

NEW YORK SOUTH AREA PUTS ON A “TEAM”

The New York South Assembly Area hosted an historic TEAM (Together Empowering Al-Anon Members) event June 2, 2019, at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown. Among the 100 in attendance were members from our Area as well as visitors from New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Texas, and the World Service Office in Virginia.

The day was comprised of workshops, group discussions, panels, and many opportunities for sharing and fellowship. We had both informational presentations and personal shares from Marsha W., WSO Director of Programs, Debbie G. of Iowa, outgoing Chair of the Board, who spoke on “Abundance and our 12th Step in Action,” and an explanation of how Al-Anon recruits and selects Trustees from South Central Regional Trustee Cindy K.

There were also workshops on Spirituality in Money Matters, Service as a Recovery Tool, Inclusivity in Expanding our Membership, and a report from the NY-South Area Delegate on the April 2019 World Service Conference, the maximum traditional authority of the Al-Anon fellowship.

One innovation at TEAM was the provision of Spanish translation. WSO sent a transmitter and headsets, which were tested the day before and just prior to the opening. However, the hotel’s sound system interfered with the equipment, rendering it inoperable, so translation occurred informally at the tables.

What members thought of the TEAM event

After the event attendees were invited to answer a brief, online evaluation questionnaire, and about half (41) did so. Here are some of the results:

Overall, respondents rated the event as “excellent” or “very good” (85%, 34 of 40 replies).

Kudos to the organizers for putting together an “extremely” or “very well” organized event (95%, 39 of 41 responses).

Information available about the TEAM event before it took place was rated somewhat lower. Forty-one percent said they had all the information they needed while 36% said “most,” and 20% “some.”

The TEAM event lasted somewhat too long for 39% of attendees while 59% said it was “about right.”

On that topic, there were a number of suggestions in the open-ended questions and final comments. “Too much sitting!” said one. Various attendees mentioned ways to keep people’s energy and concentration high with longer or more frequent breaks and more interactive formats. A number of comments mentioned the difficulty of viewing the screen due to the layout of the meeting room.

Food got very high marks. We had an excellent buffet!

Likes

Positive comments included frequent references to the tight organization of the program, broad participation (especially the presence of people from WSO and a Trustee) and the warm spirit of fellowship.

“It gave me the beginning of realizing how finances impact my growth.”

“Participating in higher level discussions about leadership”

“I loved having the archival material on display!”

“Seeing real people, Al-Anons like us, serving at WSO was leveling.”

“I liked the enthusiasm of the WSO members.”

“The respect for diversity”

“So many people getting the microphone to share gems of insight and spirit”

“We are from all walks of life, but having the common thread bring us together was magical.”

“The last topic about Sponsorship was transformative! I had fallen out of touch with mine and it prompted me to get back in touch.”

“I always come to the conclusion that Service is the key for my recovery.”

“I actually ran into some women from my past whom I have not seen in over 17 yrs. It was like a reunion.”

Suggestions for improvement

Some logistical issues came up in the critical comments.

“The screen was difficult to see; translation equipment was not working which was frustrating to many of us.”

“Started too early in the morning. We needed a couple of half-hour breaks.”

“Some of the speakers could not be heard very well, even with the microphone, since their voices were so soft.”

“There was no handout or outline of the Abundance session.”

“A summary flyer to bring home would keep all 100 of us from each having to reinvent the wheel to report.”

“I would have liked more time with spirituality in money matters.”

“A longer mid-day break, also the chance to rotate from table to table.”

“I would like some short presentations directed toward actual problems that leadership faces when volunteering to do service.”

WSO has announced that it will plan for future TEAM-like events (perhaps with a new title) to optimize the use of limited resources, including the Trustees and officers who bring so much insight to the operations of the worldwide fellowship.

-Tim F., Coordinator of Translation and Language Services