

Virginia Area Al-Anon
2020 Fall Assembly (via WebEx)
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Delegate’s Report

On the 60th Annual World Service Conference “Dreaming Big with 20/20 Vision”

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1. What does a Delegate do?

- The World Service Delegate is an Al-Anon member elected at an Area Assembly.
- Represents all the Virginia Area groups at the annual World Service Conference (WSC).
- The Delegate is the primary communication link between the groups and the WSO.
- Shares the Virginia Area experience at 3 annual Conferences.
- Brings the views and the spirit of world-wide Al-Anon back to the Virginia Area.
- See the World Service Conference Chart on page 171 of the *2018-2021, version 2, Al-Anon Service Manual* to understand more about how our organization is structured.

2. What is the World Service Conference (WSC)?

- It's the largest **Informed Group Conscience of Al-Anon/Alateen** world - wide.
- An annual business meeting attended by 67 Area Delegates from all over the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Bermuda, along with the Trustees at Large, the Regional Trustees, the WSO Executive Committee and the WSO Administrative Staff members.
- This year it had 92 voting members, plus some attendees with voice, but no vote.
- On Al-Anon's overall policy matters, the World Service Conference makes the final decisions.
- The Conference can direct committees to further study or to refuse to act in a given situation.
- The Conference cannot mandate or govern the Al-Anon fellowship, which it serves.
- As part of their duties, Delegates are invited to serve on either a:
 - Thought Force
 - Task Force
 - And as a Delegate Member committee.
- This year I have been asked to chair the "Task Force: Conflict Resolution Workshop."
 - That Committee's charge is to: "Create a workshop for the 2021 WSC that can be used in all Areas, Districts, and Groups on how to use the Conflict Resolution Tools we have taking into consideration Concept Five."
 - This committee has been meeting virtually throughout the summer and submitted a plan for a workshop to the Chair of the Executive Committee on Aug. 31, 2020.
 - The Executive Committee reviewed our work and returned it for minor additions and revisions.
 - The Task Force now moves on to plan and prepare a 60 minute presentation for the 2021 WSC.
 - The Final Report will be due Dec. 4, 2020
 - After the 2021 WSC, the workshop will be available for use by the Areas, Districts, and Groups.
- I also serve on the U.S. Southeast Regional Committee on Trustees. That committee is responsible for reviewing nominees' application for the Southeast Region Trustees.

3. The 2020 World Service Conference (WSC) – the first hybrid WSC

- I am a Delegate of Panel 59, meaning that I, and the other Panel 59 Delegates, attended our 2nd of 3 Conferences this past April.

- The 2020 WSC was the first hybrid Conference, ever. Even though the Conference did not meet face to face in Virginia Beach as it usually does, we met in a combination of online discussions on AFG Connects for WSC members and on 2 four-hour WebEx sessions and a 2 hour observation of a Board of Trustee meeting.
- Voting took place electronically, through an app, titled VoxVote. Votes were cast on voting members' devices, and the app tabulated, then posted the results.

4. WSC online presentations via AFG Connects for WSC Members

In my Delegate's Report to the May 2020 Spring Assembly, which was cancelled, I reported back on the events that took place in our WebEx meetings. That report is available on the VA Area website.

For this Delegate Report, I am covering the presentations that took place online via AFG Connects for WSC Members. The various report and presentations were posted and members had an announced amount of time to read and respond. The full Conference covered the traditional week long time period in a mix of WebEx virtual meetings and read and respond online presentations.

Thought Force and Task Force presentations:

- There were 3 Thought Force and Task Force presentations at the 2020 WSC.
- **Thought Force definition:** a temporary unit of people established to brainstorm ideas and to develop strategies on a single defined task or activity. It uses the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) questions to guide their work. Their ideas are reported back to the originating body for a decision as to whether to move forward or to table the discussion. "They are thinkers, not doers."
- **Task Force definition:** also a temporary unit of people established to work on a single defined task or activity. It implements a strategy developed by a previous Thought Force. Task Forces are the "doers."

Thought Force and Task Force Presentations: (Please see the *2020 WSC Summary* for a more detailed report, including members' comments. It is available as a free download on the WSO website, or you may purchase a copy for \$5 from the WSO website).

1. Task Force: Reaching and Unifying Rural and Large Geographic Populations (WSC Summary, p. 28-30)

- This Task Force was asked to create tools to help the Areas connect the groups in rural communities and/or large geographical areas.
- This Task Force created a survey tool for Areas with rural groups and/or large geographical areas to use to determine what members and groups need and want in order to be more included in and connected to the Links of Service.
- Their survey is included in this report in the attachments.
- The comments section offers a wide variety of suggestions and problems to be addressed.
- The Board of Trustees reviews the work of the Task Force and the members' comments at Board meetings to decide if further action is needed or how to implement the Task Force's suggestions.

2. Thought Force: Fear of Change: (WSC Summary, p. 30-32).

- This Thought Force was given the following question to consider:
 - What tools of the program help us in overcoming our fear of change?

- How does our fear of change affect our unity and our growth as a fellowship?
- What changes can we make, consistent with our Legacies, to aid us in overcoming our fear of change?
- Comments from Members report that change has “frequently been unwelcomed and accompanied by fear.” Some members do not welcome change; some feel hopeful with change.
- Al-Anon offers a variety of tools to help members address change – our Traditions and Concepts of Service; the Serenity Prayer; slogans such as *One Day at a Time*; many passages in our CAL.
- This Thought Force presentation offers many helpful suggestions and thoughtful comments. It is a good resource for any member or group who is confronting change and its attendant fears. It is also an excellent source for meeting topics relating to fear and change.
- The feedback from this Thought Force also goes to the Board of Trustees for further assessment for the need for any further action.

3. Thought Force: Identifying Ways to Look at Service in Relation to Roles, Terms and Possible Roadblocks (WSC Summary, p. 32-34).

- This Thought Force was asked to address this ongoing concern within the fellowship. I was a member of this Thought Force in 2019.
- From Al-Anon’s beginning to the present, involving members in service has been a common theme.
- Questions we addressed included:
 - Is it time to consider new ways of envisioning service?
 - Identify new ways to look at service roles and terms of service.
 - Consider any possible roadblocks to new ways of looking at service.
- Some suggestions that arose from this Thought Force:
 - Develop inventories – at the group, district and Area levels, focusing on service opportunities.
 - Create a service workbook as a service tool, specific to a specific group, district or Area.
 - Set up teams to assist Coordinators.
 - Utilize technology to hold business meetings at all levels, opening up the possibility for more members to participate without the burden of travel and expense.
 - Find new ways to rotate leadership, but still retain members with knowledge, experience and skills that benefit the fellowship.
- See the WSC summary for more in depth comments.

5. Discussion Segment of the WSC: Chosen Agenda Items (CAI)

- From 34 initial submissions of topics to the Conference Leadership Team, 25 topics were offered to WSC members for a vote.
- WSC members voted for 8 topics of most interest.
- From these votes, the 2 highest ranked topics were offered as Chosen Agenda Items.
- WSC members had the opportunity to share their thoughts via AFG Connects for WSC members.
- See the 2020 WSC Summary, pages 21 – 25 for a fuller report.

CAI 1 Topic: “How is Al-Anon going to reach new members in the 21st century and the millennial generation?”

Why the CAI is important:

- “The average age of Al-Anon members is 56 – 60 years old. If we continue doing the same things, Al-Anon Family Groups will struggle with difficult times. It is important for Al-Anon to explore new ways to reach out to potential members.”

Some Conference members’ responses:

- “We need to collaborate better with A.A. through public outreach efforts at the local, District, and Area levels.”
- “Run PSAs on game apps or other electronic media that young people frequent. Make information available to colleges.”
- “New members are *new*. Constantly repeating that the average age of a member is 56 – 60 seems to be disrespectful and irrelevant. People come into Al-Anon when their lives have been affected and they learn about Al-Anon – the two circumstances *intersect*. If a newcomer who is 55 comes into Al-Anon and is constantly hearing how we want new, young people, why would they stay?”
- “Reaching millennials is a different topic. Do we understand how important *intersectionality* is to younger people?”
- “We need to ask the young people...It would make sense to ask the young people who are in the program what keeps them in and what might bring others who need it into the program.”
- “Having a Mobile App is definitely a great way to make Al-Anon and meetings accessible to younger generations.”
- “Instant availability to online meetings is a must. This generation is not going to wait; they fly through their cell phones and tablets to get the information they are looking for immediately.”
- “Encourage and publicize the formation of more Young Adults in Al-Anon meetings (open to any Al-Anon or Alateen member).”
- “I would like to look at this from a slightly different perspective, and that is *name recognition*. A.A. has name recognition; Al-Anon does not. Maybe looking at this from a meta-view can help us see what we need to add to what we already do to reach both potential members and younger members.”
- “Al-Anon has slowly grown over the years to accept people who are different. This remains a challenge today. I say this as a woman of color in this fellowship. I have been made to feel (on occasion) that people who look like me are not welcome here and it is 2020.”
- See the 2020 WSC Summary, pages 21 – 22 for a fuller report.

CAI 2 Topic: “Our Envisioned Future sees Al-Anon being a global organization with barrier-free access to the program, how do you see this manifesting?”

Why this CAI is important:

- Today, approximately 40 % of our groups exist outside the World Service Conference (WSC) structure. This percentage does not even include electronic meetings, which are without geographic limitations. These groups and meetings are growing, while our face-to-face groups seem to be getting smaller. The creation of an actual worldwide conscience is not only desirable, but imperative. All voices must be heard. How to make Al-Anon a truly global organization is a difficult task, with many visions. Input from the Conference can only further this goal.” **(Read**

the following section on International AI-Anon structures for more on what is being done now.)

Some Conference members' responses:

- “For the WSC to be barrier-free would require changes to the AFG, Inc. Bylaws in the U. S. and Canada, and to the World Service Conference Charter.”
- “I would see us starting by establishing a task force with WSC Delegates (past or present), electronic meeting members, Board of Trustee members, WSO staff, GSO (General Service Organizations) Delegates and GSO staff to chart out a plan.”
- “Might we consider that the repeated concern over how hard it is to fill service positions signal a need for us to adapt to a changing reality and a changing world?”
- “My vision is a traditional body of all the service structures, GSOs, and evolving structures to discuss and form a truly global AI-Anon group conscience. Much like our World Service Conference, Delegates from structures all over the world could meet in person or electronically to be ‘the voice of worldwide AI-Anon’ and create a truly global group conscience.”
- “This is only the beginning of the conversation... may it *explode*.”
- See the 2020 WSC Summary, pages 23 – 25 for a fuller report.

6. International AI-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM)

Background on Service Structure of AI-Anon Groups outside the WSC:

- WSO, aka AI-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., renders services to groups belonging to the WSC, World Service Conference. Members are the United States, Canada, Bermuda and Puerto Rico.
- Any other AI-Anon meetings outside those geographic areas belong to various GSOs, General Service Offices, outside the WSC structure.
- To keep communication open between the WSO and the various GSOs, there is IAGSM. That organization holds a biennial meeting of representatives from WSO and the GSOs.
- WSO is responsible for services to AI-Anon Family Groups all over the world, either directly as in the case of the WSC, or indirectly, through the AI-Anon GSO of each country.
- These services include translation or review of translations of Conference Approved Literature (CAL).
- WSO also plans and coordinates the biennial IAGSM.

Current operations of ICC and WSC:

- In 1978, the International Coordination Committee (ICC) was formed to serve as an avenue of communication to support international growth and to serve as an advisory committee to the Board of Trustees.
- In 2018, Delegates to the IAGSM requested a discussion about the current relationship between the WSC and other entities outside of the WSC. “The current form of representation and rights of the international groups runs counter to our principles of equality, democracy, and protection of minorities as set out in the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and Warranties and is contradictory to much of the commentary on these in our literature.”
- It was agreed that the conversation would continue in 2019, via AFG Connects, and at the 2020 IAGSM.

- The ICC met in December 2019 to review responses. One conclusion from that review was that many of the structures want to participate more directly in decisions that affect them. Another was that there seems to be a lack of understanding among the various structures regarding how representation works currently.
- The ICC planned its next steps: allow time for the responses to be translated and shared on the various GSO's AFG Connects.
- The conversation will continue at the IAGSM this October.

Other International News:

- In 2019, WSO developed a new functionality to the online meeting search at al-anon.org to search for meetings in countries outside the WSC structure.
- That proved to be challenging work that is also ongoing. It requires help from the international structure in locating and mapping international meetings.
- The WSO has implemented a semi-annual survey to capture changes in information for offices, Board members, IAGSM Delegates, and other international contacts.
- The WSO staff also maintains correspondence with members all over the world via email, phone, social media and web-based technology.
- International travel for WSO staff for this year has been cancelled because of both the pandemic and reduced contributions to the WSO.

7. Other WSC Updates: July 2020 Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Chairman of the Board letter:

- IAGSM originally scheduled to meeting in London in October has been changed to a virtual meeting via AFG Connects.
- Discussion of Thought Force and Task Force presentations at 2020 WSC in April
 - “Fear of Change” Thought Force – enough resources on that topic exist in current CAL. No further action is needed at this time.
 - “Identify Ways to Look at Service in Relation to Roles, Terms, and Possible Roadblocks” Thought Force and “Reaching and Unifying Rural and Large Geographic Populations” Task Force – will be discussed at the October Board Meeting.
- Electronic Meeting Work Group (EMWG) Update:
 - This group focuses on meetings that are permanently electronic and does not address face-to-face meetings that are meeting electronically at this time.
 - In June 2020, this group was tasked with determining if it is feasible and consistent with the role of WSO to register or license AI-Anon events being held electronically and not connected to a service arm. This would include the formerly titled “AI-Anon Without Borders” events. The decision of the Board was “it is not desirable to have events outside the service structure.”
 - See the Service Manual, pages 91 – 93. That text allows for differing interpretations, especially in the section titled “Autonomy of Service Arms When Announcing Events.” The Virginia Area has decided to list only events that are sponsored by AI-Anon Service Arms. This means that an event sponsored or put on by a group, District or Service Center will be posted on the Virginia Area website calendar.

- EMWG concluded that electronic meetings (permanent electronic meetings) are AI-Anon groups. They are asked to adhere to the same policies that apply to all other AI-Anon groups. The EMWG is evaluating considerations to these groups having a GR with the same duties and responsibilities as defined in the current edition of the Service Manual as for GRs of face-to-face groups.
- Please see the 2020 WSC Summary, pages 25 – 28 for the EMWG’s presentation to WSC members on AFG Connects for WSC members at the 2020 WSC in April.

Board Meeting: Finance Committee:

- CAL sales:
 - June 2020 \$185,129 - 22% less than June 2019; 33% less than budgeted; YTD - 29% less than 2019
 - Sales of electronic literature in June, 2020 - \$19, 613; May 2020 - \$8,506
- Contributions:
 - June 2020 - \$509,058 – 211% over June 2019; 194% over budgeted; YTD – 65% up, due to Special Appeal letter and Bequests in February.
- Investments: June 2020 – unrealized gain of \$1,687,675 in the Reserve Fund compared to \$1, 658,757 at the end of May.
- Expenses: decreased by \$99,967 compared to prior year and 45.10% below budgeted.
- Net Assets: General Fund had an operating gain of \$273,929 as a reflection of the June increase.
- Reserve Fund: a loss of \$332,166 year to date.
- Finance Committee Reflections: “Although the contributions were above the budgeted amount for June, we are not out of the woods. There is still a projected deficit of \$420,000 through the end of December 2020. Please continue your contributions to WSO if you are able. To give, you may contribute by check to **AFG, Inc., 1600 Corporate Parkway Landing, Virginia Beach, VA 23454**, or go to the website: **al-anon.org** and look for the “Contributions” tab.

Board Meeting: Policy Committee Updates:

- A new Thought Force will soon be assigned: ‘National and International Public Outreach Concerning Social Media.’
- The EMWG concluded that electronic meetings (permanent electronic meetings) are, in fact, AI-Anon groups. They are asked to adhere to the same policies that apply to all other AI-Anon groups. The EMWG is evaluating considerations as to these groups having GRs with the same duties and responsibilities as defined in the current edition of the Service Manual. These electronic groups currently have only a CMA (Current Mailing Address) and meet with the WSO.
- The possibility of Electronic meetings being organized into their own Area, not limited to geographic areas, and having representation at the WSC is being explored.
- Please see the 2020 WSC Summary, pages 25-28 for the EMWG’s presentation to the WSC members on AFG Connects for WSC members at the 2020 WSC in April.

Board Meeting: Conference Leadership Team (CLT)

- The **2021 WSC Theme** has been selected: “Moving Forward with Unity, Courage, and Perseverance” “Avancemos con unidad, valor y perseverancia.”

- The **2021 WSC, April 12 – 16, 2021** is being planned for Tarrytown, New York, with a visit to Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson. There was no mention of a backup plan for a virtual Conference if one may be needed.
- The Mega Issue, Policy Items and the Literature discussions for the 2020 WSC were postponed to the 2021 WSC. Each item is being reviewed and updated as needed.

8. Mobile App Updates:

- The WSO launched their Mobile App on Wednesday, August 12, 2020.
- There are currently over 10,000 subscribers.
- What it is:
 - A social app for Al-Anon members
 - A new platform for electronic meetings
 - A way to connect with your Al-Anon family in private chats
 - A place to create and update a digital Al-Anon journal
 - A place to stay informed on the latest information from the WSO.
- What it is not:
 - A face-to-face meeting list (go to the WSO website for that)
- The Mobile App is free. Download the App from either the Apple App Store or from Google Play.
- For much more information, go to the WSO website: al-anon.org>Members>Member Resources>Mobile App.
- To find meetings on the Mobile App, go the WSO website: al-anon.org>Meetings>Electronic Meetings>Mobile App. (At this time meetings on the App only show up the day of the meeting). Currently there are only a few meetings on the Mobile App. More are in process of registration.
- Improvements to the Mobile App are currently underway, including an update to the registration process.
- To send feedback about the Mobile App to: afgmobile@al-anon.org.

9. Contact your Delegate:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns that I can address, please contact me at twoodsides@verizon.net. You may also request me to attend your virtual District meeting to speak to your Group Representatives about World Service Conference matters or anything else on your minds.

Attachment 1: Survey from Task Force: Reaching and Unifying Rural and Large Geographic Populations.

Attachment 2: Task Force - Reaching and Unifying Rural and Large Geographic Populations: Break Out Session Instructions

These two Attachments follow:

Group Name _____

1. Are you as a member/group receiving information from your:

District? Yes No I Don't Know

Area? Yes No I Don't Know

If you are receiving information, what kind of information are you receiving?

2. How important is it to you/your group to be connected to your:

District? Not very 1 2 3 4 5 Very

Area? Not very 1 2 3 4 5 Very

3. What challenges or obstacles prevent you/your group from being connected to your:

District? _____

Area? _____

What do you/your group need or want in order to be connected to your:

District?

Area?

4. Does your group have a Group Representative (GR)? Yes No I Don't Know

Does your GR attend District Meetings? Yes No I Don't Know

If not, why not?

Does your GR attend Area Assemblies? Yes No I Don't Know

If not, why not?

5. Does your District have a District Representative (DR)? Yes No I Don't Know

Does your DR attend Area Assemblies and/or Area meetings? Yes No I Don't Know

If not, why not?

6. If distance, time, or money are obstacles to participating in service, how much of each is reasonable in order for your Group Representative to attend a:

District Meeting?

Area Assembly?

7. Would you or your Group Representative be willing to participate in a District/Area meeting using a phone or a computer/tablet (teleconferencing or online conferencing)? Yes No I Don't Know

If not, why not?

8. Any other comments or suggestions?

Task Force - Reaching and Unifying Rural and Large Geographic Populations

Break Out Session Instructions

Ask for volunteers to be a recorder and a reporter.

Hand out surveys and allow no longer than two to three minutes to complete the survey.

Then, discuss the following questions (20 minutes):

- Now that you have reviewed this survey, can you come up with a strategy or plan of action for implementing the survey in your Area?
- Are there any questions to add that are specific for your Area?