

2015 World Service Conference (WSC)

The theme of the 2014 WSC was:

Living Our Spiritual Principles: Expanding Our Vision
Viviendo nuestros principios espirituales – Ampliando nuestra visión
Vivons nos principes spirituels – Élargissons notre vision

Dear Members,

What a wonderful Conference it was! As Trusted Servants we do our utmost to allow the spiritual principles of Al-Anon to guide our daily thoughts and actions. We were asked at the beginning of Conference to “think abundantly” as we looked at our resources in ideas, finance and service structures. I am so grateful to be able to represent Florida North and to share this experience with all of you.

As your Delegate I am here for you; for your opinions, concerns, and questions. Please reach out!

What are Spiritual Principles? Let’s take a look.... (PP presentation)

Memorial Contributions

At the 2013 World Service Conference (WSC), a Policy conversation began on accepting memorial contributions from a non-member on behalf of his or her deceased family member who belonged to Al-Anon. This conversation came at the request of the 2011 WSC in response to a discussion on identifying information for a guideline on memorial contributions.

The Policy Committee began the discussion in July 2011 in light of Tradition Five and “giving comfort to families of alcoholics.” Once this Tradition was fully explored, the Policy discussion expanded to include a review of all Legacies and extensive archival research.

At the 2013 World Service Conference (WSC), members shared their opinions on the Memorial Contributions presentation, which included the archival timeline Delegates were provided on e-Communities in preparation for this discussion. During the discussion, members requested clarification on the definition of “family,” “member,” and whether there would be a limit on the memorial contribution. WSC members also requested safeguards to ensure no undue influence or “ear-marking” and questioned whether a change to Al-Anon’s policy would affect AA as a whole. At the end of the 2013 discussion, the Conference members requested the conversation continue.

At the 2014 World Service Conference, in response to the work of the Thought Force, Conference members discussed the definition of “family” and “member”. Due to time restrictions, the discussion was unable to reach conclusion. Conference members requested to continue the discussion at the 2015 World Service Conference.

Memorial Contributions (cont.)

We discussed limiting the contribution and allowing a “one time only” contribution. At 2015 conference a decision was made to have the policy committee draft language for a statement regarding the question of Memorial Contributions. The statement will be discussed at 2016 Conference.

***Please note this is not about the money, it is about family members who are not Al-Anon members that wish to honor the deceased member in loving memory and gratitude for Al-Anon. Currently these family members cannot make a donation or they must go through the “back-door” so to speak to do so.

Chosen Agenda Items

Each Conference Delegates submit topics that are a concern in their area. The Delegates as a group vote upon the items (topics) and choose two to discuss at conference.

This year the following were discussed; we will have a discussion on each of these at Assembly.

CAI:

Is the current model of Alateen the best model for the future of both Al-Anon and Alateen?

Explain the importance of this CAI and how it could shape Al-Anon as a whole:

In Bill’s “Essay on Leadership,” he speaks of revisiting past decisions to see how they’re working out. Much has changed in Society since the advent of Alateen safety and behavioral Requirements. Cellphones and texting are now the norm for teen communication, background checks (and the administrative costs associated with them) are common and schools, once welcoming, are now reluctant to deal with us for fear of litigation over the inclusion of the three legacies. In short, is Al-Anon wasting resources maintaining the current model of Alateen? If so what changes should be made?

CAI:

The importance of Alateen to our Al-Anon programs.

Explain the importance of this CAI and how it could shape Al-Anon as a whole:

I would like to see work done for Alateen to:

- 1) Get Al-Anon members interested in being Sponsors, Coordinators, and AAPP.
- 2) Get teens interested in Alateen and Service they can do.

CAI:

In some Areas, what is stopping our kids from coming to Alateen?

Explain the importance of this CAI and how it could shape AI-Anon as a whole:

The Alateen Groups are up and running and we are not getting the teens to some of the groups. What could be stopping the kids from coming to Alateen?

CAI:

How can we clarify our primary purpose while welcoming members who need our program who may have a drug addicted friend or family member?

Explain the importance of this CAI and how it could shape AI-Anon as a whole:

Many people are coming into AI-Anon affected by others having problems with both alcohol and other substances, or sometimes only other substances. Our primary purpose is to help families of alcoholics and our only requirement for membership is a problem with alcoholism in a relative or friend.

Some groups respond by stating AI-Anon is for families of alcoholics and addicts, although that is inconsistent with Tradition Five. If groups do not have strategies to welcome newcomers in a manner that protects AI-Anon's focus while encouraging them to determine for themselves if they belong, we risk AI-Anon's ability to offer recovery.

CAI:

Is AI-Anon becoming friends and families of addicts? Is the focus more on addiction than alcoholism? Are we diverted from Tradition Three and Tradition Five? How can we support groups and maintain AI-Anon's primary aim? Is the AI-Anon program being diluted?

Explain the importance of this CAI and how it could shape AI-Anon as a whole:

I continue to hear more talk of addiction instead of alcoholism at all service levels and within the groups that I attend. Our responsibility is to ensure AI-Anon's survival as a resource for families and friends of alcoholics. How do we ensure AI-Anon's survival as a fellowship for families and friends of alcoholics? There are many different types of addiction and we risk our program being diluted more and more as different types of addiction are entering our meetings.

AFG 2015 Budget

When the conference summary comes out in August you will be able to review the budget and Annual Report and see the answers to the questions asked.

To cut to the chase WSO expenditures are \$52,000 greater than their income. WSO needs additional contributions. If each registered group gave \$5.50 extra it would make up the difference. **Please remind members to practice the spiritual principle of gratitude when passing the basket.**

I am very proud of Florida North as we generously contribute to WSO, only 3 other Area's contribute more than we do. Let's increase our contributions this year and show our gratitude!

Just a note on personal contributions to WSO- If you have WSO take out a contribution monthly (you can pre-authorize a monthly deduction) that is tax deductible. Also if you send a personal check to WSO or make an online contribution through a credit card that is tax deductible.

Group contributions are not tax-deductible.

Lastly, if you would like to create a budget for your group I have some suggested budget handouts from last year's conference.

e-communities-AFG Connects

For our Officers, Coordinators, District Representatives and past Conference Members and Members I have great news!

e-communities will be replaced by AFG Connect possibly as soon as October 2015. This program will allow us to access documents without downloading, will actually have the documents attached to a notification email. AFG Connect is very user friendly!

It will also allow members to subscribe to announcement notifications like e-group news and Area Highlights, Al-Anon International Conventions and much more!



"Universal Understanding of Recovery"

WSC is seeking a definition for the statement above. The development of the definition has been a work in progress since 2009. It is felt there is a need for a statement on family recovery when working with professionals and engaging in other public outreach work.

Background:

Goal #3 of the Board of Trustees Strategic Plan under the topic of Universal Understanding of Recovery is “Everyone – both within AI-Anon and outside – will have a universal understanding of recovery.” The rationale being “There seems to be no universally understood definition of “family recovery”; a universal understanding of family recovery could be useful to professionals and could encourage additional research”.

2015 Conference voted on the proposed definitions and the definition below was selected.

Family recovery is a process of healing and growth for family members affected by someone's drinking. This process helps these individuals make healthier life choices and develop relationships that are more positive and supportive.

Team Event

Many Areas are having successful Team Events. The agenda has changed somewhat since we had our Team Event with more Area participation. Some Areas are having a Team Event in conjunction with their Area Convention, on the Friday before or woven in throughout. Something to think about.

From WSO website;

A TEAM Event is a nimble, innovative, flexible event customized to the interest of local members. One or more Areas partner with the World Service Office (WSO) to create this unique service event. TEAM Events are an opportunity for AI-Anon and Alateen members to learn more about service and the AI-Anon program.

TEAM Events are designed to energize members' spiritual quest, activate members' creativity, and expand members' understanding of our worldwide fellowship.

Conference Thought/Task Forces

Each conference presents thought and task forces around topics of interest to the membership. I will be talking about “Presenting Practices that Demonstrate a Healthy, Thriving Group” and “Creating New Strategies” with the Group Representatives on Friday evening at Assembly. The topics below will be discussed throughout the year.

Conference Thought/Task Forces (cont.)

Task Force-Alateen Tools

Task Force- Healthy Thriving Groups

Task Force-Abundance and Spirituality

Thought Force: Create Strategies to Help the Membership Welcome New Practices into the Fellowship

Thought Force: Create Strategies to show the Benefits of Being a Registered Group

New Book!!!!

I have included the memo below as I think it is important to share how much thought and insight goes into thinking about and realizing new literature.

2015 Conference approved the motion for a new book based on Forum sharing's! See the memo below;

In July 2013, the *Forum* Editorial Advisory Committee (FEAC) began to discuss the possibility of developing a book based on sharing's published in past issues of *The Forum*.

After much discussion and careful consideration of the pros and cons, FEAC agreed to bring this proposal forward for Conference approval for two reasons:

- FEAC believes that *The Forum* regularly publishes important and thoughtful sharing's that represent the diversity of the fellowship today. These sharing's have insight into AI-Anon recovery that is not currently available elsewhere in AI-Anon's literature. The best of these sharing's deserve to be read for years to come, but they are likely to be lost and forgotten in the continuous flow of new *Forum* stories published every month, unless they become Conference Approved Literature (CAL).
- FEAC also believes that this book may help a wider cross-section of the fellowship to become aware of the value of the magazine. *The Forum* plays a vital role in communicating the benefits of participating in AI-Anon service and promoting AI-Anon unity, but is read by only a relatively small proportion of the fellowship.

FEAC has followed protocol and prepared the five KDBM questions to present to the Executive Committee and, if approved, present to the World Service Conference for consideration.

This process follows the precedent set by four previously published volumes of *Forum Favorites*, according to which FEAC would ask the Conference for conceptual approval to develop a book based on previously published *Forum* sharing's. Also following previous precedent, FEAC proposes to develop the book and then submit it to the CAL process: namely, review by the Literature Committee, a Policy Review, and approval by the Executive Director.

Background:

Forum Favorites is now out of print. The third and fourth volumes in this series were approved by the Executive Committee and the World Service Conference in 1989. Volume 3 was printed in 1991. Volume 4 was introduced in 1993. The World Service Conference rejected a proposal for a fifth volume in 1994 because Volume 4 had been produced so recently.

Criteria for inclusion:

These are the criteria to help determine if a sharing should be included in the proposed book based on past issues of *The Forum*.

- FEAC has agreed that the purpose of this book is to provide relevant and meaningful support to current members of Al-Anon who are actively working their programs. FEAC has determined that this book is not intended as an historical overview of what has been published in *The Forum* over the past two decades, neither is it intended to be a 60th anniversary retrospective of the magazine's best work. While stories included in this proposed book might be selected from any past issue of *The Forum*, each sharing must be deemed to have value to contemporary Al-Anon members—that is, members who are working their programs today. To that end, sharing's will be excluded when they employ archaic language or are out of touch with the needs and diversity of the fellowship as it exists today.
- FEAC's regular and designated responsibility is to determine whether a particular sharing is relevant and meaningful to Al-Anon members, namely that the sharing addresses topics of concern and that are of interest to the members of the fellowship today. FEAC members and *The Forum's* editorial staff exercise this editorial judgment in compiling every monthly issue of the magazine. These decisions are reached by consensus within FEAC. In most cases, three FEAC members and one staff member agree about the value and ranking of each story. In many cases, the reviewers independently agree in their assessment of a story. In some cases, consensus is reached after group discussion. The process of determining the content of the book would be more highly selective than that for the magazine, but it would be a similar process.
- Selection for inclusion in the book would be guided by the same CAL criteria that are applied in the development of all Al-Anon books. These CAL criteria are also used on a regular basis by FEAC members and *Forum* editors in the development of each monthly issue of *The Forum*. These CAL criteria are:
 - Is it Al-Anon in content and feel?
 - Is it responsive to identified needs within the fellowship?

- Is it factually accurate?
- Is it timely?
- Is it understandable by a broad-based audience?

“Al-Anon in content and feel” is key:

- Is it obvious that the writer has benefited in some way from the Al-Anon/Alateen program?
- Is it gentle and from the heart?

A sharing is deemed *not* to be “Al-Anon in content and feel” when:

- It is directive.
 - It is teaching or preaching.
 - The focus is mainly on the alcoholic, instead of the hope of recovery.
 - When it focuses on any outside issue, including drugs or other addictions.
- In addition to CAL criteria, FEAC members and *Forum* editors also consider several other factors:
 - Geographic diversity—Are Canadian members represented? Is there some representation of members from other countries around the world?
 - Gender diversity—Are there sharing’s from men as well as women?
 - Diversity of recovery—from newcomers to long-timers, Al-Anon members have different levels of recovery. As in the monthly magazine, the book must include a range of recovery stories so that all members, regardless of the level of their personal recovery, will find something that is relevant to their personal program.
 - Diversity of alcoholic relationships—some members have an alcoholic spouse, some have alcoholic children, and some have alcoholic parents. As in the monthly magazine, the book must include a range of alcoholic relationships so that all members, regardless of their personal situation or recovery, will find something that is relevant to their personal program.
 - Alateen must always be included.

- Members write or call the office to comment on stories published in the magazine. Stories that have received strongly positive feedback from members will be included in the book.
- To be included in the book, sharing's should be compelling, unique, and honest. They must create an emotional connection between the reader and the writer, and reflect the needs of a diverse Al-Anon fellowship as it exists today.

And that my fellow members is the end of my report for today! I am so humbled to be representing our Area at Conference. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity. Conference is such a spiritual experience, seeing the principles of our program at work as we perform the business of Al-Anon I am filled with gratitude that I belong in this fellowship.

Wendy R

Panel 55 Delegate

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"Participation is the key to harmony"