



A newsletter from the Asia Pacific Areas of Narcotics Anonymous

Welcome to the APF Newsletter

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. . . and I will finish on this . . .

My job of editing of this fine journal is nearly over, It has been my pleasure to work on these two most recent issues of the APF Newsletter during 1998-99.

A lot seems to have happened since APF last met in Calcutta, India. The Singapore PI presentation, The WSC and all the changes that happened there, the forming of our first real steering committee for the APF, and the setting up of our own website.

There has been growth and changes in the communities around the Asia Pacific. Governments in Asian countries asking NA to be involved as a resource in their communities. Stirrings of activity in Indonesia, contact with Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Korea, conferences and presentations in Thailand, workshops in Japan.

At this Years APF meeting in Bangkok we are expecting to have reports from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Hawaii, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. There will be around 25 -30 people at the meeting from most of these communities plus representatives from World Services.

For me, the real rewards of doing service in the APF have been in sharing and working with the people I have met from our many diverse cultures. I am really grateful for the opportunity to serve, and look forward to assisting the next newsletter editor in any way I can.

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THE FIRST THAILAND CONVENTION BANGKOK 1998:

Neil T, speaker at the Convention.

Years ago we only had one meeting which was held on a Monday night. There was about 4 or 5 of us at the beginning and we continued that way until we decided that we really needed another meeting, that one a week wasn't really enough for us. So we started one on a Friday night.

That went on for approximately 3 and a half years. The group remained very small and the people who would come to support us were mainly people travelling through Thailand or those working here for a short time.

We had started to translate some of the literature into Thai because we felt that needed to carry the message of NA beyond our small community. Although we had been doing this for 3 years the Fellowship wasn't growing. In hindsight we realise that this was because although we were meeting and staying clean we weren't giving away what we had been given.

One of our problems was that we didn't have any hospitals or institutions that we could visit to carry the message and our literature was all in English and of limited usefulness to people in institutions here in Thailand.

About 3 years ago a miracle happened when a women working at a Rehab brought a couple of addicts to our meeting. She said that she wanted to know about Narcotics Anonymous. Our response was Thankyou Thankyou. This was exactly what we had been waiting for.

From this we started another meeting at the Treatment House. This was at 2 pm on Sundays and had about 5 to 10 addicts attending it. This meeting was a combination of Westerners and Thai members and we now have about 18 - 20 people at a meeting. It was obvious that the Thai members needed more than one Thai speaking meeting a week so another meeting was started.

Last year we had a call from Australia saying that they were having a convention and the group decided that it would be a great idea if we could send some Thai members to the convention so that they could see the depth of recovery that is available through Narcotics Anonymous rather than just a small group of westerners who were staying clean. So we got together and with the help from members of the Sydney Convention Committee we sent 2 members of our fellowship to the convention in Sydney in October.

This really helped because when they came back they had a broader picture of what recovery was about and they had more of an impetus to take the already translated literature and work further on it. We have now nearly finished the Basic Text.

Also around that period we had been in contact with World Services and we decided to hold our first convention. After only a short discussion we were committed. So that's how

we got our first convention. It has been a really really rewarding experience for us all. This was the first project where all the members, both Thai and westerners, worked together.

The money that you have paid to attend this convention will be used to help pay for those Thai members who attended the Australian Convention, to work further on our translations, to pay for the meals for new members attending this convention and for the Public Information Workshop we held at the convention.

This PI workshop was really successful. We had 45 people from local Drug Agencies and Treatment centres who not only attended the Workshop but attended part of the convention. Thankyou to all the people who attended the convention, without your contributions the convention would not have been as successful.

We would particularly like to thank World Services for sending representatives to assist us with our workshop and to show everyone the example of people who have put this program into their lives and are working it to help themselves and others.

The Thai speaking meeting held its first birthday at the end of March 1998.

Thailand update

The past year has seen further growth in Thailand. The four existing meetings in Bangkok are now bi-lingual, (Thai and English speaking). A new meeting has opened in Phuket, and another has started in Chiang Mai. In November a PI workshop was held in Chiang Mai. A large contingent of local D&A workers attended, resulting in a very good positive response.

The 17th annual INFGO conference was held here and NA was well represented. The spiritual versus religious aspects of the program received a good, lively hearing.

A local member is doing regular visits to addicts in jails in Bangkok and a couple of hospital meetings could be starting in the near future. NA has been approached by the Bangkok Administration offering the use of schools as venues for NA meetings.

Thinking of Alcohol as different.....This is still a stumbling block on the road to full recovery for some of the members here. Even so there is an increasing level of participation within the fellowship by the Thai speaking members, who have done most of the preparation work for the APF meeting and the Convention. Next years convention will be held in Chaing Mai.

New Contacts

We were pleased to welcome Bokul, a member with 10 years clean time from Bangladesh to the APF meeting. Two treatment centres (one started 10 years ago) are run by Jesuit Brothers and use Hazelton literature that acknowledges NA. Interestingly, there appears to be no AA meetings in Bangladesh, a reversal of the usual situation. There are estimated to be over 300 clean addicts there

Their first shipment of NA literature was received by Bokul at the APF meeting. This was supplied by the WSO plus some items from the Australian FSO. Addicts in Bangladesh have been able to set up meetings outside the treatment centres and have joined together

to create a service structure that will best suit their needs. A convention is being planned for 26th June, in Dhaka, details will be posted on the APF and NA Events websites.

Kerry A. a resident in Indonesia reported on NA activities in Jakarta. She collected their first batch of NA literature from the APF meeting as well. Previous to that, AA literature was being used. There are now 3 meetings in Jakarta and plans to start a meeting in Bali where addicts currently attend AA.. The meeting of groups of Drug addicts is officially frowned upon. More will be revealed.

A report from Pakistan was presented by John, an American member who was travelling through the area. Unorganised meetings began in Lahore in 1990, and have been on and off since then. At the moment the group there is having difficulty holding meetings. Another group began holding meetings in Karachi in 1996. They had not seen any NA literature at all until this year when a member returned with some from the Bombay convention. A shipment of literature from the WSO arrived in April.

Postcards from China continued.....

Debs...We have friends in the other fellowship and we decided we could be of service through translations, so we got together and formed a translations group. My partner, Geoff had served in many roles in the Indian NA fellowship, so he was able to guide us in the procedures we needed to follow. The other couple, Janet and Nick who speak fluent Chinese, and myself set about to work on the glossary with the help of a Chinese woman June Chen, from the school where I work.

It took quite a considerable amount of time deciding on the characters to use. With Chinese you can have similar characters but the meanings can be different depending on the way they are written and visualised. Anyhow, this gave us a basic framework to work on once we were able to get all the Chinese characters and English words into the computer. We then went back through it and worked on modifying and refining it.

We spent a lot of time on the God thing. How to write ♡God♡ so it doesn't come out as ♡Western God♡? So, with regards to that we came up with a character that had something to do with a power inside your heart that you believe in: - ♡shen li♡ , higher power, better than (cultural/historical) God.

Now that we have sent the glossary to the WSO and the APF, we would like to make contact with addicts in Shanghai. Apart from being able to tell them about NA we will be able to get more feel for the street language here.

Geoff continues...That morning I was sitting in my meditation, feeling miserable that I was unemployable in China. I asked my Higher Power ♡What is my purpose here in China?♡ At that time I was showing a friend, Janice from NA in Brisbane around Suzhou while my wife, Debs was at work. We were looking for a particular garden she had heard about, but couldn't find it. We entered a small alley and asked the way and were pointed towards a doorway. We went inside, there were a group of people buying tickets, so we did likewise. Inside was the Suzhou museum, and on display was the drug awareness exhibition that we had heard about back in July.

I was taken aback with the presentation of the issue of drugs in China and appalled at the horror captured by the photography. As I walked around absorbed in the exhibition, I remembered my morning prayer, and thought ♦Was this the answer from my HP about what to do with my life here in China?♦ ♦Could the answer come this fast?♦ I felt overwhelmed by the exhibition, but I believed this was my HP♦s message for me. Since then I have been studying Chinese at the university. It is my hope that once I acquire this language, I can help to carry the message of recovery to addicts here in China.

Check out these translations ♦.Ed

Group conscience - Best wisdom of the group

Get high - To feel/become immortal

Sponsorship ♦ Guardianship, protect & supervise

A HARD DAY AT THE OFFICE

(Letter from Malaysia)

I just got back from my Bahasa NA meeting. It♦s 1150pm. I am having mixed feeling at the moment, its really has been a good and bad day for me.

This morning at 9.30am on my way to Drop-In, I saw a client laying in front of the Drop-In on a pavement. So I ask a few clients to carry him up to the Drop-In (Drop-In opens at 10.00am) So we put him in the living room on a couch. Then I went to my office making arrangement to send him to General Hospital. We♦ve got our own van but it was at the place of my parent organisation. So the van arrived at about 11.00pm then at that time my Project Officer told me that somebody died. I went down and saw the client there and we tried to take his pulse but couldn't find one so I asked that he been sent to hospital. They arrived half and hour later but the client was already died. What made me feel sad is that I saw him yesterday and yet my mind seems to be blank and I did not do anything.

Normally for the past 2 years that I was working I♦ve been picking up sick Drug Users from back lanes, road side and alley. That is the nature of my work, dealing with active users who I can say that 90% are HIV positive and we are having 45 to 60 users dropping in daily. The client who died has been attending Bahasa NA for the past 2 weeks. I think the higher power knows what best for him. For your info 95% of the clients are homeless, jobless and rejected by family and society. They are the street guys.

I was once there. For 18 years I was on the streets and I really know how it feels being a street guy. When they told me that he died my first reaction is that "he's a free man". Oh yes. he is 32 years old. At the Bahasa NA Meeting (every Tuesday night 8.00pm-9.30pm, its held at the Drop-In) we had 30 people and half of the attendees were these street guys active users.

We also have 2 female addicts attending NA meetings for the past 3 months. One has been clean for 2 years and the other is 3 months clean. I am trying to

bring them to Bangkok for the APF meeting and the convention. It made me really realised how lucky I've been. I am proud that I am one of the few people that made this possible. It has been busy like this for the past 3 weeks. At least people can see that there's still hope.

You know for the Muslim in Malaysia, after one month of Ramadan we celebrate Hari Raya. Its the time we visit one-another and a month of seeking forgiveness and forgiving others, just like making amends to the one that you have hurt in your life. Just like the Program. During this time also we eat and eat and eat. More or less like your Christmas. So for my Hari Raya I did an open House for the Drop-In centre. I did not go back to my home town.

We open from 10.00am - 5.00pm. About 300 people attended but the best thing was that most of the people that came were either active users and recovering addicts.

I was very busy, even though I was very very tired but I felt real good. I did most of the cooking (main menus) and marketing, something which I've learned when I was on the street.

After that event I shared my feeling with my sponsor. Well Ron, I guess doing work in a Drug drop-In centre is not that easy, I see my community/friends dying each day, each week, each month. I've been thru this for the past 2 years. It really hurts but these are the facts in which I cannot hide or concealed or deny. During this time last year between December 97 & January 98 I lost 4 friends who died from AIDs and they were recovering people even though not in the NA Program. As far as I know they died clean.

I'm just really glad that I have the Program. Life on life's terms, one day at a time. I am also glad and feel lucky that the other fellowship are working together with me in this Drop-In. They have helped me a lot. What the program says that one addict helping another is without parallel is true for me. How I wish I could mention their names, but I guess that's not right, (anyway guys thanks for helping me, It's not an easy road to travel alone, but together we can make it a bit easier). See you soon in Bangkok.

Terima Kasih AzizN

Letter from Mumbai India

I am back from my area's convention which had it's moments of heart moving experiences. The most moving experience was during the count down when the member from Pakistan stood-up.

All of us cheered and hugged him till his back went sore. Our nations may fight wars but the war against addiction has brought us together in brotherhood and love. I believe that that moment made my area's convention a success.

Ivan

Letter from the USA

Hello friends!!! what a treat to go to your website and find what I found there. Thank you for all the information. I particularly enjoyed the newsletter and the experiences conveyed in it from all the conventions and other events. I think we take for granted all too often just how fortunate we are here in the states to have developed NA communities.

The reality of what is going on in China and many other places being discussed in your newsletter strikes a chord of love in my heart, and of gratitude. Where there is a desire to stay clean, no matter the odds, no matter the setbacks, there is hope.

I will continue to peruse the site. I love what I read, and I love knowing how NA flourishes elsewhere in the world.

love, Shane C.

HELLO FROM CANADA

Hi Asia Pacific Forum members, my name is Dean and I'm the Chairperson of the Canadian Assembly. A warm hello from a very cold Zonal Forum. We're alive and well and really appreciate your Newsletters. At times we feel quite isolated and enjoy the contact with other Forums.

Sometimes people are confused and think that we are Americans at times but this is not the reality at all. Our culture is very different. It gives us renewed confidence when we attend the WSC and meet people from other different cultures too and hear how you do your service and help each other carry the message. Thank you.

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Please notify any corrections or changes to these numbers.....Ed

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