

Delegate's Report to the Fall Assembly 9-24-11

I would like to welcome all our new GRs and DRs to this Assembly and to share with all of you a reading from "As We Understood" pg.26

As your NYN Delegate it is my job to bring the information of what is happening at the World Service Office to you the GRs so that you can in turn take the information back to your group so that ALL the fellowship can be informed. My report of the happenings at the World Service Conference is given at the Spring Assembly but it is not possible for me to cover all of the topics so today I will report on a few more and also repeat on some which were covered this spring.

This year's conference theme was "Expanding our Community of Hope by Embracing Yesterday's foundations, Today's successes; Tomorrow's possibilities". As you may recall we were also preparing to celebrate the Sixth Birthday of Al-Anon immediately following the Conference. One of the things that I noted about this year's Conference was that there seemed to be a lighter tone to the Conference from the members of the WSO staff, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee and this was apparent in their participation at various points throughout the Conference, some of which I will share with you.

The chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Mary Ann R. and the chairperson of the Executive Committee, Judy P. acted out a brief skit that demonstrated the difference between Al-Anon, the organization, which Lois incorporated as Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. in 1954; and Al-Anon Family Groups, the fellowship. Here are the differences:

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., the organization:

- Exists in the eyes of the law-the Board of Trustees is legally responsible for AFG,Inc.
- Has tax exempt status
- Is the legal arm-protects our logo, our copyright ,our trademarks (name)
- Conducts the business of Al-Anon.
- Has a governance document, the By-Laws of the corporation, which is amended by the Board of Trustees.

Al-Anon Family Groups, the fellowship

- Doesn't exist in the eyes of the law
- Doesn't have tax exempt status
- Is the traditional arm-provides meetings and service structure
- Provides support for individual members
- Has a governance document, the World Service Conference Charter, which is amended by the World Service Conference.
- Recognizes the Board of Trustees as the chief service arm of the Conference.

Information about how these two entities work can be found in your Service Manual; something each of us should become familiar with.

Each year delegates are given an opportunity to participate in workshops that will aide them in carrying out their duties as delegate. The topic for this year's conference workshops was communication. We were given three choices and asked to select two. The three choices were: (1) Understanding Learning Styles, (2) Active Listening; (3) Presentation & Reporting Skills. The workshops are presented by a team made up of a Trustee and a Delegate and it is an interactive type of workshop.

I participated in Communication – Understanding Learning Styles. We began by first accessing our own learning style by means of a handout for doing and scoring our style of learning. Next the presenters gave us the background and relevance of having the workshop. Then they presented the three different learning styles and their characteristics by modeling each one for us. Then there was a discussion about sequential and global styles of processing information. Now we were ready to put a presentation together the topic was predetermined by the information at the table where we were sitting. We would brainstorm ideas on how best to present the topic, using various learning styles. Each group was given three minutes to present their topic to the full group. Fortunately we were provided with a number of handouts so that I can spend more time on this topic. The group I was in had difficulty doing this but it did become a learning experience.

The second workshop that I participated in was Communication-Presentation and Reporting Skills. We began with a discussion of communication strategies for doing a presentation and report. This was followed by a Gallery Walk to identify

techniques that could be used in presenting and reporting in various situations. Some of the key elements pointed out were know the audience, know the subject and the importance of research, when you don't know the answer it's okay to say so and say you'll get back later with the answer; using humor is helpful; let others help with the presentation or report. I hope I have done some of these things during my reports.

Thought and Task forces are short term committees who look at a specific concern using the KBDM process to investigate the topic and to develop strategies to address the topic/idea. Thought Forces are the thinkers they discuss whether or not they want to pursue the idea/topic into action; Task Forces do the actual work such as rewriting guidelines, new programs or design new events. Thought and Task forces were relatively new to us when I began as delegate. The Forces are made up of delegates from all three panels, a Trustee and a WSO staff member and our work is done using computer and conference calls in carrying out our charge. Currently, I am on the Thought Force on Members Involved in Service Work Who are Unable to Effectively Fulfill the Responsibility of the Position. Our hope is that there will be a report at the 2012 WSC and then this will then be reported back to the fellowship.

A Thought Force "To Identify Information for a Guideline on Memorial Contributions reported that in recent years, surviving family members, whose deceased relatives were members of the fellowship, have attempted to make memorial contributions. Current policy does not allow the WSO to accept contributions from anyone who is not a member. The Thought Forces' research found that from the earliest days of Al-Anon that donations had been allowed with a cap of \$100 gradually being raised to \$500 over the years. At the 1986 WSC, at an "Ask-It-Basket" workshop the question was raised and discussed. The workshop participants concluded that accepting family member contributions was a violation of Tradition Seven. The Policy Committee responded and brought revised language to the WSC the following year; and the Conference voted to remove family member contributions from the "Digest of Al-Anon/Alateen Policies."

At present the current WSO policy is to give family members the option to purchase Conference Approved Literature and donate it to an appropriate facility

or to make a contribution to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency or the Stepping Stones Foundation. Following the presentation by the committee the conference members were asked, “In the spirit of our Traditions and our principle of unlimited abundant resources, in what ways can Al-Anon Family Groups support a non-member’s request to honor a deceased member of Al-Anon?” What followed was a lively discussion on the topic with much information as to what can and can’t happen. I would encourage all to read the summary of comments that followed the presentation in the Conference Summary. At the close of the session it was asked if a Task Force might be formed to study this matter further. According to the August Policy Committee report it was agreed that a Thought Force to explore the possibility of family member memorial contributions in light of Tradition Five and “giving comfort to families of alcoholics” during times of bereavement.

The second Thought Force that I wish to report on today is the Thought Force to Support Areas with Groups Whose Activities Fail to consider Al-Anon or Alateen as a Whole. This is a topic which has been raised numerous times and was the focus of one of the 2009 Chosen Agenda Items. Following this presentation and the discussion that followed and additional discussion by the Board of Trustees it was determined that a Thought Force be formed with the following charge to identify the issues that may lead to the practice of activities that fail to consider Al-Anon or Alateen as a whole and develops a variety of strategies that will assist the Areas in dealing with these groups in a positive and productive manner.

The practices included:

- High- pressure groups
- Unregistered groups
- Unfilled group (district and Area) positions
- Failure to follow the intent of the Group Registration Process
- Alcoholics Anonymous (“Big book”) study groups
- Speakers from high –pressure groups
- Lack of trust at all levels
- Outside literature used in meetings
- Modification of the wording of the Steps, Traditions, Concepts & Warranties

- Failure to financially support Al-Anon as a whole.

Using the practice of “outside literature” the Thought Force presented six strategies for discussion purposes. Following the presentation by the Thought Force it was opened-up for discussion from the Conference floor as to what we liked and what we did not like about the strategies. I have provided handouts on this Thought Force. There is a two page handout that will help you understand each of the practices which I listed as possible practices which could lead to a group whose activities could fail to consider Al-Anon or Alateen as a whole. The second handout is a four page piece which identifies all of the practices and gives strategies for each of these practices. There are some great ideas in this handout and I would encourage districts to consider spending some time in looking at these as I think you will find some helpful hints in addressing problems you may be having with individual groups within your district. I would also suggest that you look at the information on this Thought Force which is reported in the Conference Summary. A point of information regarding any thing that I am reporting on here today; all of these topics can be found in the Conference Summary. All DRs, Officers & Coordinators have been given a copy of the Conference Summary. The Summary can also be viewed on the WSO Member Website and pages of it downloaded for discussion, etc.; copies (P-46) are also available from the WSO for the cost of shipping.

This leads me into my next topic The Policy Discussion, “Several Al-Anon districts, Al-Anon Information Services, or Areas have made a decision to discontinue listing groups that have been determined to not reflect Al-Anon principles or procedures. For the purposes of our discussion , the term ‘delist’ is defined as ‘remove’ from a printed meeting list or electronic meeting list. The delisted group would still remain active in all links of service, with voice and vote.

The question for the Policy Committee becomes should WSO become involved in an Area’s dispute with a group? The Policy Committee has discussed the issue, including what the Al-Anon entity has done or might do to eventually re-list the group. The WSO’s philosophy is to provide meeting information for all ‘active’ status groups in the WSO database to callers on the toll-free meeting line. To do this the WSO links a caller to the Area Website, most of which contain local meeting information.

The topic of removing and eventually reinstating a group has been referred to the Conference so that we can better understand what has been done and the philosophy behind the decision. What followed was a discussion using the following three questions.

If your Area has a delisting criteria and procedure please share what principles were discussed when making the decision to delist; who makes the decision; and how does the Area feel about the decision/process?

If your Area has criteria and procedure for relisting; how are the principles applied; who makes the decision; have you worked thru this process; what was the result; and what are the Areas thoughts about the decision/procedure?

Final question: What, if anything, might the WSO do to support Areas in regards to referring members, newcomers, and professionals to groups that an Area has determined do not follow Al-Anon's principles?

As you can imagine each of these questions brought about much discussion and thought. According to the latest report from the Policy Committee a Thought Force was being formed to begin to further explore the "Do Not Refer" issue to determine what the WSO should do when an Area and a group in that Area are in disagreement over whether the group is adhering to the Twelve Traditions. One proposal under consideration was for the WSO to create a "Do Not Refer" list so that operators on the toll-free meeting line would not refer newcomers to groups that Areas have determined are in violation of the Traditions. We will continue to follow what is occurring thru the quarterly updates from the Policy Committee which accompanies the quarterly letter from the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees; this information is available to the membership on the WSO member website.

One of the enjoyable moments of the Conference was to see and hear WSO staff, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee members join in presenting the "Spirit of Generosity". This was a series of seven separate vignettes interspersed throughout the course of the Conference. Each vignette portrayed a service which is provided to the fellowship as a result of our contributions and was a way of pointing out the importance of our abundant giving. The vignettes included the PSAs which appear on TV, these can be viewed on the member website, the

Alateen Chat Meetings for our teen members, the Public Outreach magazine “Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism”, travel to new countries just starting Al-Anon, The FORUM, visits to Areas for presentations, & the Al-Anon toll-free meeting line. Each time one of these vignettes was presented it was accompanied by a verse of “Our Spirits Soar with Every Gift” specially written for the occasion to the tune of “When the saints come marching in”. I had hoped to share some of my pictures on this but they were not workable. I would be happy to share the words to the song and the details of the vignettes are in the Conference Summary. This would be a fun thing to do to raise awareness of how our quarterly contributions are used and to encourage members to think abundantly when giving.

At the August AWSC meeting I asked people to consider submitting a topic for the Area to put forth for the Chosen Agenda for the 2012 WSC. To date I have not received any suggestions and unless we receive suggestions today we will move on to plan B.

Have you done the Abundance Survey on the WSO member website? If not I would encourage you to do so; this is a way you can participate on projects right from the comfort of your own home.

The 2012 World Service Conference will be held April 15 – 19 at the Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa in Stamford, Connecticut. The Conference theme is: “Our Spiritual Journey – we get as we give”.

There were two questions from the Spring Assembly that I needed to get back to you on: 1) How was the determination made that the trial ownership was successful? Each of the triennial reports which were conducted over the fifteen year trial period continued to show that ownership was saving money that would have been swallowed up had we been leasing in New York and secondly there had been continued discussion on the Conference floor that this was working. There is an abundance of material on the member website that supports the decision for anyone who wishes to review it.

2) If the building were sold and it became necessary for us to lease rather than purchase; would the funds from the sale be used to cover the leasing? YES The only use of any funds derived from the sale of property would be buying or leasing of property for the purpose of housing our WSO operation.

QUESTIONS: 1) How many groups are giving the 'new' soft covered "How Al-Anon Works" to newcomers?

2) How many of the GRs have been contacted by WSO via 'e-communities'? In the October issue of the Forum there is an article on this very topic it is the "Inside Al-Anon Family Groups by Barbara O., Director of Member Services. I suggest you read it and if you wish to receive this communication follow the instructions in the article.