

REACHING OUT

VOLUME 2

NUMBER 1

World Service Office, Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91406

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.

MY GRATITUDE SPEAKS...

"My gratitude speaks when I care and share the N.A. way." When I started coming around N.A. I saw this slogan on the walls at the meetings and in the literature. I didn't know what it meant. What was the "N.A. way"? I had been abstinent from all mood altering chemicals for three years at that point, thanks to another Fellowship, but had many problems fitting in. When I finally surrendered to the N.A. Program a few months later I started to learn what that slogan meant. I was taught to help the newcomer, never say "no" and get involved in service.

My service commitment began at the group level where I did what I was taught early on--get to the meeting early, help set up, greet the newcomer, stay late and help clean up. I

became a GSR and was exposed to the first real service commitment in my recovery. At the first ASC meeting I attended, I heard about H&I for the first time. I don't really know why, but something about H&I sounded good to me; it sounded special. Although I had only been in a city jail for a weekend, I knew in my heart that the only difference between the addicts in the institutions and me was that I didn't get caught. I know today that my Higher Power was gently nudging me towards that special branch of service called H&I.

Over the next few months, each time I heard about H&I, I became a little more aware that I could no longer be just curious about this thing. I was at my home group one night when we received a phone call from the substance abuse coordinator at a state prison nearby. She asked if anyone would be willing to meet with her to discuss the possibility of having an N.A. meeting at her facility. A few days later a few of us met with her and several residents. We each took turns sharing a little of our stories and what N.A. had done for us. I left that meeting with an overwhelming feeling of joy and gratitude. Those people really wanted to know about N.A. They wanted an N.A. meeting.

We started a weekly speaker meeting at the institution a few weeks later, and my love for those people and H&I started to grow. My belief in the N.A. Program was strengthened as I watched the men come to the meetings week after week, first with that cold, hard look in their eyes, later that look of recognition and understanding and finally that look of belonging and hope. We have seen many miracles while attending this meeting but I believe we haven't seen anything yet.

H&I started as a once-a-week commitment to carry the message of N.A. into this institution. In an effort to better do this, I was forced to reach out to other members in the Fellowship for answers and ideas. I found that special breed of loving and caring individual who is so often drawn to H&I. I learned the true meaning of sharing and caring from these people. I became actively involved in H&I all around the world.

Looking back, I can see a great deal of my personal growth has come from my commitment to H&I. I've learned to reach out to the Fellowship for answers, and as a result I've formed many friendships that otherwise may never have been. From our local H&I meeting at the institution I have been forced to look at myself, my opinions about race and religion, and my character defects of being judgmental and unforgiving.

My H&I service has been a privilege and a gift given to me by my Higher Power. I've been struggling lately, trying to

pass on to some newcomers the special feeling, the sense of satisfaction and belonging that H&I has given me. I have to remember that what works for me might not work for them, and maybe their Higher Power has got something else in mind for them.

If you are reading this article and haven't really gotten involved in H&I yet, maybe it's time. If you are interested enough to read this article maybe the desire is already there. Maybe all you need to do is take that first step. If you are already involved in H&I my heart goes out to you. Finally, if you are in an institution, this article covers just the tip of the iceberg as far as explaining what is in it for me.

Anonymous

THE WAR IS OVER

My name is A---- and today I'm a grateful recovering addict. I had always thought I would never become an addict. I remember times during my sixteen years of using when I thought that I could change the world. My drug of choice was heroin. With heroin I was always able to forget my problems. The only thing it did for me was suppress life's ups and downs temporarily. I was introduced to N.A. in the Baltimore area, where I thought I could get clean in a detox, attend N.A. temporarily, and go back to the battlefield again. **WRONG!**

For once in my life, I listened and let go at the meetings. I heard many stories of other recovering addicts. I always believed that I was the worst, and only person in the world with the problem I had. (Wrong again). I was not alone. The people had something I've wanted for years, but how did they get it? I started searching, and getting involved in daily meetings. I was warmly accepted by the people in the Fellowship, got myself lots of love, friendship, and understanding.

I was then on a mission, because I wanted to know how they did it. There was something in these people I wanted, and just had to have. One person I literally owe my life to is D----, because he suggested I work the Twelve Steps of N.A.-- and I did. I was then told to work them the right way, so I gave it a shot. I read, and would say the First Step. For three months, I said, "My life is unmanageable, and I am powerless over my addiction." But I was just saying it, until one

evening at a meeting I finally really believed it. Not until I believed, I mean truly *believed* it, did the Fellowship work for me. Today I am grateful because I no longer have to battle with heroin, self-pity, lies, escape, and on and on. Even though I am in prison, the prison is *not* within me.

Thank God for D---, and N.A. Today I live, and the war is over.

In God and N.A.
A., D.C.C.

GRATITUDE FROM MILWAUKEE

It was a hot summer morning in July. I woke up feeling very depressed and in physical pain. I was depressed because there was no more dope, no more money, I hadn't been to work in weeks, my husband had left me, my lover no longer visited me, my daughter had been taken away from me. I had physical pain in the sores on my arms from all too frequent injections and missing the vein, from not having eaten, poor sleep--I was hopeless and helpless. I wanted to die. But I got drunk instead. At some point during my drunken binge that day, I reached out for help. I called my M.D., told him what was happening and found myself being transported to a local treatment facility shortly thereafter.

After detoxing for two days, I was sent to an N.A. meeting in the treatment facility. I don't remember much about it. I didn't want to look up from the floor, to face these smiling people. What were they smiling about? What did they have going for them that I needed, that I wanted? They read the white book, and there it was--hope for recovery from this disease of addiction--a drug-free lifestyle that could bring me serenity and peace, with some work on my part.

They offered me a set of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions--principles by which I could live my life and become a happy productive member of society, of life itself. Could this be possible for me? I had never dreamed that it could.

They also offered me hugs, acceptance of me for myself, not for what I had or didn't have. At first this was hard for me to accept. It was a new experience and I didn't trust this free gift of love. But as I continued to attend these N.A.

meetings every week, I found that the love and caring was real.

On my one year clean birthday, I went back to that first N.A. meeting I had attended. I had something to share, to celebrate one day at a time--I was clean!

My outlook on life has changed a great deal. Today I want to live a clean and serene lifestyle in recovery from addiction. I'm so grateful to N.A. for showing me the way to a new way of life.

Anonymous,
Milwaukee, WI

NEW MEETINGS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

AUSTRALIA

Grafton Goal
Grafton, NSW Aust.

Long Bay Prison Complex
Sydney, NSW Aust.

Mulawah Women's Detention Ctr.
Sydney, NSW Aust.

CALIFORNIA

Federal Prison Camp
Boron, CA

Los Angeles County Jail
Los Angeles, CA

LOUISIANA

Dixon Correctional Institute
Jackson, LA

VIRGINIA

Nattaway Correctional Center
Burkeville, VA

INSTITUTIONS INQUIRING ABOUT STARTING MEETINGS

ARKANSAS	Ark. Correctional Institution Wrightsville, AR
FLORIDA	Desoto Correctional Institute Arcadia, FL
MISSISSIPPI	Parchman Prison Parchman, MS
NORTH CAROLINA	Johnston Co. Prison Unit Smithfield, N.C.
PENNSYLVANIA	Lewisburg Federal Prison Lewisburg, PA
VIRGINIA	Brunswick Co. Correctional Center Brodnax, VA

LETTERS AND/OR EXCERPTS OF LETTERS

Dear Friends,

My name is A---, and I'm writing from a prison in Southwestern Michigan. While N.A. is very much alive and growing in the Metro-Detroit area and in the Eastern part of the state as well, on the western shore the N.A. membership is few and scattered. Due in a great part to this fact, participation from outside members in our meetings here at the prison has been nil.

During the past eight months, I've been very active in trying to encourage outside members to attend our meetings. I became very discouraged with the lack of results. I've written to the WSO, the Detroit Service Office, and H&I committees around the state and country expressing my discouragement. Then recently I "cried" to my sponsor about the situation here and it's his response that I would like to share with you.

In a very nice way he told me that sympathy comes between sh-- and syphilis in the dictionary, and he wasn't going to get involved with a word that shared such bad company. He pointed out to me that I, like most other addicts, choose to focus on the negative in any given situation rather than the positive. And, true to form, this is precisely what I was doing! He suggested I focus on the positive aspects, and he brought to light the positive aspects I was choosing to overlook. I would like to share these positive thoughts with all you other H&I members who might be struggling with getting a solid meeting started in your particular place of confinement.

The most important positive aspect he pointed out, that my diseased thinking conveniently chose to overlook, is that every day I sat in a meeting, whether by myself or with others, I was *clean*. As the Basic Text says, "Any addict clean for a day is a miracle." So while the miracle was taking place I was busy thinking negative. There is also the fact that I was practicing "willingness." The only willingness I had before was to kill myself "one fix at a time." I also would be reading N.A. literature while waiting for someone to show up at a meeting. I was making N.A. available to others who wanted it. I was actually helping others instead of using or destroying them.

My sponsor reminded me of a phrase I had heard while in a treatment center, "You can't be grateful and depressed at the same time." And it's this message that I would like to share with all of you struggling with incarceration, recovery, or just life itself. Get a daily "fix" of gratitude and check out the results. I'm sure you'll find it beats being "drugged!!"

In grateful service to the Fellowship,
A.K., Michigan

Dear *Reaching Out*,

On October 20th, 1980, I found myself in the Boulder County Jail suffering withdrawal symptoms from my addictive drug abuse habits. What I abused or how much I used is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is I was addicted to drugs, and I had allowed my disease to dictate the life I lived and suffered.

Another inmate there recognized my situation and showed me some sympathy. He told me about the N.A. meetings, and said that I could attend them if I wished to.

At first I was very skeptical of the program, but anything was better than my misery and suffering. So I attended my first meeting and met eight recovering addicts from the streets. I never really wanted to give up my drugs, but at that time I needed something and N.A. was there.

I was released ninety days later and returned to my home town of Akron, Ohio. I contacted many "old" friends and I was off in the fast lane once again. My ninety days of being drug-free had little value to me back then. I just didn't care about myself or anyone else.

By March 20th, 1981, I was back in jail, but this time I was facing a very stiff prison sentence. It was a very sobering day in court when the judge sentenced me to nine to thirty years. So much so, that I decided right then and there that I had to change. I had to change my life, because no one else was going to change it for me. I knew what I had to do. I knew ever since my first contact with N.A. that I had to have a sincere desire to quit using drugs, that I had no control over drugs. I had to admit that I was *powerless* over my addiction. It was all too obvious to me that my life had become unmanageable. I came to believe that my "Higher Power" could restore me to sanity. I turned over my will and my life to the care of my Higher Power, as I understood my Higher Power.

I took the steps, as suggested by the N.A. Program, and my life in general started getting better. I am still in prison at this writing, but I have a totally different outlook on life. I care about me and I've learned how to love myself for the human being that I am.

Many things have changed in the five years that I've been incarcerated. But to me, the most important change is that by the grace of God, I have maintained five years of being drug-free, and I have tried to help the addict who still suffers by sharing what I've learned from and through N.A. and my Higher Power.

I owe much to many other recovering addicts, both on the outside and those still incarcerated, for they showed me that three things are indispensable if one should truly desire to live drug-free. Those three things are honesty, open-mindedness, and a willingness to try N.A.

The Twelve Steps suggested by N.A. are proven to be helpful. I am grateful living proof of that.

I am surprised at times by the amount of time that has elapsed since I first stopped using drugs because I wanted to. I am not surprised at how, as time went by, it was easy for me to deal with my problem of addiction, "one day at a time!"

I will end this letter with my favorite part of N.A. and what I most like to share with others:

JUST FOR TODAY

JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.
JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.
JUST FOR TODAY I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.
JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get a better perspective on my life.
JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

In loving fellowship,
K.P.J.

Dear fellow addict,

Hi, my name is M---, and I'm a recovering drug addict. I read about *Reaching Out* in *The Recoverer*, the Washington/No. Idaho Regional Newsletter, and am very interested in supporting this project in any way possible--be it time, energy, written articles, financial contributions, area H&I reports, whatever...

Although our area is small, we have two H&I meetings, one at the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, and another at a treatment center. We are in the process of beginning an H&I meeting in a juvenile detention center.

We in Everett are very grateful to be recovering in the Fellowship of N.A., and as such we are very conscious of our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

A trusted servant,
M.R., Everett, WA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Fifteen months ago, I couldn't see how getting involved in service work was going to make a difference in keeping me

clean. I did *not really* want to get involved, but I saw that the ones who were had a quality about them that I wanted to have. So if it meant "getting involved" I was willing. I started with chairing N.A. meetings at a treatment center every Monday night, and the difference it made was that it saved my ass. What an opportunity to "get out of myself" and be reminded where I came from. As I continued to go back every week, I could see the progress some of the patients were making, and was reminded how well this program DOES work. Soon I could start seeing the progress I had made and how far the program had brought me.

This last November I was allowed to be the chairperson for the area H&I service committee fund-raiser. We put together a carnival which consisted of numerous booths such as a dart throw, cake walk, pie throw, a dunking booth, which we rented from a local fire department, pony rides, an apple bob, and prizes for the winners. We raised over \$350.00 to supply literature, chips, and books for hospitals and institutions that cannot afford to buy them.

We take N.A. to five different institutions here in Ft. Worth, and hope to be able to add more as we grow. Not only did we raise money but the fun we had "playing," showed the newcomer that being clean CAN be fun. It was a lot of work but well worth the effort for a day of FUN--CLEAN & SERENE!!!

C.N., Ft. Worth, Texas

Hi,

My name is B---, and I am an addict. On February 14, 1986, I'll have six months clean, one day at a time. I'm very grateful to the N.A. Program for showing me that there is life after drugs.

My home group is the 255 group at Dade Corrections in Southern Florida. I was transferred to a brand new institution where we formed "Reflections." I'm presently on my second month chairing our group meetings. I do most of the service work for our group. What I want to let you guys know is that the N.A. Program of recovery is working for me and others. We have a small group, but it's growing very fast. Our outside sponsors are doing an excellent job of sharing the message. The very first thing I'll do when the final day comes--even before I call my mother--is call someone from N.A. and spend my first couple of hours at an N.A. meeting.

My release date is still questionable, but my future is not. N.A. all the way.

Believing in miracles,
B.D., Florida

Hello Folks,

I guess I'll get right to it. I got busted in February of 1983 for armed robbery, and got sent to a maximum security prison. (Washington State Penitentiary at Walla Walla). The prison was on lock down when I arrived. Lock down means doing a lot of cell time, so that's when I decided to start going to meetings (as an escape from doing cell time, in the disguise of seeking help). At the meetings I would sit in the back of the room and socialize with my buddies from other parts of the prison. After a few months of this I started picking up little bits of the meeting's messages, and seeing the concern N.A. people had for *themselves* and others. These people were serious! They were clean and wanted us to know that we could be clean too! After I started listening, and feeling, it didn't take long to figure out that I could have what these people had. At first I thought life was gonna be a big bowl of cherries if I were out and clean. I flashed a lot on that John Lennon song called "Imagine."

Well, needless to say I found out that being clean is no bowl of cherries. I'm in a work release facility now and I'm working full time and "doing good." It's just about a full time job trying to duck and dodge all the slippery people and places, but with the help of a few good friends I'm making it work, and I'm discovering a "new me" every day. Today is Saint Patrick's Day, and I'm proud to be Irish this time around. I can celebrate today without forgetting why, and not using St. Patrick as an excuse to get loaded.

I'm doing some Fourth Step work these days, and can actually find a few good things to say to myself. In the last 21 years I've only felt clean and serene twice that I can remember (except in meetings), and both those times I was with an N.A. member. Both times I was thinking good things, experiencing simple parts of living, (you know--the things that are with us every day, but somehow got overlooked along the dope trail).

I'm making it today with N.A.! I'm gonna keep coming back!

Lots of love, honesty and caring,
J.K., Washington



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: We would appreciate any input for the next issue of the *Reaching Out* by mid-June. We will be putting together the July/August issue at that time. We are beginning to accumulate input from throughout the Fellowship, but we still need 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**

