

## A Welcoming Tradition

Attracting and welcoming newcomers to Al-Anon is so important. We have all experienced our first Al-Anon meeting: the nervousness, frustration, embarrassment, and annoyance. My first recollection is being put at ease as soon as I entered the room. My second is being bombarded with a variety of pamphlets about Al-Anon and the family disease of alcoholism. I remember looking at them thinking, *All this for me?*

Welcoming newcomers to their first Al-Anon meeting has been a long-standing tradition that is usually accompanied by passing on Al-Anon literature. The “door” through which newcomers arrive to Al-Anon varies widely today. As members, we need to be prepared to meet them—however they get here—and today we have many options! We are fortunate to be able to provide resources in print, digitally, and through our **al-anon.org** website.

Members from groups meeting electronically shared with World Service Office Staff that newcomers were flocking to phone and online meetings well before the COVID-19 pandemic. While the various groups welcomed them and explained what Al-Anon was all about, there was nothing that could be immediately provided or shared with them in the form of a newcomers’ packet. Those conversations led to the creation of a one-time, English-only, newcomers’ email that phone and online meeting attendees could request. This email launched in 2020, just at the start of the pandemic, and was announced at the virtual 2020 World Service Conference.

The email was so well received that it was made available to anyone attending an Al-Anon meeting for the first time, whether in person, online, or by phone. According to the 2022 *World Service Conference Summary*, the *Welcome Newcomer!* email was a huge success, requested more than 20,000 times since March of 2020!

Today, newcomers can visit the **al-anon.org/welcome** webpage, which is available in English, Spanish, and French. This introductory page features much of the same information from the *Welcome Newcomer!* email and provides links to relevant information about Al-Anon meetings and other resources available on **al-anon.org**.

In 2021, the digital booklet *Welcome Newcomer!* (eK-10) became available for purchase. Members quickly learned that these e-booklets can be given as gifts, provided the giver knows the recipient’s email address and preferred digital reader platform. Since many people now opt for the convenience of digital resources, some groups have created a new service position to make sure newcomers are offered the *Welcome Newcomer!* ebooklet. The original *Welcome Newcomer!* packet (K-10), which contains several pamphlets outlining Al-Anon basics, continues to be available in print in English, Spanish, and French on the Al-Anon Online Bookstore.

Creating those initial connections with newcomers is crucial to Al-Anon's primary spiritual aim: to help families and friends of alcoholics. We want to provide the newcomer with not only a warm welcome, but also some tangible, easily accessible resources as a bridge to help carry them to their next meeting...and the next meeting...and so on!

*By Sue P., Associate Director—Group Services*

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