

Al-Anon Family Groups AREA Highlights

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Fall 2008

Volume 40, No. 3

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CONFERENCE

Build Bridges— Energizing Our Spiritual Quest

By Suzanne M., Associate Director—Conference

This year the members of the World Service Conference focused on building bridges during the annual week-long business meeting of the widest group conscience of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Al-Anon members—Delegates and members of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee—from the U.S. and Canada joined together with World Service Office Conference staff in Stamford, Connecticut, April 13-17, 2008, to form the 93 voting members of the Conference. This year's theme was "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest."

that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions,' they were talking about us, today! Did you imagine? Can you imagine?"

When the Chairperson of the Board welcomed the members of the Conference, she stated, "This year's Conference theme, 'Build Bridges—Energizing our Spiritual Quest,' is the connection of the World Service Conference to the Areas, the districts, and the groups." In the Conference orientation, she reviewed the various roles of Delegates, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee members, and the World Service Office

"My leadership style is different from the strict authoritarian style in the alcoholic home of my childhood. I simply present my experience, strength, and hope to others and provide support and encouragement for them to do their best. I strive to let it begin with me, which is true Al-Anon leadership in action."

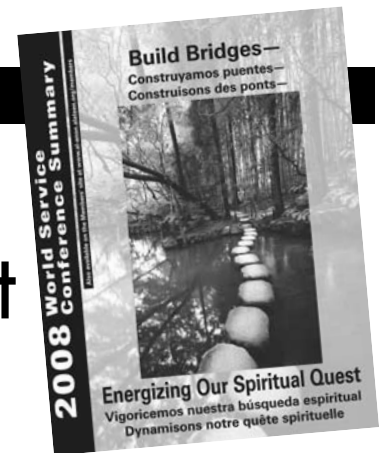
Hope for Today, page 25 |

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the Conference said, "Did you know that serving this fellowship would build your spiritual resources; connect you with blessings and benefits that would bring you out of isolation, anger, and fear; and plant in you the desire to give away what you have gained?"

"Our pioneers knew. When they wrote in [the descriptive text of] Concept Two: 'We believe our fellowship is a spiritual society characterized by enough enlightenment, responsibility, and love for God and man to ensure

Conference staff and the way in which everyone works together to achieve informed group conscience decisions.

Some of the highlights of the Conference included a presentation on the history of committees; two presentations and discussions on the theme, "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest;" discussion on the impact of further division or consolidation of the Areas; a visit to Stepping Stones, the home of Al-Anon cofounder Lois W.; a presentation on the future of Chosen Agenda Items; and an Alateen Tradi-



"I ask myself: Am I ready to make a difference?"

When I Got Busy, I Got Better, page 2 |

tions discussion. Members also built bridges as they reviewed proposed Policy motions regarding bequests, anonymity, introductory meetings, and limited access groups. For complete details of these topics and discussions of these motions, visit www.al-anon.org/members, or order a copy of the 2008 World Service Conference Summary (P-46) for \$3.00 shipping/handling on the same site.

Before the Conference closed, members listened to international guests from Germany, Mexico, and South Africa share their personal stories and give an update on what is going on in their structures.

One of the remarks the Chairperson of the Board made in closing the Conference was, "What a week this has been. I don't know about you, but I think Lois was here with us."

With our Conference theme being "Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest," I believe Lois was with us too.

We hope all Al-Anon members will build bridges after hearing their Area Delegate's report and reading the 2008 World Service Conference Summary (P-46).

Group Services

Shaking Things Up a Bit

Rebecca, Group Representative, Wyoming

The Link, April 2008

Our group has experienced some changes this year that are frustrating as well as positive. Due to the decrease in attendance, our group decided to move. Along with moving, we decided to shake things up a bit. We made a group conscience decision and we now have meetings on Conference Approved Literature (CAL), themed meetings, and open meetings. We are considering having speaker meetings.

Since developing this new plan of action, our attendance is climbing. Members are now returning to our noon meeting on their lunch hour, and we have had three newcomers, two of whom have returned regularly. Our group attendance has been between five and eight people. This is extremely encouraging! We invite everyone to come and visit us. You never know what you'll find at our Thursday group.

Member Services—International

Service for the Right Reason

Helen B.

Austra-Link, February 2008

I started doing service work so that I had no excuse for not turning up at meetings. I used to take special treats for supper, which were well-received and gave a boost to my self-esteem. I still had a lot of learning to do.

I feel it is important for my recovery to help my Al-Anon group by accepting service work. The main reason is that service brings me into contact with newcomers and reminds me of the frustration of struggling with the alcoholic in my life by myself.

Al-Anon has changed my life. No matter how difficult things get I have the fellowship and a way of life that helps me cope. I know I am no longer alone.

Today, I am proud to take an active part in Al-Anon service work. I'm not doing a favor—Al-Anon is doing me a favor.

I have seen doing service work for about eight years, in just about every capacity from group to district. By doing this, I see myself accomplishing things I never knew I could. I am happy with myself and have found many lifelong friends.

Al-Anon was there for me when I needed it, and I will ensure that it continues to thrive and know that any service work I do will strengthen my own recovery.

Service IS Recovery

Anonymous, United Kingdom

News and Views, October 2007

In meeting after meeting, whenever I have been both within the UK & Eire and beyond, I have seen miracles of recovery. For me, sharing my recovery with others is part of that recovery—it's Step Twelve in action. It is by putting the principles to work in my life that I carry the message of hope to others.

I have become increasingly concerned at the way service is sometimes seen as separate from recovery: Areas divide their time between business and spiritual meetings; groups might close the meeting for the group conscience or hold it outside of the regular meeting times. But is this necessary or even desirable? Who are we serving after all, the Area, the group, or the Al-Anon fellowship as a whole? I believe that I am serving "God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."

Our *Service Manual* (UK1) defines service as "anything done to help the families and friends of alcoholics." For me, that goes from making the tea to chairing a committee. Perhaps, in our fellowship of equals, it isn't so much *what* I do but *how* I do it. I can make the tea with a sense of gratitude or I can do it full of resentment for those I see as not pulling their weight. Through service I have learned to give without expectation of return, to do the right thing because it *is* the right thing. That for me is service.

Unreliable Information at Meetings

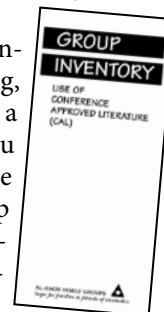
Teddie B., Alternate Delegate, Maryland/DC

Al-Anon-Cer, March 2008

I have a few thoughts about the Al-Anon focus. If, at our meetings, we share material from sources that are not Conference Approved Literature (CAL), we add unnecessary and possibly unreliable information to our program. When we use other recovery sources for our program slogans, greetings, or terminology, we take the focus off our primary goal—to help families and friends of alcoholics and, most importantly, ourselves.

I have been to meetings that were well-attended until the focus shifted to psychology, religion, addiction, etc. The sharings at these meetings did not even tie into our Steps or Traditions. I became confused and saw that newcomers did not come back, possibly missing out on the help they needed. Most of these meetings have since closed.

If your meeting attendance is dwindling, maybe it's time for a group inventory. You can download a free copy of S-62, "Group Inventory: Use of Conference Approved Literature (CAL)," from the Al-Anon Members' Web site: www.al-anon.org/members.



Alateen IS Al-Anon

A question frequently asked of the Group Services Department is, "Can Alateens attend Al-Anon meetings?" The World Service Office (WSO) refers members to page 77 of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27): "Alateens are members of the Al-Anon fellowship. Where there is no Alateen meeting available, young people are encouraged to attend Al-Anon meetings."

Some members have shared that young people have brought a new perspective to their Al-Anon group and have found that their presence has enhanced their meetings. Other members feel uncomfortable with young people attending their meetings. Groups are encouraged to remember our primary purpose as stated in Tradition Five, "to help fami-

lies of alcoholics," and to have a plan in place. Your Al-Anon meeting may be the first and only exposure to recovery that an Alateen newcomer has.

Be sure your group knows where the nearest Alateen meeting is, and have some Alateen literature on hand. If there is no local Alateen meeting, talk in the Al-Anon group, with other groups, and in your district meeting about getting an Alateen meeting started. Encourage members in your group to become certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service, in accordance with your Area Alateen Safety and Behavioral Requirements. If a pool of certified potential Alateen Group Sponsors is available, getting an Alateen meeting started will be that much easier!



KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Alateen Safety

**Greg P., Area Alateen Process Person
Washington Wanderings, March 2008**

We currently have 154 certified Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service and 28 active Alateen groups. This week we certified a Spanish-speaking member, and we are working on registering a Spanish-speaking Alateen group.

I have distributed to District Representatives (DRs) lists of active and inactive Alateen groups. DRs are asked to review the lists to make sure all the information is accurate. All Alateen paperwork and changes must come to me as the Area Alateen Process Person. I have to check for appropriate mailing addresses and certified Sponsors. Once I've approved all the information, I will send it on to WSO.

We have a new feature on our Area Web site. It's an e-mail address for Alateen information. The e-mails are sent directly to the Area Alateen Coordinator and me. We have been getting several inquiries a week and referring them to the local Alateen meetings. Where there is no meeting, we let the DR know of the interest, in hopes of getting a meeting started.

Alateen Service Education

**Bonnie M., District Representative,
California North**

Twelve Stepper, April 2008

Trusting an Alateen group teaches me to trust my Higher Power, acting through the group conscience. Our Al-Anon literature suggests that confusion is a gift from a loving God that discourages me from acting when inaction is more appropriate ("when in doubt, don't"). Several times situations have come up in an Alateen meeting that I thought, "As the Alateen Group Sponsor, I should have the solution," but I didn't know what the solution was. Each time, as I tried to figure out what to do, the Alateen members would resolve the situation successfully, gracefully, and in a way that would never occur to me.

Alateens teach me, by their example, how to love and accept others as they are. As I practice trust, acceptance, and unconditional love in our fellowship, it becomes easier to practice the same qualities at home and at work.

Alateen in our District

**Tracey D., Al-Anon Member Involved in Alateen Service, Wyoming
The Link, March 2008**

Sometime in 2006 our district recognized the need to get Alateen active again. There was a lot of discussion regarding individuals being "stuck" in that position and also about liability issues. There were fears that it would be like "last time" and about being involved with teenagers in this "day and age." We came up with a plan that was agreed upon by the district members who were interested in helping with Alateen. We started by inviting the Area Alateen Coordinator to our district for a workshop. Six of us became certified by our Area process as Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS). Once we were certified, we set a day and time that we could all commit to. We registered the group and we then had an Alateen meeting.

We had agreed that two AMIAS would attend every meeting. We would rotate every six months, with three-month overlaps. One of the first two AMIAS would serve for three months to start the rotation. We had eight teens for our first meeting in April 2007. Since then, the numbers have varied, but the rotation has been working for us.

One fear was that the teens would get secure with the Alateen Group Sponsors, and then the Sponsors would change. It seems that our Higher Power has a plan. The teens are getting to know several different adults and hearing a wider variety of experience, strength, and hope. We have seen them involved in service in our district and hope to get them to our next Area event.

Today we have eight certified AMIAS. We serve as backup Group Sponsors if the assigned person must be absent. This has been a great way for us to live up to the Alateen slogan, "Together We Can Make It."

A Real Meeting in My Pocket

Sherry S., Forum Coordinator, New York North

Northern Hi-Lights, April 2008

I would like to share with you the many uses of our exciting little magazine, *The Forum*. Another title, remember, is “A Meeting in My Pocket.” How wonderful and convenient that is!



Have you ever had to stay at a doctor's office, airport, or other facility longer than you planned? What will you do to pass the time? Then you remember that you have the latest issue of *The Forum*. Even if you have read it, why not read it again?

The next thing you know, time has passed with an extra boost of peace and serenity.

Editor's note: You can always leave a copy of The Forum behind for someone else!

The Forum needs you!

Our readers are the most vital part of *The Forum*—because they share their experience, strength, and hope with other Al-Anon members in the U.S., Canada, and around the world.

Here's a reminder of some types of sharings that *The Forum* needs:

- Humor—share your funny recovery stories with us!
- Our Three Legacies—Steps, Traditions, Concepts of Service (particularly the Concepts)—how do you apply them to your life?
- CAL Corner—let us know how a specific piece of literature or e-CAL has enhanced your recovery.
- Alateen—are you a member or a Group Sponsor? Tell us how Alateen has affected your recovery.
- My Story—tell us your recovery story, from the beginning.

We are striving to bring you the best Forum possible. Please help us achieve that goal. We can't do it without you!

Taking Al-Anon on Holidays

Anonymous, Manitoba

The Province-Wide Newsletter, Spring 2008

I have the habit of taking Al-Anon on holidays with me. My husband and I decided that driving to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico would be an experience. I brought many pamphlets and *Forum* magazines.

I placed a *Forum* in the middle of the umbrella table where we were sitting around the pool. I mentioned to my in-laws that I belong to Al-Anon and that I would gladly speak with anyone who had questions. Later, one of my sisters-in-law asked if she could keep *The Forum*.

At the towel hut, there was a place where you could deposit books already read and pick up those that you hadn't. I thought to myself, “What a great place to insert a bookmark.” When I finished one of my paperbacks, I inserted a Crying House bookmark (M-76) and deposited the book for someone else to read. I also deposited two *Forum* magazines and a copy of the Spanish *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción*.

I had *Courage to Change* (B-16) in my bathroom. Another sister-in-law asked if she could buy a book like that for herself. I gladly gave her my copy with a *Forum* magazine and asked her to call me anytime.

After a couple of weeks of beautiful sun, I began to look for an Al-Anon group. Not being very brave, I gave up. Then I came upon a local newspaper and this heading caught my eye: “Sobriety under the Sun Convention” with Al-Anon participation.

I tried a couple of times to get more information but couldn't reach anyone. I spoke to my husband and asked if he would come with me. I am so grateful he agreed to accompany me. We attended two workshops and one panel of speakers.

What a beautiful gift I gave myself! I met some Al-Anon members at the workshops and asked if they had seen *The Forum* magazine. When they replied “no,” I handed out a couple of *Forums* plus an *Al-Anon y Alateen en acción*. I was so grateful to be with other members.

I came back from our holiday in the sun grateful for what I have been given in life. Other places I left literature were the bus depot, airport, airbus, bathrooms, hotels, etc. When you are packing for a long-deserved holiday, don't forget Al-Anon literature.



Electronic Conference Approved Literature

On behalf of everyone at the World Service Office, thank you to everyone who participated in the e-CAL contest. We received several beautiful songs, some compelling and powerful PowerPoint presentations, and some thoughtful poetry. We hope to continue receiving your recovery in these creative ways. That's what e-CAL is all about! Visit the Members' Web site at www.al-anon.org/members to view current e-CAL.



Literature

Alateen Literature Is for Al-Anon Members Too!

Bunny S., Area Literature and Forum Coordinator, Kentucky
The Road to Recovery, First Quarter, 2008

If you are having problems interpreting Al-Anon literature, the Alateen literature is a great resource. Topics are kept simple and to the point. For example, the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for Alateen* (P-18) pamphlet might prove helpful.



Oldies but Goodies

Wilhelmina H., Literature Coordinator, Maryland/DC
Al-Anon-Cer, September 2007

When I have been asked to chair a meeting lately, I have found myself selecting a book or pamphlet from my early years in the program. Yes, some of them have collected dust, but the wisdom they contain is still fresh.

As we embrace new publications such as *Opening Our Hearts, Transforming Our Losses* (B-29) and new technology like e-CAL, let's not forget old friends like *The Al-Anon Family Groups—Classic Edition* (B-5), *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22), *Alcoholism, the Family Disease* (P-4), and *Alcoholism, a Merry-Go-Round Named Denial* (P-3). I find that when I share from these and other pieces of literature not currently on the "hot list," people inevitably become interested enough to add one of these titles to their collection.



We're Looking Forward to Looking Back

The 2008 World Service Conference gave conceptual approval to develop a new piece of literature about Al-Anon's history in commemoration of Al-Anon's first 60 years, using the extensive and valuable information contained in the World Service Office archives. It is projected to be published in 2011.



Our Newest Book Is Here!

Discovering Choices (B-30), our new book on recovery in relationships, is now available. It shares the experiences of hundreds of members as they describe how alcoholism affected their relationships and how applying different Al-Anon tools made a difference.

Here are a few comments from those who've read it:

- This is quite an impressive piece of literature. Members from all walks of life and varied circumstances will identify with these stories.
- I have not read anything in Al-Anon recently that has touched me more!
- I like the concept of a brief introduction and then letting the stories speak for themselves without comment—just like a meeting!
- Very good. It's interesting to see the progression—and the developing recovery—as each chapter unfolds.
- I loved that Chapter 14 thoroughly discusses how each Tradition and Concept can be applied to relationships.
- I am in a 47 year marriage, forty-three of those in Al-Anon. I learned a lot reading this book.

Discovering Choices is softcover, 335 pages, priced at \$15.00 U.S., and is available at your local Literature Distribution Center, on the shopping cart feature of our Web site, or by using the order form included with this issue of *Area Highlights*. Read an exclusive excerpt at www.al-anon.org/b30.html.

Remember—when you buy from your local Literature Distribution Center, you support your local services.



Outreach to School Libraries

By Pat H., Kentucky

The Road to Recovery, First Quarter 2008

“The purpose of the Public Outreach Action Committee is to reach every person whose life is adversely affected by someone else’s alcoholism.”

Our statement of purpose challenges us to look at ourselves and how we can accomplish such a task. Let us not be overwhelmed, but rather take a moment and think simply of “Let it Begin with Me.” Each time we do anything to share the message of hope with those who have yet to make their way to Al-Anon and Alateen we are working towards this purpose.

I have received updates and reports from most Districts in regards to the placement of *Courage to Be Me* (B-23) in school libraries. To date, 399 schools within Kentucky Area 21 have received an issue of the Alateen book. There are other districts in the planning stages and we’ll be delivering books soon.

Al-Anon launches podcasts to help families

For the first time, Al-Anon Family Groups are offering podcasts to families and friends of people who have a drinking problem. Podcasts are audio recordings on the Internet that are available by subscription. The podcasts entitled “First Steps to Al-Anon Recovery” are at www.Al-AnonFamilyGroups.org. The subscriptions are free. An automated e-mail will notify subscribers each time a new installment is posted.

Our podcasts give people a private and easy way to hear what Al-Anon has to offer. The series of six podcasts contains conversations with experienced Al-Anon members who anonymously explain how they realized they needed help to deal with a loved one’s drinking. They also reveal how they overcame their fear of attending their first face-to-face Al-Anon meeting. These podcasts can benefit anyone who has been affected by a loved one’s drinking.

Reaching Out with *The Forum*

By Nancy M., Public Outreach Coordinator

Pennsylvania Al-A-Gram, Spring 2008

It’s so simple! It costs each district \$11 to send a free, one-year subscription of *The Forum* to a library in its district. District 18 earmarked \$100 toward this project and nine libraries will be receiving *The Forum*. Every library I have contacted was interested in receiving the magazine.



Outreach to Mental Health Sites

By Bee L., District Representative, South Carolina

The Reflector

Much emphasis has been, and continues to be, placed on Public Outreach. District 7 is sponsoring the purchase of subscriptions to Al-Anon’s monthly magazine, *The Forum*, for a variety of local mental health sites.

Send thanks to “Dear Abby”

By Rose J., Public Outreach Coordinator

BC/Yukon Assembly Chair Report, March 2008

On Sunday, February 10th, those newspapers with a “Dear Abby” column gave our fellowship a boost. “Dear Abby” referred a reader to Al-Anon and Alateen. For those of you who read the column, please follow up with a thank you and perhaps a local contact!

Communicating via E-mail

By Eleanor, Public Outreach Coordinator, Alabama

Love Express, February 2008

At the suggestion of some members, instead of copying every file exchange and sharing it at the Public Outreach meeting at the Area Assembly, I am “copying and pasting” to a word document and sending it via e-mail. This process should help with the cost of printing and help members, coordinators, and officers receive information in a timely manner. Reminder: if you don’t have e-mail access, see if someone would be your e-buddy. This was a suggestion given to me from WSO.

Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism 2009 second printing order forms are now available

The deadline for second printing orders is 5 pm, February 12, 2009.

- See order form enclosed in this issue of Area Highlights
- Visit the on-line shopping cart at www.al-anon.alateen.org

Archives

Getting Groups and Districts Involved in Archives

Tricia B., Area Archivist, Wyoming
The Link, April 2008

First of all, it's important to know why it is important to maintain the history of our Area, districts, and groups. Here are some reasons:

- To keep the memory of some very special people who are no longer with us
- To preserve our history for present and future members
- To learn where we come from and see where we are now, so we can continue to grow in Al-Anon and Alateen
- To keep a paper trail of what and how our Area maintains the program and insures the preservation of our Area history and its documents

Where do we get started as districts and groups? District and Group Representatives can begin by asking for help from local members. Ask to see who is interested in your district or group's history. Find out if any members like to do scrap booking and if they are willing to form a committee of two or more members. Then set a date to start, and meet with them once or twice a month.

Gather all your boxes of information. Purchase archival boxes, paper, glue or tape, pens, and folders. Select one person to lead the committee. Begin sorting by year or by events. Start with this year's events and work backwards. Use file folders for each event or year and each group. Write a brief draft statement about the event. Include where it was held, who was there, why it was held, and any other comments from members that would allow someone who was not there to know what happened.

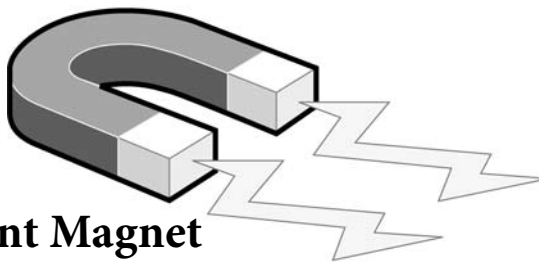
Next, think about how you want to save this information and whether or not it is complete. If not, consider other sources to collect more information and fill in missing pieces from, including longtime members, Area Archives, and the World Service Office Archives.

Public Outreach— Outreach to Professionals/Institutions

E-Outreach to professionals— WSO podcast series

Informing professionals about the new "First Steps to Al-Anon Recovery" podcast series is an excellent way to educate them about Al-Anon. Professionals can hear first hand what an Al-Anon meeting is like. They can share our podcast series with other professionals and their patients or clients. Here's how you can let professionals know about it:

- Create an e-mail distribution list of professionals and facilities
- Write a brief message that includes a link to the "First Steps to Al-Anon Recovery" podcast series: <http://al-anonfamilygroups.org/Podcasts/FirstSteps/>
- Sign off your message with your Al-Anon contact



Parent Magnet

Joyce L., Texas

via *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* 2008 second printing survey response

We want Al-Anon to be visible, so my group takes a monthly meeting for parents to a drug youth rehab in a hospital. The parents, of course, think it is their fault. We attach our group's business card which has our meeting schedule and directions to the *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazines. Parents have been coming. Our group is near the hospital.

Personal Meetings with Professionals Makes Al-Anon and Al-Anon Literature Come Alive

Maribeth M., Public Outreach Coordinator, Montana
News and Views, February 2008

Copies of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* magazines were ordered for psychiatric clinics, doctors' offices, clinics, and emergency rooms. However, my experience is that when professionals put a face to the literature, they are more willing to contact Al-Anon and Alateen. Special attention was paid to Alateen and entities in contact with children, teens, and their parents.

Al-Anon members arranged meetings with a variety of professionals to explain Alateen to the following types of educational professionals:

- Teachers
- Counselors
- Principals
- Guardian ad litem, a lawyer service representing children from dysfunctional homes who also helps create treatment plans for parents to help them get their children back

Public Outreach—Outreach to Professionals/Institutions

Pass Along Understanding to Members and Groups—*The Forum* and *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*

First there was *The Forum*, then a September issue of *The Forum*, and now *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism*, a new magazine published each year by the WSO. These two magazines have different purposes and separate audiences. There is some confusion among members, and you can help by informing them in your communication with them.

Below is a chart outlining the differences between our two magazines to help you “pass along understanding” within the fellowship.

	<i>The Forum</i>	<i>Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism</i>
Issues per year	Twelve (one per month)	One per year
Availability	Ongoing by subscription and registration as a group	Two times per year (fall and spring)
Distribution	Monthly mailing to subscribers and groups	Sold in bulk quantities of 25, 50, 100, or 400
Content	Recovery sharings and WSO updates for members and groups	Basic information about Al-Anon, member stories for newcomers, and articles by professionals
Audience	Members and groups	Anyone unfamiliar with Al-Anon, e.g.: the public, professionals and their patients or clients
Language	English Note: Spanish- and French-speaking groups and subscribers receive the <i>Al-Anon y Alateen en acción</i> and <i>Le lien</i> quarterly—these magazines are made up of excerpts from <i>The Forum</i> .	English, Spanish, and French

In essence, the purpose of *Al-Anon Faces Alcoholism* is to motivate families of alcoholics to attend their first meeting and to aid professionals with their patient or client referrals. It is also a brief educational guide for the general public. *The Forum* is the “voice of the fellowship” within the fellowship. Both magazines have very important messages designed for specific audiences.

Sharing Ourselves

Three “Cs” of Service

Joan P., Delegate, Ontario South

Open Lines, Volume 31, Number 1, February 2008

The three “Cs” of service come to mind as I prepare this report and review the events of our past year:

Year one is classified as a “confused” year. We learned and grew through our first term as we introduced the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making process. I must say, we had great results.

Year two is classified as the “comfortable” year. As I focus on the positives of the past year, I reflect on the successes we experienced with our Area Convention, the Alateen Conference, and our Assembly. I have come to realize how strong the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship is in our Area. I have had the opportunity to travel to several districts to share my report and meet wonderful members. I heard new thinking, I felt new energy, and I experienced the abundant resources our members have embraced with our new book *Opening Our Hearts—Transforming Our Losses* (B-29), and our new bookmark *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover* (M-78).

Year three is classified as the “capable” year. This is the last year of my term, which has flown by too quickly. My goal is to emphasize the benefits of serving in our fellowship and moving forward in order to keep the doors open for those who suffer from the effects of alcoholism. Our Conference theme for 2008, “Build Bridges—Energizing Our Spiritual Quest,” is very appropriate. We take the lead to inform our members of the value and benefits of service.

The opportunity to serve as Delegate is a gift my Higher Power has bestowed on me. Here’s hoping more people step up to the plate to reap the benefits of service.

Sharing Ourselves

Forming Solid Foundations

Barbara W., Delegate

Ohio Al-A-Notes, Winter 2008

The Delegate is a “channel through which information flows” (page 146, 2006-2009 *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual*). In order to serve fully, I find it necessary to spend several hours a week reading and responding to e-mails from the WSO and Area concerns. This devotion of time is greatly increased from January until the April Conference, when all Conference members receive motions, budget information, the Annual Report, and other business matters to review before Conference and to submit questions, if we have any. The Delegates submit topics for Chosen Agenda Items and write responses for the Sharing Area Highlights session that is held for the Delegates before the Conference convenes.

Upon returning home from the 2007 Conference, I slept a lot and then spent several weeks sifting through the information, composing, and printing the report for distribution at the Spring Assembly meeting.

I served as a Conference Sponsor, making myself available to an incoming Delegate. We met the afternoon before the opening dinner and had numerous phone conversations and e-mail exchanges before Conference. The gift I received was a treasured friendship with the Delegate I sponsored.

In the event of my inability to serve, I take care to keep the Alternate Delegate well-informed of all Area and World Service matters. I keep in close contact with the Area Chair. These communications form the foundation for solid friendships as well as providing reinforcement to the Area. My Service Sponsor is always just an e-mail away, and she encourages me to think “globally not just locally.”

I feared I would not be enough or know enough to serve in this service position. As the days unfolded and I faced the challenges, I discovered that the service path I had walked *had* prepared me. With honor and humility, I will assist the next Delegate in the transition—passing a cherished service position onto capable hands (and letting go!) with loving hands and heart.

From the Question Basket

Brenda F., Area Chairperson, Illinois South

News-O-Gram, February 2008

From the Question Basket:

If a member of Al-Anon has not been attending meetings due to illness and wants to give \$20 for the meeting basket, is it considered an “outside contribution”?

It is my interpretation that if this person is still a member, he or she may contribute. An outside contribution would be from an individual, or a business, who is not a member of the fellowship.

Service and Recovery

Judy C., Ontario North

Northern Outreach, April 2008

I have come to realize that every Al-Anon service position brings with it an awareness of the valuable learning tools that are at my fingertips—all I have to do is look around and reach out!

When I apply the principles of the Al-Anon program in all my affairs with an open mind, amazing and wonderful things happen. “The Twelfth Tradition reaffirms the principles of all our Traditions. When we act and think as a member of Al-Anon, we are able once more to see that our will alone does not determine the reality of a situation” (page 135, *Al-Anon’s Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*, B-8).

What Are My Gifts to Al-Anon?

The Province Wide Newsletter, Manitoba, Spring 2008

Members in Manitoba responded to the following question: As a trusted servant, what is (are) my gift(s) to Al-Anon? Responses included:

- Attending meetings, being responsible, coming with a good attitude, doing the best I can with what I know and have
- Being willing, having integrity, caring for others
- Collecting information for the groups in my district, helping to organize times when members from the groups in the district can get together, being supportive of groups and members throughout the district
- Having time for service, making monetary donations, doing Twelfth Step work
- Being a Group Representative and contact person for newcomers
- Being a District Representative, carrying the message by speaking
- Sharing information for group and personal growth, showing up when I say I will, encouraging newcomers, sharing how the program has changed me
- Helping other groups
- Traveling, making friends, gaining new perspectives, and having fun
- Willingness to grow and take risks, gaining self-confidence and the ability to speak up
- Having a better understanding of the program above the group level
- Acting as a liaison between Assembly and my group, encouraging and informing other members of my group about service
- Chairing meetings, making coffee, and helping to wash the cups

Sharing Ourselves

“Let It Begin with Me”

News & Views, Saskatchewan, Winter 2008

Marci U. from Saskatoon shares:

I was quite pleased to hear the topic, “Let It Begin with Me.” After all, if it didn’t begin with *someone*, where would we all be? We are so fortunate to be part of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon, and I have been privileged to attend functions to see this fellowship in action. “Awesome” is all I can say!

This July I will be attending the Al-Anon International Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We have been looking forward to this for a long while. I am so very thankful that someone was there ahead of me to open the doors and chair meetings. At our group, we make sure we are there to have our doors open, the literature out, and the coffee pot boiling. It is more welcoming to show newcomers a calming place, so different than their own lives—just like it was for me.

The other thing we can do to “Let It Begin with Me” is to evaluate our contributions. Sometimes we get into the same

old rut. Expenses are increasing. We can help our groups by increasing our donations. It is a touchy subject, but “Let It Begin with Me.”

Joy B. from Saskatoon shares:

A few years ago, I came home from Assembly feeling unhappy. I felt like even though I had been attending for several years, no one really knew me. I’m a fairly shy, reserved person—I learned not to draw attention to myself growing up in alcoholism—and I was beginning to feel that no one knew the “real me.”

In Al-Anon I discovered that I can choose to change what I can, or I can choose to be a victim. Once I realized that I was feeling isolated at Assemblies, I decided to “Let It Begin with Me.” When I took a hard look at it, I realized I was using my shyness as an excuse. I’d skip the mixer because I didn’t want to be in a group of strangers. I’d only talk to people I knew because I felt safe with them. I’d

go to the bathroom during “hug breaks” because I felt uncomfortable. In short, I isolated *myself*.

What a huge realization! I was receiving exactly what I was giving. At first I felt like a failure—I have a tendency to be hard on myself, another scar from my alcoholic childhood—but gradually I saw my situation for what it was: another opportunity to stretch myself.

I’m still a bit afraid of Assemblies, but I know my attitude has changed. Now, on my way through the doors, I say a little prayer to remind myself that my Higher Power is with me and then I take a few risks. I might say, “Hi,” to someone I don’t know or share a story or joke at the mixer. The change has been dramatic and I learned a valuable lesson. How I view a situation is my choice. People at Assembly have always been friendly and welcoming. It’s up to me to put my guard down and join in.

What is the Foundation for Al-Anon Family Groups?

Judy G., Delegate, Wyoming

The Link, March 2008

Our foundation lies within the 36 principles of our program. We draw our strength from practicing these principles in all our affairs (Tradition Twelve). This is a “we” program, if we could have done it alone, we would have. We learn from each other by what we share and how we work our program. How is your foundation? What are your strengths? How are you giving back?

Have you ever looked through a kaleidoscope and wondered how it works? How can just a few bits of color pieces make such a beautiful picture? Have you ever wondered how Al-Anon Family Groups works? There are a lot of similarities between the kaleidoscope and Al-Anon Family Groups.

Each has many very separate parts. These parts look very different from one another. They both have something holding them together—a basic structure. Something happens when these parts interact with one another. By moving the kaleidoscope ever so slightly—just a small amount of action—you can create a beautiful picture. In Al-Anon, a small amount of action from each of us can have some very positive effects.

Can you think of other similarities between a kaleidoscope and Al-Anon Family Groups? How do we take action in the Al-Anon Family Groups? Your participation (Concept Four) in your groups, districts, Area, Assemblies, and action committees is just one way to take action. By being a part of this action, you are taking an active part in making Al-Anon Family Groups come to life, through you and through those with whom you share the Al-Anon program.

Can you think of other ways as a member of the Al-Anon Family Groups that you take action? An Al-Anon kaleidoscope: take one idea and add a number of individual people. Let them love it, nurture it, and then present it in a beautiful positive way. Together we can make some awesome pictures for the future of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Reaching Out to Others

Sandi C., Delegate, California North

Twelve Stepper, April 2008

In October I had the opportunity to do a short talk, in Spanish, to the Hispanic Convention. It felt so good to reach out to others in their language. When I sat down, one woman who was sitting behind me said something like, “Now you know how we feel at Assembly,” and she was absolutely correct.

I took enough Spanish in high school and college to be able to read, speak, and write it fairly well. But I haven’t used it in a very long time. I owe thanks to a member in Sacramento who helped me translate my talk, sat next to me, and helped translate the talk by the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Al-Anon in Mexico. I’ve been fortunate to be able to meet her at the last two World Service Conferences, but what a joy to have her share her story with the Hispanics of California.

These shared experiences, sent from around the world, came to WSO through French and Spanish newsletters as well as correspondence. The WSO will continue to select service activities for this page, so Spanish and French members will have the opportunity to write and read about their service projects without translation. This additional page gives all members a consistent reminder that service in Al-Anon is taking place in many languages.

Estas experiencias, de los miembros de todas partes del mundo, las hemos recibido en la OSM en boletines y cartas, tanto en español como en francés. De ahora en adelante la OSM continuará publicando actividades de servicio; de esta forma los miembros hispano hablantes y los de habla francesa podrán escribir y leer sus experiencias auténticas de servicio. Esta página adicional nos recuerda a todos los miembros que el servicio en Al-Anon se lleva a cabo en muchos idiomas.

Banco de herramientas Al-Anon, para todo trabajo

Boletín Amistad N° 314,
Mercedes, distrito Capital, Argentina
Abril, mayo, junio de 2007

Deseo compartir con toda la hermandad mi experiencia, cómo me sentí en el banco de herramientas Al-Anon y gracias al Poder Superior pude utilizarlas.

Si bien hace muchos años que me separé de mi primer esposo, siempre ocupó un lugar importante en mi corazón.

Un día me despertó un triste llamado telefónico para comunicarme su fallecimiento, y de pronto vino a mi memoria la página de *Un día a la vez en Al-Anon del 3 de mayo*: “Mi madre me enseñó cuando yo era una niña, que cuando me ocurriera algo terrible yo debería pensar en lo que estaría haciendo si eso no hubiera pasado y lo llevara a cabo”. Primera herramienta: **Literatura**.

Comencé a decir la Oración de la Serenidad mientras llamaba a mi padrino. Segunda herramienta: pedí **ayuda**.

Seguí con mi rutina, siempre pensando “qué haría si esto no hubiese ocurrido”, tratando de ordenarme en medio del dolor.

Mi **padrino** (también ésta es una muy buena herramienta) me escuchó, ayudó, guió y me acompañó con toda su humanidad y práctica del programa.

Al día siguiente yo debía coordinar en el grupo al que concurro; me autoexaminé lo más honestamente que pude –no desconozco que cuando no estamos bien no deberíamos coordinar para no arriesgar las bondades de la **reunión** (otra muy importante herramienta) – y allí el Poder Superior me entregó la tercera herramienta: el **Servicio**. Pude coordinar porque el Poder Superior me envió un benéfico y balsámico paréntesis a mi dolor.

Por todo esto que comparto hoy con la hermandad, me permito la sugerencia de que nos sentemos más a menudo en el “Banco de herramientas Al-Anon” y las utilicemos. Agradezco al Poder Superior y a la hermandad Al-Anon que me haya brindado estas herramientas.

Comité de Servicio a la Sociedad

Boletín Amistad N° 313, Argentina
Enero, febrero, marzo de 2007

Ya comenzó un nuevo año y es un buen momento para dar una mirada a nuestro progreso, tanto personal como a nivel de servicio.

¿Cómo ayudaré a la hermandad este año?

Si reconocemos nuestras falencias, preparamos el terreno para sembrar nuestras virtudes y obtener serenidad, paz y armonía...

¿Qué es lo que más me gustaría compartir de lo recibido en Al-Anon?

¿Transmito el mensaje? ¿Qué siento en mi vida?

¿Considero el servicio como una meta en mi vida?

El 4° Concepto nos dice que “La participación es la clave de la armonía”

Participar nos hace parte de Al-Anon.

¿Puedo participar en el Comité de Información Pública del grupo, distrito u Oficina de Servicios Generales?

¿Puedo comprometerme?

¿Estoy dispuesto a correr el riesgo de descubrir que tengo más para ofrecer a otros de lo que pensaba?

No nos neguemos el beneficio de este compromiso.

Planifiquen la tarea de Información Pública y trabajen en grupo, sabemos que lo hacen muy bien.

Recuerden nuestros proyectos para este año.

Agradecemos la valiosa colaboración que siguen brindando con motivo del 40 aniversario.

Lo que puedo dar nunca será tanto como lo que recibo dando. (Extraído de *Un día a la vez en Al-Anon*)

Transmitamos nuestro mensaje a los profesionales.

El Subcomité de Cooperación con los Profesionales informa a la hermandad que pronto estará disponible la edición del Boletín “De Al-Anon/Ataleen a la Comunidad. Un mensaje a los profesionales” correspondiente al año 2007. El mismo será distribuido en la CSN sin cargo, para todos los miembros que asistan a la misma; estamos seguros que sabrían hacer una difusión responsable y masiva de él.

These shared experiences, sent from around the world, came to WSO through French and Spanish newsletters as well as correspondence. The WSO will continue to select service activities for these pages, so Spanish and French members will have the opportunity to write and read about their service projects without translation. This additional page gives all members a consistent reminder that service in Al-Anon is taking place in many languages.

Ces expériences partagées proviennent de bulletins et de lettres envoyées au BSM par des membres d'expression française et hispanique à travers le monde. Le BSM sélectionnera pour cette page des témoignages de membres sur leur travail de service, et leur permettra ainsi de partager leurs expériences dans le service directement sans traduction. Cette page supplémentaire rappelle à tous les membres que le service dans Al-Anon se fait dans toutes les langues.

Mot de la Secrétaire à la liste des groupes...

Extrait du journal interne des Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon de la Circonscription du Québec-est et du Nouveau Brunswick
Le Contact, avril 2008
Huguette N.

Pour moi le service a débuté très lentement, après quelque mois dans le mouvement, les membres de mon groupe m'ont supportée, elles ont su me faire confiance et j'ai pu développer cette confiance en moi qui me faisait défaut.

C'est en essayant une tâche à la fois que j'ai découvert que j'étais capable comme tout le monde de prendre ces petits contrats de service. J'ai acquis plus de confiance et j'ai reçu le support dont j'avais besoin. Au fil du temps j'ai essayé tout ce qui m'était proposé, j'ai demandé de l'aide dans la fonction que je devais occuper. Ma Marraine de service a toujours été là pour me guider, et aujourd'hui j'en retire les bienfaits. J'ai osé essayer et ça marche.

C'est en travaillant et en m'impliquant que j'ai réussi à mettre mon programme en pratique, et c'est en servant que je découvre les bienfaits qu'Al-Anon a fait pour moi. Aujourd'hui, je suis comblée par la vie, et je continue à prendre les choses une journée à la fois, à surtout savourer le moment présent.

Je suis reconnaissante envers ce programme pour la belle vie que j'ai découverte.

Merci aux membres, ne lâcher pas. Le meilleur est à venir.

Invitation à tous les membres

Faites nous parvenir vos expériences dans le service pour nous permettre de les publier dans cette page. En nous envoyant les bulletins de nouvelles de votre circonscription, vous nous donnez aussi la possibilité d'y puiser des témoignages et de les partager avec tous les membres.

Partage de Service

Extrait du journal interne des Groupes Familiaux Al-Anon/Alateen de la Circonscription du Québec-ouest
Le Tournesol, mars-avril 2008
Lucie D.

Je trouve cela important que vous et moi prenions du temps (à s'asseoir ensemble) pour discuter et échanger sur ce que l'information publique représente pour chacun de nous, les membres (1^{er} intervenants), les groupes (l'accueil, temps à donner au nouveau), les districts « **Faire le lien entre la Circonscription, le BSM, et les groupes** ». **Prendre le temps pour les rencontres.** Ce dont je n'ai pas encore parlé et qui retient beaucoup l'attention, les COÛTS, le financement. Le prix des salles, les locaux...le bénévolat ! Le prix à payer... Moi la première, je trouve cela dispendieux de mon temps, et financièrement. Où va mon argent ? Où va mon énergie ?

Je n'ai pas les réponses, mais ce que je sais, c'est que ma Puissance Supérieure m'indique la route à prendre et m'inspire selon le besoin.

Que je donne du temps, c'est le temps de Dieu, Puissance Supérieure.

Que je donne de l'énergie, c'est l'énergie de Dieu, Puissance Supérieure qui se manifeste.

Donc, mon rôle devrait être de transmettre le message par mon attrait, mes expériences, mes forces, mes espoirs et de les partager. Je ne puis partager seule. Donc, nous avons besoin les uns des autres.

J'ai besoin de définir mes priorités et cela n'est pas facile : ma famille, mon travail, ma vie sociale, mes engagements, mes contraintes, etc...

Donc, chacun et chacune fait de son mieux et c'est là que vient la gratitude.

Merci à tous ceux et celles qui prennent des fonctions; c'est comme ça que je vois et comprends l'humilité, la patience, le courage, la détermination de tous, toutes. L'anonymat, c'est ce qui est fait gratuitement et que personne ne sait comme le bénévolat. L'infini de la vie, c'est mystère ! Les couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel (représentant chaque personne) viennent embellir ma vie. « Lâcher prise et s'en remettre à dieu » tout s'arrange sans la moindre force.

Nous devrions dire « Laissons notre colère, nos ressentiments, nos apitoiements, à la porte et apportons notre sourire, notre AMOUR, notre respect et nos couleurs »

C'est ce dont j'ai le plus besoin.

Veillez photocopier *Area Highlights* et le distribuer à d'autres membres