Good morning, my Washington Area World Service Committee friends! I am very happy to be with you this weekend, and I have much to share. However, I must first apologize for not getting my report to you prior to today. You certainly would have read it – but maybe that would have spoiled the surprise of what I’m going to say? No, there really aren’t any exciting news items this time, but I was hoping that my delay might allow me to share the very latest from our Trustees and the quarterly Chair of the Board letter. Instead, you’ll have to watch your “In the Loop” emails to see that letter when it’s released. There will be some new news in it.

My activities since Fall Assembly have been significantly quieter and slower than they are for the rest of the year. Here are some highlights:

* I told my story at a virtual speakers meeting (with my loved one unexpectedly home that evening – I suddenly had to change what I had planned to share! Good lesson for me.)
* Attended the 2022 Washington Area Speakers Convention in Lacey. What a great time of fellowship and recovery, and a very comfortable setting.
* Sitting in on a couple of virtual GR Circles, facilitated by our own Alternate Delegate, Kimberly. Good questions, great opportunities to share and learn together.
* Met with the rest of the Washington Area Excess Funds Committee to consider a proposal for outreach.
* Had some virtual meetings with the other Washington Area Officers.
* My work on the Literature Committee means that I have homework assignments and quarterly meetings with Tom Coffey, other Delegates, and at-large members of the committee. We’ve been working on three different projects that you will get to see… eventually.
* Replied to email, phone, and text messages from our members with who brought questions on a variety of topics. Not all of these are resolved yet, but we’re working on them together. I’m grateful to be a sounding board when someone needs to talk through a complicated situation.
* And then there are all those other emails, from the World Service Office (WSO) staff, other Delegates, and the Chair of the Board. When I was a brand new District Representative, a wise friend told me I didn’t need to drown in all the emails that gushed into my inbox every week. There are filters you can apply to the daily stuff, and it’s okay to do a quick skim so you know what needs full attention. The volume of communications is much greater in this position, so it’s a good thing I learned a little back then!

If you receive “In the Loop” emails from the WSO, you already know that the 2022-2025 Service Manuals have landed! Production delays brought us all so many new opportunities to breathe… wait… and breathe again… but now we can see about getting them into our hands!

As you recall, the highlight of last year’s World Service Conference held in New York was the vote to accept the Global Electronic Area (GEA) into the Al-Anon service structure. Once that was established, the next step was to create a way for Permanent Electronic Groups (PEMs) to move from a traditional geographic Area (such as ours) to the GEA, or vice versa. It took a while to get this finalized, but those procedures have now been established. The next step for the WSO is to set up their database to allow two different types of meeting searches: one for electronic groups anywhere, and one for those electronic groups that would like to draw members from a limited geographic region. This might be beneficial for members who are temporarily unable to get to a physical meeting, but want to get to know other people around them. So, keep watching the WSO website for updates and improved searching capabilities.

The flexibility of electronic groups means that meetings are available in several different languages. Can you guess how many languages are currently accessible? As of today, electronic meetings are being held in 18 different languages!

Another big concern for Al-Anon is the need for volunteers at every level of service. I want to thank each of you again for being here today. Your commitment to your district, to your groups, and to Washington Area is appreciated. How many of you are in a district that has most of its service positions filled? Most of your groups have GRs? Are there some groups without a GR? We have an unfilled Coordinator position on the Area level. “Big” Al-Anon has a few open Trustee positions. At any level, there’s the question of waiting to find the right person for the job or taking the first one to volunteer. I’m not saying there’s one right answer to that problem. Some jobs require certain skills, some need just the right kind of team members to work well together. And some positions are good for members starting out in service, allowing them to learn along the way and grow into it. For a variety of reasons, our society is running short on volunteers these days.

Let me suggest one word to help fill an empty service job: ask. A personal invitation to come alongside you, or to join your district team, is a great way to start. Yes, a nudge from a sponsor is good, too. One of the best things about Al-Anon is that we always expect a rotation of service – you can’t get stuck doing the same thing forever! “Come back for another report, when I talk with you and our GRs about the joys and needs of service!”

Looking at my spring and summer calendar, I’ve got busy times ahead. In late March, Alternate Delegate Kimberly and I will do a mini road trip to Pasco to attend the Northwest Regional Delegates Meeting. Think of this as “boot camp” for Delegates! All past Delegates from nine states are invited to attend this weekend meeting to discuss Al-Anon business, service, and give handy how-tos to current Delegates and Alternates.

The very next weekend, March 31 – April 1, I’m looking forward to seeing all of you and our GRs for the Pre-Con Assembly. Whatever items we decide on today will be what make up the agenda for that meeting. I love our AWSC meetings because they’re smaller, more personal, but I really love the excitement that comes from a big Assembly where a couple hundred of us get to listen and discuss our Al-Anon family business.

In mid-April, I’ll be representing all of Washington Area at the World Service Conference in Virginia Beach. This will be the first year of a three-year trial that shortens the Conference from five days to four. No matter how many days the Conference is, every moment is carefully scheduled and no time is wasted.

If you would like to send “love gifts” for me to share with other Delegates, you’ll need to give them to me at Pre-Con. This year, no packages will be accepted at Conference. But, in one improvement over last year, you may plan to send cards to me at the hotel. Cards must arrive between April 15 and 23, with my name and a “hold message” on the address. If you want to be absolutely sure that I receive your card, you can use my home address as the return – you’ll find that address on your AWSC contact sheet, lovingly provided by our Washington Area Secretary, Denise.

**Katharine Richardson (hold for WSC 4/20–4/23, 2023)**

**The Founders Inn and Spa**

**5641 Indian River Road**

**Virginia Beach, VA 23464**

We will get to see each other again in mid-May at Warm Beach for our Spectacular Super Summer Service Serendipitous Seminar Amazing Anticipatory Assembly, known as S-S-S-S-S-S-A-A-A! Okay, actually it’s just SSA, short for Summer Seminar Assembly. Anyway, I’ll see you there for dinner on Friday, and we’ll have workshops and fellowship and great meals on Saturday, you’ll get to hear a shorter version of my time at WSC that night, and then breakfast together on Sunday before we go home. SSA is a place to meet up with friends you **love**, make new friends as you **laugh** and have fun, and **grow** in your understanding of Al-Anon principles and service – all **together**! See what I did there?

That all sounds good, right? Service gives us a reason to get away, to spend time focusing on our individual recovery and our work together. But wait – there’s more! At the end of June, come with me to Albuquerque for a few more days of new hopes, new friends, and renewed recovery! Al-Anon’s International Convention starts in 123 days. Please keep talking about this in your district, because there’s still time to gather up some members and get down there for a once-every-five-years experience of a lifetime!

A fun way to celebrate our Area and Al-Anon as a worldwide fellowship is for us to take part in the Language of Love parade at International. I know our Area has represented in this activity in the past – what were some of our costume themes? … We need someone with a passion for fun to orchestrate this if we want to do it again. Registration for the Language of Love parade will open in May. Also in the past, a member organized a Washington Area dinner. Is there someone here who enjoys eating out with friends? How’d you like to see about getting this going?

But also… There is another way to get a piece of the International action from the comfort of your own home, and at a fraction of the cost of travel and lodging and registration. For $145 you can get a virtual attendance package that lets you watch the big meetings and connect with other members on a dedicated app. It’s not the same as actually being there, but it’s still a way to see some of the action, hear great speakers, and partake in a fun weekend.

Well, that is all the news I can fit into this one little report. As we focus ourselves on the business before us today, let us remember to be in the moment. Every new topic on the agenda brings the prospect of hearing a new perspective. We always ought to presume good will. Heated discussion gives us each a chance to practice sitting in the room, listening but not reacting, taking it all in and becoming better informed. Breathe… close your eyes… doodle… take notes… and think about what may be good for Washington Area as a whole. None of our decisions get chiseled in stone. We get to try things out, and if they don’t fit, we can change them later.

Have a good day. Love, laugh, and grow… together!