

Report on 2008 World Service Conference

The 2008 World Service Conference opened with a tap of a high-heeled shoe on the podium, in honor of Lois W.'s shoe toss at her husband, Bill. This reminds me that Lois was in her late 60's when she and Anne began Al-Anon Family Groups – and if those ladies can do that at their age, I can certainly find time to be of service to this life-saving fellowship.

The evening before, we had our opening dinner and Sharing Area Highlights session. I placed a conference pin “WSC 2008” on Gina R., the Panel 48 delegate from Connecticut.

Our Conference Chair challenged us to ask ourselves, “Am I ready to make a difference” from the booklet *When I Got Busy, I Got Better*. Lois W. was quoted from the book *Lois Remembers* where Lois warns us “Stagnation is retrogression.”

There were 67 Areas represented by delegates. We reviewed the Knowledge Based Decision Making process – and it was noted that not everything is presented in KBDM. We have to use good judgment and be flexible. The four key elements of KBDM:

- open communication between leadership and membership
- dialogue before deliberation
- all decision makers will have common access to all the information
- we exist in a culture of trust

The Financial Audit received an unqualified opinion, which is the best report possible. There was a discussion and review of the salary ranges of our WSO staff. The average cost of services to a group was \$228.33 in 2007. The average group contributed \$98.14. Fifty six percent of our groups contribute to WSO. There are 15,344 registered groups in our service structure. Ohio has 48% of their registered groups contributing an average of \$75.82 per group.

A basket was passed at WSC, and over \$2000. in individual contributions were collected!

After a presentation on Select Committees vs. Action/Task Force committees, the conference members went to their various committee meetings. This year, delegates were given the option to continue on their select committee, or serve on a Task Force. One Task Force produced the *Reserve Fund Guideline(G-41)*.

Our conference theme, “Build Bridges – Energizing Our Spiritual Quest”, provided us with brainstorming sessions throughout the week. We asked “How can we expand, renew, and strengthen our connections with the fellowship?” We discussed ways to improve communication between the Areas, Districts and groups by reaching out to newcomers, by asking AWSC members to visit groups, through the use of CAL at meetings, utilizing our past Delegates in service work, and inviting WSO Trustees or staff to visit our Areas. We discussed the value of identifying the natural talents and gifts, as well as skills, of our membership.

The first year (of a 3 year trial) of the selection process for Regional Trustees was completed. RCT (Regional Committee on Trustee) Chairpersons were elected for the regions that will vote for an RT at the 2009 WSC.

The Annual Report was presented and reviewed. Our Board looks at the Strategic Plan quarterly. The Operational Plan is about the work on a day to day basis. The Strategic Plan is what moves us forward.

Our 2006-2009 Service Manual has blank “note” pages at the end of each section. We can use these to insert changes approved at WSC, to keep our individual copy of the Service Manual up to date. We may be able to go to a standard 3 year printing cycle vs. a 2 year printing.

Four Policy motions were passed. The first motion involved moving the descriptive paragraph about “Introductory Meetings” from page 78 to page 80 between Open/Closed Meetings and Electronic Meetings. The second motion amended the text on page 78, changing “Limited Access Groups” to describing meetings where access is limited due to the facility's entry restrictions.

The third motion amended the text (pg. 83-84) on Anonymity. The changes elaborate on the 3 elements of anonymity with the general public, the media, and professionals. We need to educate our members of the vulnerability with the use of computers and the internet. Websites are asked to refrain from using full names and email addresses that have full names. When we use our full name, others who are not aware of our anonymity and statement of purpose could use our personal information and violate our 12th Tradition, unknowingly. Please remember that even internal email that lists the recipients of the email, could be breaking those members' anonymity, especially if you list the members' name in your address book. Perhaps an Action Committee could provide guidance on the use of our website and email. As an Area, we need to police ourselves and educate our membership, creating a policy that works for Ohio.

The fourth policy motion amended the text on page 85 concerning Bequests. After much discussion, the WSC decided it was controlling of our fellowship to limit the amount a member may bequeath to Al-Anon Family Groups in their will. This motion carried, allowing WSO to accept a one-time bequest from an Al-Anon member in any amount, provided its use is not restricted by the donor. Bequest amounts, up to ten percent of the total revenue of the WSO General Fund as identified in the previous year's audit, will be placed in the General Fund. Members may give more than the ten percent; however, the portion of the bequest above the 10% will be reported separately on the financial statements. The WSC will authorize the use of these excess amounts and the authorized expenditures will be administered by the Board of Trustees. These excess amounts are not available for general purposes, unless further authorized by the Conference. This policy change gives the World Service Conference express oversight of these funds. The changes presume goodwill and a high level of trust between the Board and the Conference. The Conference trusted the Board to proceed with the motion, and the Board trusted the Conference to appropriately authorize the use of the funds. In its traditional role, the Conference has never had responsibility to specifically direct the use of funds.

A newly created position at WSO of Information Analyst allows AFG contact at a number of organizations, (as a researcher not a member) to encourage other organizations to continue the research on the effects of the disease of alcoholism on the family. Several membership surveys have been conducted – members who did not renew Forum subscriptions, and currently surveying the membership about welcoming newcomers (and asking newcomers about their welcome). This employee's non-membership allows us to put a face to the media when talking about Al-Anon. She is not a spokesperson for Al-Anon, but is able to provide information and data. She is the face who introduces the information.

The 2008 WSC gave conceptual approval for the Literature Committee to develop a piece of literature

on Al-Anon's first 60 years. It has been 30 years since *First Steps* was written, and this is no longer in print.

The topic of expansion or consolidation of Areas resulted in a discussion about the impact on the Areas and the WSC in terms of finances, the growth and the diversity of the fellowship. Concern was expressed about the affect on outreach to sparsely populated areas and how technology could be used to build those bridges.

There are currently 3200 registrants for the International Convention to be held in Pittsburgh, PA. July 4-6, 2008. There will be a hospitality area in the Convention Center and the big meetings will be held at the Mellon Center. The opening parade will be limited to the first 500 people who apply, via the website in late May or early June. Please wear costumes! There will be a Service Day on Thursday, July 3. Participants need to preregister and the charge is \$10.00.

Our newest publication, *Discovering Choices*, will be for sale at the International for \$15.00 per book. Case discounts will not be available at the convention.

Much discussion took place on the proposed Charter changes to protect the Alateen Traditions. No decision was reached and the changes were sent back to the committee for review.

In regards to Regional Service Seminars, WSO is looking at ways to engage more people in less time. Due to planning changes, it will be late 2009 before RSS are resumed, and they may be held AT assemblies, so as not to compete with the Fall assemblies.

The PSA was not distributed to the conference, but will be on the website as soon as it is finalized and approved. Last year's "Sketches" was well-received by the media, so the new PSA continues on that theme.

A session was held on Conflict Resolution. There are essential skills that are key to achieving resolution: Look, act and be interested! Don't interrupt or finish the other's sentence. Try to listen between the lines, to reveal the fear. Rephrase what was heard, using statements that are non-judgmental. Stop talking. Separate the principle that one is trying to convey, from the personality. While "Conflict Resolution" may be a term often heard in business – the solution is in our timeless CAL – *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage*, in the chapter on Communication. The 5 guides are:

- discuss, don't attack
- keep the voice low and pleasant
- stick to the subject
- listen to their complaints
- don't make demands

I was introduced to the newly hired Director of Communication, Bob S., at the first conference I attended in 2006. He had no voice and no vote at that WSC. This year – two years later – he presented a podcast of past delegates participating in a series of beginner's meetings for newcomers. The introduction and first meeting is on our public website. These are not intended for use at a meeting, but rather for personal use, and as an outreach tool.

The week was rich with 3 minute sharings on the Conference Theme from our outgoing Panel 46 delegates. Our International guests from Mexico, Germany and South Africa also shared. You will have the opportunity to read these, in their entirety, in the 2008 WSC Summary, later this year.

The 2009 World Service Conference will be held at the Wyndham Hotel in Virginia Beach, Virginia, April 18-23, 2009.

The conference participated in a trip to Stepping Stones, the home of Lois and Bill W. As I walked around the grounds I was moved beyond words by the view of the rolling countryside. I crossed the back yard to “Wit's End” - Lois' term of endearment for Bill's small office, and sat at Bill W.'s desk. Inside their home, I sat at the kitchen table and then at Lois' office desk, where she lovingly answered so many letters to our membership. I didn't focus my vision so much on their possessions – their things, but I gazed out of every window, wanting to see what they saw! This is the gift Ohio Area Assembly gave to me – the ability to gaze out of the windows of Ohio, to have a vision of our worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon and Alateen. I most humbly thank you for your trust and belief in me. It has been an honor to serve.

From my heart to yours,

Barbara W. Panel 46 Ohio