

REACHING OUT

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 4

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Welcome

We would like to welcome all of you to the WSC-H&I Newsletter. We hope that what this simple newsletter contains can assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts throughout the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

ARTICLES AND EXCERPTS OF LETTERS

Hello, I'm an addict from Hollywood work-release. The reason I mention that I am in prison is to let you know, if you are out there also in a jail or institution and you think that you might not be able to recover, that you can. All you have to do is be willing to listen to our way of life and have a desire to stop using.

When I came into N.A. I thought drugs were my problem. Well, it took me a long time to admit and accept that I'm the problem!! I have a disease called addiction and it has been with me since day one. I only used drugs because I felt changed and a part of; little did I know that I would end up doing anything to get my drugs. It wasn't always as bad as it was when I got to this Fellowship. Sometimes it was almost OK, and at other times it was a lot worse. I lied, stole, cheated and just plain screwed everyone over who was in my path. It didn't matter who you were, what you had or didn't have, if I had my will I would take it in some manner.

I don't want to talk about me, but the Program of Narcotics Anonymous and what it has done for me. I came into this program 17 months ago, with all the wrong reasons for coming, but it didn't matter because it says, "We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help." See that was the key word. I didn't know I had a problem. I thought I was always going to be a low life who didn't care about anything.

As I sat in my first meetings I heard so many people sharing their lives and problems, and I could relate to everyone in the rooms. I had done and been everywhere they had. I had finally found a place where I belonged and was welcome for what I had,—my disease. People really wanted to help, not get what I had, because I didn't have anything anyway, but of course I thought I did. They told me to give myself a break. "Try our way of life—I can't", we can—and just for today, I have a choice to change and not use.

I did it almost their way. I didn't use drugs again, but I did continue to use my other addictions. I thought by giving up my drugs everything else would be OK. Well I was wrong. Just giving up drugs was a big start, but I didn't do it the N.A. way. I still tried to run my life. I continued to steal, since that's all I thought I knew how to do. My disease brought me back here to prison again. I can't blame this on anyone or anything but me this time. I had the choice and I chose not to do it the N.A. way. I don't kick myself like I did in the beginning of my prison sentence. Today I've learned how to deal with me so much more. I've finally felt my Higher Power working in my life. I can admit I'm powerless and my life—as it was and is now—is unmanageable. It was such a relief to turn my will and life over to someone or something greater than myself.

Today, I've become grateful. You might say, "How can you be grateful in prison?" Well, I honestly am. I won't go into all the things I'm grateful for, but I do want to say I'm grateful for N.A. Without it, I probably would be on my last "death." I don't just say that to sound good, or just because I had nowhere else to go. I've tried to run my own life and it didn't work—with drugs or without them. I tried other ways of getting clean and they never worked. But I never tried this way, and guess what . . . it works, if you work it with honesty and open-mindedness.

This program has taught me and showed me I never have to use or go to jails, prisons, or other institutions again, as long as I work my program to the best of my ability and turn my life and will over. Today, I have turned my life and will over. Today, I'm clean. I have learned how to live, just for today. I've learned how to help and be helped by other addicts in our program. Today, I have a choice. I

choose not to use and try it one more day. The days have wound up being weeks, months, and soon a couple of years. It wasn't easy, but that was because it was my choice to make it hard. I can only tell you, that you never have to use or go to our "yet's." If you only give this Fellowship an honest chance. You only get out of it what you put into it, so try it, it does work. Just for today, I have faith in N.A. and my Higher Power. Just for today we can give ourselves a break. You have the choice today, use it!!

Just remember this program works one day at a time, sometimes minute by minute, but it does work no matter where you're at, don't use no matter what. Today I have the faith in you, remember that, because that keeps me going when times get rough. Faith in you, N.A. people, N.A. itself and my Higher Power. I'm on the road towards recovery today.

T.R.

Florida

"The Lighter Side of Hospitals and Institutions Work"

Just as any other Twelfth Step work may be frustrating, hospitals and institutions work can have its moments. I have been going to institutional meetings for a few years now, and let me tell you, I have been very frustrated some days. As I look back upon those experiences I can smile and even laugh. Isn't that how recovery goes? What appears to be a dark, ominous cloud on our horizons is just a cover for magnificent rays of sunshine. If you are involved in H&I work, this article is to you.

When I was new in N.A., I attended meetings at a state hospital. What scared me was that I related better to the patients rather than to my sponsor or the other N.A. members who went with us. I can recall going to an N.A. meeting at a state prison in Pennsylvania. Three of us drove about one hundred miles to attend their group. When we were going through security, one of us who was clean over a year wasn't granted entry because he was too young. When you're carrying the message you never think of those things. At another men's prison one of us was refused entry because he was wearing shorts. We didn't let him live that one down for a long time. A state facility here in New Mexico initiated a stringent security policy which required all volunteers to obtain a photo identification badge to be shown at the prison guards' request. I used my card as a second I.D. for cashing my checks, to open my front door when I locked myself out, (old habits die hard), and as a bookmark. When I showed it to the guards one night, they were intrigued by the cards but didn't know what they were for. A last incident occurred when

one member failed two separate metal detector tests while being cleared for a prison meeting. He was escorted to a back room for a strip search. He emerged, embarrassed several minutes later. He had forgotten that he still had a steel pin in his knee from an old war injury.

There are other incidents which at the time tried the patience of the members involved. As time passed, and as we let go and let God, we gained the ability to laugh at these.

The real reward of H&I work is the feeling I get inside when a member who has been incarcerated, (or still is), gets up for a birthday. I have been to several meetings where this occurred, and I can still get choked up and teary-eyed, (gratitude in liquid form), for those members. When a moment as special as this happens, I close my eyes and say "thanks" to Whom the credit is due. Thank you for listening. Talk to you all again.

J.S.

Albuquerque, NM

Greetings to H&I *Reaching Out*

My name is J — — and I'm a grateful and recovering addict. I first heard about N.A. while doing time in California's Rehabilitation Center (C.R.C.). That was in 1967. I went to my first meeting playing the get-out game. But then I started seeing people on the panel who I knew from the streets who told me they were staying clean. From the way they were smiling and their eyes were sparkling, I knew it had to be true. Nobody could use and look that healthy. So I kept going to meetings for the rest of my stay there.

Somebody who I knew took me to an N.A. meeting on the streets my first night out. There I was able to meet other recovering addicts who were staying clean one day at a time. After staying clean for nine months I forgot it was my Higher Power who was keeping me clean, and I took my addiction back into my own hands. Fourteen years later I made it back to Narcotics Anonymous. I'm deeply grateful to the people who were still around and said "Welcome back, glad you're still alive."

Today I'm active in H&I because that's where I first heard the message of N.A. I don't want to forget where I came from, lest I have to relive it again.

Since my involvement in service thru H&I, I have been able to meet other recovering addicts across the country who all have the same common purpose—just for today we will not use.

Hopefully someday a seed will be planted at an H&I meeting, and what was given to me so freely will be received by another addict seeking recovery.

Yours in service to the Fellowship,

J.K.

Idaho

Dear H&I Newsletter,

I am writing in reference to your newsletter for addicts in prisons and institutions. I am a recovering drug addict and am seriously contemplating getting involved in Narcotics Anonymous. I have been attending N.A. meetings here in prison and have received a pamphlet informing me about your offer to get on the mail list of your newsletter. I would greatly appreciate it if I could be added onto your mailing list. The men and myself that are in the group here are all contemplating getting involved with your newsletter and contributing as much as we can in any way that we can. I would be honored and like it very much if I could hear from your committee as soon as possible, so that I can share it with the other guys in the group. Thank you very much for your assistance, and for taking the time to read this letter of request. May God bless you all for what you're doing.

Sincerely yours,

K.P.

Pennsylvania

My name is of no great importance but the message hereafter is, hopefully. I am 28 years old, and have been addicted to drugs since I was 16 years old. I am powerless over my addiction except for the power of God's help, as I understand Him, to overcome my addiction to drugs. I am currently incarcerated in prison for doing some really dumb and stupid things due to my using and abusing drugs. I have finally come to the realization that my addiction has been the cause and sole reason for all the problems that exist in my life. Life for me, and probably for most of you who read this, has been like being caught up inside of a funnel and you keep getting sucked down to the bottom of it, no matter how hard you try to get to the top and out over the edge of it to a drug-free life.

I for one keep slipping back down more and more, further and further down. The bad part about it is that at the bottom lies incarceration in mental institutions, prisons, pain and suffering

that we all have caused to come upon ourselves and others that we love and care about. The most tragic thing that lies at the very rock bottom of this so called funnel is death. We all know this to be true due to the fact that it has happened to so many people like us all that have been or still are addicted. I, for one, still am an addict and still get urges to do drugs. I sure hope that, through the power of God and the help of N.A., when I reach the top of this unwanted funnel I am caught in, a helping hand reaches over the top and pulls me out and keeps me from falling back in. I can honestly believe it when I say that N.A. and the people who make N.A. work will be that helping that all of us addicts need to get out of this turmoil of a lifestyle. The people who I have already met thus far earnestly believe in what N.A. stands for and what it can do for me and others like myself. We must all sit back and take a good look at our innermost being, call it your conscience if you like, and examine the life we have lived in times past. I don't like what I see, and I intend to do something about it. I suggest that all of us—newcomers and regulars alike—really give N.A. a chance to be the helping hand that we all need. May God be with you all in the trying times ahead.

K.L.P.

Lebanon, OH

Denial

When I first stumbled into my first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous, it was pretty easy to admit that I was powerless over drugs. After all, I was an addict, wasn't I? I had hit bottom, hadn't I? My life was spinning out of control, wasn't it? So it was pretty easy to admit I was powerless over drugs. All I had to do was quit, and just like magic, I would be immediately rich, famous and happy, just like every other recovering addict right?

Wrong. I found through countless hours of constant self-examination that I had a much worse problem than just drugs. I had a denial problem. For I am not only powerless over drugs, but I am powerless over my addiction. I am powerless over persons, places and things. The problem was not my problem, it was their problem. My life wasn't lie after lie, it was just I was misunderstood. And so on, and so on.

The antidote to denial is simple, but painful. It is self-honesty and awareness. It means a life of continuous and never ending self-examination. Many of us can find recovery, but we must find the capacity within ourselves to be honest with ourselves. Nothing else will do.

Everything this program requires us to do is simple, but it must

be done. Procrastination will get us nowhere, and threatens our recovery.

It is through the love and the selfless caring of the group, and the caring of our Higher Power we can find the strength to do what must be done to help us on our journey to recovery with serenity. It is my hope that those who read these words will be encouraged on their journey. If but one addict is helped, then writing this was worth it.

Yours in recovery,

H.D.

Texas

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing this letter to share the happiness I have found in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

As I write this letter, I'm listening to the noise in the hall. It no longer bothers me, for I've found peace and patience in my life. I'm in prison, but at the same time I have my freedom. I have freedom of choice now. And I choose not to use.

I've been here a year. The first six months was regular prison life. I say regular because this is the fourth time I've been here. Each time in the past that I've left, I thought I was free, but in reality I took my chains and bonds with me. This time things can be different, thanks to N.A. and my Higher Power.

After that first six months, an old friend of mine came back into the prison. She had been here with me before. She had been on an escape and had turned herself in. I really couldn't understand that, so I asked her why. She told me about N.A. and the Twelve Steps, and how she was on the Ninth Step. I thought she was crazy. As I was around her more in the few months she was here, I have seen a change. The peace she had within herself. I wanted this change and the peace of mind she had found.

After a lot of work on her part and a little help from staff and other inmates, Narcotics Anonymous was allowed in and started a regular meeting here. Our meeting is called the "Save Your Ass" group. That's exactly what it has done for me and others. I'm sure it will save more lives in the future.

My future will be a lot better. In the past I would wake up sick, and went to bed only if I had a plan for the next shot in the morning. That will never have to happen again. I can only work the Twelve

Steps and keep my freedom, sanity and my new life. For this I want to say, Thank you.

Yours truly,

A.R.

Tennessee

Hello from Salem, Oregon,

I received the issue of the *Reaching Out* newsletter from a counselor. I am in the Oregon Women's Correctional Center, and I am active in the Narcotics Anonymous Program in the institution. I have been having a really hard time keeping a program of recovery in here even though I've been clean for a number of months. I have been sharing the newsletter with other active members of Narcotics Anonymous, but we're not really sure what to do with it. I am writing this letter as a way of writing to other people, and to get information about literature and about how to spread the news of hope and recovery within my own institution.

There is a great need for support and sponsorship and for carrying the message to the addict who still suffers in here. This place is filled with anger and denial, and that weighs heavy on my heart, because I want these people to discover the love and unity that N.A. has to offer. Out of 115 girls in this prison, there are only two or three of us who are trying desperately to keep N.A. functioning. There must be more we can do; I'm hoping that the H&I newsletter committee can help in this matter. I thank God for Narcotics Anonymous, and I thank God for you people who are reaching out to inmates all over the world.

Sincerely,

R.A.

Oregon

Note: We immediately corresponded with the active H&I committee in the Salem area to inform them of these needs. They were aware, and have become quite active at this facility.

Hello,

I'm a member of the New Wave Narcotics Anonymous group here at S.C.I.G., Pennsylvania. I am also a twenty (20) year addict who has tried many times to refrain from the use of narcotics. After four years of staying clean, finishing school and starting a family, I

experienced a humbling and humiliating relapse. My action has sealed my fate for several years to come.

I never had the experience of a therapeutic setting to aid in my recovery. I did have the love and understanding of a good person (my wife), but it took a great deal of personal humiliation to make me deal with my life and drugs. I can realize from this short experience with Narcotics Anonymous the value of one addict helping another. I've just begun to share the painful memories of my addiction. At this point I know I would be unable to share them with anyone other than another addict. From time to time I meet a guest speaker or another member and we can see each other's fears, hopes and strength. I honestly believe that had I been a member of an N.A. group, the chances of my being where I am today would hve changed to favor a drug-free life.

As long as Narcotics Anonymous exists and people like those I've met continue to be a part of its existence, I know I'll have at least one sanctuary. I am going to hold onto the N.A. Fellowship, work the Twelve Steps and try to internalize the principles. I plan to make use of N.A. here in prison and hopefully be wise enough to stay a part of N.A. on the street.

Hanging in,

T.B.

Pennsylvania

Hello,

Well now that we have ended our procrastination, our Narcotics Anonymous group New Wave at the S.C.I.G., Pennsylvania would like to say Hi! to all of the other N.A. groups across the country, especially the N.A. groups in institutions. Our impression from reading the H&I newsletter is that we are a veteran N.A. group within prison walls. Our group is about to celebrate its second anniversary in the fall. Our first celebration was a great success.

We are fortunate to have a large reservoir of N.A. volunteers in this area. There is hardly a meeting where one or more guests do not share their experiences with us. The participation within the institution is such that we have had to start a second meeting on a different evening.

Our members have the unique opportunity (as mentioned in the literature) of meeting drug-free men and women of various ages, races and backgrounds. Because of the growth and participation, our credibility with the administration has increased. Hopefully we

will continue to grow and prosper and more of our members share their recovery, via the H&I newsletter *Reaching Out*.

T.B.

Pennsylvania

NEW MEETINGS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS:

CALIFORNIA	Folsom Prison (Ranch Unit)
CANADA	Calder Rehabilitation Center, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
FLORIDA	Immokalee Stockade, Henry County Maximum Custody Prison, Tarpon Springs Community Correctional Center
PENNSYLVANIA	Allegheny County Jail, Pittsburgh, PA State Correctional Facility, Greenburg, PA Abraxas Seal Foundation, Pittsburgh, PA.

INSTITUTIONS INQUIRING ABOUT STARTING MEETINGS

ARKANSAS	Department of Corrections (Women) Pine Bluff, AR
FLORIDA	Florida Correctional Institution, Lee County Stockade, Lee County Work Release, Lee County Mental Health, Roadhouse Prison.
KANSAS	Kansas Honor Camp, El Dorado, KS
KENTUCKY	FCI Ashland, Ashland, KY
NEW YORK	Wyoming Correctional Facility, Attica, NY
TENNESSEE	Prison Advisory Liaisons, Memphis, TN
WASHINGTON	Port Angeles Jail, Port Angeles, WA
WEST VIRGINIA	Huttonsville Correctional Facility, Huttonsville, W VA, Alderson FCI (Women) Alderson, W VA

The following is an entire letter which was written to a woman in a county jail by a lady who was active in H&I in the Sacramento, California area. Shortly after she wrote this letter, B.H. was killed in an automobile accident. V.B., the woman who received this letter, was doing time in jail when B.H. met her, and this was the message B.H. shared. Thanks to people like B.H., V.B. has now been clean

ten months, and is out of jail and active in Narcotics Anonymous on the streets. She has given us permission to print this letter:

Hi V — —

It's taken a few days to get back to you. What can I say? Recovery is definitely not boring! I barely sit down during my day unless I get to a meeting. In fact, the reason I'm writing right now is because my first class is canceled. A few extra moments don't come my way very often so here I am. Before I forget, Tracy wanted me to be sure and give you her address.

Okay, when I go to the Saturday night meeting I'll ask around for some phone numbers of people you can call. If you can get a 10:15 pm call Monday or Wednesday evening, call me collect. It's really okay to do that. I know that you don't want to feel like you're causing anyone added expenses, but I wouldn't offer it if the intent wasn't sincere. While I was doing time in Southern California, many program people from down that way wrote me and asked me to call. One gal even offered me a place to parole to! Me and my four kids. I couldn't conceive of offers like this.

Not only had I never know such kindness, I knew that I didn't deserve anything good coming my way. After all, in my years of doing my thing, I had hurt many people, caused many ill feelings with lots of folks. How could anyone like me be worthy of such offers? It was baffling to me. And it was a very long time before I accepted any of them. I kept saying, "Thanks, but you obviously don't know who I am and what I've done!" They knew all right — only too well. They knew because each of them had lived it too. But my refusals never discouraged them. They kept coming back, still offering, still sharing their experience, strength and hope, still caring. I knew nothing about caring for B — —. In fact, although I didn't realize it then, I don't think I had ever felt like I was worth anything. I never mattered, I never counted. I spent a lot of years proving that to myself over and over again.

My last fifteen months out there were the hardest; I was so miserable. I didn't really want to do what I was doing. But every day I'd do it again. And every day I'd reaffirm how I didn't matter. Those program people in Southern California knew how I felt, they felt like that, too.

After about a year, my second time down there, I was sitting in a meeting one night. The subject was, "What keeps you coming back?" Nothing very profound about that. I looked around the room at the outside speakers. Everyone of them had been coming there for a long time. They had been coming there both times I was down and I knew that they had been coming there long before that!

Now keep in mind, I have a very thick skull. I realized, after all this time of knowing these people, that they really care. Brilliant observation on my part! I mean, why else would they come week after week, no matter what the weather was like, holidays or not? They *must* care. I was overwhelmed by that new awareness.

I thought about it all that night and for the next couple days after that. Here comes the biggie! After running that same thought through my thick skull for a couple of days, I thought, "Gee, maybe, just maybe, there's something about me that's worth caring about?" I swear, I don't think I'd ever thought there was, till then. And I wasn't even sure. But I had a glimmer of hope for the first time that maybe I mattered. I had spent so many years looking for approval looking to be fixed. The result was little or nothing until I was willing to let go absolutely! I do have worth, and I do matter. Those people taught me that I do.

Bottom line V— —, is that you matter, too! You're worth the very best! Please feel free to call me, if not the days or time I suggested, try another time. On Saturdays or Sundays, I'm usually home between 4-5 pm.

I'll have to go right now. I'm sitting in my next class and I'm losing my train of thought. I'm one of those that can't walk and chew gum at the same time! But that's okay, I'm clean and recovering and I'm living. Be good to yourself.

Love,

B.H.

Note from the Editor: We would appreciate any input for the next issue of *Reaching Out* by mid-October. We will be putting together the November-December edition at that time. If we are to be effective in carrying the message in print via the forum provided by this H&I newsletter, then your input as a concerned member of the Fellowship is needed. Help the addict who cannot attend regular N.A. meetings by sharing the experience, strength and hope that was freely given to you.

If you are a recovering addict who is housed in a correctional or treatment setting, let us hear how Narcotics Anonymous has helped you in your life. If you are a member of an H&I committee, let others hear how you or your committee have carried the N.A. message of recovery. We all have a responsibility to the suffering addict and to ourselves as recovering addicts to do our best in carrying the N.A. message of recovery, to participate in letting others have what we have been given freely.

GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!!