



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

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October 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 of the highlights from the October 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.

Certainly, one of the many pleasures I have had as the Chairperson is sharing the knowledge and fellowship of our Board Week. There was once again much accomplished by some very dedicated people.

Our October 2024 Board Meeting was held in historic Columbia, South Carolina, where we drove over orange tiger prints on the road, signifying the presence of nearby Clemson University. This preceded Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect.

Perception Conversation

One of the current Trustees brought forth the discussion of “perception,” something that can alter someone’s interpretation, to the October Board Meeting. This Trustee shared that the definition of perception is “the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.”

In the WSO Volunteers Handbook, which is similar to an Area’s policies and procedures for officers and coordinators, it states the following: “Regardless of the nature of the invitation, it is helpful to recognize that WSO Volunteers are always representing the WSO and AFG, Inc., even when their service as a Trustee or Executive Committee member is not known or announced.” This statement serves to remind our WSO Volunteers that we are always representing the WSO and AFG, Inc. The perception others have of us is that we represent the organization, so words and actions matter.

As a Board, we had a generative discussion on the question: “Do we as Trustees represent the fellowship on personal and/or public social media sites?” The Board concluded that by choosing to serve at the world service level, WSO Volunteers agree to place the needs of Al-Anon Family Groups above our personal preferences when sharing information at the level of press, radio, film, TV, and internet, including social media. The conversation helped us to recognize that when we share personal opinions on social media—even if those opinions involve outside issues—those who know us as WSO Volunteers may perceive those opinions as reflecting the choices or voice of AFG, Inc.

GEA Regional Assignment

In April 2021, the WSC voted to recognize all permanent electronic meetings as Al-Anon Family Groups. During the October 2021 Board Week, WSO Staff brought a topic to the Board regarding the assignment of the then non-panel Area, now the Global Electronic Area, to a Region. The Board reached a consensus to assign the new Global Electronic Area (GEA) to the geographic region in which their first Delegate resides, providing the Delegate resides within the WSC Structure, or to a geographic Region “pulled from the hat” if they live outside the Structure, on a three-year trial. (October 2021 Board Minutes)

The three-year trial ends this year; therefore, the Board needed to decide whether to make permanent the practice established by the trial, establish a new trial, or end the trial, which would leave the GEA Delegate without a Regional assignment.

The selection of the Region affects the composition of the Regional Committee on Trustees for each Region up for election of a Regional Trustee. The selection also affects the GEA itself both financially, in terms of the cost for the Delegate to attend Regional Delegates Meeting (RDM) if approved by the Area, and educationally, as each Region's RDM offers different levels of education and support for their Region's Delegates.

At the July 2024 Board Meeting, a consensus was reached to gather more information regarding the preferences of the GEA on the matter of being assigned to a Region and to clarify the implications of assigning an Area to a Region from a Board perspective, so the Board could be informed when making a decision at the October 2024 Board meeting.

The COB discussed the GEA preference with the Area's Delegate, who then brought the matter to the GEA Officers to discuss. The Delegate informed the COB that the GEA would like to continue the trial for another three years, since, during the first three years, they had two different Delegates and an Alternate Delegate who attended the Conference for the Area, so were part of different Regions and did not have continuity of experience with any. They are hopeful the new Delegate will serve all three years, and the GEA can experience being part of the same Region throughout the term.

In October, the Board decided to extend for a second three-year period the trial to assign the GEA to the Region within the WSC Structure in which their current Delegate lives or, if the Delegate lives outside the WSC Structure, to a WSC Structure Region pulled from a hat. During the discussion, the Board recognized that according to the current AFG, Inc. Bylaws, future Past Delegates from the GEA who do not reside within geographic areas of the United States and Canada would not be eligible to serve as a Regional Trustee.

Reserve Fund and WSO's One Year's Operating Expense

Per the Board's direction at the July Board meeting, SLT provided cost information for the following projects to be financed by the excess funds in the Reserve Fund beyond the one year's operating expense identified at the end of 2023:

- Core Systems Overhaul
- Passing It On
- PO Campaign for the Professional: Young People. This will include travel expenses when identified.

The Board discussed the benefits of these projects and Staff capacity to implement these in the future before approving the use of the Reserve Fund to finance all of the special projects. These transfers will occur after expenses are incurred when appropriate for efficiency and reviewed through the usual financial controls, including Board approval for the amounts when transferred. Timing for completing these special projects will be considered as part of the Board's January 2025 Strategies approval process.

Strategic Planning: Envisioned Future Work Group (EFWG)

The EFWG is a work group of the Board charged with bringing forward-looking generative discussion topics on strategic issues. The topic this time was "looking at our competitors in the recovery space." It was noted that a syndicated columnist, whose predecessor would routinely recommend AI-Anon, recommended AI-Anon or Smart Recovery in a recent column. This reminded a member of a competitive analysis that was presented to the Board in 2020. This analysis identified which organizations were our direct and indirect competitors at the time, as well as what they were doing.

The Board discussed how we compete for members within our Legacies, what we are missing, and whether this is still relevant.

As the Board discussed, it became clear that we are already doing many things to attract members and that it is not a competition. People who need help will participate in things they believe will help them.

Board Week & Evaluations

October Board Week Duration

In October 2023, the Board had a thoughtful discussion concerning the October Board Week schedule. There were several factors considered including finances, efficiency, and time. A consensus was reached to shift the

arrival at the October Board Week one day later but maintain the existing overall meeting duration of 1.5 days for a one-year trial in 2024. This year's Board schedule reflected that shortened schedule.

The Board needed to decide if this shortened schedule is in the best interest of the Board, AFG Inc., and Al-Anon as a whole and whether we will extend the trial, make it permanent, or return to the previous October schedule. We asked ourselves

1. How well is it working to have a shorter Board week?
2. What have we gained by shortening the week?
3. What have we lost by shortening the week?

Generally, the Trustees expressed appreciation for the efficiency and productivity of the Board meeting; however, most preferred to have additional experience before deciding. The Board agreed to extend the trial to hold the October Board of Trustees meeting in 1.5 days for an additional year to further evaluate the results and impacts.

Continuing to Refresh Our Spirituality during Board Week

We again were able to include an Al-Anon meeting on the Board Week Schedule. All WSO Volunteers and Al-Anon member Staff present for the Board meetings and Road Trip! were invited to attend. It was a wonderful opportunity to continue the practice of gathering for fellowship and recovery in the midst of conducting Al-Anon business.

Clarifying the Board Evaluation

In July 2024, the Board began the process of reviewing the questions contained in the Board Evaluation to ensure consistent understanding of each question's meaning across all Trustees. After that discussion, the Board asked Staff to update the evaluation survey to:

- Include a comments section on each evaluation field
- Add a "Not Applicable" option for those without that experience
- Show trends and changes

Staff thoughtfully completed these changes, making them a part of the evaluation survey the Board members complete at the end of each Board week.

We continued our review of the evaluation questions in October but ended up completing only one as it sparked such a generative discussion about the Board practice. More next time.

Executive Director Performance Evaluation

The evaluation of the Executive Director occurs annually. Each year, all WSO Volunteers contribute to this process. The Board is continuing to improve its process for communicating more frequently regarding the ED's performance.

Events

2028 International Convention Site Selection

The Board has selected the site for the 2028 International Convention, and...it will be announced at the 2025 World Service Conference. Got your attention?! Stay tuned.

Road Trip!

Columbia, South Carolina was the location of our ninth Road Trip! You and Your Board Connect. There were 73 pre-registered participants. The day was very full of personal shares and presentations on the many activities of the Board and Executive Committee members. There were also interactive sessions, a skit on service work, and Q&A periods (all related to information presented at Road Trip!).

The South Carolina Welcoming Committee were awesome and did such a fantastic job greeting the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and all those attending Road Trip! in Columbia.

The Board randomly picked three possible sites for next year's Road Trip! from those Areas who applied. That location will be revealed in January after Staff completes their negotiation work with proposed hotels.

Nominating Committee

At-Large Executive Committee Role Description

The Nominating Committee completed development of an At-Large Executive Committee Role Description. The Nominating Committee enlisted the help of the WSO Human Resources Manager in revising the At-Large Executive Committee Role Description to be formatted like the Trustee Role Description but to highlight the different skills needed. One of our hopes in creating the Role Description is to provide more information to those applying for the position.

The Board approved the At-Large Executive Committee Member Role Description as presented and decided to implement it as soon as the results of the At-Large Executive Committee member time survey are analyzed and incorporated into the Role Description.

Timeline for Delegates Applying to Serve on Executive Committee

The Board also accepted the Nominating Committee recommendation that Delegates not be required to wait two years after serving before being considered to serve as an At-Large member of the Executive Committee on a three-year trial basis. The Board discussed the rationale for Delegates not being permitted to apply for Trustee during the two-year period after their Delegate service. This rationale exists to ensure members of the Nominating Delegate Committees (Regional Committees on Trustees and Conference Committee on Trustees) who may have served with these Delegates are not influenced by that experience. Since At-Large members of the Executive Committee are not reviewed by the Nominating Delegate Committees, this same concern does not exist.

International Coordination Committee (ICC)

The ICC has been very busy these last three months. They planned and implemented the International Al-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) with this year's historic hybrid business meeting. This year both Russia and Austria were recommended and accepted as new admissions to the IAGSM.

Much of the agenda was focused on the future of the IAGSM. After thoughtful discussion, the participating members voted to develop a Thought Force including some ICC and GSO representatives to investigate alternate funding options for future IAGSMs. They also approved holding interim meetings of IAGSM members virtually to further discuss the future of the IAGSM. An additional interim virtual meeting was approved to select the host country for the 2026 IAGSM.

World Service Conference

Conference Theme

We are so happy to announce our 2025 Conference Theme:

Investing in Each Other to Preserve Our Legacy

S'investir mutuellement pour préserver notre héritage

Invertir los unos en los otros para preservar nuestro legado

In keeping with its intended purpose, this new theme becomes effective with the New Year, January 1, 2025, and extends until December 31, 2025.

Our current theme continues until the end of this year.

2026 WSC Delegate Thought/Task Forces

The Board discussed what topics and discussions might be beneficial to bring to the floor of Conference in 2026 through WSC Delegate Thought/Task Forces. The Board agreed by consensus to bring forward two new topics.

Outgoing Panel 62 Delegates

There are rarely enough ways of saying "thank you" to so many wonderful people. But I do want to thank the Panel 62 Delegates for the service they have provided over the last three years. My first WSC as a Trustee was the same as theirs as Delegates. We have traveled these last three years together through figuring out the wifi and how to vote electronically at our first WSC. Our second year included homecoming at WSO, and this year I'm

so grateful that we walked this path together as we talked about such a varied list of topics. I have grown from sharing this time with you.

As you walk through these last few months of your term, remember that you made a difference, and hopefully you know that you have done your part to make sure that Al-Anon will continue to be here for the next person who walks in these doors looking for help. Your job isn't over; keep carrying the message as only you can. I'm not going to say goodbye, I'm saying "see you later."

In gratitude,

Katherine M.

Kathi M.

Chairperson, Board of Trustees

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc