



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

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January 2024 Chairperson of the Board Letter

Dear Al-Anon and Alateen members:

The purpose of this Chairperson of the Board (COB) letter is to share with you some highlights from the January 2024 Board Week. You will also find updates from our Policy Chairperson, a Finance Update from our Treasurer, and a Conference Leadership Team (CLT) update.

It is my privilege to welcome the new Panel 64 Delegates as members of the World Service Conference (WSC). The Board of Trustees and Executive Committee (EC) members, World Service Office (WSO) Staff, and Panel 62 and 63 Delegates wish you all the best in your new role as Delegate. I am looking forward to meeting all of you in Virginia Beach in April for the 64th WSC. (See the CLT update for more information.)

Board Development:

The Board engaged in two thoughtful discussions on the following topics:

- Inclusion as a spiritual principle found in our Legacies and Mission Statement
- Hidden norms

At our 2023 October Board Meeting, the Trustees were encouraged to delve into focusing our discussions on diversity and inclusion on a group level. To continue this process, in January, the Board had a conversation about how our Legacies and Mission Statement represent the spiritual principle of inclusion. As our guideline, we began our conversation using “when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help.” The Board concluded that the Al-Anon/Alateen program is immersed in inclusion, particularly in the Traditions. After this attentive discussion, we felt a similar conversation could be useful for any Area or District agenda topic.

As part of its education regarding inclusion, the Board has learned it is important to identify and document any “hidden norms” by which it has been or is operating. These are items that are understood by some but not documented. The Board has come to understand “hidden norms” can represent unconscious biases. To be of greater assistance to future Trustees, we are examining our Board of Trustees Handbook, Governance Handbook, and the Orientation for New Trustees. Our aim is to assist all new Trustees to have an easier transition into their new roles as WSO Volunteers and to avoid unconscious behaviors that could impact their experiencing a sense of welcome and support. Is it possible that your Area or District might want to look for “hidden norms” that might help your future trusted servants?

Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee was extremely busy this year. For the first time, all work to prepare for Trustee and Executive Committee interviews, plus the technology assignment, was completed by the Nominating Committee. This approach allowed these trusted servants to develop specific questions related to each candidate’s resume, which in turn better informed the Board during the interview process as to the skills and qualifications each candidate could bring to the Board. All interviews were conducted virtually in January.

In addition to this work, the Nominating Committee completed their work to develop three recommendations to update the Trustee nominating process. The first two recommendations concluded significant efforts that began after the 2022 WSC to address Area Delegate concerns about the lack of clarity in the Trustee application process. The third resulted from the evaluation of an experimental effort to improve the Regional Committee on

Trustees election process that had not worked as well as estimated. The Board approved the Nominating Committee recommendations as follows:

- Revise and replace the current Trustee Role Description effective immediately
- Begin using the revised Trustee Application for the 2024 nominating process, which commences August 16, 2024
- Hold Regional Committee on Trustees Chairperson and Co-Chairperson elections during the time frame of the WSC

The Board is responsible for ensuring that “This [Nominating] Committee aids the Trustees in discharging their prime 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 on page 210 of the 2022-2025 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27) v3. Throughout the selection process, we as a Board keep our hearts and minds open to the collective understanding and guidance of our Higher Power.

The list of nominees to be presented to the World Service Conference (WSC) for traditional approval are:

Regional Trustee:

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

Trustee at Large:

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

Board Officers:

Kathi M., Chairperson of the Board, first one-year term
Diane B., Vice Chairperson, first one-year term
Ann Marie Z., Treasurer, second one-year term

Following traditional approval, the Board may elect the nominees at the Annual Meeting following the WSC.

The following resumes will be presented to all World Service Conference members for their information.

Executive Committee:

Carol M., third one-year term
Jeff F., second one-year term
Angela A., first one-year term

Chairperson of the Executive Committee:

Carol M., first one-year term

Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM):

Lori H., three-year term

Chairperson of the Executive Committee for Real Property Management (ECRPM):

Sue C., second one-year term

We are extremely grateful for those willing to stand for service to fulfill our primary purpose of helping friends and families of alcoholics.

At-Large Committees (Literature, Forum Editorial Advisory [FEAC], and Public Outreach):

The Board discussed how we do our work and how our diversity conversations have been an integral part of that development. We considered the benefits of expanding our definition of diversity beyond its current regional constraint when recommending At-Large members to participate on these important Board Committees. The Board noted the historical context of the regional consideration. After much thought and attention, the Board approved a motion to eliminate the need to restrict applicants for balanced Regional representation on the Literature, FEAC, and Public Outreach Committees during the selection of At-Large applicants. This decision increases the possibility that two qualified applicants from the same Region, representing diverse perspectives, can be selected to serve on these important At-Large Committees of the Board.

Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect:

I am excited to share with the fellowship that the 2024 Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect event will be held in Columbia, South Carolina on October 26, 2024. The planning has already begun. The Road Trip! Work Group recommended some exciting revisions to the agenda, which the Board approved, and is currently working on a Welcome Committee Guideline. Please tell all your Al-Anon/Alateen friends to join us in fellowship to meet the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee members for a day-long event full of surprises, fun, and more knowledge about our links of service.

And there's more! The Board approved a motion to begin a three-year trial to offer interpretation when it is requested by the Area and supported by local Area interpreters. Criteria specified in the motion included: paying fair, standard rates for local interpreters; having access to Area interpretation equipment (transmitters at a minimum); ensuring overall costs are minimal enough to maintain an affordable registration fee; having Spanish- or French-speaking meetings registered in the Area; and considering translation support from the Area as being helpful to WSO Staff.

Strategic Projects Update:

Each year the Board looks forward to discussing our role in examining and approving the 2024 WSO Projects Landscape. This landscape is shared with the Board by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). It aligns with the Strategic Plan's Goal Statements of Members, Recover & Service Tools, Awareness, Financial Sustainability, and Global Engagement.

The 2024 WSO Projects Landscape includes the following:

- eBooks Globally
- Next Generation Group Records
- Online Store Version 2.0
- Electronic Alateen Planning & Validation
- CAL Globally
- GEMS Booklet
- 2025 A.A. International Convention with Al-Anon participation in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- 2028 Al-Anon International Convention Site Selection
- Revamping the Trustee Application

In addition to the 2024 projects, the WSO Staff continue to provide their time and resources to the services listed on the back of each appeal letter.

2025 Visit to Stepping Stones:

In January, the Board again continued its discussions regarding the 2025 WSC visit to Stepping Stones as it considered ongoing Delegate and Staff feedback. The conversation began at the July 2023 Board meeting to address a pressing Staff need to select a hotel at which to hold the 2025 WSC. At that meeting, time constraints necessitated the Board focusing its good estimates on the near future. For this reason, the Board only made a decision regarding the 2025 WSC, as it was committed to discussing "how [this idea] might apply under differing conditions in the longer future" as described in Concept Nine. Further discussion in October, and again at the January 2024 Board meeting, led the Board to evolve its current plan to better align with previous experiments undertaken to address the rising costs of hotels and other necessities in New York and the surrounding area while maintaining the connection with Stepping Stones.

Through these discussions, the Board has reaffirmed that no permanent decision has been made regarding holding the WSC in New York and visiting Stepping Stones. What happens after the 2025 WSC is a topic for consideration at the 2024 WSC. After confirming that the increased cost for visiting Stepping Stones results from the higher rates for surrounding area hotels and related expenses, the Board also approved at its January meeting that the Delegate costs associated with the Stepping Stones visit will be included in the 2025 WSC full cost and equalized expense calculations. This decision relieves Areas of the need to choose whether or not to send their Delegate to Stepping Stones in 2025 based on financial considerations. And finally, the Board affirmed its commitment to ensuring the Delegate Task Force charged with organizing the Stepping Stones visit is fully supported by the WSO Staff in contractual and financial matters. The Board is looking forward to the conversation about this matter with the Conference in April.

Board Reflective Questions:

During the November COB Letter Presentation, I mentioned “reflective questions” that the Board answered at the end of Board Week. These questions are part of our Board evaluation process. Several Delegates were interested in obtaining a list, but there was a question of copyright issues. After WSO Archives research, Staff confirmed the questions were not copyrighted but rather were developed by the Board.

During January Board, there was a consensus to approve the Board providing Delegates the reflective questions. They are: What did we accomplish as related to the Strategic Plan? Did we perform at our ideal level of engagement? What progress can we show for what we’ve done? What were the difficulties/struggles? What can we improve? Tell us some things we did well. Was it spiritual?

International Coordination Committee:

The International Coordination Committee (ICC) shared with the Board a lot of good news. As we try to reach others affected by alcoholism no matter where they may be, preparations for the 2024 International AI-Anon General Service Meeting (IAGSM) in Virginia Beach, as well as the reports from the various Zonal Meetings that occurred in 2023, keep our focus on our Global Engagement Strategic Goal. Included in those endeavors is the ability to reach more of our fellowship through our Conference Approved Literature (CAL).

Today I am thrilled to share that the Board has approved the following translations and printings of CAL in other countries:

- Latvia granted permission for first-time translation and printing CAL into the Latvian language
- Mongolia granted permission for first-time translation and printing CAL into the Mongolian language.

Our worldwide fellowship continues to grow! I hope you are as excited as I am to know that the hands of AI-Anon and Alateen are reaching out not only in meetings but also with our literature. Bravo!

Envisioned Future Work Group:

The Envisioned Future Work Group (EFWG) facilitated a thought-provoking discussion about artificial intelligence (AI) to the January Board, bringing awareness to the reality that each of us is likely already interacting with AI. Trustees shared examples like phones suggesting words when typing an email or message. This Work Group’s focus is to bring forward thinking topics that can create visionary and generative discussions. This topic brought excitement and surfaced some fears. The focus was on AI’s impact and future opportunities for use by AFG, Inc. We concluded that we needed to have a better understanding of AI and be cautious in our thinking and possible actions.

Public Outreach Committee:

The Public Outreach Committee has been busy seeking ways to reach families and friends of alcoholics and professionals who work with them. Some accomplishments of the Committee’s work groups include the following:

- Social Media Work Group – Evaluated approximately 100 statements sourced from the 2021 AI-Anon Membership Survey.
- PO Toolkit Work Group – Devised a process for assessing projects submitted by AI-Anon members to add to the PO Toolkit located on al-anon.org. The WG has already reviewed 14 submissions.

The Forum:

This year marks *The Forum's* 70th anniversary. You may have already noticed the front cover acknowledging this milestone. What can you look forward to in upcoming issues? There will be reprints of adult children member shares, an archival look back at the first adult children's groups, a reprint of a cartoon entitled "Stepping Lightly," and an article about the Traditions from *Inside Al-Anon* before it became part of *The Forum*.

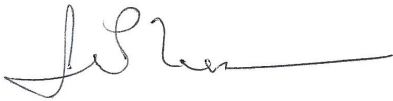
A Little Time for Myself (B-34):

How could there be a COB Letter without the mention of the tremendous success of our new daily reader? This book has been the catalyst for literature sales being the highest in our history. I thank those who contributed their sharings, those on the Literature Committee who began the process, and all members who purchased this wonderful piece of CAL.

In closing:

The 2024 World Service Conference theme is "Our Path toward Grace, Unity, and Understanding." As I look at all that has been accomplished by many, I know for myself that grace is what allows me to seek unity and understanding in all I try to say and do. May your coming moments, days, and weeks be filled with this theme as well. May you question, comment, listen, learn, pray to your Higher Power, and love with all your heart, mind, and spirit. May your path be one of adventure as you help each other on your recovery journey. Thank you for your dedicated work!

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeri W.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeri W.

Chairperson, Board of Trustees

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc