

Inside Al-Anon

Willingness and the Collateral Benefits of Service

If you are like me, sometimes service commitments don't inspire excitement. When I first heard the terms Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, they sounded like another room in a house I wasn't allowed to enter. They sounded intimidating, even out of reach. But what I came to understand was that behind those formal-sounding titles are members whose stories sound a lot like ours. Members who found their way to service not because they had it all figured out, but because they had the willingness to show up and learn. I had the privilege of speaking with two of these members—a Trustee and an At-Large member of the Executive Committee—and what they shared wasn't what I expected. These conversations felt less like interviews and more like a good meeting—the kind where you leave feeling a little more hopeful and capable.

What is it, really, that these trusted servants do? Before I introduce you to them, let's talk about what their service actually looks like, not through formal job descriptions but in practice. Understanding what they do makes their decision to serve all the more meaningful. Who knows? You may find yourself one day thinking, "I might be willing to stand for that service." So let's demystify these service roles a bit and see why they matter to every single one of us in our meetings.

The Board of Trustees of the World Service Conference Structure consists of Al-Anon members who protect our principles and act as the chief service arm of the World Service Conference (WSC). I like to think of them as the legal guardians of our fellowship's future. They oversee finances, approve policy changes, and ensure Al-Anon stays true to its primary purpose while adapting to meet the needs of members in a changing world. Trustees serve three-year terms and bring their recovery and service experience to guide the organization. They review literature proposals, consider how technology can better serve members, and discuss ways to reach out to underserved communities. They also carry legal responsibilities for the organization. While their work involves meetings, reports, and conference calls, at its core, serving as a Trustee is about caring for this fellowship we all love so that it will be here for the next person who needs it.

Executive Committee members are responsible for management of the World Service Office. Since office oversight requires prudent financial practices, many Executive Committee members also serve on the Finance Committee. In this way they ensure that every dollar contributed by members is used effectively to carry the Al-Anon message. This is where *numbers* meet *mission*. They review financial reports, help develop budgets, and provide oversight to keep the organization financially healthy.

Think of it as detective work—looking at the numbers to understand what's working and what needs attention. Does the need for updated technologies warrant special project funding from the Reserve Fund? How do we balance the need to ensure literature prices

remain affordable with covering production costs? These aren't just financial questions; they are questions about principles, priorities, and how we live our Traditions and Concepts of Service in practical ways.

I invite you to read more our conversation with the members behind these roles. In Part 2 (available only online at al-anon.org/meet-volunteers), I sat down with two Volunteers who serve in these roles: a Trustee and a member of the Executive and Finance Committees. Both members are no strangers to service or sponsorship. They have been showing up for Al-Anon in various ways throughout their recovery. Although these members come from different Areas within the WSC Structure, they serve Al-Anon worldwide. I asked them questions most of us want to know: What brought you to Al-Anon? What does a day in your shoes look like? What character defects still show up in service?

I couldn't help but meditate on the words they spoke. They shared beautiful stories of *hope, of accepting rather than understanding* (shifting from knowing to being willing), and of the *collateral benefits* that come from serving and being a part of our *fellowship*.

By Elizabeth M-R., Magazine Editor

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