

WSC-H & I Newsletter

REACHING OUT

VOLUME 1

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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

Dear Friends,

In October, the WSC H&I Committee met in Philadelphia. We accomplished a great deal and it seemed appropriate to share about the meeting with the readers of *Reaching Out*, especially since we need your help.

Most of the time was spent working out internal guidelines so the committee can function more effectively. We approved sending literature to several individuals who were doing H&I work in areas where no structure existed to support them.

We discussed the status of several on-going projects. The pamphlet *Staying Clean on the Outside* has been submitted to the Literature Review Committee. A new pamphlet was presented, *Twelve Suggestions for H&I Work*. It will be distributed to the committee members for initial review.

We heard from the regions which are working on the two booklets to be directed toward addicts in institutions. One

treatment facilities. We have been trying for some time to get members of the Fellowship who first heard the message of recovery while in an institution to send in their stories. We talked about trying to get stories of addicts who had some continuous clean time following their release from the institution, although we agreed that other types of stories would be considered.

We decided that perhaps one reason we had not had more response to our request was that we had not done a good enough job of letting the Fellowship know what we needed. This letter is one attempt to do that.

The booklets we have in mind would be about the size of the White Book. Therefore, personal stories need to be about 500 words long. They should be concerned with recovery in Narcotics Anonymous and use language which is consistent with other N.A. literature.

If you began your recovery in N.A. while in an institution, please send your story to:

H&I Project Coordinator
c/o World Service Office
16155 Wyandotte St.
Van Nuys, CA 91406

LET'S CARRY THE N.A. MESSAGE (Into the Jails and Prisons)

While there are increasing numbers of ex-offenders participating in H&I efforts, the greatest number continues to be non-ex-offenders. Two of the most frequent comments and questions asked are, "How can I relate to these people with whom I have so little in common?" and "What can I ever offer them?" First of all, you have suffered their experience of addiction. This provides you a common bond and basis of communication for which there is no substitute, even with the most professionally trained, clinically qualified counselors or doctors. More than that, when you go to an institution you are a living, walking, talking example of the hope that is vital to their very survival in the institutional setting. You bring to prisoners what no other person can possibly bring: your individual and unique message of recovery.

For far too many prisoners, your presence is the only real contact with the free world. Certainly, the institutional staff is there with them every hour of the day and night, but they

are not seen as part of the real world. Yes, they have television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, but they are only pictures and words about the real world. You are the real world. For too many prisoners, your acceptance of them as a person is the only expression of love they have ever experienced. Your acceptance of them and your recovery is testimony that support can come from others, but more importantly, you are a living example of that true help which is constantly available from a Power greater than ourselves. Your presence in a prison or jail is witness that people do care about people. Your willingness to share your progress along the tragic/comic road to recovery may be the only way prisoners ever have to look at themselves honestly. One of the most sorely missed necessities of life in jail and prison is humor--healthy humor--and its resulting laughter, and most especially, the ability to laugh at one's self. There is no way to teach this except by providing an example and model for them.

Don't ever worry about your so-called "differences" between you and the men and women in jail or prison. Many times the only real difference between you and them is the fact that they got caught.

The observation is many times made about institutional groups that the setting in which they must necessarily operate is too sterile and artificial to provide any meaningful N.A. experience. This observation is true only if you allow it to be true by your failure to share with the prisoners what you have found in a life of recovery. As a matter of fact, if you are good listener, you will earn rather quickly there are some very real hope-to-die addicts in jails and prisons who have much to offer you, in their efforts to become clean even as they are doing time.

The greatest test both for the prisoner and for you comes on the day of release. Too many prisoners leave us without the love and support of a family. Too many prisoners leave even without the welcoming smile of a responsible friend to greet them. For every prisoner who has expressed a willingness to accept the Fellowship of N.A., this can and should be changed. Some of the most challenging and rewarding Twelfth Step work awaits you every day a prisoner is released.

While in jail or prison, people can accept intellectually your loving invitation to stay with the program after release, but they still harbor within themselves great apprehension about acceptance in your outside group. In carrying the message of N.A. to prisoners, what happens on release day is the bottom line. Our willingness to meet that ex-offender the very day

of release and take him to the first meeting is essential. It goes without saying that if they don't make the first meeting they'll never make the second or any others. For those of you who have not made this effort in recruiting other N.A. members to engage in this work with you, for those of you who have not experienced this challenging and sometimes frustrating Twelfth Step work, you are cheating yourself of one of the most rewarding parts of your recovery. Those of you who have the greatest apprehension and fears about entering this kind of work, you are probably the very ones who have the most to offer. As I have heard so many say, "We keep what we have by giving it away." I know of no other group than prisoners in greater need of what you have to give--love, recovery, life itself in many cases. *Think about it!* "It works when we care and share the N.A. way."

Yours in loving service,
Anonymous

INVOLVED IN H&I WORK EVER SINCE...

I have been fortunate to have been involved in H&I work ever since I started my recovery. I thank my Higher Power and sponsor who took me to my first institutions meeting in 1981. It helped me to get out of myself. **YOU KNOW**--get out of the problem and into the solution. Since that time I have been able not only to attend several different H&I meetings, but help start a few others.

The rewards for me are overpowering. They fill me with love. Love for others, but more importantly love for myself. I have been able to make tremendous strides in correcting my fears and opening myself to love. *I am being healed as I offer my healing to others!!*

I have a friend who has not and does not have any other contact with anyone on the outside. We are alike in many ways. He has watched me flower and grow as I have watched him grow. I have been able to help him to heal as he has helped me to be healed. As I watch him make efforts in his own way to reach out to me, my heart swells with love--love for N.A. for giving me the opportunity to reach out in these kinds of meetings, and love and trust for my Higher Power, who is showing me a new way of living: out of myself, giving to receive.

I have watched with a troubled heart as both addicts behind the walls and addicts on the outside suffer needlessly. Addicts behind the walls pleading for more meetings and more outside addicts to share with them and addicts on the

outside stuck trying to fix themselves, when they could be helping to heal and in turn healing themselves. Yes, they may not ever use again, and they are satisfied with that, *but* there is more. A LOT MORE!!! And it is available to all of us. That pink cloud that I felt four years ago when I first came into this program, is back in my life today. It comes from being able to see love in all that I do and to give love in all that I do. Hospitals and institutions work is helping me to get well, to heal myself. IT CAN WORK FOR YOU TOO, IF YOU WANT IT!!!

R. W.

REACHING OUT

I have to reach out every day in my clean time. The bimonthly publication of *Reaching Out* is good for me to have when I go to H&I meetings to let addicts in H&I meetings know that they can share their recovery with other addicts, and I need to go to hear because I need to know what is there for me. If I were to go out and use, I'd be locked up too.

I like in Tradition One in *It Works: How and Why*, the following:

"In N.A. we learn that by helping each other, abstinence and ongoing recovery are possible. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. It is up to us to preserve our Fellowship so that we will have a place for the recovering addict. Unity means we are all working towards a common goal: recovery from addiction. We are now able to do things as a group that we were unable to do alone.

You see, when I was reaching out for help, when I was at my first H&I meeting, there was the one addict letting me know I was not alone and that I did not have to wait to get out to reach out and have a day clean.

Let us keep reaching out as a group to that one precious addict that says, "I need help."

Love, in fellowship,
J. T. F.

NEW MEETINGS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

ARIZONA	Arizona State Prison Complex- Florence, East Unit
CALIFORNIA	Hall of Justice Jail Los Angeles, California
KANSAS	Bridge Back Group Honor Camp, Toronto Kansas
NEW YORK	Greene Correctional Facility
PENNSYLVANIA	Decision House Oil City, Pennsylvania
VIRGINIA	Stafford Correctional Unit Stafford, Virginia

**INSTITUTIONS INQUIRING ABOUT STARTING
MEETINGS**

ARKANSAS	Arkansas Department of Corrections Women's Unit Pine Bluff, Arkansas
CALIFORNIA	Walter Hoving Home Pasadena, California Vacaville Correctional Facility Vacaville, California
CANADA	Warkworth Institution Ontario, Canada
FLORIDA	River Junction Correctional Institution Chattahoochee, Florida Florida Hospital, A.T.U. Orlando, Florida
MICHIGAN	Pugsley Camp, Kingsley, Michigan

MISSOURI

**Fordland Honor Camp
Fordland, Missouri**

NEW YORK

**Daytop Village
Parkville, N.Y.**

VIRGINIA

**Mecklenburg Correctional
Institution
Boydton, Virginia**

WASHINGTON D.C.

**Psychiatric Institute,
Washington D.C.**

LETTERS AND/OR EXCERPTS OF LETTERS

Hello!

My name is A.L. and I am a recovering addict. I have but a few words of encouragement for the newcomers to N.A., for they are most important to the Fellowship and to me. Although I consider myself fortunate to be so lucky as to not have fallen all the way to the bottom, I can still feel the destructive forces that had a hold of me, making my life unmanageable and blinding me to the right way of living. But, after gaining control over my life again, I can see that I can live the principles by sharing them with my family—other addicts.

This has proven to me that the program works if you work it. So now all day long I just tell people that there is a better life, a life of not being humiliated, defeated, and destroyed by bad habits or drugs or jails and institutions.

If you could spend only ten minutes per day at first, meditating and pondering the principles in your heart and mind, to be ever reminded of that better life, this will cause those principles to become rooted deep within you. You can rely on your own recovery experience just as you can always depend on a good joke to make people laugh and to brighten their day. The principles, or the "spirituality" of N.A., work like that too. They encourage and they cheer.

You can receive a great amount of help from the principles when you are alone meditating and thinking about them, then using them in your daily activities. You really began to feel confident in them. Thus your faith in the program increases and you will be victorious over death by addiction.

I can't do anything by myself, but with God, I can do all things.

Your servant, reaching out

A.L.

Columbia, SC

I have just been released from a jail here in Sydney after eleven months of fighting counts and a parole board. I don't need to do any hard thinking to realize that my becoming a member of N.A. eventually led to my winning my fight for my freedom. I've been a member since 1982.

N.A. has given me a Fellowship of ex-drug-users to associate with who have a positive attitude and a program to live by. This program has returned to me a real desire for life. It has enabled me to stop using drugs, to regain the belief that I am worth fighting for, and as my mind has gradually cleared I've been able to put my legal defense together. I'm now free instead of confronted with the thirteen plus years that police and lawyers told me I'd be doing in prison.

On the fifth of February 1984, I was released on bail and was so convinced that I was going to be serving those years that I jumped bail, but did so with an attitude that my time had come--my time to decide if I really cared if my life continued to be the disaster strewn road that it was. I involved myself in N.A. and gradually my life began to fall into place. Then in December, 1984, the law caught up with me and brought me back to Sydney to face the music.

In May of 1982, my legal problems were so much of a mess that I wasn't sure of exactly what I was facing. It seemed that each month would bring a new charge. And on top of them, car crashes, family and financial problems. In 1982 my life was the First Step of the N.A. Program, totally unmanageable.

All of my problems didn't disappear because I stopped using drugs; far from it. But at least now they are manageable. In fact my life's a lot better than just bearable.

Here I am now forty years of age and for the first time since I was sixteen I've got real prospects of never going to jail again. Now that's a problem but I can live with it.

As long as I don't pick up an escape drug I'll retain the serenity and patience to think straight, the courage and determination to over come problems, the wisdom to know that I throw away my serenity and courage if I don't stick with the winners.

Since I came out of prison I've started to become involved with H&I work, because if there is one thing I have experience with it's the problems of institutional life. So I've found an area of N.A. work that I can feel at home with, even if my involvement is just writing to members who are in jail. By doing so I'm carrying the message of the Fellowship of N.A., and to me that is extremely important.

Well I'll leave it at that. I hope there is something in there that will help some one.

J.Y.,
Sydney Australia

Hello,

I just received your third newsletter, and I must admit that most of the input I can relate to directly. I'm here in Florida at a correctional facility. I been here attending N.A. for eleven months now. Before coming here I had been forced by the county courts to a number of drug rehabs ranging from a few hours a day to one or two live-in drug houses. I had never really gotten anything from those experiences, and I blamed it on the fact that I was forced to go, not on the true reason, which is that I hadn't hit my bottom. I now thank God and a few responsible people that I finally did hit bottom. The drug scene has brought about three prison terms, sabotaged a promising career, and also it caused the woman whom I love and who loved me to have ill feelings about me leaving her and my son out in the free world all alone.

Since I'm beginning to iron out my defects and really take the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous seriously, I've come to know myself on better terms. If it wasn't for this third prison term, hitting my bottom and finding the Find-A-Way group of N.A. here, I would never be in the frame of mind that I'm in now. It's a blessing because I haven't felt this way about life ever. I now have some insight on what is expected of me to become an example for my four-year-old son. I know there is a long and rough road ahead of me because I'm heading back to my hometown, Miami. But I'm not afraid, because I've turned my will over to the care of God. I have longed for a new way of life so long now that everything else has become secondary. My drug of choice was cocaine and I became obsessed with it like I do with everything else. "An addictive personality"--they must have had me in mind when inventing those words. Before, I never had patience; now I do

because I've come to know that I don't have control over people, places and things.

In loving service,
D.S.,
Florida

Dear Reaching Out:

I didn't take any drugs today. This is remarkable; not very long ago I couldn't go one hour without messing with reality in some way. I am in treatment again and I am hearing all these clinches as if for the first time. They mean just what they say—nothing is hidden, and this is perhaps the most important thing for us all to keep in mind.

I have been an addict for more than all my adult life. Since the age of fourteen I have used opiates to enhance the flavor of a very bland world, to soften the blows of a very cold world, and to keep myself in a very selfish world. I was miserable. Since coming to treatment this time (not exactly my own idea to start with but I thank God today for the lawyer who suggested it) I have discovered that the world is a large mirror reflecting the image that we present it. If I am selfish and boring and cruel, so the world will appear to me. But through the N.A. way I can find my own warmth, kindness, love and joy of life, and therefore find it in world around me. For the using addict, misery is a certainty. For the recovering addict, misery is optional. I have a chance today.

I thank God for treatment and N.A. Keep coming back it works. I did—it does.

V-----
Wichita, KS

Hello,

I was very happy to receive the H&I Newsletter today, and after reading it I am even happier. This is the kind of encouragement I need. My name is S--- and I am a drug addict. I never knew that I could be free from drugs. I spent the last fifteen years of my life dazed, confused, in and out of jail, and hurting the ones I loved. Thanks to some fellow inmates, I heard of N.A., so I decided to go and see if it was

for real, well that was eleven months ago and I only missed twice.

I am going to chair my first N.A. meeting this week, and the H&I Newsletter will provide the topics for the evening.

I would like to say that taking it one day at a time, along with the strength I get from my Higher Power, is what helps me when things look bleak.

I would like to encourage other inmates to tell how they are doing and how N.A. is working in their lives.

Recovering one day at a time,
S.W.,
Pennsylvania

Dear H&I

I am an inmate at a correction center in New Jersey. We have been holding a meeting here every Tuesday night for over eighteen months.

My name is J---- and I am an addict. I have been in and out of jails for the past ten years. All of my crimes are related to my addiction. I always thought that it was bad luck and the actions of other people that brought me back and forth through these gates. Today, I can see, through enlightenment from this Fellowship that it is my disease of addiction that has caused all this misery.

At the beginning of this New Year I am looking forward to a good "clean" year, thanks to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, and my Higher Power. My gratitude speaks each time I share in a meeting here. I am also looking forward to being paroled this year. The transition from this institution to the mainstream of N.A. on the "streets" should be a very interesting experience for me as well as the Fellowship.

I would like to express my gratitude to J.D., F----, R---- who started and have been carrying the message into this institution. I know at times they are discouraged because it seems that no one has left here and made meetings on the streets. I, however believe that if one person recovers through your effort, that your time is well rewarded, and besides you can't keep what you got unless you give it away.

In loving fellowship,
J.W.,
Yardville, N.J.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: We would appreciate any input for the next issue of the *Reaching Out* by mid-March. We will be putting together the April-May issue at that time. We are beginning to accumulate input from throughout the Fellowship, but we still need for you or your committee to contribute articles. By helping the addict who cannot attend a regular meeting, you will be giving back what has been 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 would like to thank all of the members who have sent in articles and other written contributions to the newsletter. 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 by sharing with others what we have been freely given.

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



**MY GRATITUDE SPEAKS
WHEN I CARE
AND WHEN I SHARE
WITH OTHERS
THE N.A. WAY**
