# highlights of the 2020
## WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

## topics

- **Electronic Meeting Work Group Report**

- **Task Force: Reaching & Unifying Rural & Large Geographic Populations**

- **Chosen Agenda Item**

- **Upcoming Al-Anon Events**

- **More Information**

 **"Dreaming Big With 20 | 20 Vision"** was the theme for the 2020 Conference, and this theme foretold an event bigger than any of us would imagine for the 60th World Service Conference! History was made, because, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a week-long meeting which normally takes place in a face-to-face setting was adapted. In her welcome letter, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Gail G., shared these words that summarized much that had happened leading up to this event, "When the theme for this year, 'Dreaming Big with 20 | 20 Vision,' was chosen, we had no idea just how big the dream was going to be or how fast it was going to be upon us! In the last few weeks almost everything in our lives has changed, including the format for our World Service Conference. And now, here we are taking part in our first virtual World Service Conference." Although disappointment was expressed about the circumstances, there were lots of virtual hugs shared to keep spirits high.
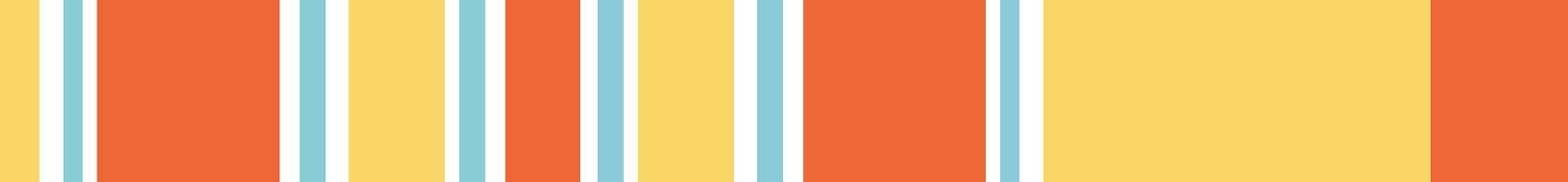
# Electronic Meeting Work Group Report

The Electronic Meeting Work Group (EMWG) report highlighted new developments in the evolving relationship between the World Service Office (WSO) and Electronic Meeting contacts. Conference members learned that, since establishing an AFG Connects community for Electronic Meetings, the WSO is hosting regular web conference calls with phone and online meeting contacts, respectively.

These calls cover several topics, including:

- Available resources on al-anon.org such as samples of literature, the "Slogans used in Al-Anon" page, and resources to welcome newcomers

- Use of the Traditions to resolve conflicts in meetings

- Starting new meetings on new platforms

- How to verify and update meeting information

- Safety in meetings (how to handle disruptive or verbally abusive members)

- Sponsorship and how to help members to connect after a meeting

Conference members also learned new information about the need to protect Al-Anon's trademarked name online. As online meetings have

evolved from having a public outreach focus to having a recovery focus, the WSO has invested more resources in educating members about our trademarked and copyrighted materials and the importance of registration. Only registered Electronic Meetings have permission to use the Al-Anon name and logo trademarks. Processes for posting the Opening, Closing, and Legacies were revised in cooperation with meeting contacts, but copyright laws do not support posting other excerpts from Conference Approved Literature (CAL), even for registered meetings.

The EMWG clarified the role of WSO Staff is to support the registration process and to offer time, facilitation skills, and an online platform to host discussions of timely topics. These actions improve the WSO's understanding of how electronic meetings can best support Al-Anon's primary purpose.

In closing their presentation, the EMWG encouraged Conference members to bring up the topic of Electronic Meetings at a home group business meeting to gauge whether members know where to find them. Hint: The best way is to search the al-anon.org website; using Google or other search engines may return WSO non-registered results.

# Task Force: Reaching & Unifying Rural & Large Geographic Populations

The Task Force was charged with creating a survey for groups in isolated communities. These groups are isolated in terms of geography. They are not connected to or participating in Area Assemblies. The groups may or may not have an active District and District Representative. The Task Force designed a survey as a tool to distribute to groups to ask them to identify the barriers that prevent them from being part of the Service Structure within the Area and connecting to the WSO. The survey also provides an opportunity for the groups to identify what assistance is needed for them to be unified with groups in larger communities.

The topic resonated with Conference members who posted their responses online. The feedback came from Delegates representing Areas that are large or small in terms of size and the number of groups. Delegates also recommended questions to add to the survey that met their respective needs.

Challenges faced by groups that were identified by Delegates included:

- Personal responsibilities, e.g., child or elder parent care making it difficult to attend Assemblies or District meetings

- Group financial resources to send a Group Representative (GR) to District or Area meetings

- Winter weather and long distances to drive to service arm meetings

- Limited or poor local access to the internet and mobile telephone services

When the results of the surveys are tabulated, the Areas and the Districts can then ascertain how to assist the groups.

The Task Force created a PowerPoint presentation and a catchy rap song to launch the topic for an Area or District prior to breaking into small discussion groups. The materials can be utilized at face-to-face meetings or on virtual platforms. Some Areas or Districts may opt to simply distribute the questionnaire directly to the groups in lieu of a workshop.

# Chosen Agenda Item

One of the Chosen Agenda Item topics was: How is Al‑Anon going to reach new members in the 21st century and the millennial generation?

Conference members shared the following:

- The Mobile App will broaden the reach of Al‑Anon. It can be a unifying tool for all Al‑Anon members. The WSO already has a presence on social media.

- Consider different avenues to air our public service announcements (PSAs)—like in game apps.

- Coordinate public outreach efforts—with A.A., our professional partners in healthcare, schools, Employee Assistance Programs, and the judicial system.

- Create "How to" service tools or skits to use in training sessions when considering public outreach campaigns.

- Let's go to the physical and virtual places where the people and millennials are.

- We live in an "on demand" society where people want to attend meetings on their time. Recording meetings may be a consideration for others to hear experience, strength, and hope.

- Encourage the formation of Young Adults in Al‑Anon meetings. This may help Alateen members transition to Al‑Anon.

- Newcomers / young people may be more willing to attend an electronic meeting instead of a face-to-face meeting. Starting "Beginners" meetings on social media may be helpful.

- We need to embrace the diversity of our members and potential members regardless of race, sexual orientation, religion, education level, mental stability, or appearance.

- Can we change the approach of the PSA and consider making it animated—as if playing a video game—to attract younger members?

- The vehicle changes (i.e., media, ads, PSAs) but the message remains the same.

- Create a DVD with young people sharing their experiences to use as a tool for school presentations, on college campuses, or other areas where young people gather.

# Upcoming Al-Anon Events

Two very exciting events were announced and highlighted:

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, from 7:00 - 10:00 pm EDT, attend Al-Anon's 70th Anniversary Celebration at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown, New York. Banquet tickets will go on sale early next year.

In July 2023, celebrate recovery with 4,000 to 5,000 other attendees at the seventh Al-Anon International Convention with A.A. Participation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

## MORE INFORMATION

For a more detailed account of the 2020 Hybrid World Service Conference, including a discussion segment on AFG Connects and a virtual segment via web conferencing, see the *2020 World Service Conference Summary* (P-46). The electronic version will be available in July; print copies will be available in August for the cost of shipping and handling.