

Rhode Island Al-Anon Family Groups (RIAFG)
Spring Assembly – June 3, 2017
Franklin Court Community Room, Bristol, RI
Hosted by District 3

Voting Members (Groups Representatives and Proxies)

Sheila B.; Tami K.; Denise C.; Holly R.; Jane A.; Alicia M; Barb H.; Jon W.; Sarah A.; Esme H.; Sandy M.; Susan H.; Joy C.; Jean T.; Charles W.; Dean H.; Terry L.; Maggie W.; Barbara M.; Tom H.; Sandra L.; Lorie G.

Area Officer/Coordinator Attendees

David G., Area Chair; Chris L., Group Records Coordinator; Joy C., AAPP; Phyllis H., Area Delegate; Shawn J., District 1 Representative; Tami K., Area Treasurer; Jane A., Office Coordinator; Barbara H., Literature Coordinator; Terry L., District 3 Representative

Opening

Moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer; reading of the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and Warranties; roll call/introductions. Terry L. reviewed the housekeeping issues and thanked those who were able to assist.

Minutes

One GR commented that he had not received the Draft Minutes for the Fall Assembly. Upon discussion, it was determined that the Agenda packet may not have been forwarded to the District 1 GRs nor posted on the Area Website. The Area Chair will follow up with the DRs and the Website Coordinator to make sure that the packets are sent and posted in a timely manner in the future. Upon motion duly made by Charles W. and seconded by Jane A., the amended minutes of the October 1, 2016 Assembly were approved by a vote of 13 ayes, 0 nays.

Open Service Positions

David reviewed the open service positions that will be voted on this afternoon.

Announcements

Before moving on to the first topic of discussion, David G. introduced Jon W. who was involved in starting the Al-Anon meeting at the Veteran's Hospital and briefly talked about how easy and rewarding it is to start a new meeting.

David also mentioned that there has been discussion on AFG Connects regarding members changing the pronoun "he" in the Steps and Traditions. The online discussion suggested that members who are uncomfortable with saying "he" should pass on that Step or Tradition rather than changing the pronoun. In their personal sharing members are free to use the pronoun of their choice; he/she/they etc.

Annual Appeal and "Break the Buck Barrier"

An updated version of the "Break the Buck Barrier" tablecard was passed out. Barbara H. edited it to reflect 2017 costs for comparison. GRs were encouraged to take this back to their meetings to aid in discussion and awareness of choices for

member donations when the basket is passed. Charles W. and Sandy M. talked about increased donations as a result of discussions in their groups.

David stated that Annual Area Appeal donations were less in 2016 than in 2015. The annual appeal provides approximately 10% of the Area operating costs each year. He explained the distinction between the group donations that are placed in the basket and the Annual Area Appeal donation. He also explained the difference between the Annual Area Appeal (one time per year sent by Area and donations go 100% to Area) and the Quarterly WSO Appeals (sent by WSO to the group and 100% of donations go to WSO). He then opened it up for discussion.

Ideas that were put forth were: GR should be the one to make the announcement and explain the difference; many groups don't have a GR to make such announcements; there is resistance to reading the letters in some groups; does the timing of the appeal impact the donations?; make November a "month of gratitude" – a campaign month of giving starting with the Workshop; the group treasurer has a better understanding of group finances and donations to the Area; appeals are individual donations; give each group a batch of pre-addressed envelopes for individual members to send in their donations; approximately \$250/group/year would take care of our budget; David has the group donations information available for people to look at during the breaks; groups also can make donations to the appeal; send out pre-addressed stickers (they are cheaper than envelopes to create and mail); during the appeal period, members put one week of their monthly donations into the appeal rather than the basket; set a goal for the donations and then provide updates on how close we are to our goal; AWSC members revisit groups to talk about what AWSC does for the groups/members and what the appeal is about.

Delegate's 2017 World Service Conference Report

Due to an injury, Phyllis H. was unable to read her report so her husband, Dean H., read it for her. See attached for details.

Planting Seeds of Service

Jane A. read the May 30th reading from Courage to Change and led a "guided meditation" on the planting and growth of a seed. She provided cups, soil, water, seeds, and bulbs for everyone to plant their own "seeds of service".

Communication Thought Force Report

Shawn J. presented a report on the process and results of the Communication Thought Force established in January by the AWSC (see attached).

Communication Breakout Sessions Reports

The Assembly participants broke up into 4 groups to discuss the 4 priorities identified by the Thought Force. They reported back using the 6 questions that David gave to each group:

1. What have you experienced related to this issue?

2. What do you see the Area does well (positives on this issue) and what does the Area not do as well (negatives on this issue)?
3. What ideas/suggestions/information do you have for the consideration of the Task Force if one is created?
4. Do you support/oppose a Task Force of Area members to implement the changes on this issue?
5. If support, do you favor Options A (one task force with committees and address all issues) OR Options B (one task force with one issue at a time?).
6. Can you volunteer to be on one of the committees if that is the Assembly's choice?

The answers from the groups will be reviewed by the AWSC to determine how to proceed.

Barbara H., Tami K., Terry L., Susan H., and Shawn J. volunteered to be on a Task Force or committee. Dean H. volunteered to be a technical consultant to the Task Force.

Ask It Basket

David read and responded to questions that were placed in the Ask It Basket.

Elections of Area Coordinators and Officers

Alternate Delegate position was tabled – no nomination made.

Secretary position was tabled – no nomination made.

Archives Coordinator position – no nomination made.

Forum Coordinator position – no nomination was made.

Lifelines Coordinator position – no nomination was made.

Public Outreach Coordinator position – no nomination was made.

District 2 DR – no one stepped up to fill this position.

Workshop 2017 Committee Chair – Tom H. volunteered to co-chair the Workshop Committee. Tom will look for someone to co-chair with him. Susan H. volunteered to be on the committee and said she knows of two other members who want to be on the committee.

The next assembly will be held on November 4, 2017, to be hosted by District 2. The venue will be communicated when set.

Closing

Motion made to adjourn at 3:30 p.m., so carried.

The meeting closed with the Serenity Prayer and the Al-Anon Declaration.

Much thanks to District 3 for planning a great Spring Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,
Phyllis H.

World Service Conference 2017

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

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

There are 3 parts to my presentation this year:

PART ONE: A visit to OUR World Service Office

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are a few key staff that we met:

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

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

PART TWO: Conference

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

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

2016 Budget Report

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

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

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

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

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

Rhode Island Contributions

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

Thank You!

2017 Proposed Budget

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

Income from literature sales is projected to be about \$14,877 less than last year and *Forum* subscription income is expected to be about \$1,900 less than last year. Contributions are being budgeted at \$2,100,000, which is \$1,902 more than last year's actual amount.

Beginning in 2008, the Board agreed to transfer up to 4% of the average balance of the Reserve Fund over the prior 36 months to the General Fund. The 2016 reserve transfer has been set at 4 percent. Last year we were able to not take any money from the Reserve Fund because our revenues covered all our expenses. Wouldn't it be great if that happened again in 2017? Here's how we can help make that a reality.

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

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

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

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

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism Magazine

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

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

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

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

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

Here are the totals for Rhode Island:

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

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

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

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

Thank you for putting the 12th step into action.

Prayer for Today

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

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

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

My responses were:

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

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

My response was:

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

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

International Convention

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

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

\$130 before December 31st, 2017

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

\$195 after May 31st, 2018

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

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

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

PART THREE: Fellowship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Phyllis H.
Delegate, Panel 55
Rhode Island

2017 RI AREA COMMUNICATIONS THOUGHT FORCE REPORT

Difference Between Thought Force and Task Force:

Thought Force: A temporary committee of members charged with brainstorming to develop strategies with regard to a single task or activity. Thought Force may lay foundation for the work of a Task Force. They are the researchers. They gather information about the issue and compile thoughts (only) about the issue. They are the thinkers- NOT the doers.

Task Force: A temporary committee of members charged with working on a single task or activity. They do the work of the issues and thoughts and may fulfill the recommendations of the Thought Force. Task Forces are the doers not the thinkers.

****Neither group is a decision making body. Both groups have a distinct function and responsibility to the AWSC to present its findings and proposals****

Activity: The RI Area Communications Thought Force was charged with determining the scope of communication issues/barriers and determining its impact on the RI Area of AI-Anon.

It was a 6 member committee consisting of the following representation from RI AI-Anon: A former Area Delegate, the two current District Reps, as well as three other members that currently or have previously held positions on the AWSC (a current GR and former Group Records Coordinator, the current Alateen Coordinator, and the current Webmaster).

The brainstorming process was started and centered around five probing (Though provoking) questions.

1. What do we know about members' needs that are relevant to this issue?
2. What do we know about the resources and vision that is relevant to the issue?
3. What do we know about current realities and evolving dynamics in this topic area?
4. What are the ethical implications- will it be consistent with spiritual principles?
5. What do we wish we knew but don't?

These questions guided the thinking of the research. The challenge was for the committee to stay in the thinking part of the process and not combine it with the problem solving part of the process. Remembering that we were the information gathers and thinkers not the doers. The tendency was to jump to a solution once an area of the problem was identified. There was much discussion and various points within each question that was the focus of the thinking. The committee also started to see a pattern of overlap between questions as some points of concern were covered in more than one question. From there a list of the main points/concerns was developed. For simplicity it was determined it should consist 3-5 main topics only. Although communication and processes associated with it are complex, the goal of the Thought Force was to identify the scope of the issue. Simplification of the communication methods and processes was identified as a key need within the issue. The Thought Force was able to determine 4 primary areas/topics that encompassed the scope of the issue. Those primary areas were then prioritized and are found in the following findings and recommendations:

Thought Force Findings: Scope of Issue (4 primary areas of priority)

1. Need for organizational/communication structure for the Area.

- a. As it is related to both positions and processes
 - i. To provide clarity for confusion of ownership
 - ii. To provide for continuity of communication (esp. w open positions/broken links of service)
 - iii. Provide standards for frequency of communication and need for it to be streamlined

2. Need to address Digital communication in all forms

- a. Processes, platforms, and interfacing
 - i. With regard to concerns of security, efficiency, functionality, efficacy, frequency, privacy, service positions, and responsibilities

3. Need for process for consensus of public facing content to address concerns

- a. For newcomer in terms of attraction and in terms of support
- b. For existing members to overcome apathy & encourage service/ participation/ engagement
- c. To prevent group isolation
- d. Address Alateen needs

4. Need to establish process for collaboration with other Areas

- a. For communication of events
- b. Collaboration of best practices
- c. Ability to connect for mentorship opportunities
- d. Energize and support membership of Al-Anon as a whole

Alateen meetings across state lines was given as an example for this priority*

RI Communications Thought Force Recommendations:

It is recommended that the AWSC proceeds with forming a Communications Task Force to determine options for addressing each Thought Force priority. That those Task Force options be presented to AWSC for further decision and if appropriate implementation.

The RI Communications Thought Force discussed several options for structuring a Task Force. The two most feasible options involved the following considerations for structuring the work of the Task Force, both with unique advantages and disadvantages. They are as follows:

Option A: One Task Force consisting of multiple committees assigned to each of the Thought Force priorities (4 committees responsible to one Task Force).

Advantages: Work could be completed quickly, with timely implementation of completed Task Force recommendations, possibly implemented by 2018.

Disadvantages: Need many more members to step up to service within the committees for the task force- would require larger scale of volunteers. Also would require very strong leadership, collaboration, and coordination skills of the member heading the Task Force to coordinate all work between all committees (large undertaking of responsibility).

Option B: One Task Force that works through one priority at a time. Reporting findings and recommendations through implementation before starting on next priority. Same Task Force (with same or different members for each priority) to work on all priorities over time.

Advantages: Less members needed to step up to service to complete work. Any priority that gets options implemented is step toward stronger communication regardless of if all priorities are completed. Could be completed over time as resources allow.

Disadvantages: Will take longer time period to complete. Risk of only part of priorities being completed. May take up to two years for all priorities to be addressed. May not have sustainability of resources to implement all priorities.