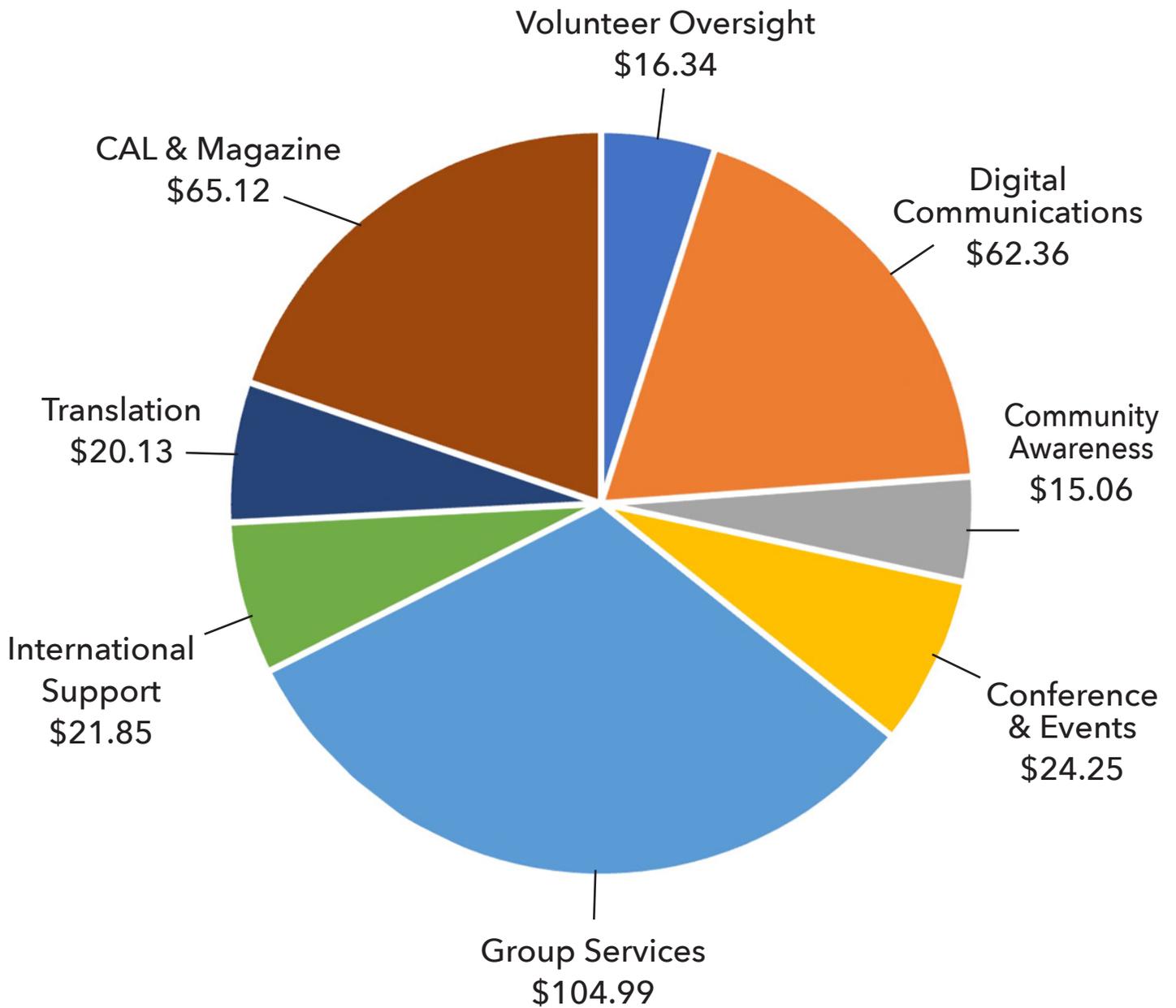
This year, the Annual Report headers under Our Work have been modified to differentiate sections detailing 2023 Strategic Plan Strategies or operational initiatives. Note that a few ongoing or smaller initiatives listed here, specifically the Longitudinal Survey and WSO Staff Emergency Texting System, are not referenced in the Annual Report. Additionally, two initiatives—Improve the Online Store and Member Guidance: Bequests—deferral of which was approved by the Board of Trustees in July are also not included.

Our Impact

2023 Worldwide Al-Anon Family Groups Statistics



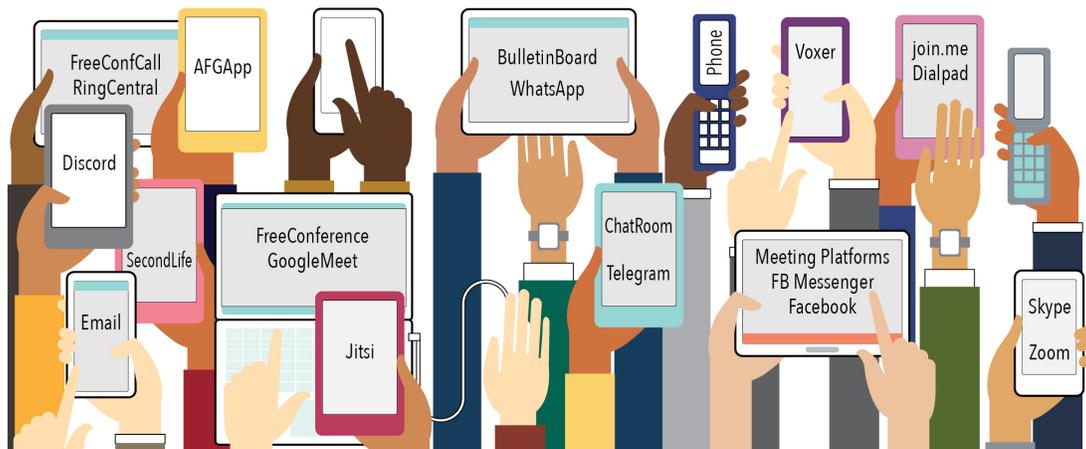
Cost of WSO Services Allocated across WSC Registered Groups



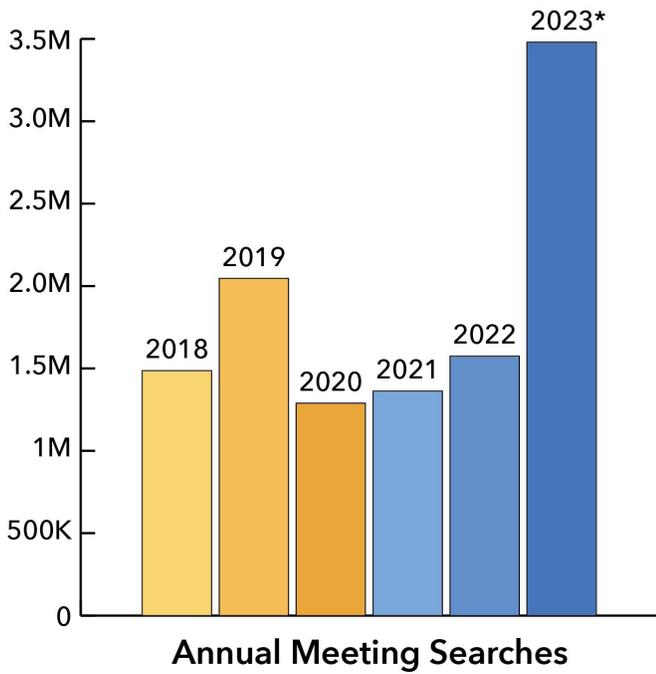
Groups by Language



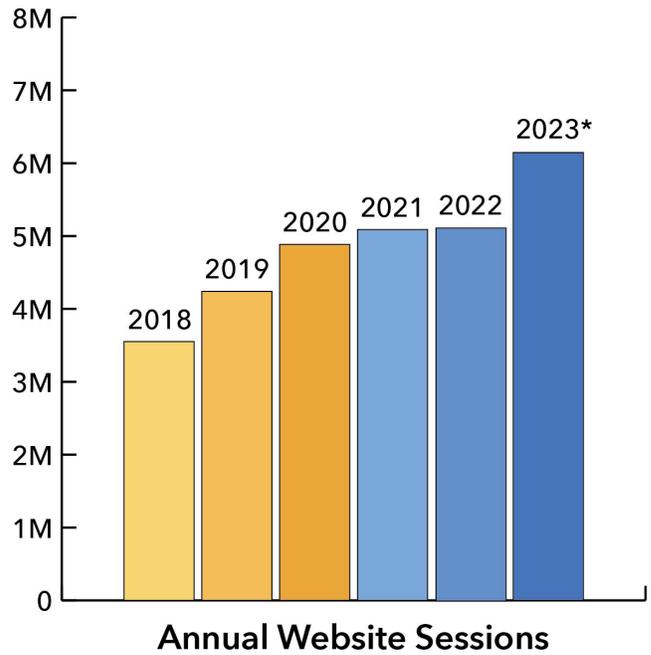
Meeting Platforms



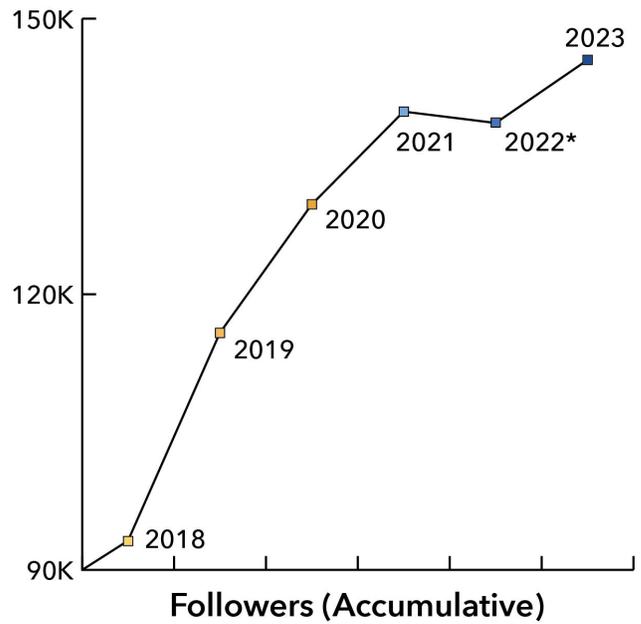
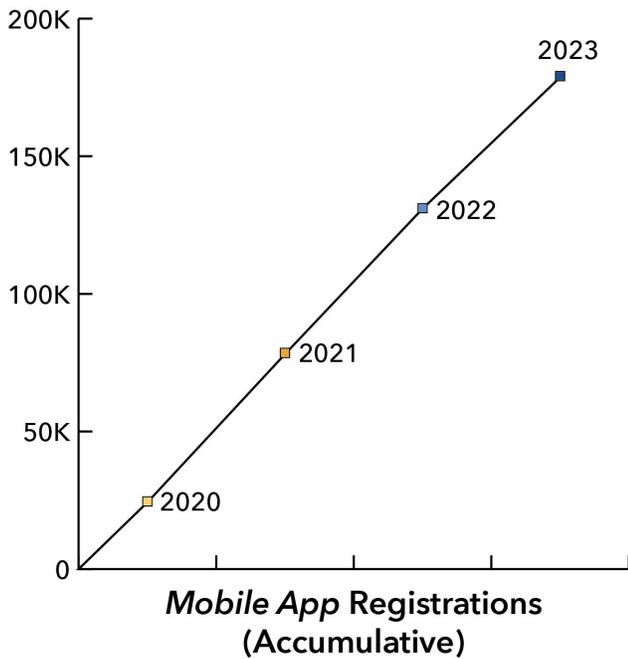
Digital Communications Connections



* In March 2023, the new Global Electronic search launched, providing greater search visibility.

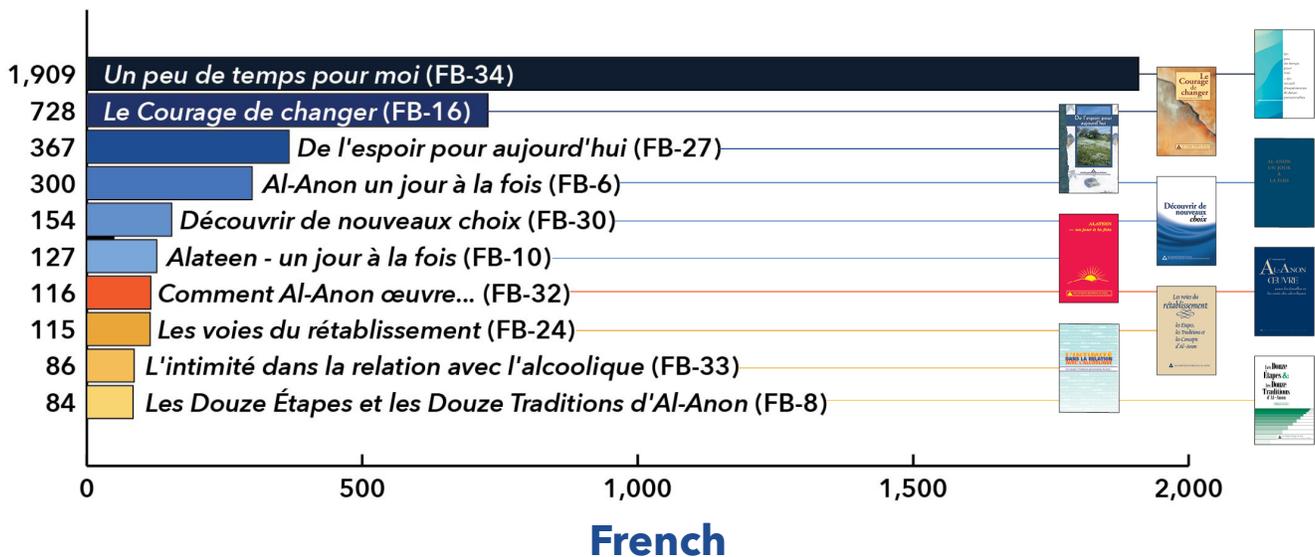
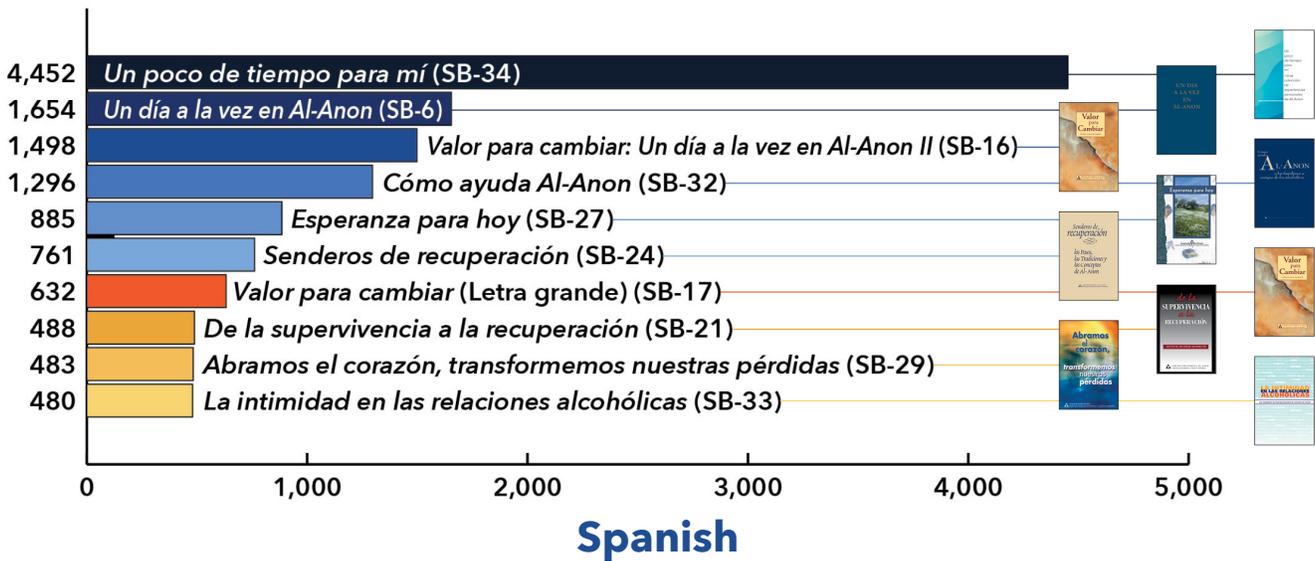
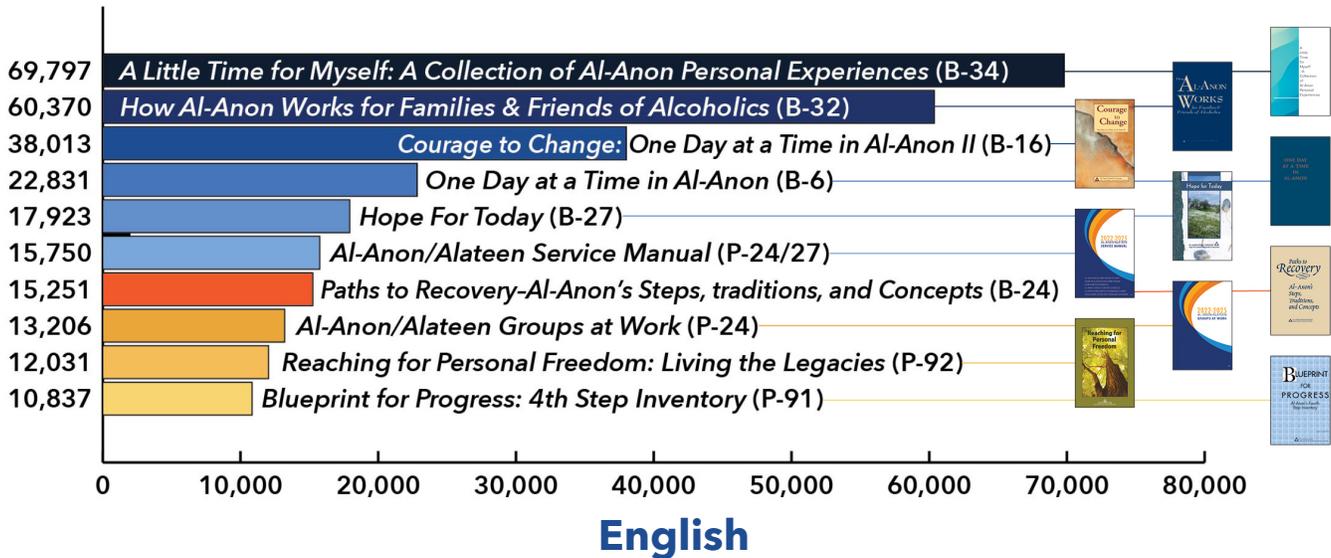


* In 2023, session tracking analytics changed from using cookies to using events.

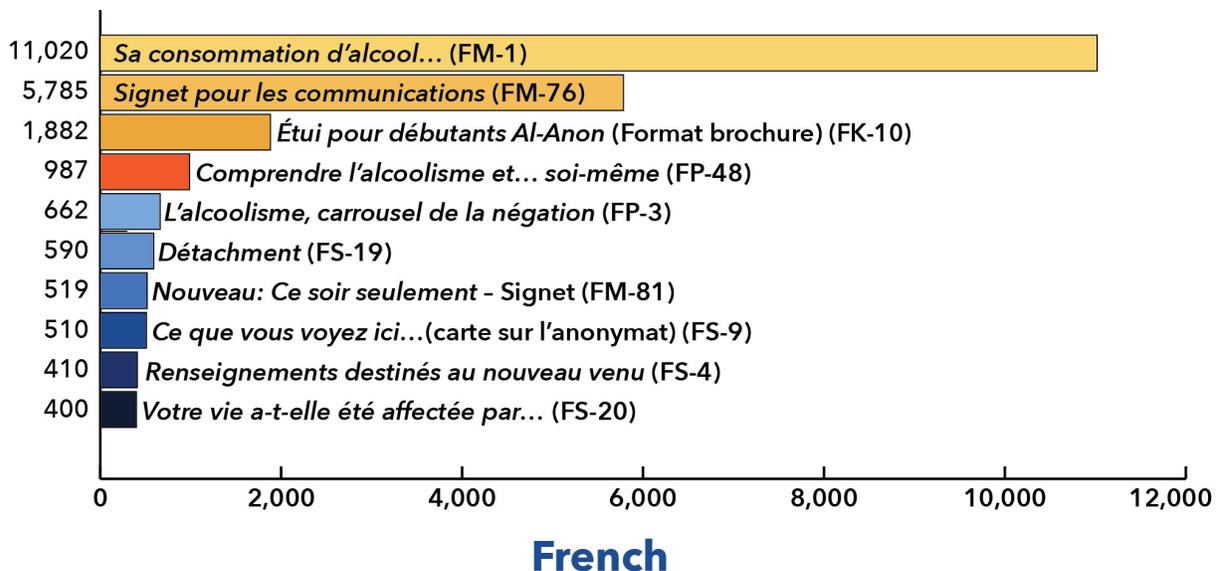
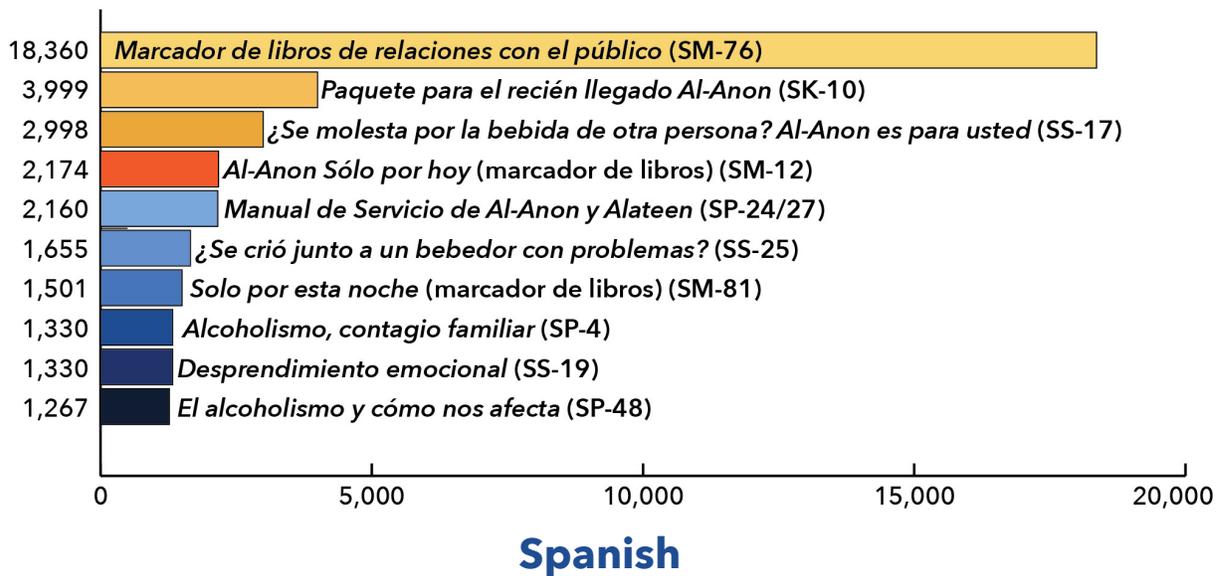
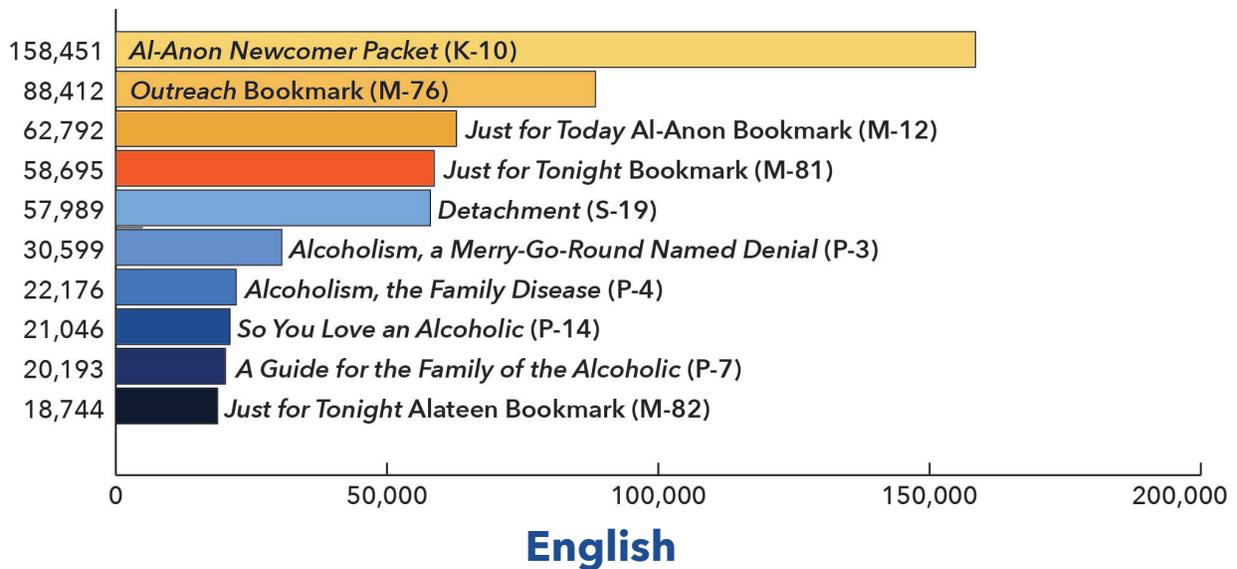


* No longer managing Alateen pages - removed 9,021 followers as a result

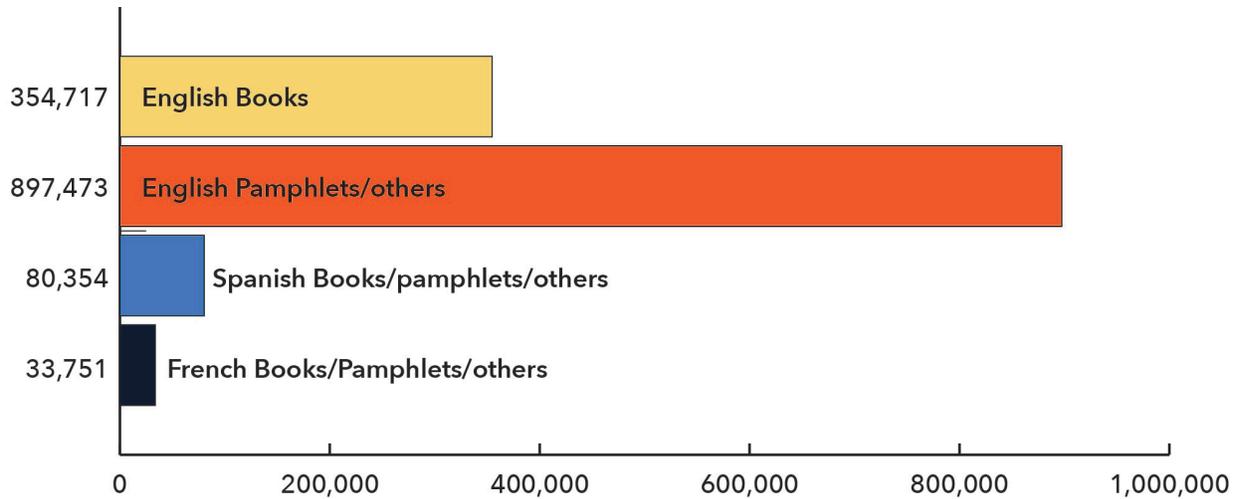
Top 10 Selling Books/Booklets of 2023



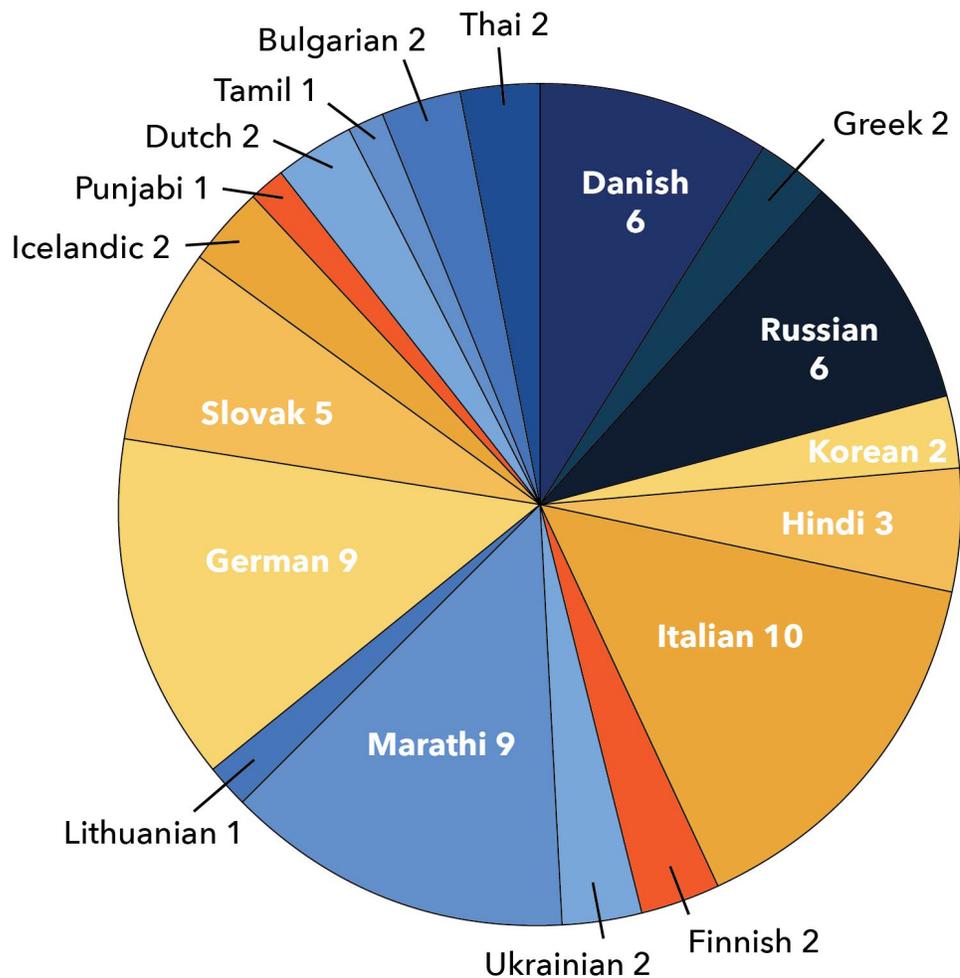
Conference Approved Literature Volume



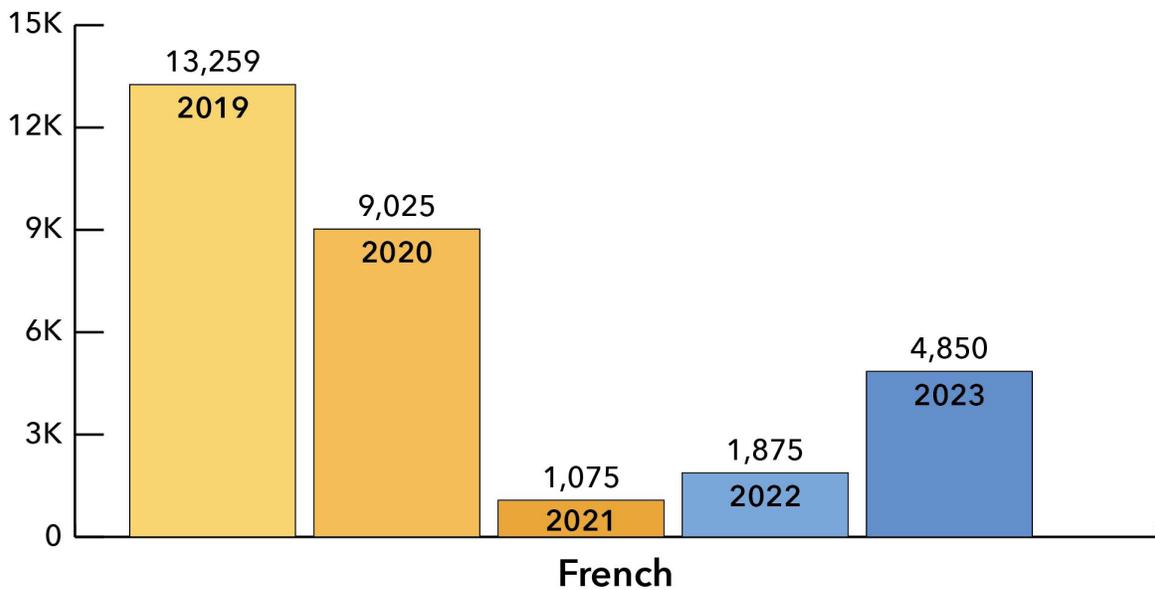
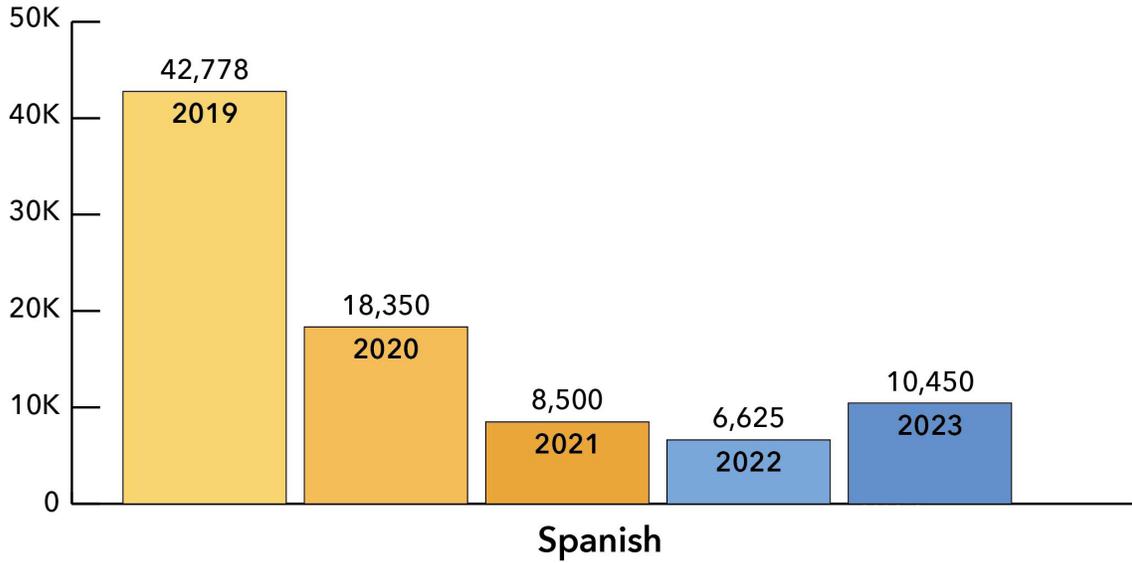
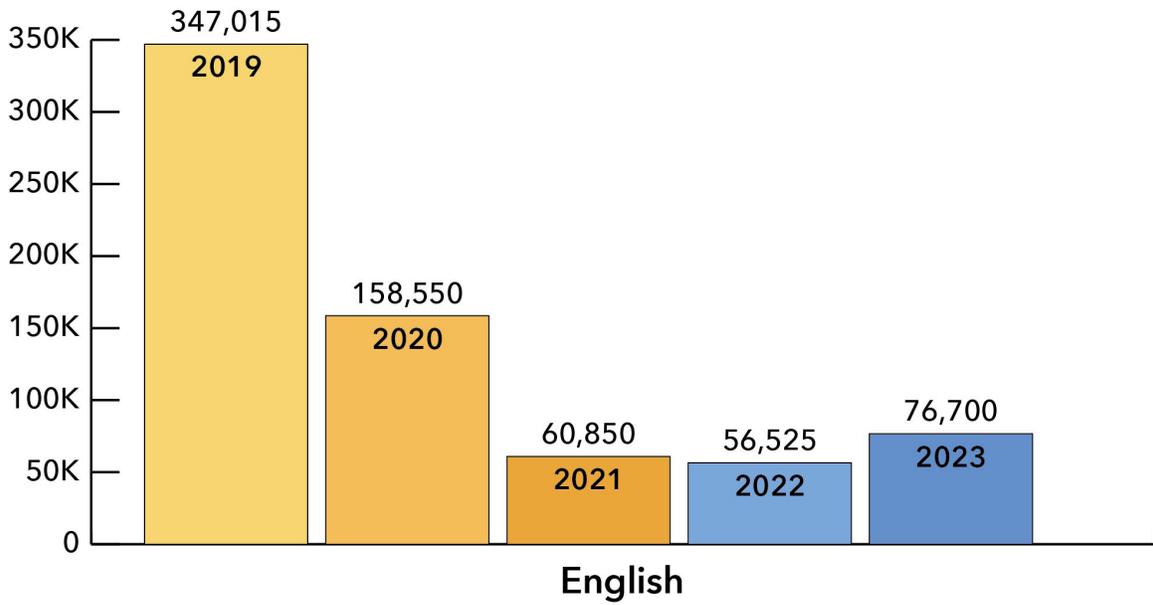
Conference Approved Literature Volume



Translation & Reprint Requests for AI-Anon Internationally



Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism



Our Work

Domain: Members

AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics.

Meeting the Needs of Our Groups and Our Members

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Sue P., Associate Director—Group Services

Valerie Stump, AFG Records Manager (Non-member)

The 2023 WSC theme, “Love, Laugh, and Grow Together,” permeated through the Group Services team as we continued to serve our members. Correspondence via email and phone was filled with excitement and hope as members shared their questions and concerns. The loving interchange that takes place in those moments inspires us in Group Services to be informed and prepared so that we can best support you.

The Group Services team was privileged to be able to participate in international structure meetings with Greece, Belarus, Cayman Islands, Venezuela, and South Africa as well as to support the evolving structure of Iran and share experience, strength, and hope. Topics included attracting trusted servants and teens to Alateen, where to hold meetings, and being aware of and adhering to local laws as well as welcoming electronic Al-Anon groups.

Group Services Staff shared in the first International Town Hall hosted by WSO to discuss and gain insight into the feasibility of supporting electronic Alateen groups and proposing the concept of a Global Electronic Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirement. This gathering attracted over 80 members from around the world, representing more than 25 countries. Results of this discussion were shared at the 2023 WSC to present a truly worldwide view for Alateen, which prompted additional discussion and encouragement to move forward.

Group Services also participated in the Identify the Optimal Flow for Online Group Records Task Force. The Task Force charge was to determine the requirements for supporting the changing landscape of where and how Al-Anon groups meet and how to best support the Area trusted servants accessing and interacting with that group information. In March 2023, the Task Force completed its work, which began in August 2022, with the presentation of its final report. One unique component of success for this Task Force was the first-time gathering of input from District Representatives. This information, together with that gathered from Area Group Records Coordinators, offered a conclusive perspective on what is needed, as well as what is working well, with the current Online Group Records application. For Group Services, our participation gave us insight into how better to support groups as they navigated decisions about whether to continue meeting electronically, hybrid, or in person, and whether to connect to a geographic Area.

Al-Anon Member and Group Communications

Group Services fielded significant correspondence from people looking for information related to helping individuals affected by the family disease of alcoholism, resulting in referrals to attend meetings. Since so many newcomers have questions about the meetings, having accurate contact information can help provide a newcomer with answers and someone to look for their arrival and welcome them to their first meeting. We were excited to be part of the process that resulted in over 25,000 hits to the al-anon.org/welcome page during 2023!

Calls continued to be answered regarding group autonomy and business issues. Groups that meet electronically searched for clarity with Area-related issues and how to make Seventh Tradition contributions. While there are some differences in how and where groups meet, it helps to remember that “a group is a group is a group,” always adhering to the Twelve Traditions of Al-Anon and the decisions of our World Service Conference.

Alateen Electronic Group Feasibility

The pilot project for the six Alateen meetings (five English, one Polish) taking place on the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* continues to thrive and be well-attended. Reported attendance averages from two to 16 in any given meeting, including newcomers who return! Certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) are rotating to serve the meetings. They are supported through an AFG Connects community as well as scheduled quarterly conference calls with Group Services Staff to address meeting concerns as well as to share best practices on meeting topics, engaging the Alateens, and technology.

The Electronic Alateen Group Feasibility Team successfully completed its charge to explore the possibility of registering electronic Alateen groups. The Team conducted thorough research including investigating national and international legal restrictions related to minors, surveying some Alateen members' interests, tracking and surveying international structures' Alateen pilot projects, surveying Area Alateen Coordinators, and facilitating robust discussions at the WSC and at an online town hall meeting with international structures. As a result, the Team determined it could be possible to support registration of electronic Alateen groups. In July, the Team presented its findings to the Board of Trustees, which agreed the Team had accomplished its charge. While this was a major accomplishment, the WSO Staff and trusted servants from international structures recognize much work is left to be completed in 2024 as the Team continues to explore how an electronic Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements process might be implemented globally.

Al-Anon Information Services and Literature Distribution Centers Communications

Al-Anon Information Service (AISs), Literature Distribution Centers (LDCs), and AIS/LDCs (sometimes known as Intergroups) within the WSC Structure reach out to the WSO for support to understand how they can operate and serve members with meeting information and literature sales. Group Services Staff answer their questions, including further explaining service positions and roles; finances; deciding geographical boundaries; and linking to the Area World Service Committees (AWSC) and Area Assemblies as liaisons.

Currently within the World Service Conference, the following number of these service arms are registered with the WSO:

	English	Spanish	French
Al-Anon Information Service (AIS)	81	2	1
Literature Distribution Center (LDC)	103	1	4
AIS/LDC (Intergroup)	85	16	0

Seven percent, or 19, of the English service arms and five percent, or one, of the Spanish service arms are in "no mail" status. For AISs and AIS/LDCs, this means they cannot be listed on al-anon.org, since the status indicates the service arm may not be functioning.

One role of Group Services is to continually update important contact information for newcomers, members, and professionals who are looking for local meeting information. In 2023, Group Services collaborated with other teams to begin the process to create an update form for these service arms that could be published in English, Spanish, and French.

Group Services also hosted the very first online informational service meeting for AISs, AIS/LDCs, and LDCs in March 2023. The meeting was extremely well-attended, with 80-plus attendees connected to AIS, AIS/LDC, and LDCs. Essential information was shared to support further understanding and knowledge, including:

- Service arm roles and responsibilities
- The importance of keeping contact information updated, especially for the Worldwide Al-Anon Contacts page on al-anon.org
- How to access AFG Connects
- Experience, strength, and hope.

A post-meeting survey of the participants concluded that 90 percent found it provided vital support to their roles. A second session was planned and held in November 2023, with over 100 members registering and more than 80 in attendance.

The Associate Director–Customer Service & Shipping and the Associate Director–Literature led the sessions, providing insight on how the small number of WSO Staff supports Al-Anon worldwide by processing orders and developing new literature. Recordings of both meetings were posted on AFG Connects along with information on supporting rotation of service.

[Inmate Correspondence Service](#)

The pandemic prevented the distribution of several WSO mailings, including the Inmate Correspondence Service (ICS) Contact update. Historically, there have always been Al-Anon members willing to serve incarcerated people by volunteering to write letters that serve as meetings, since many incarcerated populations must find their own path to the program. The WSO acts as a postman to preserve the anonymity of the ICS Contact. ICS Contacts send their correspondence to the WSO, which is forwarded to the assigned inmate and vice versa. Areas are encouraged to reach inmates through a variety of public outreach efforts.

Transforming Electronic Groups: Updating WSO Processes

Vali F., Executive Director

Valerie Stump, AFG Records Manager (Non-member)

Karen Wolff, Software Engineer (Non-member)

In 2023, the Transforming Electronic Groups (TEG) Strategy project team continued its multiyear effort to update WSO technology and processes to better support the electronic groups created as the result of 2021 and 2022 WSC motions. As the year began, WSO Staff found it challenging to keep the semi-automatic feed of the al-anon.org electronic meeting search current, due to the growing number of electronic groups registering as part of the Global Electronic Area. Geographic Areas continued to evaluate whether they would accept electronic groups in their Areas and what would happen to groups that wanted to transfer in or out of their Area once the decision was made. Groups temporarily meeting online that wished to become electronic groups registered in geographic Areas were also struggling to figure out how newcomers could find their meeting on al-anon.org given geographic meeting search restrictions.

[Global Electronic Meeting Search](#)

As the number of electronic groups seeking a global audience grew, so did the number of time zones, languages, and platforms supported. Automatic updates of group information from the WSO database to the meeting search became critical to ensure accuracy for the newcomer, as did the need to improve the user experience for those searching for meetings. In late 2022, Staff began an effort to upgrade our electronic group meeting search. Staff identified several features that would be critical to the success of the new meeting search, including:

- Embedded translation capability supporting as many languages as are supported by electronic groups—currently our global electronic groups are held in 18 languages.
- User time zone recognition, allowing meeting times to be displayed in the user’s time zone.

The new Global Electronic Meeting Search (GEMS) launched in March 2023 with very positive results. Later in the year, Staff discovered an incompatibility between several components of GEMS, which led to misaligned information being displayed when users searched for Spanish- or French-speaking meetings. A GEMS code refresh was approved to resolve the issue. In the meantime, ongoing component updates addressed the alignment issue. The experience reinforced for Staff that the complexity of the GEMS technology will require ongoing investment and resource commitment. At year end, Staff were completing their testing of the code refresh, which is expected to increase long-term code stability.

Group Transfers between the Global Electronic and Geographic Areas

The Team developed a process to support electronic groups choosing through group conscience to transfer from one Area to another following Area procedures. The process supports a group submitting a request on al-anon.org to join a new Area and transfer out of the Area where the group is currently registered. Once submitted, the transfer request notifies the group and Delegates for the Areas involved. After the initial trial of the process, Staff recognized Area Group Records Coordinators (AGRCs) needed to be included in the process. Given technical challenges, AGRC notification is currently limited copying AGRCs on the original request. This approach provides the AGRCs and Area Delegates with necessary background information. Transfers are completed once approved through both Area procedures.

Geographic Meeting Search

The number of geographic Areas that accept Al-Anon electronic groups and have policies/processes to support them increased significantly in 2023. At year end, 58 Areas were accepting electronic groups. As of September, groups with electronic meeting locations in geographic Areas were incorporated into the Al-Anon Group Annual Update Sheet mailing, while groups in the Global Electronic Area (GEA) will receive the update in January.

Finding an electronic meeting seeking a local, geographic audience also became much easier this year. The geographic meeting search on al-anon.org now displays electronic meetings alongside local physical meetings. Electronic groups are easy to distinguish from physical groups by the custom pin on the map view and wording on the listing. The meeting search was also updated to allow those interested in attending an electronic group to join the meeting directly from the listing. The 2023 update allowed for the automatic refresh of meeting information, ensuring the most accurate results possible and a good user experience.

Insight: Impacts of Electronic Groups on the Service Structure

Norm W., At-Large member of the Executive Committee

Electronic groups have dramatically affected our service structure and have greatly expanded the number of meetings available to those seeking Al-Anon recovery. Electronic groups have enabled us to move closer to achieving our Mission that “families and friends of alcoholics connect and support each other through barrier free meetings, information, and shared experiences.” It could even be asserted that electronic groups enabled the fellowship to survive and prosper throughout the pandemic and into the future.

Because of the success of electronic groups, the WSC Structure has even added a 68th Area, the Global Electronic Area (GEA), which is made up exclusively of electronic groups seeking to attract a global audience. At year end, the GEA had 941 groups holding 1,556 meetings. In addition, some groups still temporarily meet electronically, and some electronic groups have moved into geographic Areas and seek to attract a local audience.

The impact of the electronic groups on Al-Anon is further demonstrated by the extraordinary success of the *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App*, which has more than 177,500 active users.

Numerous Areas have held and continue to hold Assemblies and AWSC meetings electronically, as well as many District meetings. Without exception, service participation using technology has increased! All as a result of welcoming electronic groups to our service structure.

Electronic groups have helped make meetings available on a 24/7 basis worldwide. Electronic meetings are available in at least 18 different languages and on more than 20 platforms. Members on all continents can experience Al-Anon meetings based in South Africa, Great Britain, Mexico, France, Australia, India, Russia, Brazil, and many more countries. Thank you, electronic groups, for fostering our unity and truly making us a worldwide fellowship.

Archives: Engaging with Our History

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Jennifer U., Archivist & Conference Specialist

In April 2023, the WSO Archivist of 27 years retired, leaving behind a legacy of contributions that continue to resonate in daily operations. The mission of the Al-Anon WSO Archives remains steadfast, aiming to permanently document the history of Al-Anon and Alateen, make organizational history accessible to members and researchers, and provide a contextual understanding of Al-Anon's evolution, principles, and traditions.

Archives plays a crucial role in offering resource materials and services to Al-Anon members, researchers, and others interested in the history of Al-Anon/Alateen. This includes responding to global information requests and supporting local Areas, Districts, groups, and individuals conducting research on their history.

Research and Process Improvements

In 2023, Archives Staff undertook several activities to improve processes and increase internal awareness:

- Completed an inventory of Board of Trustees and its Committees' meeting minutes, identifying gaps and strategies to fill them.
- Reviewed and improved procedures.
- Conducted extensive training with the cloud-based archival solution provider.

American Archives Month in October was marked by a presentation at an all-hands Staff meeting emphasizing the significance of preserving the history of Al-Anon Family Groups, including Alateen. A scavenger hunt for WSO Staff engaged employees in our history by showcasing key artifacts around the Corporate Landing office.

Group and Structure Research

In 2023, the Archivist addressed over 60 group registration requests, a commonly sought-after archival service. Working closely with the AFG Records Team, detailed research, often dating back to old World Directories, was conducted to determine the formation dates of groups, some spanning over 50-60 years. The Archives actively responded to numerous requests for information, using tools such as the Archives Guideline (G-30) and the online Archives Research Request form (AR-9) to manage and respond to requests promptly.

Archives also conducted research for the WSO International Team exploring the history of over 70 international structures, including Al-Anon in Iran, the Russia with Love project, and other notable requests.

Archives Exhibits and Tours

In 2023, the Associate Director–Community Relations and the Archivist collaborated to begin a regular cadence for rotating the Archives exhibit cases and displays in the WSO lobby, with the first rotation occurring ahead of the 2023 WSC. Visitors and Delegates at the WSC expressed excitement at exploring the Archives and gaining insights into the organization’s rich history.

Ongoing WSO tours, which include a visit to the Archives, received positive feedback, which led to improvements in the tour script. Collaboration with the Graphic Design/Publications team led to the creation of professional signage for Archives and tour gift books, enhancing the visitor experience.

Collection Growth

The digital collection continues to expand, with over 100,000 documents stored in cloud-based archives repositories. While not entirely paperless, the Archives is actively moving toward digital preservation to safeguard its history. Generous donations of historical materials, including audio recordings, photographs, and letters, have enriched the collection. Notable donations include an old letter from a Hawaii Delegate and audio recordings from past Virginia Delegates featuring international and spiritual speakers from the 1968 WSC.

Collection growth is a key responsibility for Archives, and the Archives Team’s collaborative efforts with various stakeholders underscore the ongoing evolution of the Archives and its vital role in preserving and sharing the history of Al-Anon and Alateen.

Digital Communication: Connecting Members

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

Al-Anon Family Group Mobile App Code Refresh

The *Al-Anon Family Groups Mobile App* was launched in August 2020. Since then, the *Mobile App* has had two significant upgrades, which added much-needed features and improved the user experience. At the start of 2023, however, the development code for the *Mobile App* was over three years old. And while we added features and improved the design, the base code was primarily the original code from the initial launch of the *Mobile App*.

This year, we invested in long-term success for the *Mobile App* by completely updating the underlying code to the most widely used coding language today. This simplifies future updates in addition to providing a better user experience to members in the *Mobile App*. This code is more streamlined and requires fewer resources to run, which makes it smoother and faster. We continue to work through issues as they arise; most recently, we worked through a compatibility issue with the latest version of Zoom and the latest operating system of Android devices.

al-anon.org Redesign Feasibility

We have launched a feasibility study to determine the estimated costs associated with a complete redesign of al-anon.org. The website was last redesigned in 2017, which makes it a prime candidate for a significant update to take advantage of the latest advancements in website technology. Staff has identified the key features members need on the website, along with some areas which need improvement. Some updates being considered include additional accessibility features, easier access to the most-used member resources, and simplified navigation. This project will provide the necessary information to make an informed decision about whether and how best to proceed with a site redesign.

International Conventions

Vali F., Executive Director

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

2023 Al-Anon International Convention

Al-Anon's Seventh International Convention (IC2023) saw 3,387 Al-Anon members, 42 Alateen members, 293 A.A. members, and 54 guests register for the Albuquerque, New Mexico celebration of recovery! Making history, an additional 741 people participated *virtually*, as the 2023 International Convention included a virtual component that allowed attendees an option to watch recordings of the Big Meetings and daytime sessions in all three languages. The virtual registration option offered those attendees the ability to watch a recorded version during convenient local time zone hours.

International Conventions are an enriching way to champion the Board of Trustees' Members Goal, "AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics," and a total of 4,517 participated in doing just that in person and virtually in Albuquerque!

Insight: Creating "New Hopes, New Friends, Renewed Recovery"

Kathi M., Chairperson of the Conference Leadership Team—2023 (Trustee)

I feel blessed to have attended many International Conventions since I started in Al-Anon. This was my first time as a Trustee. I got to participate in so many ways: behind the scenes, and right out front as one of the Parade MCs. There were so many firsts: the parade was held in the morning, leaving Friday evening free for fellowship. There was a virtual component, a party in the plaza, and I got to dance in the rain.

I was grateful and impressed that we attracted seven professionals to attend our program for professionals and the media. The program included a professional panel, which received many positive reactions. I personally appreciated hearing the panelists speak on Al-Anon and what it has done for their clients. I learned years ago that Al-Anon is not anonymous, its members are. I believe having this program at our Convention was truly a big boost to our public outreach.

Being onstage for the Language of Love Parade and announcing all the different structures and Areas that form part of our global fellowship gave me chills. What a gift to include those who couldn't travel to join us but did so virtually. I'm grateful to have co-chaired the in-person event which was simultaneously streamed to members attending virtually. I even received a message from members thanking me.

There were some challenges at the Convention: finding places to eat, everyone wanting the same sessions, and rain during our party. But those are the stories that will be told, great memories that I will laugh about in the future. I didn't starve, order was restored, and I danced in the rain with some of the nicest people.

"New Hopes, New Friends, Renewed Recovery" was our 2023 International Convention Theme, and I believed we lived up to it.

With the assistance of a convention management consulting firm, all of the Staff's plans to reimagine—and yet provide a familiar landscape for—Al-Anon's 2023 International Convention with A.A. Participation came to fruition this summer.

Many attendees registered for the Day of Connecting add-on event held Thursday, the day before the Convention started. Participants began the day together in the auditorium before breaking out into various service-related interactive sessions. Over lunch, participants joined together again and were welcomed by a couple of Al-Anon-friendly professionals who shared their experiences referring their clients to Al-Anon. Members could join more sessions in the afternoon before gathering back together in the auditorium to share their experiences from the day.

Also new to the Al-Anon Convention experience, the weekend kicked off early on Thursday evening with a Party in the Plaza featuring music, dancing, and food just outside of the Convention Center in Civic Plaza and games, films, and food inside the Albuquerque Convention Center. Attendees enjoyed watching two Al-Anon and two A.A. films in English, French, and Spanish.

Moving the first Big Meeting from Friday night to Friday morning afforded virtual attendees, depending on time zone, the ability to watch the Language of Love Parade in real time. Following the parade and break for picture-taking, the Big Meeting continued with three speakers who shared their experience, strength, and hope as members of the Al-Anon global fellowship.

Saturday morning, our reimagined Trailblazers Breakfast on Route 66!, a ticketed event, was available for participants who wanted to celebrate current and longtime pioneers in our program. Three speakers shared their experiences: a former WSO Staff member's journey to Russia back in the '90s; a former WSO Deputy Director's relationship with Lois W., Al-Anon's Cofounder; and a member from the Global Electronic Area's experience with the evolution of electronic meetings, from groups to members of the 68th Area of Al-Anon's World Service Conference Structure. A separate *first-ever* longtime, Spanish-speaking members' session was held concurrent to the Trailblazers event.

All throughout the event, the New Mexico/El Paso Welcome Committee volunteers greeted attendees and answered myriad questions while staffing an Information Booth.

Members who downloaded the Convention app were able to plan in-person and virtual meetups with old and new friends, post celebratory pictures, and view the Convention schedule and floor map to ensure attendees knew where sessions were being held. Many Convention attendees chose to meet up with fellow participants by arriving early or staying after the Convention to tour Albuquerque and the surrounding area. Hot air balloon rides were among the most popular of the organized tours.

Following the International Convention, Staff participated in a retrospective with the event management company and also conducted their own. Among the takeaways were opportunities for growth along with clarity about what activities, schedules, and sessions were particularly successful in celebrating "New Hopes, New Friends, Renewed Recovery." After these conversations, Staff began planning for 2028! The location will be announced at the 2025 World Service Conference prior to our celebrating recovery with our A.A. friends from July 3-6, 2025 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Alateen at the IC2023

New Friends were made among the more than 40 teens who registered for the Alateen sessions held at IC2023. The four closed sessions and two open sessions held over two days were filled to seating capacity. Many Al-Anon members interested in learning more about Alateen attended the open sessions, to the point that some were turned away to allow the teens to participate. Certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS) were willing to serve to fill the 1:5 ratio to ensure safety and recovery in the meetings.

IC 2023 also hosted the first Spanish-speaking open Alateen meeting, in which an Alateen and their parent shared their experience on how Alateen has been helpful in the family dynamic. It was a privilege to plan this session and see how welcomed it was by our Spanish-speaking members.

Insight: Creating Inclusion for Worldwide Al-Anon

Jean L., Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee—2023 (Trustee)

My experience with the 2023 International Convention was enriched by the attendance of our international participants. How can you have an International Convention without the participation of our global community? This really hit home for me when I got to experience the language of the heart at the registration desk. One specific memory was greeting a group from Mexico. I could feel the excitement. I utilized a translation app on my phone to communicate. We shared contact information and gifts. Being able to break language barriers and share hugs and stories with members whose language I do not share was a highlight for me.

Having an online option allowed members in many countries around the world their first-ever opportunity to participate in this international Al-Anon recovery event. But even though this option eliminated travel costs, the registration cost itself could still be prohibitive for many globally. One of the gifts that was approved this year was the ability to offer cost-adjusted virtual registration fees for international participants. As a member of the WSC service structure, it is hard for me to imagine the burden of trying to pay a registration fee set in United States dollars and based on US economic conditions when I might be severely limited by the economic conditions where I live. Countries outside the WSC structure were offered a discounted price for virtual registration based on local economic conditions, which 127 Al-Anon members were able to enjoy. Approval of this discount demonstrated to me the Board of Trustee's commitment to making the Al-Anon International Convention as inclusive as possible.

I will never forget all that I experienced attending the International Convention. Having the International Convention in person as well as a virtual portion set at a realistic price to all participants allows us to honestly say, "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there!"

2025 A.A. International Convention

In support of the AFG, Inc. Mission, "Families and friends of alcoholics find hope and encouragement to live joyful, serene lives," as well as the AFG, Inc. Goal statement, "AFG, Inc. connects and supports the friends and families of alcoholics," Staff members attended their first site visit to begin the initial planning for Al-Anon's participation in A.A.'s International Convention, to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia in 2025.

Two Staff Coordinators were assigned to lead the WSO IC2025 Planning Team. In 2023, these Coordinators:

- Defined the Planning Team's roles and responsibilities
- Selected the headquarters hotel for Al-Anon's daytime sessions
- Recommended the number of WSO Staff and Volunteers needed to attend the event
- Met with the A.A. planning team and consultant
- Began reviewing Al-Anon International Convention Welcome Committee guidelines and considering ways to improve the collaboration between the Welcome Committee and the WSO IC2025 Planning Team.

Al-Anon's daytime program will consist of sessions on Friday and Saturday. In addition to sessions covering various recovery topics that were popular during Al-Anon's 2023 International Convention in Albuquerque, Staff is excited to consider offering several service workshops. On Friday and Saturday evening and Sunday morning, Al-Anon and Alateen members and their guests will attend A.A.'s Big Meetings.

Staff looks forward to A.A.'s 2025 International Convention in Vancouver, where we anticipate celebrating recovery with an estimated 4,000 Al-Anon and Alateen members, in addition to the tens of thousands of A.A. members and their guests.

2028 Al-Anon International Convention

Prior to IC2023, following the guidance of our event management consultant, the WSO decided to defer site selection bid process for the 2028 Al-Anon International Convention until after Albuquerque as opposed to before the Convention, as was the historical practice. The change reflected both shifts in the event planning environment after the global pandemic and 2022 resource capacity. Collaborating with the consultant, the WSO established a schedule, and WSC Structure Delegates were sent a site selection questionnaire to complete by January 2024. Like the site selection timeline, the questionnaire also reflected changes, inviting Areas to commit to organizing 400 Al-Anon member volunteers rather than asking for detailed evaluation of facilities. As of the year end, Staff had already received eight bids and are looking forward to what January 2024 will bring.

The site selection process will continue throughout 2024 in anticipation of an announcement at the 2025 World Service Conference. Those who attended IC2023 may recognize that this timing is different than the timeline shared at the closing Big Meeting in Albuquerque. Based on feedback from members and the IC2023 retrospectives, Staff recognized it would be more appropriate to announce the Al-Anon International Convention site at an Al-Anon rather than an A.A. event, so a new timeline was developed. Staff members are always grateful for the opportunity to learn and make different decisions.

Domain: Recovery & Service Tools

AFG, Inc. develops and publishes materials to share the collective experience of the families and friends of alcoholics.

Literature: Collecting, Editing, and Maintaining Our Member Sharings

Tom C., Associate Director–Literature

Carol C., Magazine Editor

Conference Approved Literature (CAL)

During 2023, the WSO Staff and the 11 members of the Literature Committee received 25 more requests for the development of new pieces of literature or revisions to existing pieces. The Committee brought a recommendation to the 2023 World Service Conference for the development of an in-depth piece about personal sponsorship and service sponsorship. It also continued answering the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making questions begun last year regarding the need for a piece about members' relationships with finances in Al-Anon recovery. Based on the results of that work, the Committee decided to recommend such a piece to the 2024 Conference.

While the development of new material is important, so is bringing attention to already existing literature. In addition to the monthly "CAL Corner" spotlight in *The Forum*, several newsletter and magazine notices put the focus on our literature throughout the year, including the April "Notes from the WSO" in *The Forum*, which explained what "conceptually approved" and "Conference approved as a concept" mean, and the May "Inside Al-Anon Family Groups" *Forum* article on the history of the Al-Anon Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps. The magazine continued the "CAL on..." spotlight for a third year, featuring memorable quotations on specific topics. February's issue included "CAL on Adult Children," September's was about "CAL on Carrying the Message," and November's featured "CAL on Anonymity."

Area Literature Coordinators are essential in sharing news and information about literature to local members. Updates were posted every other month on the Literature Coordinator community of AFG Connects, where Coordinators also share their ideas and questions about writing workshops and other ways to encourage Area members to take an interest in CAL. To help further communication between them, two Literature Coordinator conference calls took place—one in February and the other in December.

For members' convenience, the WSO once again provided 20 quotations in English, French, and Spanish for service arms to use in fundraising calendars without having to seek written permission. This service reduces work for trusted servants as well as WSO Staff.

Additionally, progress was made on the following projects:

GEMS BOOKLET (working title)

The 2021 Conference motion to add a new Foreword to *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (B-4) also included development of a GEMS BOOKLET (working title) of favorite ideas from this book and other material. During this year the Literature Committee completed review of two drafts, eventually giving unanimous approval and sharing high praise for the piece's content. The booklet was next

reviewed by the Director of Programs, the Policy Review Task Force, and the Executive Director. It is currently undergoing design and translation.

Insight: GEMS BOOKLET

Mary W., Chairperson of the Literature Committee (At-Large Member)

New this year, once all Literature Committee members had the opportunity to review the first draft of the GEMS BOOKLET (working title), a tally of all comments was distributed to the Committee. The diverse and disparate opinions of the Committee seemed to be all over the place. I wondered how we could ever reach a consensus, and how this booklet would ever come together. Prior to development of a second draft, we had further discussion about the scope and contents of “the gems.” Some previous discussions were revisited and some new perspectives added.

I have been a member of the Committee since before the initial discussions of this project began in 2018, and I voted to approve the current document. At times I have experienced feelings of frustration and fear during some of the Committee meetings. Now that my part in the process is completed, I have one more example of how my Higher Power, the Al-Anon principles, and the WSO Literature Committee Guidelines can help achieve an outcome that is so much better than I would have ever imagined.

Just for Tonight Alateen Bookmark (M-82)

This year, the *Just for Tonight* Alateen bookmark became a reality. After completing reviews by the Director of Programs, an Alateen Task Force, a Policy Task Force, and the Executive Director, the bookmark was designed, translated, and printed. It became available on September 1, and announcements were made on various communities of AFG Connects, as well as in *The Forum* and *In The Loop*.

Insight: First New Alateen Piece in 22 Years

Kathi M., Member of the Board of Trustees

As is the case whenever we provide materials that help everyone, I am very excited not only that we have our first new Alateen piece of literature in 22 years, but because of the opportunity that was given to our Alateen members to submit their sharings for the bookmark. It’s wonderful that there was such a positive reaction from the WSC to approve this piece. The bookmark is such a wonderful expression of the Alateen program.

As everyone knows, there have been so many questions and concerns about Alateen in the last few years. The pandemic was *definitely* not their friend and was a plague for many young (and older) people. The technological generation was getting slammed with technology for school, church, and even Alateen. Alateen meeting attendance dropped. I see this bookmark as a beacon of hope for our Alateen members and Alateen meetings, and hopefully a draw for so many more.

It has been a privilege to have had my children attend Alateen and to have served as an Alateen Group Sponsor for a meeting, at conventions, and for the Southern California Alateen Conference. I have walked through some tough times with my daughter when she was an Alateen member, but I believe Alateen gave her a safety net. I’ve also walked through tough times with the Alateen members in my groups and with Alateen itself. We’ve had lots of growing pains. But today I am truly blessed to be a grateful member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon, which includes Alateen. I am grateful to see these positive signs that Alateen will come back stronger. *Together*, we can make it. I have been fortunate to personally watch so many of the members of my Alateen groups grow into such amazing adults. Alateen and Al-Anon have made such a difference in so many lives.

Personal/Service Sponsorship Piece (working title)

Once given conceptual approval by the 2023 World Service Conference, the Literature Committee began developing a writing guideline to encourage members to share their recovery stories for the development of an in-depth piece about personal sponsorship and service sponsorship. Meanwhile,

Literature Coordinators have already been leading writing workshops for the piece, and sharings have been arriving at the WSO.

Recovery Magazines—*The Forum*, *Le lien*, *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción*

As the monthly magazine of Al-Anon Family Groups, *The Forum* continues to offer hope and help to the families and friends of alcoholics, as do our bimonthly Spanish and French magazines, *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* and *Le lien*, which until this year have been made up only of translated excerpts from *The Forum*. All our magazines feature sharings from members in various relationships with alcoholics and are intended to support recovery between meetings and provide topics for meeting discussion. The Publications team designs the magazines from the manuscripts developed by the Magazine Editor, incorporating member-submitted photographs as well as stock photography.

Member sharings are selected for publication based on recommendations from the At-Large *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC), whose members evaluate 50 sharings each month. The FEAC meets quarterly via web conferencing to discuss the status of the magazine and address reader concerns. Continuing a project initiated in 2022, FEAC members helped formulate questions for the first-ever online survey regarding *The Forum*, which took place in October 2023. The Committee also played a crucial role in planning for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of *The Forum* in 2024.

Dozens of Area *Forum* Coordinators from throughout the US and Canada also participated in web conference calls in 2023, sharing their service experience with one another. Many reported resuming in-person writing workshops to encourage member submissions to *The Forum*, reflected in an uptick in sharings received at the WSO.

Insight: Planning the 70th Anniversary of The Forum

Meg U., Chairperson of the Forum Editorial Advisory Committee (At-Large Member)

I have been honored to be a member of the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC) since 2020 and to serve as its Chairperson for the past two years. Our Committee is composed of five dedicated Al-Anon members representing different geographic regions, along with the *Forum* editor. It has been a privilege to meet and work with these members, as well as with the talented and very helpful Staff at the WSO.

Our Committee meets virtually several times a year and stays in touch through the WSO's AFG Connects platform. 2023 has been a fun and busy year for the Committee. We recommended a *Forum* reader survey, which was done in October. We have had fun brainstorming ideas and planning ways to celebrate the 70th anniversary of *The Forum*, which will be commemorated in 2024. For me, as a *Forum* subscriber since 1988, this has been especially meaningful. I can still remember some of those early articles I read that helped me so much!

Every month, Committee members read submissions by Al-Anon members from all over the world. We evaluate each sharing to ensure that what gets published in *The Forum* is consistent with Al-Anon principles, and we offer our thoughts on how each one impacts and inspires us. I am continually awed by our members' wisdom and resilience and the creative ways in which they practice and live our program. Like sitting down to have a cup of tea in the afternoon, reading a few sharings daily brings me peace and serenity, even in the midst of the most hectic day.

I have found much joy and fulfillment serving on the FEAC. Being a Committee member has been a wonderful way to be of service and to give back to our fellowship.

First Publication of Original Spanish- and French-Speaking Member Sharings

A milestone was reached for the WSO's Spanish and French language magazines in 2023! For the first time in their history, original submissions from Spanish- and French-speaking members were published in *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* and *Le lien*. Prior to this year, content in these two magazines

represented only translated versions of English member sharings. This milestone came as the result of a collaboration between the Digital Communications, Literature, and Translation Teams.

The final 2023 edition of the Spanish *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* magazine contained two sharings originally submitted in Spanish, and *Le lien* contained two sharings originally submitted in French. As reviewers, the Translation Team took great care to preserve the original voice of the members, limiting edits to grammar, punctuation, spelling, and clarity.

Translation

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Colette Norman, Translation Manager (Non-member)

The WSO Translation Team continues to make strides in providing faster translations to support the timely release of trilingual communications. A huge contributing factor is the access to our six freelancers who have been translating for several years now and are dedicated to preserving the essence of Al-Anon in their translations. This favorably impacted the turnaround of a large number of translation projects in 2023.

This year, aside from their routine translation projects (COB Letter package, Appeal Letter, *In The Loop*, *Le lien* and *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción* magazines, social media, etc.), the Translation Team had a robust schedule of special projects:

- *2022 Annual Report*—an average of 20,000 words were translated ahead of the projected date in under four months
- Two Electronic Group Transfer Forms—Global Electronic Area (GEA) to a Geographic Area and Geographic Area to the GEA
- Longitudinal Survey
- 2023 International Convention materials—al-anon.org International Convention page; Privacy Policy and Terms updates; emails and communications with attendees; program and participant messages for the Convention app
- *Just For Tonight* Alateen bookmark
- 2022 Strategic Plan Refresh
- New forewords for *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (B-4) and *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6)

Translated WSO Guidelines

Following the 2021 kickoff of a multiyear Strategy to progressively review and update all Al-Anon Guidelines—the shared experiences of Al-Anon and Alateen members on diverse topics—Staff continued its phased approach of translating and publishing updated Al-Anon Guidelines in English, Spanish, and French. As a result of this cross-team effort, a total of 24 guidelines (eight English, eight Spanish, eight French) were recently uploaded on our website.

Members can find these Guidelines, which are identified with a *New* label, under the Members menu at al-anon.org or by visiting al-anon.org/guidelines. Guidelines are free to download.

International Structures Support

As a result of the increased communication and collaboration between the WSO and trusted servants globally, the WSO identified two new areas in which trilingual translation would better support our international structures. The WSO committed to implementing these changes in 2023 to better support the Al-Anon Mission: “Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. is a spiritually based organization that helps the families and friends of alcoholics connect and support each other through barrier free meetings, information, and shared experiences.”

At a 2023 Staff Policy Implementation Round Table (SPIRiT) discussion, Staff discussed the potential challenge for Spanish- and French-speaking international structures seeking to understand the

background leading to Policy Digest changes. Since international structures are responsible for adhering to all policies contained in the Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies, Staff decided the WSC Summary content describing policy discussions needed to be translated in addition to the approved Policy Digest text changes themselves. The Translation Team implemented the new practice by translating the 2023 WSC “Announcing Events” and “Workshops” Task Force discussion. This discussion was translated along with the new Policy Digest text approved by the 2023 WSC and published as part of the 2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3.

To improve global communication and honor our trilingual responsibilities, the WSO International team collaborated with the Translation Team on a regular basis throughout the year to translate materials publicizing events such as the Global Gatherings and other AFG Connects communications.

Publications: Publishing Recovery and Service Tools

Vali F., Executive Director

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

Suzette McKinney, Publications Manager (Non-member)

eBooks Globally Strategy Refinement

In 2022, Staff gained an understanding of the potential impact on our Al-Anon international structures’ ability to practice Tradition Seven self-support created by what appeared to the WSO to be a relatively small volume of international ebook sales. Once informed, the WSO deferred the rollout of new CAL in ebook format until research could be conducted into options that would consider both the WSC and international structures’ needs.

That research began in earnest in the second half of 2023, once Staff’s International Convention responsibilities were fulfilled. The eBooks Globally Project Team relaunched its evaluation of current technology in a constantly advancing industry and made some exciting discoveries. Additionally, the Project Team began discussing the financial implications of both self- and third-party hosting of ebooks. The conversations illuminated not only revenue potential but also the considerable resource knowledge and expense required to manage, protect, and administer ebook sales. Honoring the WSO’s commitment to keep international structures informed, Staff attending the European Zonal Meeting provided an update, which included a plan to invite affected international structures to collaborate in 2024 on options and ideas.

At year end, the Project Team was working to prepare its presentation to the Board of Trustees in January, which will outline a plan for progressing the eBooks Globally Strategy in 2024.

Insight: Expanding CAL Availability through Flexibility & Creativity

Cindy M., Chairperson of the Finance Committee—2022 (Trustee)

As our program continues to move forward into the digital age, the WSO is continuously asked about having more CAL in electronic form. It was perfect timing that the electronic welcome for newcomers was released right after we were hit by the pandemic. It was originally a request from our online community, which has been around for over 20 years. The pandemic just increased our presence online, creating a thirst for more online literature.

While we have a good number of books, pamphlets, and issues of *The Forum* available in electronic format, in 2022 the Board of Trustees voted to answer the membership’s requests for more online CAL. Data about our CAL sales suggested ebooks would not reduce printed literature sales, which is a main source of income for the WSO. What we didn’t realize until hearing from our international structures at the 2022 International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) was that the Board decision to produce more electronic literature could be reducing these structures’ main source of income. Because of this new information, WSO Staff is currently researching and compiling a report for the Board to review

at its January 2024 meeting about how we can honor our international partners as we move forward to make ebooks more widely available.

In the meantime, we have another project in which multiple international structures are being connected to improve their access to already available CAL in their language of choice. We must be creative and flexible as we expand the availability of our literature so that any member, anywhere, will have access to their choice of content—either online or in print.

2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3

The *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* supports the Board’s “Recovery & Service Tools” Goal statement: “AFG, Inc. develops and publishes materials to share the collective experience of the families and friends of alcoholics.”

After overcoming significant supply chain delays in 2022, the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* v2 became available in print in English, French, and Spanish in January. Regrettably, Staff discovered two unfortunate errors in the English *Service Manual* on page 13. The word “God” was mistakenly italicized in Steps Three and Eleven. Staff corrected the online version, and the text will be corrected in the next printing. The errors did not occur in the French or Spanish *Service Manuals*.

Following the WSC’s approval of new Policy text, Staff translated the text and published v3, including housekeeping changes, online in English. Staff expect to publish the French and Spanish v3 online immediately after year end. Given current inventory levels of the *Service Manual* v2, the WSO did not print v3 in 2023; however, Staff did finalize replacement pages that members can download, cut to size, and add to their printed v2 copies.

The changes to the electronic version of the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3* include a housekeeping edit to the “Channel for Arriving at Policies” to reflect the accurate composition of the Policy Committee; an update to the Announcing Events Policy text per a 2023 Conference motion; a housekeeping change to “Electronic Communication Outside of Al-Anon” to replace “social networking sites” with “social media posts”; and a housekeeping edit to the Concept Eight descriptive text to reflect a 2021 Bylaws change.

Warehouse: Distributing Literature & Al-Anon Tools

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Camille Peters, Associate Director—Warehouse & Customer Service (Non-member)

Suzette McKinney, Publications Manager (Non-member)

A Little Time for Myself (B-34) Launch

In 2023, the WSO introduced the new daily reader, *A Little Time for Myself—A Collection of Al-Anon Personal Experiences* (B-34). Just as Al-Anon’s earlier daily readers reflect the times in which they were written, this book represents our fellowship as it is today.

The process to deliver this new piece, which occurred across multiple years, began with the Literature Committee identifying and reviewing the manuscript. The manuscript was completed and translated into Spanish and French during 2022, in keeping with our practice of releasing literature simultaneously in all three languages. Potential covers and binding for the book were also designed, and one version was approved in 2022. Once the design and translation were complete, WSO Staff began working with several different publishing vendors equipped to handle the volume and unique design of the book. The Finance Committee approved pricing consistent with our primary purpose. Staff sent updates to the LDCs and AIS/LDCs several times, informing them of relevant information along with a Priority Notice order form for preordering the book. Staff communicated availability dates via AFG Connects, *The Forum*, *In The Loop*, *Le lien*, and *en acción* and configured the Online Bookstore for sales.

Insight: The Excitement of Experiencing New CAL Be Fulfilled: A Little Time for Myself (B-34)

Tony S., Member of the Board of Trustees

I have been looking forward to this new publication for as long as I have been involved at the WSO. At the WSO in 2016, the first year I became Delegate, we were told that the WSO had collected 680 possible sharings and would need many more for this new daily reader, which had received conceptual approval by the Conference in 2014. In 2017, we were given the update that we had received 10,662 sharings. We were so excited. In 2021 when I became a Trustee, I heard the plan was to launch this book at the 2023 International Convention. We were even more excited!

At the end of this June, the first printing was launched, and in four days we sold out of all books taken to Albuquerque. A second printing of 30,000 books arrived the week before October Board week, and by mid-week, there were only 5,000 left. A third printing was already on order. The membership was hungry for this newest book, and judging from all the communications I have heard, they were not disappointed. Many members were excited about the new personal sharings and the question at the bottom of each page. This has truly been one of the greatest successes of 2023.

On a personal note, this daily reader has been a great addition to my daily routine. I love how it is laid out so differently than our other readers. The readings are so in touch with our changing world, the reflections are so closely related to the reading, and the questions give us something to think about as we go about our day. I really love how this book fits in with all the tools Al-Anon has given us. Thanks to all involved in making this happen.

All this occurred prior to the books being received in the Virginia Beach warehouse. Staff anxiously anticipated the books' arrival in time to ensure availability for sale at IC2023. Many pallets were shipped to Albuquerque in the hopes of providing adequate supply in all three languages. Both the Spanish and English copies sold out before the Convention concluded on Sunday.

Anticipating huge sale volumes upon return from IC2023, Warehouse and Customer Service Staff worked the Monday WSO Staff holiday before July 4 to start processing preorders for the LDCs and AIS/LDCs. Preorders allow LDCs and AIS/LDCs an opportunity to receive books first so they can distribute them to the groups and individual members in their respective areas. In 2023, we shipped 69,797 copies of *A Little Time for Myself (B-34)*.

Insight: Persevering in the Face of the Post-Pandemic Materials Distribution Realities

Diane B., Member of the Board of Trustees

This has been an exceptionally exciting year for new WSO materials. The WSO released the new daily reader *A Little Time for Myself (B-34)* at the 2023 Al-Anon International Convention. This new CAL was a huge success and sold out completely. There were supply chain delays with both the second and third printing, but WSO persevered, all the while ensuring transparent and timely communication with the Areas, LDCs, and AIS/LDCs.

My experience is that the world is still dealing with residual supply chain issues resulting from the pandemic, including paper supplies. Through all the delays and frustrations, WSO has done a stellar job of providing literature so we can carry the message to those who are suffering from the effects of the disease of alcoholism.

My message to members is always to purchase literature, write articles for *The Forum*, and contribute in any way possible to the development of Al-Anon literature. This is a small example of the work that is done daily at the WSO and through our Volunteers to ensure that our fellowship has the tools we need to carry out our Mission.

Domain: Awareness

AFG, Inc. builds public and professional awareness of the Al-Anon program.

Digital Communications

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Public Outreach Toolkit Launch

Historically, a popular Public Outreach resource was the *Best of Public Outreach*. This was a PDF document that provided lots of information about Public Outreach, including ideas for projects that could be completed by members in all different levels of service. The challenge with this type of document is that it is very tedious to maintain. In a digital world, things change frequently, and a PDF document is not flexible enough to be updated regularly. With that in mind, the Public Outreach Committee made the recommendation to develop and maintain a space on al-anon.org where trusted servants could share public outreach ideas with one another. This idea became the Public Outreach Toolkit (PO Toolkit), which launched on al-anon.org this year, featuring several of the projects from the *Best of Public Outreach*. These ideas are tagged with various attributes, making it easy for any member to find ideas that fit their service arm, budget, and/or time commitment. Furthermore, as the clearinghouse of Al-Anon Family Groups, we also created a form on this page for members to share their Public Outreach experience, strength, and hope. These submissions are reviewed by a Work Group of the Public Outreach Committee, then added to the PO Toolkit.

Insight: Impact of New Toolkit on Increasing Public Outreach

Jean H., Chairperson of the Public Outreach Committee (At-Large member)

I am currently serving my second one-year term as an At-Large member of the Public Outreach Committee. The opportunity to exchange ideas and participate in public outreach projects is gratifying.

Members have been invited to share information about their local outreach projects. When I review the submissions in my role on the PO Toolkit Work Group, I am amazed at the variety of creative ideas. Some are short-term projects, some are low-cost, and some are directed to a specific audience.

This new approach to sharing current public outreach projects offers our members the opportunity to use an idea, perhaps with some modifications, to share the message of help and hope offered by attending Al-Anon.

I believe the new PO Toolkit will ease member hesitation about trying a new outreach project, inspire others to do a project for the first time, and alleviate any roadblocks that could occur. I am looking forward to seeing more ideas added to our online PO Toolkit.

Same Public Service Announcement (PSA), New Delivery Method

For years, the World Service Office has produced and distributed PSAs throughout the WSC Structure. While our PSAs continue to be played on TV and radio stations, we have also expanded our reach through a new digital partner that helps us reach a digital audience. This new way to deliver our PSAs has generated over 3 million views of our message.

The Ever-changing Landscape of Social Media

Over the past decade, social media has been a successful channel for building awareness and attracting potential newcomers to our life-saving program. Currently WSO Staff maintain profiles in English, Spanish, and French on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Additionally, we also maintain a profile on YouTube, with videos in English, Spanish, and French, and a profile on LinkedIn to attract professionals in the position to recommend Al-Anon.

In 2023, Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, created a new platform to compete directly with X. While the WSO is not currently posting content on this new platform, Staff reserved the Al-Anon WSO profile names in English, Spanish, and French, so that when we are ready to start posting content, we can maintain the same brand identity as on all the other platforms.

Community Relations

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Trusted Servants—Our Vital Link to Public Outreach

The 14-member Public Outreach Committee, made up of an At-Large Chairperson, three At-Large members, eight Delegates representing each panel, and two WSO Staff members, met quarterly to assist in conveying the effectiveness of Al-Anon/Alateen as a valuable resource for families and friends of individuals struggling with alcoholism while attracting new members to our fellowship. The Committee's work supports the AFG, Inc. Strategic Goals of Recovery and Service Tools and Awareness by developing materials to share the collective experiences of families and friends to build public and professional awareness of the Al-Anon program. To remain relevant in the face of constant change, evolving cultural landscapes, advancing technology, and shifting public needs, the Committee has three work groups: Public Outreach Toolkit, Social Media, and Equitable and Unbiased Public Outreach Materials.

- The PO Toolkit Work Group reviewed 21 projects submitted by members.
- The Social Media Work Group rated 918 testimonies for posting.
- The Equitable and Unbiased Work Group investigated replacement materials for the discontinued pamphlet *Al-Anon Family Groups Welcome Gays and Lesbians (S-70)*.

Fostering Connections within the Recovery Community

AFG, Inc. engages in community relations to build positive relationships with various stakeholders, raises awareness about its Mission, and promotes understanding of the support Al-Anon provides to friends and family members affected by someone else's alcoholism.

One way we foster connections within the recovery community is through a mix of in-person and virtual events. Attendance at national conferences such as the American Psychological Association and NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, not only provided networking opportunities but included participation in sessions to learn more about current trends in the addiction and recovery industry. Our presence at Recovery Month Kickoff events was another occasion to engage with key public officials, advocates, and professionals. The events included a luncheon with speakers sponsored by Faces & Voices of Recovery and SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Walk for Recovery. The connections made during these conferences and events have helped raise Al-Anon's visibility and establish a pipeline for potential cooperation with professionals in the future. More than 50 meaningful contacts were established, with contact information being passed to the appropriate Area Public Outreach Coordinators for follow-up. Significant professionals and subject matter experts were incorporated into AFG, Inc.'s portfolio for potential interviews, contributions to *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, or panel participation.

Al-Anon Member Survey Data Supports Recovery Research

As AFG, Inc. continues to build bridges within the recovery community, our commitment to cooperation with professionals, researchers, and students remains steadfast. In 2023, the Associate Director—Community Relations and Senior Data Analyst were invited to attend a Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate's virtual dissertation defense presentation entitled "Does It Work If You Work It? The Therapeutic Elements of Al-Anon Participation." The student utilized the anonymous survey data from the 2018 Al-Anon Membership Survey to analyze the impact of participation on subjective well-being, finding positive correlations with spirituality, service, sponsorship, and consistent attendance.

This research was presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association's conference and shared with the Board of Trustees. Staff has continued to cooperate with the new Doctor of Psychology and their dissertation advisor, who reached out to discuss additional opportunities to cooperate with other students interested in conducting research using AFG, Inc. Membership Survey data.

Insight: Sharing Professional Validation of Al-Anon Recovery

Cindy M., Member of the Board of Trustees

The final dissertation, "Does It Work If You Work It? The Therapeutic Elements of Al-Anon Participation," was presented to the Board of Trustees, and I found it to be amazing! Here we have a professional who did their research and came up with evidence-based data that backs up what we hear in meetings: "It works if you work it!" Their findings suggest that the following four actions improve members' recovery:

- Going to meetings
- Being spiritually motivated
- Being of service
- Getting a Sponsor and being a Sponsor

As a member who has been told to do all these things, I was surprised by "being a Sponsor." I thought that being a Sponsor was just another form of service. In reflecting on sponsoring others, I see how it has greatly enhanced my recovery, as I am constantly driven back to the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service. So now, I encourage anyone that wants to grow in their recovery to not only to go to meetings, be spiritually motivated, get a Sponsor to work the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service, and be of service, but most of all to be a Sponsor or Service Sponsor to others! I am so grateful that we have a professional sharing their findings with other professionals, which helps to validate that our program works if you work it!

Domain: Financial Sustainability

AFG, Inc. encourages membership and organizational self-support by aligning resource allocation with its core purpose and strategic priorities.

Human Resources: Recruiting, Growing, and Retaining Staff

Vali F., Executive Director

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

In 2023, WSO Staff turnover was 11.1 percent², representing a decrease from 2022. Sadly, 2023 turnover included the unexpected death of a beloved, long-term Staff member and another departure resulting from health issues. Given his longevity of service, the WSO hosted a hybrid (in-person and virtual) memorial in November to honor our well-loved and immensely dedicated Staff member who passed.

Thankfully, during 2023, we were also able to onboard several talented new Staff members, including our part-time Maintenance Technician, two new Office Assistants, who have already begun expanding their roles to reflect their unique skills, a Human Resources Manager, and our Associate Director—International. Staff members, especially the Accounting Team, were grateful to have a full-time, experienced Staff member available to address the myriad human resources issues that arise even in a relatively small office. At year end, the WSO employed one part-time and 44 full-time Staff members.

²Note: The turnover percentage starting in 2020 is not comparable to previous years' calculations, as the WSO Human Resources Staff members applied an industry-standard calculation method beginning in that year.

With these new hires, and considering the constantly evolving needs of the Al-Anon Family Groups organization and fellowship, the World Service Office reorganized several positions to clarify responsibilities in keeping with Concept Ten and to utilize specific Staff member talents. The new Communications & Community Awareness Department was formed, consolidating the capabilities and skills of both the Brand and Digital Communications and Community Relations Staff. Several Staff members received opportunities to undertake responsibilities in new roles on different teams.

To reflect a July Board decision and to increase clarity around two key Staff benefits, the WSO updated its Employee Manual after review and approval by the Compensation and Executive Committees.

And finally, to acknowledge Staff members' incredible efforts in supporting our Mission throughout the year, the WSO hosted a holiday luncheon to which former WSO Staff members who still live locally were invited. The celebration served as its usual opportunity for Staff to connect and relax as well as the opportunity to acknowledge milestone Staff member service anniversaries at the WSO. This year, we celebrated five five-year anniversaries. Two early 2024 departures were also announced: the Executive Coordinator to the ED and Board was recognized for her efforts and wished all the best in her new position, and the Associate Director—Literature was recognized for his more than 22 years of dedicated service to ensuring the Al-Anon message of help and hope submitted by our members is shared and available through our Conference Approved Literature.

Insight: Sharing World Service Leadership with WSO Staff (Concept Eleven)

Carol M., At-Large member of the Executive Committee

As an At-Large Member of the Executive Committee, working with and getting to know the WSO Staff has been an incredible gift. Further understanding of what their work (and challenges) consists of, as well as how they serve the fellowship, is extremely humbling.

As noted on the al-anon.org website, the work of the WSO includes acting as the worldwide clearinghouse; registering new groups; planning and coordinating the WSC; guiding Al-Anon's public outreach efforts worldwide; and preparing and distributing CAL. My broader appreciation emerged through understanding how this work gets accomplished year after year to support the Strategic Plan, as well as how it ensures continuity of the organization for future generations, for it is in the discernment of the future that the challenge lies. Al-Anon the organization continually needs to access and adjust to the needs of Al-Anon the fellowship.

Like with other businesses and nonprofit organizations, 2023 brought some staffing challenges to the WSO. While Staff turnover remains low at the WSO, turnover has a greater impact on a smaller Staff. I appreciate the diligence and creativity of the Directors' Team³ when addressing open positions to look across the entire organization for potential resource reallocation as well as development opportunities for existing employees.

Human resources are the greatest asset that any organization has—without people, no work would be completed, and without good leadership and oversight, people would not know where to focus. As our Cofounder Lois W. said, "It takes one person to start something, but many others to keep it going." As a member of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen, I am beyond grateful to the entire WSO Staff for keeping it going.

³The Directors' Team consists of the Executive Director, Director of Finance & Operations, Director of Programs, and Director of Communications & Community Awareness.

Executive Director Succession Planning

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board—2023 (Trustee)

Lynette K., Chairperson of the Board—2022 (Trustee)

In keeping with their fiduciary responsibilities, at the January 2023 Board meeting, Trustees began discussions related to succession planning for the World Service Office (WSO) Executive Director. Following the wisdom contained in Bill W.'s Leadership Essay found under Concept Nine in the *Service Manual*, the Board began its efforts by looking "at past and present experience to see what we think it means." The Board reviewed notes from previous Board of Trustees discussions on the topic to understand the thought process that led to the implementation of a ten-year employment limit on the Executive Director position. The Board discussed the differences between rotation of service in the traditional roles within the fellowship and the nature of legal responsibilities involved in employment relationships with AFG, Inc. Trustees reflected on the differences in the Board's employment evaluation and transparency practices in place in 2017 and those which had been developed and successfully implemented since that time. The Board also gathered information about best practices from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), of which AFG, Inc. is a member, and other sources of senior leadership succession planning. The Board identified the differences between:

- Continuity planning—how the organization will function if the senior leader is unavailable due to illness or other causes for multiple weeks, and
- Succession planning—a structured approach for creating a smooth, planned transition between senior leaders, which includes nurturing and developing leadership candidates both inside and outside the organization.

With this background in hand, the Board recognized the need to differentiate and discuss two separate topics: the ten-year limit on Executive Director employment and ongoing succession planning for the Executive Director. Given the importance of both topics, discussions began in January and continued across each subsequent Board meeting in 2023. Having conducted three thoughtful and informed discussions, the Board made the decision in July to remove the ten-year limit on Executive Director employment in favor of the transparent, robust performance evaluation process implemented, tested, and refined over the last six years. The evaluation process aligns the Executive Director's annual goals with the AFG, Inc. Strategic Plan Goals, defined and approved by the Board of Trustees; incorporates Board and Executive Committee feedback as to ED achievement of these goals as well as Staff feedback as to ED performance; and concludes with an all-Trustee discussion on the results. At its July meeting, the Board committed to continuing its education and ongoing development and review of the World Service Office Executive Director succession plan.

To that end, the Board engaged an ASAE-recommended consultant to present best practices for effective succession planning. The consultant acknowledged the Board's decision regarding the employment limit as a best practice before commencing their presentation, which included detailed steps for building, reviewing, and updating the Board's Executive Director succession plan. This conversation concluded with the Board establishing specific 2024 goals to further develop the Executive Director succession plan and ensure smooth continuation of operations and leadership at the WSO.

Operations: Managing Operations

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Michael Rodriguez, Building & Office Manager (Non-member)

Phone System Replacement

A key Strategic initiative for 2023 was improving the phone system in the World Service Office. The current phone system is over 20 years old and antiquated, and it had begun to present limitations and impacted Staff's ability to provide helpful and timely information to members calling seeking help.

Staff researched multiple companies and decided to upgrade to a VoIP (voice over Internet protocol) solution to replace our traditional landline phones. This new system provides greater flexibility for answering meeting line, department, and reception line calls and allows phone operators to answer calls remotely if the office is closed due to inclement weather. This system will boost productivity and enhance responsiveness when the members contact the WSO seeking information or a meeting. The new phone system launched seamlessly, without any disruption to members, in December 2023.

Legal: Protecting Al-Anon's Name

Vali F., Executive Director

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Anne P., International & Legal Specialist

Trademark and Copyright Protection

To answer questions frequently asked by members and trusted servants, a Trademark and Copyright Protection presentation was shared with the 2023 WSC. The goal of the presentation was to share information about what does and does not violate Al-Anon's copyright and trademark in the hopes of expanding WSO capacity to inform and reduce the incidence of violations. The presentation was posted on AFG Connects to provide accessibility for all Conference members to use, particularly for Delegates to share with their Areas.

Members responded, and the WSO received numerous reports of violations related to social media. As a result, the WSO worked with Apple, Facebook, and YouTube to remove content violating AFG, Inc.'s intellectual property rights.

- Podcasts of *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) and *Courage to Change* (B-16) by two individual accounts were removed from Apple's iTunes platform.
- Ten Facebook groups using the trademark name of Al-Anon and posting pages from our daily readers were removed for violating Facebook's intellectual property policy.
- One channel on YouTube that had produced 734 videos reading from *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon*, *Courage to Change*, and *Hope for Today* (B-27) was removed by YouTube.

Insight: Understanding Trademarks & Copyrights

Pennie K., Chairperson of the Policy Committee—2023 (Trustee)

On the last day of the 2023 World Service Conference, I was in awe of the knowledge and excitement I had witnessed in the room throughout the first three days of the Conference. I took a couple of minutes to soak in the peace and serenity and looked at my agenda to see what interesting things I would learn that day. I wondered what I could glean from the copyright and trademark presentation.

According to the presentation, a few short years ago, copyright and trademark challenges were not something that needed to be understood by the typical Al-Anon member. At that time, it was possible as a fellowship to delegate these challenges to Staff at the WSO to resolve. The presentation explained the "what, why, how, and when" of copyright and trademarks. Conference members learned that the names Al-Anon and Alateen and the triangle-and-circle logo are all registered trademarks of AFG, Inc.

We then learned about the human as well as the financial cost of copyright violations. The WSO and other service structures around the world must work to protect the Al-Anon name. Whenever a violation of copyright comes to the attention of the Board of Trustees, it is the responsibility of the Board to notify the violator through its duly appointed representative. This is necessary in order to avoid invalidation of the copyright.

When the presentation ended, I realized how lucky the Conference members were to be informed so we could all now help to protect the Al-Anon name for all of us.

Trademark Registration

As the WSO International Team expands its collaboration with structures all over the world, it remains imperative that the names of Al-Anon and Alateen and the Al-Anon logo are protected. Collaborating with AFG, Inc.'s trademark counsel, WSO Staff works to make certain the Al-Anon trademarks are registered trademarks in each new country where Al-Anon is present. This effort is especially important when an international structure desires to translate and print Conference Approved Literature.

This year, with the assistance of counsel, WSO Staff initiated the registration of trademarks in Bulgaria, Latvia, Mongolia, Thailand, and Belarus. Registrations in the Cayman Islands and Kazakhstan, initiated in 2022, were finalized in 2023. Additionally, the trademark registrations for the United States and Uruguay were each renewed for another ten years. The process for renewing registrations in the US were quite involved, requiring samples of how the trademarks are used within each registered class (for example, pamphlet, book, etc.).

Domain: Global Engagement

AFG, Inc. invests in each new generation of trusted servants to preserve our legacy and improve our structure and operations to meet the needs of the global landscape.

Coordinating the World Service Conference

Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

Kathi M., Chairperson of the Conference Leadership Team—2023 (Trustee)

Debbie P., Chairperson of the Conference Leadership Team—2022 (Trustee)

The World Service Conference (WSC), Al-Anon's annual business meeting, provides guidance to the WSO on service matters that are brought to its attention, and is a prime example of the Board of Trustees' Goal Statement "Global Engagement": "AFG, Inc. invests in each new generation of trusted servants to preserve our legacy and improve our structure and operations to meet the needs of the global landscape."

Planning for Al-Anon's 2023 WSC began shortly after the close of the 2022 WSC and continued into 2023. In April, Conference members gathered in Virginia Beach, Virginia, for Al-Anon's 63rd WSC. Ninety voting members and other attendees carried out Al-Anon's business.

In addition to discussing and voting on routine motions such as the Annual Report and the Finance Committee Report, the Conference passed a motion to amend language in the "Conventions and Other Events: Workshops" and "Conventions and Other Events: Announcing Events" sections of the "Policy Digest" to improve clarity regarding what events may be announced.

Insight: Policy Committee Update

Pennie K., Chairperson of the Policy Committee—2023 (Trustee)

The spiritual purpose of this Committee is the unification of the Al-Anon membership. It includes the Board of Trustees, At-Large Executive Members, and voting Conference members of the WSO Administrative Staff. Some spiritual principles we bring to the Policy Committee are open-mindedness, discernment, principled deliberations, personal experience, and an ability not to force solutions. The Policy Committee welcomes all questions and suggestions from any Al-Anon and Alateen member, meeting, group, or Area regarding issues that might need further clarification or interpretation in light of our Legacies.

In 2023, we held a generative conversation brought by the Registering Multiple Meetings Thought Force. The "Announcing Events" and "Workshops" Task Force brought changes to these sections of the "Digest of Al-Anon and Alateen Policies" to the 2023 World Service Conference (WSC) for discussion. The WSC approved the updates, which were published in the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27) v3*. A Task Force was charged with examining the entire "Local Services" section of

the Policy Digest. The Policy Committee completed its review and recommended the changes be approved by the Board. These changes will be presented to the 2024 WSC for possible consideration.

Policy Committee discussions also included information from the Choosing a Group Name Task Force, which was formed following the Open Policy Committee Meeting at the 2022 WSC. This Task Force is continuing its charge and is scheduled to bring further insights to be discussed in January 2024.

At the July and October Policy Committee meetings, Committee members had an opportunity to discuss two topics of concern. One was initiated by a letter from a District trusted servant on the topic, "Is the gendered language in the Steps and Traditions in alignment with Al-Anon's Legacies?" The second topic was introduced by an Al-Anon international structure. We had a thoughtful discussion on the topic of the policy implications of not allowing minors under 18 years of age in Al-Anon meetings. Our conversation reflected Al-Anon's Traditions, Concepts, and policy statements in relationship to legal requirements. Both of these conversations will be continued.

Having the privilege of being the Policy Committee Chairperson has enlightened and enhanced my recovery.

During the WSC, Conference members visited the WSO where they were welcomed home by WSO Volunteers and Staff, toured the office, met Staff, and spent time in the Archives.

Insight: Welcoming Conference Members Home with the WSO Tour

Sally K., Member of the Board of Trustees

At the April 2023 WSC, members were able to tour the WSO in Virginia Beach. Being a WSO Volunteer, I was part of the WSC welcoming committee. All members of the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and WSO Staff lined up along the driveway outside the WSO. As the bus pulled up, excitement grew amongst us. As the Delegates started to step down from the bus and moved along the line of WSO Staff and Volunteers, everyone was stopping to talk and to give and receive hugs. As the Delegates moved closer, I could see that most of them were crying, as were many Staff and Volunteers. The Staff and Volunteers were all welcoming the Delegates home.

I have heard from many Al-Anon members who have visited Stepping Stones just what an emotional and spiritual experience it is to visit the WSO. From my observation and personal feelings on that day, I think it was an experience of equal emotion. There were more than 100 of us all hugging, talking, crying, and laughing. It was an incredible and extraordinary beginning to the WSO tour.

The Delegates were split into small groups and escorted around the World Service Office while being given the information from the various Staff on the workings of each department. Those of us given this task worked in pairs, one at the lead and one behind (me) making sure no one was left behind. It was a challenge to keep everyone on track, as they all wanted to see Staff and ask questions, but there was only so much time.

The experience of observing the workings of the WSO is *incredible*. It is something those of us who have had the privilege to be a part of will never forget. I know for me that I have my name tag and mug waiting in the Board Room each time I am onsite.

I can say the impact of being part of the tour has to be an experience that makes Al-Anon members want to serve at this level. Everyone has the opportunity to serve in Al-Anon, and those of us who do serve know how enriching that can be to our programs and our lives.

Besides receiving a copy of *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31), all Conference members were given a printed copy of the *2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) v2.

Insight: Sharing Many Voices, One Journey as a World Service Conference

Don B., Member of the Board of Trustees

There are several Conference Approved Literature (CAL) books that I use on a regular basis. First, there are the daily readers, and my next most frequently used book is *Many Voices, One Journey* (B-31). I use this book as both a reader and as a reference. I love reading about the history of our program; there is so much experience, strength, and hope packed into this book! When someone asks a question about where we have been and my answer is, "I'll get back to you," I typically refer to this book to find the answer. There is a lot to be said about knowing where we have been as a fellowship.

I would encourage all WSC members to become comfortable with this book so when they are making decisions, they can look back to see what worked in the past and what didn't before looking to the future.

Supporting the WSC Structure and its Trusted Servants

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

World Service Conference Delegates

In 2023, the Board continued its practice of hosting virtual presentations of the Chairperson of the Board Letter (COB) and accompanying three updates from the Finance Committee, Policy Committee, and the Conference Leadership Team (CLT) in February, August, and November. These presentations are designed to increase the speed with which the COB Letter content is available as simultaneous interpretation is provided for our Spanish- and French-speaking Conference members. All Conference members are invited to attend. After the presentation, Delegates are also offered the opportunity to meet with their assigned Trustee to ask clarifying questions to ensure they have a robust understanding of the content shared.

Embracing the AFG, Inc. Mission, "Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. is a spiritually based organization that helps the families and friends of alcoholics connect and support each other through barrier free meetings, information, and shared experiences," CLT continued supporting Area Delegates by posting messages outlining the importance of preparing for Conference, as well as detailing the various roles of Conference attendees and the value of taking notes for Delegate Reports.

Insight: From Despair to Hope

Cindy B., Rhode Island Delegate

As I sit and reflect over my journey this past year, it feels very familiar. The beginning of this past year brought me back to a time in my life when I felt helpless. When I was elected to Delegate in the fall of 2021, I was so excited to represent Rhode Island. My excitement quickly faded as I realized that the Area's service structure had some issues, including dominance, disharmony, and double-headed management. As time went on, I realized that there had been a gradual breakdown of Rhode Island Al-Anon and the communication process.

In January, conversations began at the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) meetings regarding combining Rhode Island with an adjacent Area, as there were 11 open service positions. I stepped out of my comfort zone and reached out to the WSO, and the journey of reasoning things out began. A lunch meeting was held at the 2023 WSC with three WSO Staff members and a few other Delegates to continue the interchange of information. I began to feel hope creeping in.

As the year went on, much communication took place. Two wonderful women from the WSO came to Rhode Island and held two workshops: a service workshop on Friday night and another workshop

during our Fall Assembly. In my eyes, the weekend was a success: five AWSC positions were filled, and many new faces were seen at both events. We did not fill every position, but I am hopeful that the message will continue for anyone needing Al-Anon in Rhode Island. My service journey over this past year took me back in time to a place of despair, with many hands reaching out, and I am now in a place of hope once again.

WSC Structure Areas

The Board of Trustees, Executive Committee members, and WSO Staff continued the practice of visiting Areas within the WSC Structure whenever invited. Thanks to technology and the global pandemic, many Area Assemblies and Conventions are held virtually or with a hybrid component, providing a more cost-effective opportunity for these visits.

Insight: Sharing Experience, Strength, and Hope with the Areas

Sally K., Member of the Board of Trustees

I am moving through my second year as a Trustee and have had the privilege of being asked to attend Area Assemblies in both Saskatchewan and Alberta/Northwest Territories (Alberta/NWT).

The Assembly in Saskatchewan was held online, which I personally feel can create a less personal connection, so I was a little concerned. I was to present about my role as a Trustee and, in the evening, present my personal story. I was encouraged to see so many happy faces looking back at me on the screen.

Sharing on my role as Trustee, I talked about my personal experiences, travel issues, my nervousness at the first Board meeting, etc. I was pleased to hear later that attendees were thankful to understand the personal side of my experience and not just the business details. While sharing my personal story, I watched attendees being moved to tears and came to understand that being remote was not a barrier after all.

When preparing for the Alberta/NWT Assembly, I was pleased it would be in person. I was asked to host a workshop. I suggested the topic of abundance, and the Chairperson suggested the Concepts. I decided to combine the two. I enjoyed presenting and felt it was well received. For my personal story, I wanted to share using the Concepts. On the day, I was uncomfortable using that topic and decided, at the last minute, to share my journey as a Trustee. It felt heartwarming to hear the feedback I received, which helped me to realize my growth in service.

I am honored to share my experience as a Trustee with my home and neighboring Areas and provinces. It's important to me that Al-Anon members have a chance to hear and connect with other members who hold positions on the Board, so they can learn that Trustees are just Al-Anon members involved in service because they love the program.

Group Services Staff Visits to Areas

Group Services Staff also had the opportunity to participate either in person or remotely in the following Area events:

- Florida South Area Al-Anon Convention with A.A. participation
- Tennessee A.A. Convention with Al-Anon participation
- Illinois North Area Spanish Workshop hosted by Intergrupala Hispana de Al-Anon
- Rhode Island Area Assembly
- Oregon Area Assembly

The ability to share our personal journey in recovery with members at the local level serves to bridge the gap between the clearinghouse and the fellowship. We welcome the opportunity to extend ourselves in this manner and provide any type of additional sessions at your events!

WSC Structure Area Trusted Servants

In 2023, Staff continued to use AFG Connects to communicate in real time with fellow trusted servants efficiently and effectively. Staff witnessed our members using the platform to ask for help as well as to collaborate on ideas to best serve their respective members and service responsibilities. The strength and hope garnered from the shared experiences of our trusted servants helped WSO Staff and teams to better serve the fellowship. It is gratifying to witness the various links of service supporting each other as, for example, Areas continue discussions on welcoming electronic groups into their respective geographic structures and navigating these groups in and through their links of service.

Trust the Process - Flow of Information

The World Service Office received regular feedback and questions regarding the timeliness and flow of information. The WSO processes hundreds of requests from members all over the world every month. While Staff has protocols to address that many requests, each request is uniquely different and can potentially require research and collaboration across multiple teams. In 2023, Staff continued their efforts to streamline communication processes, encouraging submitters to use team emails such as groupservices@al-anon.org and international@al-anon.org when submitting questions and requests. Throughout the year, WSO Staff remained committed to completing necessary research and discussion to ensure requests were answered in a principled manner, inviting those who were, and potentially are still, awaiting a response to trust the process.

Providing WSO Resources to Area Trusted Servants

Throughout 2023, Staff continued the practice of uploading new content each month to the WSO Materials to Distribute Locally AFG Connects community created in September 2022. The effort resulted in hundreds of downloads each month by trusted servants with access (Area Delegates, Area Chairpersons, PO Coordinators, Newsletter Editors, Web Coordinators, and District Representatives). These trusted servants were empowered to share these messages on Area, District, and local service arm websites or newsletters.

Area Alateen Coordinators & Alateen Process Persons

Group Services reviewed and approved the revised Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements for two Areas in 2023, including New Mexico/El Paso, the approval for which was completed ahead of the 2023 International Convention. Staff were also able to certify two additional Areas that lost certification in 2021. Of the 11 Areas that lost certification, eight are now certified to use the Alateen name and the remaining three Areas are in progress to certify. There are currently 64 Areas certified to use the Alateen name.

The Annual Area Alateen Recertification was completed by all certified Areas in the World Service Conference Structure ahead of the June 15 11:59 PM EST deadline. Group Services Staff worked diligently with AFG Records Staff to assist multiple Area trusted servants in carrying out the annual recertification process.

Area Alateen Coordinators and AAPPs are invited to several WebEx videoconference calls per year to share experience, strength, and hope regarding rotation of service, training, and service roles and responsibilities. These are hosted by Group Services and AFG Records. In addition, calls received from members, potential newcomers and professionals interested in supporting Alateen are referred to local Alateen trusted servants for follow-up.

Area Archives Coordinators

In 2023, the Archivist fostered engagement by facilitating over 20 posts in the AFG Connects Area Archives Coordinator community. A successful meeting held on October 15, 2023, showcased the Archives' role and services to the community and offered insights into its collections. This meeting, attended by various service structure members, marked the beginning of a renewed connection with the community, with plans for quarterly meetings in the coming year.

Area Public Outreach Coordinators

In February and August, meetings were conducted for Public Outreach Area Coordinators, including French Public Outreach Coordinators, Spanish Public Outreach Coordinators, Cooperating with the Professional Community Coordinators, Institution Coordinators, and Public Information Coordinators. These gatherings facilitated the exchange of successes and challenges tied to various public outreach initiatives, offering valuable insights, support, and inspiration from a broader perspective. To enhance engagement and encourage dialogue, efforts were made to incorporate icebreakers and surveys into the meeting format.

Additionally, the monthly inclusion of “open” questions on AFG Connects Public Outreach Community aimed to foster discussions on specific topics, such as the role of Public Outreach Committees at the District level, utilizing the Al-Anon Welcome Series pamphlets to reach underrepresented communities, and ensuring the continuity of Public Outreach projects through the rotation of service. To better support incoming Public Outreach Coordinators, the AFG Connects welcome letter to the Public Outreach Coordinators community was updated. Specific links to public outreach resources were included, providing easy access to relevant information.

Supporting WSO Volunteers

Vali F., Executive Director

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Evolution of the Nominating Process

This year, Staff had the privilege of participating as part of the ongoing Nominating Committee efforts to improve the application process for experienced Al-Anon members seeking to serve on the Board of Trustees of AFG, Inc. The onboarding of our new Human Resources Manager proved timely in that she had experience to offer the Nominating Committee as it began evolving the document, now an online form, historically known as the “Trustee resume.” The first observation provided on the “resume” was that the form more closely resembled an application than a resume. This observation led the Nominating Committee to discuss the background on how the term “resume” may have come to be used and to agree to consider the term “application” moving forward. Staff were grateful for the opportunity to collaborate and share their professional knowledge with the Board of Trustees in this process.

Insight: Experiencing the Impact of Nominating Committee Changes

Lynette K., Chairperson of the Nominating Committee (Trustee)

Based on feedback obtained from Delegates during a 2022 WSC discussion centered around the Board of Trustees implementing a skills-based approach to selecting Trustees, the Board tasked the Nominating Committee to work toward moving in that direction. The Board approved a recommendation from the Nominating Committee to adopt a new skills-based Trustee role description, which was put into use for the 2023 Nominating Process. As the August 15, 2023 deadline for Trustee resume submission drew near, I was cautiously optimistic to see if the newly implemented Trustee role description would have any impact on the number of resumes that would be submitted.

I kept in mind the words “trust the process” and reminded myself that a Higher Power was in charge. I was ecstatic when I was informed that the Nominating Committee had received many more Trustee at Large resumes than we had available positions. Wow! That had rarely, if ever, happened in the past few years that I have served on the Nominating Committee. My heart was filled with gratitude to see that the hard work done by the Nominating Committee seemed to be having a positive impact.

I am grateful to my Higher Power for allowing me to be a small part of this change that will help the Board with their “obligation to see that all vacancies within the Board of Trustees or its Executive Committees are filled with those of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry” as stated in Concept Eleven.

Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect

A dynamic avenue for building awareness of the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, WSO Staff and the work they carry out on behalf of Al-Anon Family Groups, Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect was held in California South at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport Hotel on October 28, 2023.

Closing out Board Week, the event was a unique opportunity for Al-Anon members from the Area and across the WSC Structure to interact with the 14 members of Board of Trustees and three members of the Executive Committee. A total of 121 members were in attendance, including nearly 50 members from the Spanish-speaking community. Spanish interpretation was provided as a gift to the fellowship by the Area Spanish Coordinator in cooperation with the Area Welcome Committee.

The day started with fellowship, including coffee and icebreaker games, followed by a robust program of activities including personal shares, table topics, and informative presentations and culminating with a half-hour of fellowship. Participants acquired valuable insights into the operations of the board, understanding its functions and discovering pathways to potentially assume a Board member role themselves. A small sampling of these insights follows:

- *"This day has opened new areas of service to me."*
- *"Loved the presentations. I'm going to share what I learned at the next Area meeting and encourage the next chair to invite WSO to come out and share with members to take a 'road trip' that could inspire service."*
- *"The Staff and Volunteers at the WSO are regular members who are dedicated to serving the fellowship."*
- *"Me llevo mucho apredisaje para mi crecimiento. 'Y que empieze por mi.'" ("I am taking a lot of knowledge for my growth. 'Let It Begin with Me.'")*

Though the 2023 Road Trip! was originally slated to be a hybrid event, upon further review and discussion, Staff and the Board decided to forgo using an app to further enhance engagement at the event. The "limited" capacity created a more intimate experience to support the goal of connection and unity. Experience suggested that the app and virtual component might serve more as a distraction than a benefit for this smaller venue.

Preparations for Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect started long before it actually occurred at the end of Board Week in October. Throughout the year, the Road Trip! Work Group, made up of two Board of Trustees members, an At-Large member of the Executive Committee, and two WSO Staff members, refined the agenda based on the previous year's feedback and worked with the Area Welcome Committee to engage local members in promoting the event.

The invitations to host the 2024 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect were distributed at the 63rd Annual World Service Conference in April 2023. Area Delegates were encouraged to work with their Areas to submit a completed request form by September 22, 2023. The WSO received eight applications, and three potential sites for 2024 were selected at the Board of Trustees meeting in October 2023. The destination for the 2024 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect will be announced following the January 2024 Board of Trustees meeting.

Hosted annually by the Board of Trustees, Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect supports the AFG, Inc. Strategic Goal "Member" by connecting Volunteers, Staff, and members together in fellowship, and the "Global Engagement" goal by communicating leadership skills required for trusted servants in a creative and engaging manner. Held in a different Area each year, the event is a vital mechanism for fostering deeper connections and relationships within the Al-Anon community.

Insight: Creating Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect

Jayne C., Member of the Board of Trustees

In my first year as Trustee, I was a member of the Road Trip! Work Group. Since I had never attended a Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect event, I had no idea what to expect. The Work Group was cohesive and worked well together, making decisions about the day's activities.

We started the day with a fun networking activity that required attendees to ask each other questions in a service-oriented process. This icebreaker led to meaningful connections, and I met members from New York, Massachusetts, Nevada, Arizona, North Carolina, Ontario North, Mexico, Northern California, and many different parts of Southern California.

Sitting at a table with members from the Spanish-speaking community was particularly rewarding. We shared our experience, strength, and hope throughout the day. It was thrilling to see all the participants' dedication and recognition of service as an integral part of their recovery. Sharing our service experiences at the table reminded me that we are all the same no matter what language we speak. I also enjoyed hearing the other WSO Volunteers share their personal stories. The entire day exemplified the AFG, Inc. "Members" and "Global Engagement" Goals, highlighting the WSO Volunteers' and Staff's connection to the fellowship and how we all work on its behalf.

International: Increasing Access to Al-Anon Globally

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Tanya J., Associate Director–International

Jean L., Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee–2023 (Trustee)

Kathi M., Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee–2022 (Trustee)

Supporting Structures Worldwide

The worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon which includes Alateen now offers meetings in over 133 countries. There are 40 countries with established General Service Offices (GSOs), one country evolving toward becoming a GSO, 14 countries with Al-Anon Information Services, and 12 countries with groups that are working together with the support of the WSO to carry the message of hope within their borders. These links of service partner with the World Service Office to support families and friends around the world affected by someone else's drinking. Each operates as a distinct service entity within their respective country while also working creatively and collectively with the WSO and one another to carry the message of Al-Anon and Alateen to those who have yet to find the priceless gift of serenity.

The international team which expanded in 2022, experienced some significant changes in 2023 with the addition of a new Associate Director–International in March, the participation of the new Office Assistant in October, and the departure of the Programs Project Specialist early in the year. The new team members join our International and Legal Specialist and our Events Planner and Senior Assistant in collaborating with our international partners in the many capacities outlined here.

Celebrations

In 2023, Cuba celebrated 30 years of carrying the message of recovery. Russia celebrated their 35th anniversary, Mexico their 50th, Spain their 60th, and Finland celebrated their 70th anniversary!

Translation of Conference Approved Literature

To date, international structures have translated and printed Conference Approved Literature (CAL) into 37 unique languages. This year the International Team worked closely with six countries, supporting them as they prepared requests for recommendation from the International Coordination Committee (ICC), which then recommended them to the Board of Trustees for final approval to translate and print CAL. This year, the Board of Trustees approved Bulgaria, Romania, and Thailand for first-time translation and printing of CAL in their respective languages. The Board also approved first-time reprint

permission for Paraguay, as their primary language is Spanish. Latvia and Mongolia have created and registered AIS centers and hope to have permission to translate and print CAL in early 2024.

Insight: Creating Unity through the International Team Reorganization

Debbie P., Delegate for the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (Trustee)

I have been gifted with the opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees and witness our spiritual principles of participation and inclusion on a global scale.

Since my first involvement with the ICC and attendance at the 2022 International Al-Anon General Service Meeting (IAGSM), I have seen and felt the efforts of the WSO International Team reorganization in how they connect, support, and engage with structures outside the WSC. Having a team approach allows the opportunity for expanded collaboration, engagement, and support. Hiring a new Associate Director—International has introduced new and fresh perspectives. The International Team connects regularly with structures, increasing communication and trust. I hear the words of gratitude and appreciation noted in the international AFG Connects communities.

With the recent inception of bimonthly Global Gatherings—a virtual meeting to which all structures are invited—the WSO continues with its sincere efforts and commitment to connect structures that might not have the ability to attend Zonal meetings so they can see and hear each other. There is a unification that happens when others from around the globe have the opportunity to hear and see how often many of us have the same questions and concerns. The value, respect, and importance that WSO puts on all voices being heard is evident.

I have witnessed and experienced “Al-Anon’s Declaration of Unity” (Unanimous motion, 1984 WSC) in action on a global scale. *“Each member of the fellowship is a significant part of a great circle of hope. While respecting each other’s individuality, our common welfare must come first. Our recovery depends on our mutual need and an atmosphere of trust.”*

Regular Structure Meetings

In February 2022, the International Team began holding Regular Structure Meetings (RSMs) with some structures, both evolving and established GSOs, to improve communication and exchange information. In 2023, the International Team expanded the scope of these meetings to include groups from countries where there is no formal structure, as well as countries with Al-Anon Information Services. A total of 112 RSMs with members from 60 countries took place in 2023.

These meetings continue to be very well-received and sincerely appreciated by members from all over the world. Discussing shared experiences and challenges on a wide variety of topics, similar to those received and answered by the WSO via email every day, is powerful and productive for all involved.

As could be imagined, hosting 112 RSMs took considerable time and effort. During the year, Staff recognized the volume was not sustainable. Necessity being the creator of invention, Staff brainstormed ideas for continuing a regular cadence of communication with international structure trusted servants while honoring resource capacity. Building on the concept of the Board of Trustee’s COB Letter presentation, the idea for Global Gatherings was generated.

Global Gathering Launch

The International Team launched the first series of Global Gatherings in 2023 to provide an opportunity for international structures to gather with the WSO and learn from each other about frequently asked questions and other topics of interest they have shared with us. All international members are invited via AFG Connects, or email for those not yet part of an AFG Connects community. Staff plan to continue to host these Global Gatherings every other month.

On Tuesday, September 26 the first Global Gathering, “Board of Trustees: Composition, Jurisdiction, Responsibilities,” was attended by 85 members representing 25 countries. The event featured the Executive Director answering questions from international structures, such as, “To apply for the position of Trustee, do you need to present a Certificate of Criminal or Judicial Record?” and “Should the number of Trustees correlate with the number of groups or Areas registered in the service structure?” The series takes place via Zoom, which offers translated captions in 28 languages. In addition, the WSO provides simultaneous translation in French and Spanish.

The second Global Gathering was held on December 12 and featured the Communications & Community Awareness Department, whose Staff members shared a presentation and answered frequently asked questions about how best to conduct public outreach and social media efforts. There were 124 attendees, including members from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, The Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK & Eire, Venezuela, along with members of the Board of Trustees. Four interpreters, two French and two Spanish, and the WSO Tech Team supported the event.

CAL Globally

The goal of CAL Globally, which became a Strategy in early 2021, has been to collaborate with international structures to understand opportunities for expanding the availability of literature across geographic boundaries. In 2023, the CAL Globally Project Team has been collaborating with several international structures who are eager to participate in a select number of pilot projects to gather information, experience, strength and hope about sharing CAL between structures, so that more members are able to access CAL already available in their language at a reasonable cost and expediency.

The CAL Globally Project Team met throughout the year as it worked on developing pilots for two scenarios:

- Structures purchasing CAL wherever is most feasible
- Structures printing CAL utilizing translation from another structure

At the end of the year, the Project Team had finalized a carefully designed legal agreement developed with input from the two international structures who will carry out the first pilot, which was being translated into Spanish prior to being presented to the two structures.

Zonal Meetings

The Tenth European Zonal Meeting, hosted by Al-Anon France, took place in Paris, France over the weekend of September 1-3 and brought together 28 members representing 18 countries within the European Zone. The mission of the European Zonal Meeting is to improve cooperation between European structures in order to support growth of Al-Anon and Alateen in Europe. The EZM meets every other year, and the theme this year was “The Al-Anon Declaration.” Sarah S. shared a presentation about the Alateen Feasibility Project, and Vali F. and Tanya J. shared WSO updates with attendees.

The 11th Reunión Iberoamericana de Servicios de Al-Anon or Iberoamerican Al-Anon Service Meeting, hosted by Argentina, was held online October 20-22. The theme was “Unity in Diversity with Hope and Action,” and members from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela were in attendance. WSO Staff members Sarah S. and Tanya J. and Volunteer Diane B. attended on behalf of the WSO and heard powerful presentations about the Seventh Tradition, Strengthening Structures, and Alateen.

The 14th Reunión Centroamericana y del Caribe de Servicios Generales de Al-Anon or Central American & Caribbean Al-Anon General Service Meeting (RECACSA) hosted by Honduras was held November 17-19. The chosen theme was “A Light in Al-Anon Service.” This year RECACSA was attended by international representatives from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama.

These structures provided a warm welcome to Sarah S., Director of Programs, and Jean L., WSO Volunteer, who attended as invited guests from the WSO.

Insight: The Power of In-Person Connections

Jean L., Chairperson of the International Coordination Committee—2023 (Trustee)

Zonal meetings are service meetings. The meetings can be attended by structures that are fully organized GSOs or small groupings of mighty volunteers dedicated to carrying the AI-Anon message to the country where they live. They share experience, strength and hope to further the growth of AI-Anon in these “Zones.” Three Zonal meetings occurred this year and I had the privilege to attend the RECACSA which is the Central America and Caribbean Zonal meeting.

This meeting consisted of members from Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the host country of Honduras. As a WSO Volunteer, I was an invited guest along with the Director of Programs. My hope was that I would be able to share some knowledge with the structures. What I did not count on was how much knowledge I would gain from them. I learned that all that is required to build a solid foundation of AI-Anon in a country is a group of willing members. They do not need an office, literature, all the links of service, and funds. These structures showed me that where there are dedicated volunteers, there can be strong AI-Anon. These members are dedicated and do it all for the love of our program. I met members who put themselves at significant risk just to carry the message. They are pioneers.

As a WSO Volunteer, I feel the connections I made with these members were beneficial for the worldwide fellowship. Although few attendees spoke English and I speak “muy poco Español,” we communicated in our common language of the heart. These connections are important as they break isolation and encourage bridges to our worldwide fellowship. I will forever carry them in my heart. We are not just various structures, we are AI-Anon Family Groups.

International AI-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM)

In 2023, planning began for the 2024 IAGSM, which will take place in Virginia Beach, Virginia from September 25-29, 2024. In preparing for this exciting service event, the ICC has solicited topic suggestions from IAGSM Delegates and GSOs for inclusion on the agenda, as well as identified international structures with valuable experience and perspective to share as prospective presenters. As is typical, topics submitted and selected include specific challenges faced by several international structures. These topics will undoubtedly generate lively discussion and sharing of experiences and spiritual solutions during the upcoming IAGSM.

Our Financials

Manage Our Budget & Financials

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Ann Marie Z., Treasurer of the Board of Trustees–2023 (Trustee)

Cindy M., Treasurer of the Board of Trustees–2022 (Trustee)

With the launch of the new daily reader, *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34), literature sales had a substantial increase in 2023. The book was released and available for purchase at the 2023 International Convention. Due to the excitement and demand for the new book, literature sales for 2023 were \$4,403,746, which is an increase of 61 percent over 2022. We are still facing challenges with supply chain issues and increasing paper costs. However, we remain committed to advancing operations to overcome those challenges in 2024.

As a result of immense generosity, member contributions totaled \$2,916,399, which accounted for 42 percent of revenue for 2023. Contributions decreased in 2023 compared to 2022, in which a special appeal was held. Contributions from groups provided approximately 50 percent of all contributions received.

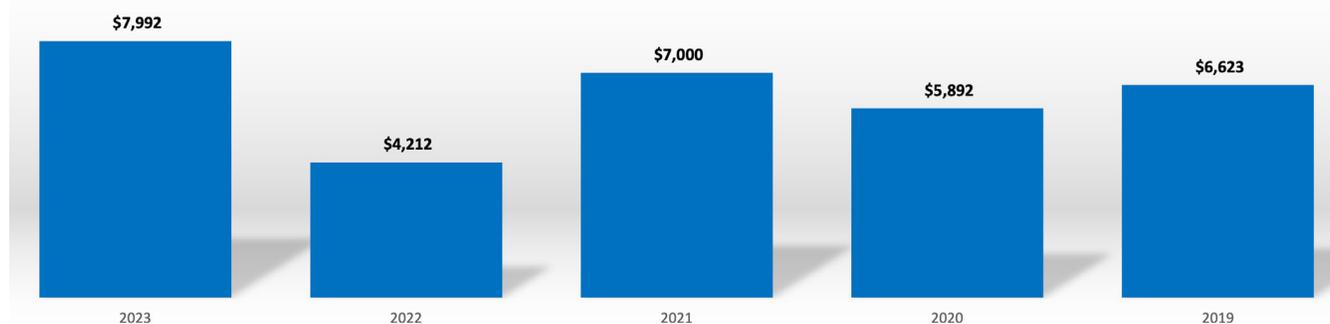
Positive market conditions increased our investments held in the Reserve Fund, allowing the WSO to build an ample reserve, which had decreased in previous years due to a tough market.

Continued member support and increasing literature sales allowed the WSO to provide essential services, along with other important achievements. The WSO was able to host the 2023 International Convention, attend RECACSA and EZM Zonal meetings, refresh the code for the *Mobile App*, expand our work to support electronic groups, launch a new Public Outreach toolkit, publish translated Guidelines, and install a new phone system at the WSO.

Al-Anon's operating funds come from three main funding sources: literature sales, contributions, and other revenue. More than 68 percent of total expenses go directly toward achieving the mission of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. The supporting services included in general and administrative expenses provide customer service and financial support to maintain operations.

Note: The complete audited financial statements of Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters Inc. for fiscal year 2023 may be obtained online at al-anon.org.

Five Year Revenue (in thousands)



Insight: Treasurer Update

Ann Marie Z., Treasurer of the Board of Trustees (Trustee)

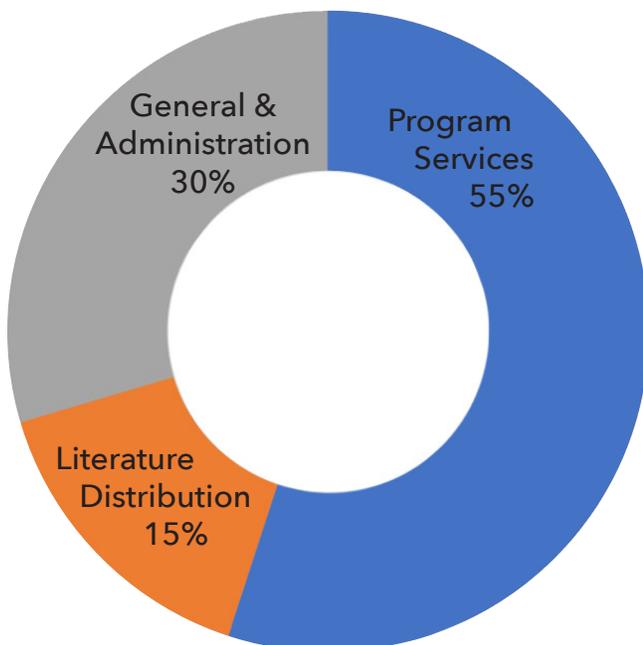
The WSO's role of providing services to the fellowship can only be carried out with consistent contributions and the purchase of literature—these are our two main sources of income.

Al-Anon's new daily reader, our first in 21 years, was introduced at the 2023 Al-Anon International Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico. There has been an unprecedented response to *A Little Time for Myself* (B-34) that would have been impossible to anticipate. Our sales of *The Forum*, *Le lien*, *En accion*, and *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism (AFA)* magazines as well as *Mobile App* subscriptions are higher than projected. Members' consistent and continued contributions also exceeded our budgeted expectations. The Staff at the WSO works diligently to keep our expenses consistent and within budget. This has resulted in a surplus, which has enabled the Executive Committee to accept the Finance Committee's recommendation to transfer back from the General Fund to the Reserve Fund the four percent Board-approved transfer. This transfer is usually needed to help cover our operating expenses.

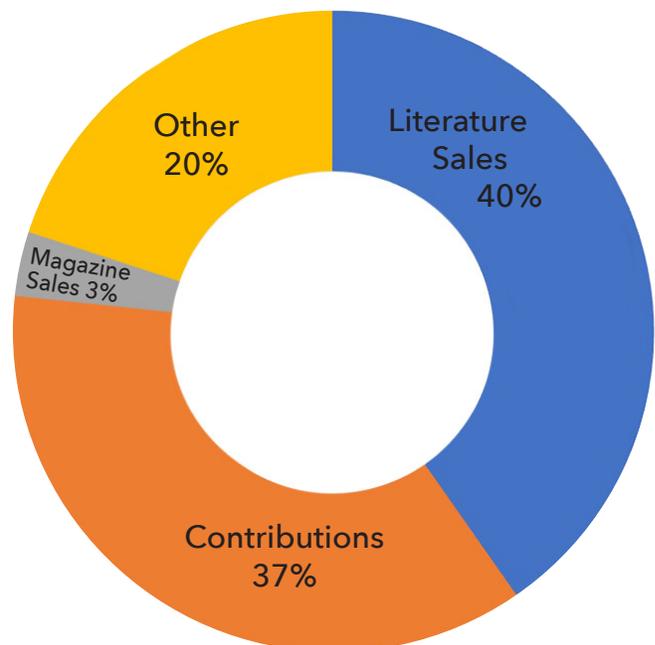
As Treasurer of the Board of Trustees and Chairperson of the Finance Committee, I participate in the review of the monthly financial statements and help to develop the Quarterly Appeal Letter for individual members. The Quarterly Appeal is sent from the WSO to the Current Mailing Addresses (CMAs). It is sent four times a year and is an opportunity for individual Al-Anon members to contribute in gratitude for what Al-Anon has given them.

As I write, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the life and relationships that I have now. I believe that my disease is a progressive disease. I shudder at times to think about the person I could be today if I had not found Al-Anon. I give my financial support so that "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help," Al-Anon will be there for them too.

Functional Expenses



Operating Revenue



Financial Highlights

Statements of Financial Position	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Total Assets (in thousands)	\$14,575	\$12,757	\$13,783	\$11,833	\$11,060
Liabilities and Net Assets Total liabilities	\$1,466	\$1,850	\$1,497	\$1,333	\$1,531
Net Assets without donor restrictions	\$13,109	\$10,907	\$12,286	\$10,500	\$9,529
Total liabilities and net assets	\$14,575	\$12,757	\$13,783	\$11,833	\$11,060
Operating revenue (in thousands)	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Literature sales, net	\$3,218	\$2,100	\$1,906	\$1,847	\$2,914
Contributions	\$2,916	\$3,338	\$2,623	\$3,295	\$2,187
Magazine sales	\$262	\$247	\$238	\$292	\$275
Other income, net	\$1,596	(\$1,473)	\$2,233	\$458	\$1,247
Total operating revenue	\$7,992	\$4,212	\$7,000	\$5,892	\$6,623
Operating expenses (in thousands)	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Program services	\$3,184	\$3,333	\$2,752	\$2,484	\$2,865
Literature distribution	\$891	\$904	\$922	\$866	\$839
General & administrative	\$1,715	\$1,352	\$1,540	\$1,571	\$1,837
Total operating expenses	\$5,790	\$5,589	\$5,214	\$4,921	\$5,541

Our Plans

AFG, Inc. Envisioned Future

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees—2023

Lynette K., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees—2022

Debbie P., Chairperson of the Envisioned Future Work Grop (Trustee)

The Board of Trustees of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. is unwavering in its commitment to look toward the future and explore how best to serve, support, and grow our fellowship. For the Board to succeed in these efforts, we continue to collaborate, to be thoughtful when utilizing organization resources, and to maximize our own efficiency. Some areas of improvement we achieved in 2023 are those that the Board expects will bring long-term benefits to both the organization and the fellowship.

In its role as a visionary work group that supports the Board in its world service roles, the Envisioned Future Work Group (EFWG) will continue in 2024 and beyond to encourage strategic and future-minded thinking during and outside Board meetings to advance the AFG, Inc. Mission Statement.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We have taken our responsibility earnestly in our efforts to nurture the spiritual principle of inclusion contained in Al-Anon's Legacies. At our January meeting, the Board participated in a diversity workshop to continue and honor our commitment to expand our DEI work. After much consideration and collaboration, the Board brought this workshop to the 2023 WSC. Trustees also engaged in a suggested "21 Day Challenge" to expand individual awareness on this topic. Then, during the October meeting, the Board participated in another session on inclusion facilitated by a professional DEI consultant, who is also a past Trustee. This workshop led to a deeper understanding of how we can expand our thinking and provided clarity on the direction we want to lead.

Not all activities undertaken in 2023 were equally successful, but the Board takes heart in the knowledge that DEI journeys are rarely without detours. What is important is continuing the work to expand diversity and inclusion within and beyond the Board, and we are committed to doing so while practicing the slogan "Progress Not Perfection." As the Board looks forward to 2024, we will follow the guidance of the DEI consultant by expanding from individual to group, i.e. from individual Trustee to the Board, its committees, and its governance procedures. We will start by examining nominating processes which could evolve to increase the inclusion of more diverse viewpoints and perspectives on Board Committees.

Nominating Process

In 2023, the Board of Trustees charged its Nominating Committee with recommending changes to the Trustee selection and nominating procedures that could improve clarity for future applicants and increase inclusion. Following best practice guidance and considering its DEI responsibilities, the Board is committed to transforming its application process toward a more skill-based approach. To that end, the Nominating Committee invited the WSO Human Resources Manager to share her professional expertise in improving the Trustee application itself. The Board will consider process and application changes resulting from this effort in 2024.

In 2023, the EFWG brought forward a conversation about the value of looking toward the future and how best to develop current Board members and expand the pool of future applicants who desire to serve Al-Anon Family Groups. The Board recognizes there are Al-Anon leaders among the fellowship, and we are discussing approaches to attract and develop more of these members. At the October Board meeting, the EFWG brought a question for discussion entitled "How Attractive Are WE?" This conversation broadened the Trustees' perspectives on what further directions we might take. Related conversations will continue as we progress into 2024.

Strategic Planning

The AFG, Inc. Strategic Plan serves as the foundation for prioritizing the work of the Board, its committees, and the WSO; yet the Plan itself remains a fluid document, with the Board regularly concentrating on its Goals and Strategic Objectives and reviewing Staff-generated Strategies. Operationalizing Al-Anon's spiritual principle of inclusion, the AFG, Inc. Strategic Plan reflects the Board's commitment to diversity and inclusion through numerous Strategic Objectives, including:

- Advancing support to underserved and diverse communities (Members Goal)
- Reducing barriers to information access created by cultural and linguistic obstacles (Recovery & Service Tools Goal)
- Identifying and reducing the effects of biases that may be preventing effective outreach (Awareness Goal)

As in previous years, 2024 will commence with the Board evaluating the coming year's WSO Projects Landscape at its January meeting. The Landscape contains Strategic Plan Strategies and operational initiatives recommended by the Staff. The Board considers the priorities represented by the Landscape and how they serve to achieve the Goals and Strategic Objectives previously approved. In light of DEI efforts, thoughtful discussion will undoubtedly occur as to the Landscape priorities, which must balance Strategic Plan Goals with resources and operational responsibilities. At mid-year, the Board will reflect on the priorities represented by the Strategic Objectives themselves to ensure they continue to convey the Board's vision for AFG, Inc.'s future.

In 2023, every Board committee and work group was asked to include a statement in its guideline clarifying how their work supports the Strategic Plan. These committees and work groups will have this resource to guide their work and priorities in 2024 as well. Additionally, the EFWG will continue to use outside sources when beneficial to bring additional questions and ideas to the Board to consider and pursue.

Fiscal Responsibilities

In 2023, the Board held several discussions and took actions designed to contribute to improved fiscal responsibility. In a year that ended very well financially, these conversations may appear to be unusually timed. However, the Board recognizes its responsibility to consider trends and other external impacts on long-term World Service Office operations. Post-pandemic inflation has increased costs for venues and services needed to host Road Trip! and the World Service Conference and affected operational expenses, including everything from salaries to publishing materials to office supplies. Despite the positive financial result in 2023, the Board recognizes it must continue to engage in these often-uncomfortable conversations about how we responsibly manage the WSO's financial resources.

One very uncomfortable fiscal conversation in which the Board engaged, both internally and with the World Service Conference, in 2023 was about whether to continue hosting the WSC in New York to allow Conference members to visit Stepping Stones. This conversation continued throughout the year and resulted in both the formation of a Delegate Task Force in 2024, which will be charged with planning the Stepping Stones visit for the 2025 WSC, and a commitment to continue conversations with the Conference at the 2024 WSC. The Board recognizes the outcome of this discussion in 2024 and beyond will likely ultimately reflect the wisdom found in Concept Nine, which reads, "Compromise comes hard to many of us. Nevertheless, progress is nearly always characterized by a series of *improving compromises*." –2022-2025 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27), page 201.

Considering the wisdom of the Al-Anon Declaration that encourages us to "Let It Begin with Me," the Board continued to improve the efficiency of its Board Week schedule and agenda. In 2023, our forward thinking included using the Consent Agenda more wisely to increase time available for the Board to focus on discussions about the future. Additionally, the Trustees began meeting virtually for its January Board meetings and established a one-year trial to decrease the October Board Week schedule by one day while maintaining the same number of meeting hours. With these latter actions,

the Board recognized it could continue to use its time wisely and effectively while decreasing the financial resources required.

“Al-Anon has grown so fast and so far, it takes my breath away! The more it grows, the greater the contrast between the early days and now.” These words were written by Al-Anon’s co-founder Lois W. in 1979.” —*Paths to Recovery* (B-24), page 249.

The Board of Trustees looks forward to continuing our endeavors to support Al-Anon’s growth today and in the future.

2024 Strategies

Vali F., Executive Director

Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations (Non-member)

Sarah S., Director of Programs

Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness

Heather S., Associate Director—Community Relations

Tanya J., Associate Director—International

Suzette McKinney, Publications Manager (Non-member)

The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), whose members are listed above, began 2024 Strategies planning in advance of the October 2023 Board meeting. In accordance with the annual Strategic Plan planning cycle, the Board asks SLT to present preliminary suggestions for Strategic Plan Strategies and operational initiatives in October to allow for thoughtful discussion and input prior to the Board of Trustees making an informed decision on the final recommendations, which will be presented in January 2024. SLT informed the Board that the 2024 WSO Projects Landscape would contain only a few major initiatives, as many previous year Strategies had created operational activities that require significant ongoing effort and investment. The Board supported the SLT’s 2024 suggestions, which are expected to include several carryover items, such as the Next Generation AFG Records solution—the next step in the Transforming Electronic Groups effort that began in 2021—and eBooks Globally, along with the relaunch of some deferred projects such as the Online Store Upgrade.

Board of Trustees Motions and Decisions by Consensus⁴

Jeri W., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees—2023 (Trustee)

Lynette K., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees—2022 (Trustee)

The Board, in its legal, financial, or oversight capacities, acted:

- to accept the 2022 Annual Report to the WSC as presented.
- to hold a generative discussion on leadership development led by the EFWG at the April 2023 open Board meeting.
- to present the DEI workshop at the 2023 World Service Conference, with each Board member participating at their own pace in the 21-day DEI challenge.
- to accept for the Alateen Online Feasibility Project Team to reach out to international structures for feedback and to gather information from the WSC on the concept of the proposed Global EASBR.
- to pause the Public 12: Cartoons/Animations for Social Media Strategy.
- to approve the 2023 WSO Strategic Projects Landscape as presented.
- to approve the 2023 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect agenda as presented.
- to maintain the Reserve Fund as-is because it does not exceed one year's operating expense.
- to approve IRS Form 990 as amended.
- to approve the Nominating Committee asking candidates not currently serving on the Board who are applying for a Trustee position to provide confidential AI-Anon and skills-based references (for a Volunteer position on a nonprofit Board) as a one-year trial.
- to approve the Chairperson of the Board, in collaboration with the Nominating Chairperson, appoint three alternates (Trustees) to the Nominating Committee who could be available to be selected in an equitable manner to score, discuss, and vote on any specific Officer position to ensure the total number of Nominating Committee voting members is as close to five as possible.
- to modify the interview process to allow the Nominating Committee to create two separate sets of "general" questions, one for current members of the Board and one for those applying to come onto the Board, even if they have served before, and to add to the interview process for current members of the Board to include both a personal sharing and a Board experience sharing.
- to modify the Board of Trustee nominee selection process so that when the Board decides not to put someone forward, they clarify the reasons for their decision and reach a consensus on what feedback the Secretary of Nominating may provide if the nominee requests feedback.
- to approve the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to proceed in identifying next steps and a project to create an EASBR for the WSC Structure and Intentional EASBR for international structures and return the plan to the Board for approval.
- to host the 2025 WSC in New York with a financial plan.
- to approve financial plan Option 3 to hold the 2025 WSC in New York [Option 3 - Host the 2025 WSC in New York or surrounding area and, as a trial, invite Delegates who would be attending to form a team (Delegate Team) to organize, coordinate registration, and handle all logistics for one add-on, optional visit to Stepping Stones arranged to occur either immediately before or after WSC for all interested Conference members. WSO involvement would be limited to connecting the Delegate Team with Stepping Stones, transportation, and other logistics contacts; communicating optional visit costs to Areas along with the WSC Equalized Expense payment amount; and collecting payments by check from Areas to forward to the Delegate Team with an appropriate release of responsibility].
- to accept that the Equalized Expense amount be set at \$1,769.00 (70 percent of full cost) and that the full cost for a Delegate to attend the Conference be set at \$2527.68 for the 2024 WSC.

⁴Following best-practice recommendations provided by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), following confirmation with the AFG, Inc. attorneys, in 2022 the Board of Trustees, together with its Executive and other Committees, began using a consensus methodology for decisions except when matters, such as legal and other fiduciary responsibilities, required formal motions.

- to approve the revised 2023 Budget as presented.
- to engage Brown Edwards & Company, L.L.P. for audit services for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023 and the following four consecutive years, with retention review to be completed annually by the Audit Committee.
- to approve the revised Expense Reimbursement and Travel Policy as amended.
- to remove the ten-year cap term limit on the Executive Director position.
- to accept the Reserve Fund & Investment Guidelines and Investment Philosophy as presented.
- to accept the Finance Committee's recommendation that the Equalized Expense for the 2024 IAGSM, to be held in Virginia Beach, VA, be \$2,828.15 US (100 percent) for each Delegate, or full cost.
- to shift the arrival at the October Board Week one day later but maintain the existing Board meeting duration for a one-year trial in 2024.

Executive Committee Motions and Decisions by Consensus⁴

David B., Chairperson of the Executive Committee (At-Large member)

The following actions were approved by the Executive Committee and presented to and approved by the Board of Trustees:

- to approve the monthly Finance Committee Report and financial statements
- to approve the recommendation of the Web Tech Coordinator Task Force as presented.
- to accept the changes made to the *Service Manual* as presented.
- to discontinue the recording of answers to the Directors' Report questions in the Executive Committee minutes and provide them to WSO Archives with the Directors' Report.
- to approve the Consent Agenda, FEAC, Literature, Public Outreach, and Audit Committee At Large resumes as presented.
- to approve 2023 and 2024 World Service Conference presentations.
- to approve the guidelines for all Board of Trustees' Committees and Work Groups.

⁴Following best-practice recommendations provided by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), following confirmation with the AFG, Inc. attorneys, in 2022 the Board of Trustees together with its Executive and other Committees, began using a consensus methodology for decisions except when matters, such as legal and other fiduciary responsibilities, required formal motions.

2024 CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Trustees at Large

Ann Marie Z. Jeri W. Pennie K.
Don B. Kathi M.
Jayme C. Lynette K.

Regional Trustees

Cindy M., US Southwest Debbie P., Canada Central
Diane B., US South Central Sally K., Canada West
Jean L., US North Central Tony S., Canada East

Sustaining Member

Vali F., Executive Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

David B., Chairperson
Vali F., Executive Director
Jeri W., Board Chairperson (ex-officio, non-voting)
Ann Marie Z., Treasurer
Pennie K., Policy Chairperson
Carol M., Member at Large
Norm W., Member at Large
Sarah S., Staff member

NON-TRUSTEE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Sue C., Executive Committee for Real Property Management
Chairperson**

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Vali F., Executive Director
Niketa Williams, Director of Finance & Operations*
Sarah S., Director of Programs
Scot P., Director of Communications & Community Awareness
Carol C., Associate Director – Literature
Heather S., Associate Director – Community Relations
Sue P., Associate Director – Group Services
Suzanne M., Associate Director – Conference
Tracey S., International Services Manager**

AREA DELEGATES

Laura M., Alabama/
Northwest Florida
Mari J., Alaska
Diane G.,
Alberta/Northwest Territories
Gene T., Arizona
Marti P., Arkansas
Owen H.,
British Columbia/Yukon
Chris M., California North
Teresa F., California South
Kari O., Colorado
Elaine M., Connecticut
Phil D., Delaware
Gretchen S., Florida North
Kathy D., Florida South
Char G.F., Georgia
Burt P., Global Electronic Area
Kauai P., Hawaii
Cheryl S., Idaho
Liz P., Illinois North
Carol W., Illinois South
Brenda K., Indiana
Becky V., Iowa
Joan K., Kansas
Pauline W., Kentucky
GW W., Louisiana
Carol G., Maine
Brenda L., Manitoba/
Northwest Ontario
Tara M., Maritime Provinces
Dolores McK., Maryland/
District of Columbia, Area Chair
Jane P., Massachusetts
Theresa S., Michigan
Linda H., Minnesota North
Colleen D., Minnesota South
Leigh R., Mississippi
Sue K., Missouri
Pamela C., Montana
Lalit J., Nebraska
Lisa S., Nevada
Kate M., New Hampshire
Katie O'C., New Jersey
Rocio N., New Mexico/El Paso
Carol C., New York North
Pat G., New York South
Marilyn McC., Newfoundland/
Labrador
Aileen W-M.,
North Carolina/Bermuda
Darcy A., North Dakota
Rose R., Ohio
Emily C., Oklahoma
Donna S., Ontario North
Jason W., Ontario South
Joanne C., Oregon
Ralph H., Pennsylvania
Lourdes C., Puerto Rico
Claudette D., Quebec East,
Interim Alternate Delegate
Kathy H., Quebec West
Cindy B., Rhode Island
Mary C., Saskatchewan
Barbara O'D., South Carolina
Rena B., South Dakota
Irene F., Tennessee
Anna A., Texas East
BJ M., Texas West
Dave B., Utah
Laura A., Vermont
Stacy L., Virginia
Katharine R., Washington
Elliott B., West Virginia
Joanne F., Wisconsin and the
Upper Peninsula of Michigan
Donna W., Wyoming

*Non-member, non-voting

**Non-voting