



the bits newsletter

Seattle Al-Anon Information Service

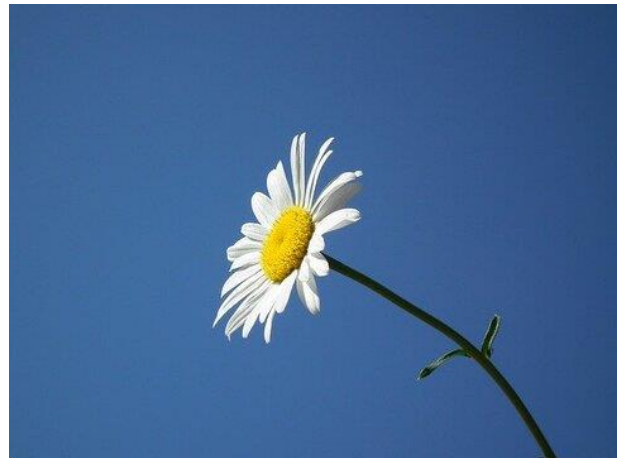
NEWCOMERS PACKET

June 2020

World Service Organization (WSO) Needs Our Help

by Eric G

In mid-May 2020, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. sent out a [letter](https://www.al-anon.org/pdf/Treasurer-COVID-Appeal-to-Fellowship.pdf) (<https://www.al-anon.org/pdf/Treasurer-COVID-Appeal-to-Fellowship.pdf>) addressing the COVID-19 situation and its impact on the World Service Office (WSO). The WSO is struggling to do business as usual and needs our continued financial support. It might be helpful to share the WSO [donation link](https://al-anon.org/) (<https://al-anon.org/>) during announcements at your meetings and remind members to go online and donate directly to WSO. It is also encouraged to discuss this topic during business meetings.



If you'd like to stay more informed of WSO's announcements, please subscribe to the WSO newsletter, *In the Loop*, by [clicking here](https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1855605/1799701/) (<https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1855605/1799701/>).

2020 Summer Seminar Assembly

by Chéré F

The Washington (WA) Area Summer Seminar Assembly (SSA) was first held in 1991. The primary purpose of this annual Assembly is to hear the Delegate's report on the World Service Conference (WSC). This is also an informal opportunity for all Al-Anon members to learn more about Al-Anon service, Traditions, and Concepts. This was the first year the World Service Conference was held virtually due to COVID-19. For more in-depth information about the Conference, including its purpose, historical background, composition, and more, see the subsection, "World Service Conference" in the World Service Handbook beginning on page 160.

This was the first Area Assembly held virtually, as well, and allowed members to attend via Zoom. Throughout the weekend, several workshops were offered on a variety of service topics, including public outreach, a study of the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P-24/27), and sponsorship. Members also had an opportunity to hear from past delegates, past and current officers, and coordinators. My favorite part of the workshops is the opportunity for members to ask questions and/or share their experiences. Workshops were recorded, and members can request a copy from Area Alternate Chair, Lynn T. (alt-chair@wa-al-anon.org).

WA Area Delegate, Kathy D., gave her report Saturday evening and shared her experience attending the 60th World Service Conference. The WSC covered the financials, budget, and strategic plans for the World Service Office (WSO). At the end of the presentation, the evolving financial impact of COVID-19 on the WSO and electronic meetings was discussed. The World Service Conference Summary will be available to download this August or September. Past issues of WSC Summaries are available at <https://al-anon.org/for-members/world-service-conference-wsc/world-service-conference-archive/>

Thank you to all the presenters and moderators for their service and willingness to share.

Step Six

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.



Ideas for Sponsors and Sponsees at Zoom Meetings

- Post in the chat window if you are willing to sponsor. Then leave it up to those who want a sponsor to contact you.
- For groups with an email, ask those who are willing to sponsor to let them know and then send that list to members who request it via the email.
- Create a Google Doc of those willing to sponsor and share the link in the chat window.
- Some groups have a sponsorship coordinator position so they can share their number for members looking to sponsor or be sponsored to contact them for info.
- Change your screen name to include your phone number.

Electronic Meeting Reactions, Part Three by Eric G



What is one AI-Anon lesson you have learned or know more about because of the electronic meetings?

Josh S: The resiliency of our fellowship in the face of “Zoom bombers.” This is another example of “going to any lengths” for our recovery.

Dave L: I discovered for me more than ever how important the Traditions are. They have given me a sense of this program being grounded at this chaotic time when it's a meeting topic, and it doesn't matter what the Tradition is.

Do you pay more attention to people's shares, or less because of your at-home distractions? Or do home surroundings make you more comfortable that you listen better?

Josh S: Somewhere in between. At times, I'm able to focus on and be fully present with the person sharing. At other times, I'm focusing on being a co-host, or getting distracted by other things happening in the home, and realize I've not been present to the meeting for a share or two. That's when I re-presence myself and tune back in.

Dave L: I pay less attention to some people's share if it isn't touching me or can't relate. And occasionally, I video mute if I feel uncomfortable with the share.

Is it okay to do chores while you attend meetings? Some people listen better while doing something else.

Josh S: I imagine this is different for everyone. Sometimes I'm about to work on something else and focus completely on the shares. Other times I do this and find I can't concentrate.

Dave L: I guess it's OK to do chores during the meeting as long as you mute and turn your video off, so you don't distract other people.

What do you think of putting your phone number up next to your screen name?

Josh S: I've never considered this, or seen it done in the meetings I've attended. I'll consider it now that you've mentioned it.

Dave L: I think putting your phone # up is a good idea, it's just like the phone list. I have to figure out how to do that; I join by cell phone.

AIS Council Meeting

Thursday, June 11th,
730p - 9p

Electronic Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting:

[Click Here](#)

Meeting ID 868 1842 4473

Password: 029195

The AIS Council Meeting is the business meeting for the Greater Seattle Al-Anon Information Service. Each Group has a vote and is encouraged to send a representative.

All Al-Anon members are encouraged to attend.

Al-Anon Slogan Crossword

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ACROSS

1. To use the brain; to not put one's head in the sand and hope everything will go away in the morning

DOWN

1. The Letter T

How It Works for Me

by Allen L

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

In Step Six, we commit ourselves to change. We decide that we are "entirely" ready to give up our old behavior. We're entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

We became entirely ready, not almost, not sort of, and not just try it and see what happens ready, but entirely ready for the rest of our lives.

I found a link to my program in a story about a man who weighed over 400 pounds buying a suit that would fit a 200-pound man. The salesman asks who the suit was for and when the fat man replied, "Me," the salesman snickered. The man was not buying the suit for who he was. He was buying a suit for who he planned to be. The point was that spending the money for the suit was the overweight man's act of commitment: The commitment to change.



When I finally face one of my character defects and decide to stop that old behavior, I also have to stop explaining why I act that way. My old self acted that way because it was the best I could do at the time. My new future-self won't act that way, so I have to start holding myself to that new standard by first saying I won't do that anymore—EVER.

Not saying "I'll try it for 30 days" or "I'll do it for an hour" because that implies that I can go back to the old behavior at the end of the trial period!

Yes, I will probably slip up and react with my old behavior for a while. That is the ultimate power of the steps. If I do slip, I can say, "I am powerless over ..." inserting the old behavior and then say, "Only a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity." I can restart my program and rededicate my commitment at any time.

Most importantly, I can start over again after any slip by treating the slip as a slip, not as a failure.

Changes to your group's listing on our meeting schedule?

Please let us know!

<https://www.seattle-al-anon.org/changes.html>



A Step Six Journey: From Bluster to Willingness

by Fawn B

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Before Al-Anon, I'd never been entirely ready for anything. It may have looked like it from the outside as I conquered every crisis and decade with self-righteousness and an acute sense of responsibility for everyone. But, the real me wasn't present. My true self, the authentic self that I would unearth through the program, rarely showed up. For years, the true me wasn't ready for much of anything because various alcoholic family systems left me anxious, fearful, and indecisive. So, I defaulted to my survival self, to that large-in-charge persona who barreled over everything in her path. But, that's not conscious readiness, that's bluster.



After working Steps 1 through 5, I would come to be entirely, wholeheartedly, 100% ready to have my

Higher Power (HP) remove the defects of character that no longer served me. The fantasy-prone, reactive, insane me who thought I knew what was best for everyone but didn't have a clue who I was. Once I realized my survival skills had become so entrenched that the real me was barely discernible anymore, I was ready to have my HP help me do what I had been unable to do for myself; see myself.

The path to true self is an epic journey that comes with triumphs and losses. Many of my behaviors needed to go if I wanted genuine, lasting recovery. Although I was eager to shed the heavy burden of the "Mighty Atlas," I mourned that part of me who seemed so certain and self-assured. My HP welcomed me to grief, "It's part of being alive," HP also reminded me, "Here is a whole warehouse of feelings to be felt and integrated into your one-and-only life!" "You don't need to pretend anymore." "You're not alone."

HP also gave me tools and support: meetings, literature, sponsorship, conferences, retreats, speaker's meetings, slogans, service, and new friends. While at an Al-Anon conference, I saw a small sticker that echoed what my HP had been telling me: YOU ARE NOT ALONE. I paid attention and paid the cashier 50 cents. I placed the label on the outside of my phone case as a reminder I could call my sponsor or another member whenever my defects started to override my willingness to have HP remove them.

My sponsor recently shared a Step 6 prayer with me. It comes from an outside source. But I find it perfectly fits my Al-Anon program, "God, give me the strength to know who I am, to act accordingly, and to refrain from diverting my time, energy, and interests into my character defects." Today, I welcome the ongoing discovery of those character traits that both serve and thwart my serenity. I can wholeheartedly say that I am entirely ready to have God remove all my character defects.

Seattle Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) Is Looking for Help DO YOU ENJOY TALKING ON THE PHONE OR SLEEPING ON THE JOB?

Early birds, night owls, those at home, or those on the go...

PLEASE CONSIDER SERVING AS AN AIS PHONE VOLUNTEER

You can work from your home or while you are out and about.

Shifts are available 7 days a week in 3-hour intervals starting at 7am during the day, and at night there is one shift starting at 10:30pm, which goes until 7am.

The focus is to answer questions about Al-Anon and Alateen's meeting times and Zoom availability, to give hope to people whose lives may be affected by someone else's drinking and to help others reach the appropriate source of help.

A manual is provided with resource numbers and helpful suggestions on maintaining anonymity and talking to people in distress.

Phone volunteers are a resource for information. Support is there for phone volunteers. We have 12-Step volunteers who make their number available to return calls to callers seeking a more detailed conversation.

FOR INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: phones@seattle-al-anon.org

Keeping an Open Mind as a "New Normal" Emerges



Out of the Toolbox

by BITS Columnist Callie D.

With all the restrictions and precautions thrust upon us during this unprecedented pandemic, I miss a lot of freedoms that I formerly took for granted. I miss all the benefits of swimming in a heated pool. I miss the former plethora of in-person meetings around the Seattle area that served the immediate need to get out of the house or the spontaneous whim to drop in. I miss my kind and competent hairstylist who gave me a fresh outlook about every 5 weeks or so. I miss movies, coffee shops, and eateries. OH MY!

I can spend my time railing against reality, or I can use my resourcefulness to create adaptations that fit my life well. Just like doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results, I can recognize where I may be pursuing a bit of crazy by clinging to familiar patterns that no longer work. For instance, I wasn't too thrilled about "Zoom Meetings" as there can be privacy issues at home. However, I downloaded ZOOM on my phone and went mobile! I have even listened to a few speaker meetings while I was out hiking!

I may not be able to swim at a heated public pool, but I did go swim in one of Washington's refreshing (meaning cold) lakes on a sunny day. My hair got beyond gross, so I have experimented with clippers and dollar store scissors out of desperation! As for movies, I do have other options like binge-watching shows or pay-per-view. I've done a few takeout meals, but I am doing more cooking and baking. I am trying to stay on the more nutritious side of the pendulum but still have gained a few "sheltering" pounds.

Instead of the same tedious walking routes, I am trying new trails. With a fresh path, comes a new perspective. Taking a risk and allowing imperfection can bring healing epiphanies and intriguing insights! I can not only "think" outside the box, but I can "step" outside the box!

Another way to "Keep an Open Mind" is to turn obstacles into opportunities. Instead of plunging into boredom and isolation, I have chosen to go deeper into my recovery journey. I am grateful for the many needs that my Higher Power (HP) is meeting, along with the opportunities and resources that ignite my growth. I am finding such restoration in nature and a powerful spiritual connection with my HP. I am finding my true self with all the intricate facets that were once diminished by discouragement and fear.

Tradition Six

Our Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous.

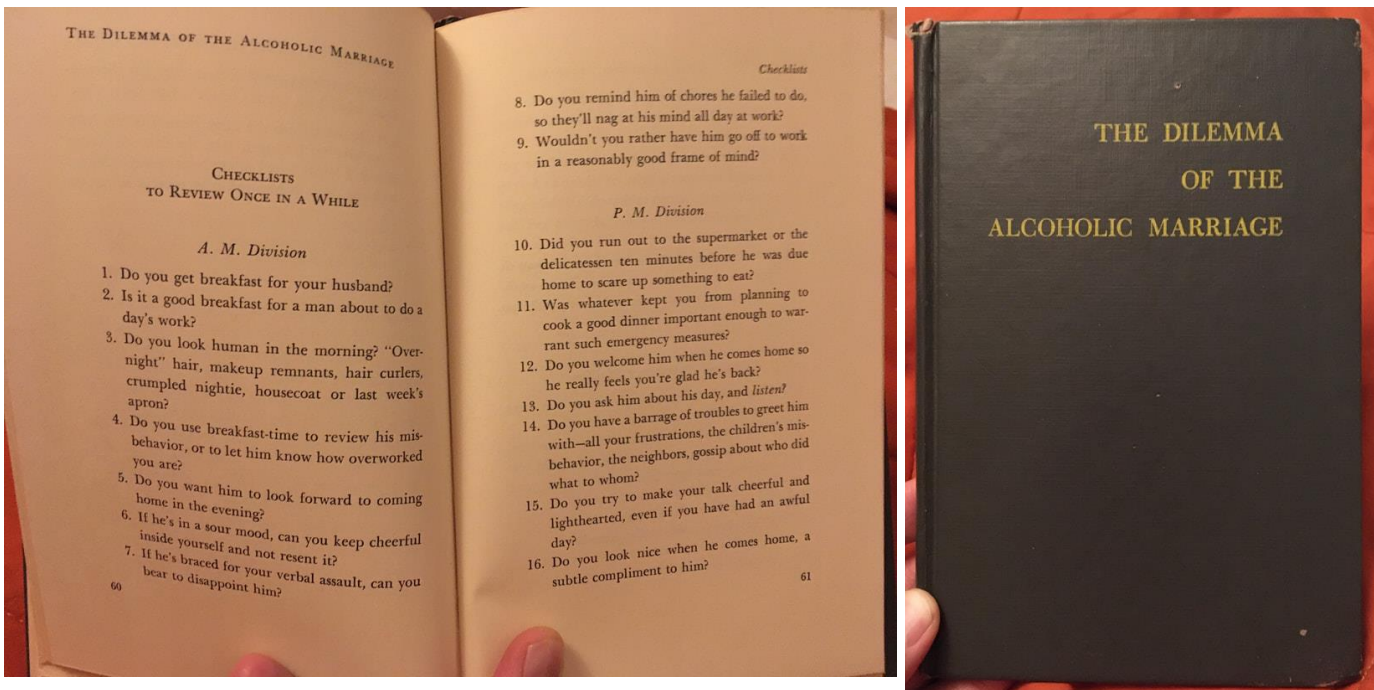




What Do the Letters AFG mean?

Al-Anon Family Groups (AFG) have one focus: to help families and friends of alcoholics. The discussion at meetings and our literature support members' recovery from the effects of someone else's drinking.

Literature Review: *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (1967 edition) by Eric G



As a fan of thrift stores, I love finding old gems. One day, a few years ago, I stumbled upon a 1967 copy of *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* and assumed it was going to be much like the [current version for sale at al-anon.org](https://www.al-anon.org). I was incredibly wrong.

In 1971, this book was revised and expanded, with some material added and some removed. The book switched from hardcover to softcover in the 1990s. This version is only 65 pages at most (the latest version has expanded to 102 pages), and many of the chapters and topics focus on sex. Even the Kinsey report is mentioned early on in the book, admitting that the report is of little use to us, as the famous report contains very little on how to navigate a sexual relationship with an alcoholic. The sexual revolution of the 1960s seems in full force in this edition.

I often feel that this 1967 edition gives sober women a certain role that is centered around their drinking husband. I understand this was “the way it was” in the 1960s, but I am glad we all have grown to realize women are stronger than the authors wrote, and they deserve more respect to choose their own path. The key idea the book promotes is to talk about the issue with the alcoholic directly, and I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment. Talking it out works with just about every situation in life.

The book that we see on our meeting tables is very different from this first version. The first two pages are cut out entirely, as are many sections of the book. Other parts are rearranged and altered that they are barely recognizable as the same. This version also refers to sex and gender roles in an archaic male-dominated way that often feels creepy. For instance, after the main body of the book, and the 12 Steps (with helpful suggestions), we find a third section not found in later editions. On pages 60-65 to close it out, there are additional “Checklists to Review Once in a While” for the sober female to consult. These do not seem like modern Al-Anon principles, and I am wondering why they are even included in the book. Some of these checklists include:

- #1. Did you get breakfast for your husband?
- #6. If he’s in a sour mood, can you keep cheerful inside yourself and not resent it?
- #16. Do you look nice when he comes home, a subtle compliment to him?
- #20. How much did you weigh before you were married? How much now?

I don't know if these checklists are meant to be things you should do, or are reminders of what you should not do. I'm assuming the former, based on the overall tone of the previous chapters.

I'm glad that this book exists, but mostly as a history lesson showing how far we've come. It is worth a read. Not so much for the Al-Anon guidance, sadly, but to gain a perspective on our program's progress from 1967. If buying it is not in your budget right now, you may read a copy of the old 1967 version for free online. An excerpt from the newest version may be read [here](https://al-anon.org/blog/dilemma-of-the-alcoholic-marriage/) (<https://al-anon.org/blog/dilemma-of-the-alcoholic-marriage/>) on the AFG website, but the original 1967 version is not for sale at al-anon.org.

Next month I will review the current version.



Yes, You Can Read Al-Anon Literature on Your Computer (or Phone)

Are you stuck at home, and need something to read? **Conference approved literature** is available for purchase in paper, audiobook, and e-book formats. Also check out the free downloads! Please consider purchasing through al-anon.org to further support our organization during this time.

The AIS Literature Distribution Center remains closed at this time. We will email an announcement when it has re-opened.

Concept Six

The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the Trustees.



AIS Needs You!

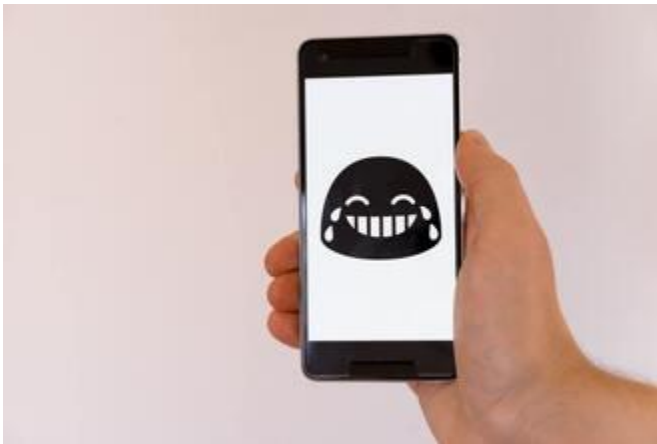
Current Service Opportunities

- *Events Editor*
- *Archivist Coordinator*
- *Tech Co-Coordinator*
- *Office Volunteers*
- *Phone Volunteers*

If you are interested in a particular area of service, please contact chair@seattle-al-anon.org

Al-Anon Joke Corner

How many Al-Anons does it take to screw in a light bulb?



Answer: None! They detach and let the light bulb screw itself!

Would You Like to Write for the Newsletter?

Let us know at newslettereditor@seattle-al-anon.org



AI-Anon versus Chaos

by Allen L

In a common newcomer's welcome, there is a phrase, "you may think you are here for the alcoholic, but you are here because of the alcoholic." How many of us, thinking we are here FOR the alcoholic, has asked the question, "How do we get them to stop drinking?"

We are searching for something to do now, something quick to stop the chaos. We search for something quick because the next crisis is ready to pop. We search for something easy because we are running out of energy from facing the same thing over and over again for much too long.

Our AI-Anon journey and the 12 Steps have prepared us for the current COVID-19 pandemic and its disruption and uncertainty. We have to accept that we are powerless over the coronavirus and, at the same time, fully accept that this is something we cannot change.

Learning that we can't change, control, or cure the alcoholic has taught us that there are many situations in life outside our control, and this illness is one more. It's easier for us to accept that the only thing we can control in this and the rest of life is our attitudes and behaviors. That we can't direct other people's behavior or somehow force them to conform to how we think they should act.

Self-care may mean physically distancing ourselves from a loved one. In much the same way, the pandemic demands physical distancing from potential risks. Our recognition and acceptance of this principle around alcohol can help us accept the same requirements in managing our health risks.

In learning to detach from the alcoholic's behavior with love and care, we gain the capacity to detach from many other elements of our daily lives. We still value and love the alcoholic but maintain a safe physical and emotional distance. In the same way, we can create a safe physical and emotional distance from the hazardous locations we used to enjoy. We recognize that "this too shall pass" and that we can recover those healthy connections when the current crisis ends.

Once again, we are offered the opportunity to practice Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

In the same way, our Higher Power gave us the strength and wisdom to thrive despite alcoholism. It will provide us with the serenity, courage, and wisdom to survive the current health crisis.

May 2020 AIS Council Meeting Summary

by Roxanne T

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Linda H provided an overview of the current financial status. She asked that anyone wanting copies of the financial reports email her.

Reserve Funds: There was a brief discussion about the AIS reserve funds. There had been discussion previously about using some funds for outreach efforts.

Open Positions: The Communications Coordinator position has been filled by Chere' F. Current open positions include Events Editor, Archivist Coordinator, Tech Co-Coordinator, Web Editor, Office Volunteers, and Phone Volunteers.

Resentment Bonfire: The Resentment Bonfire is scheduled for August 16 at Lincoln Park Shelter 2. Teresa H will draft a flyer for the event. A volunteer is needed to coordinate this event. Anyone interested in organizing this event should email Eliza D at chair@seattle-al-anon.org.

Communications Coordinator's Report: Teresa H reported that it has been busy. The website continues to have a high number of views each week. Teresa H requested that Districts inform the Communications Coordinator if business meetings are being scheduled so they can be updated on the web page. There was a discussion about publishing the print version of the BITS in the future. Currently, there is both a printed and an online version of the BITS. This increases the volunteers' workload significantly. The online version of the BITS can be printed; it is just not formatted as well when printed. The group discussed the pros and cons of making a change to an online version only. A vote was held to discontinue the printed BITS.

LDC Co-Coordinator's Report: Doug L reported that he and Julie R reached out to other LDCs to learn how they are operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the LDCs are shut down except Pierce County, which operates out of a private home with only one person managing the work. Washington State is currently in Phase 1, and once we move into Phase 2, some restrictions would impact opening the office. There will be more discussion about how to open safely in the future.

Phone Volunteers Coordinator's Report: Helen V reported on the AIS phones. We are still in need of additional phone volunteers.

Thank you for your donations and for your support of AIS!

Our funding now comes primarily from:

*Donations by Members, Groups, and Districts

*Literature Sales

Please send all AIS mail, including checks for literature orders and donations to:

505 Broadway E #400
Seattle, WA 98102-5023

And More...

Please visit our **[Members](https://www.seattle-al-anon.org/members.html)** (<https://www.seattle-al-anon.org/members.html>) page for the most up-to-date information on:

- [List of AIS Officers and Coordinators](#)
- [Where to Send Donations](#)
- [District Representatives and Business Meeting Information](#)
- [AIS Financial Information](#)
- [2020 Calendar of Events](#)