
REACHING OUT

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Welcome

We would like to welcome all of you to the WSC H&I Newsletter. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

FROM THE INSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Thanks for the latest copy of *Reaching Out*. My name is D_____ and I am a recovering addict. I am six months into a seven-year sentence, but I must be the happiest addict in the world.

I was introduced to NA in England and stayed clean now and then, but I refused to work the steps or surrender to this simple program. I was far too clever for all these happy, real people I saw in the rooms. As I can see now, I was so sick with this disease but I would not give up. I was dealing drugs and I thought I was so cool. Then one day I was arrested and put into prison. You should have seen the sight of this cool man sitting in his cell, crying his eyes out. I thought it was the end of the world and it was. It was the end of my lying, cheating world. I told the prison doctor I was an addict, and he asked if I would like to go into one of the two prison programs we have in England. I said "Yes" and waited for a place. When I arrived, I found it was an old Victorian

prison with no toilets or water in the cells. I was locked up on my own seventeen-and-a-half hours a day but, boy, was I happy. I was clean and I also had a future with my wife and son. I was also given two big gifts by my HP. One, there was an NA meeting once a week, and two, there were two clean NA members two cells along. We are in the process of starting an NA meeting ourselves. So thanks again.

D.W., England

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is J_____ and I am an addict. This simply means that, for thirty-five years of my fifty-two, I have at one time or another been addicted to every mind-altering substance known to man, and some that aren't even known.

From as early as my preteens I have been cursed with this addictive personality. I have a constant desire to escape from the unacceptable normalities of life that each and every human being is faced with (and seems to cope with). I, on the other hand, sought to create a world of fantasia, a world of illusion, where I was able to pull the strings to make my own rules and to rewrite them as it suited me.

This I found was easy provided I made these rules in a fog, due to active addiction. I was the president of the Board of Bull_____ and the smartest kid on the block.

I bought all the books on drugs. I did extensive research on the origins of all mind-altering substances. It was widely known that if you wanted to know anything about drugs, go see J_____, he knows it all. My God, the biggest thing in this world was my ego.

But you see, along the road of learning, and discovering all this wondrous knowledge, I forgot to mention that twenty-five of my fifty years were spent in and out of various prisons and psycho wards. In fact, I have the dubious distinction of having been sentenced to a total of 162 years of hard labor. Not bad for having only lived for fifty-two of them. I might add that at the time of this writing I am currently serving another twelve years in a NSW prison. So to what end was my knowledge, my research, my ego?

Today the most important thing I know is that I know very little. I am back in the halls of learning but the subject I pursue today is the twelve-step program of recovery. Today I feel content to be the dunce of the class.

I am learning the wondrous simplicity of things like "one day at a time," "easy does it," and "let go and let God." It's great. This is one class I am in no hurry to graduate from. With the help of the serenity

prayer, I pray that God will help me in my endeavor to continue this learning process on a daily basis, one day at a time for the rest of my life. Maybe I will find the peace of mind I foolishly searched for in the darkness of my own creation.

This fellowship is God-given and therefore cannot be returned. Its wealth cannot be measured. Once it is attained it is part of your life forever. As to how to be a part, that, my dear friend, is up to you. God bless the fellowship and all who sail in her.

J.B., Australia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is P_____ and I'm an addict. Getting arrested and going to prison was my worst nightmare back when I was using drugs. I've been arrested a few times and I remember very well the horror of being in a prison cell with a terrible hangover, feeling the only thing that could help me in that situation was a fix. Back then, maybe it was.

Today I'm in jail. After being in recovery for a few twenty-four hours, I was arrested for things I did during active addiction. I have to pay my dues to justice, but there's a huge difference between my stay in prison now and in the past. Today I have NA in my life. Today I'm free. My obsession for drugs has been taken away. Today I have a Higher Power. I have a perfect program. I have Twelve Steps with all the answers. I have a lot of friends that write and come to visit me. I have regained my family and have a very supportive girlfriend. I could list you a number of other things that I have today. That's what makes the difference. I know I owe that to NA. I can easily say NA makes all the difference in my life.

In the past I came to a point in my life when I thought there was no way out for me. After thirteen years of drug abuse; after losing my family, my job, my girlfriend, and all my friends; after being tested HIV, along with other diseases for a few years; several overdoses; and a great deal of longing, I thought there was no hope for me, that it wasn't worth the effort. It was all about waiting for that final overdose that would take me away the only way I knew how, using drugs. How wrong I was. In some miraculous way God made me put my pride aside and honestly ask for help (I had been introduced to NA a few years before). After all the kinds of treatments I've been under, I decided to give me a chance with NA. Lucky me. I surrendered myself to the program from the first minute and everything gradually started to change. I regained almost everything I had lost and gained a lot of things I never had.

So after all that came into my life, I was arrested. At first it didn't make any sense because everything was building up in my life, but I came to a point where I don't question God's will anymore. I just try to follow it as well as I can and that's what I've been doing. I've accepted my reality. I make the best I can out of it. I look at my life from a positive point of view. I'm not a lonely player anymore. I found my place in a big team, the NA team and, just for today, I'm a winner. Just for today I can handle anything God sends me. Just for today I don't need to use drugs. I don't like being here but, on the other hand, this time has been precious because I came to learn a lot about myself. I feel I've grown up since I came in here. I tried to put my time to good use. I can always find something good to do with that time, whether it is for me or for another fellow inmate. I tried to carry out our message (successfully, I'm happy to say). I can always find some love and comprehension to give to a suffering addict who lies in the exact same spot that I've been in before. I know I'm working this program the best way I can and I know I'm working to be a better person. I thank you all for that. I thank God for bringing NA into my life.

P.C., Portugal

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am an addict. My name is T_____ and I am a member of Narcotics Anonymous. I am, at the present time, in a prison due to testing the waters. It took me a prison bit of one-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years to tell me I cannot use successfully.

I've hit many bottoms in the past. I have put time into this fellowship. I came to this fellowship in 1987 to stay out of jail but, after probation was up, I used again. It took me three months of pure hell to come back. I came back scared, beaten down, and bankrupt of everything because of my addiction.

I had gone into my second treatment center and halfway house. It was clear in 1988 that I could not use no matter what. I was told from day one, "Go to meetings, call your sponsor, and work the steps." I did exactly that.

I lasted three months in the halfway house and then was on the streets. I did not use. I had four months clean and was determined to survive. I was going to meetings, meetings, and more meetings. This fellowship carried me through the hardest part of my recovery. I was involved in a relationship that carried both of us through a lot of hard times. Service work saved me also. I went to my first area meeting in 1987. Being in another area in 1988 was a lot different. People were

spiritual and I loved it. I was involved at the group and area level. I learned how to be honest, open-minded, and willing about my opinions, others' opinions, and how group conscience worked.

Later, my relationship ended with this woman who was also involved in NA. It was hard at first, but I was able to accept it as the end of that. I learned that we used each other to survive. What's important is we did not use.

After nine months I went to work and moved from a hotel room into a nice apartment. My job was a numbing experience. I said I would never work in such a place but, out of desperation, I took the job and succeeded. I moved out of the apartment that I shared with a friend of a friend into my own place. I had also switched jobs about nine months later and moved again. I had two years clean at this time and I moved above a bar. For about ten months it didn't bother me. I went on working, going to meetings. I stopped sharing my inner self and pushed everything deep down.

In January 1991 I went back to school. I was involved in another relationship and I went back to work. Everything was great. I was on a nice cloud. Even after a couple years of recovery, I slipped back into a cloud. This time no pin could pop it. I knew better than they did. I'd been clean for three years.

The relationship broke off and I was hurt. I didn't share with anybody about this relationship. Eventually, my school's financial office gave me a hard time about producing my parents' death certificates to prove my independence, so I received no grants. My rent was three months behind and I exploded.

The night I picked up I was at work. A good friend in NA worked with me. I shared about my desire to pick up. She shared about her desires to become a go-go dancer. I don't think I cried out hard enough, or I didn't really ask for a reaction. That night, I used.

The next day I was late to work with a hangover. I did not want to face the world. My old patterns came back fast. Some friends in the fellowship stopped by while I was using that night and I felt the shame, guilt, and remorse of my using again. However, I didn't want to give up using just yet; I wanted to ride it out. No problems had happened—yet. The addict was alive and kicking again. My addiction was started before I picked up the drug.

I used for four months. In those four months I got involved in another relationship, was engaged, and lost her after I was sent to jail. She was also pregnant by me. I experienced the falling out, passing out, blacking out, fighting, and everything else about using.

My last weekend using, I spent more than \$500 on drinking. I hurt myself and everybody around me. I made a promise to get clean again. When I returned to work on Monday, I said, "One last time won't hurt nothing or nobody." That night I wound up in jail. One last time got me one-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years in prison.

I've been in jail for one year now; I have one year clean. I have not been to one single meeting because NA is not available. I have my Higher Power, which I choose to call God, and the Basic Text. I pray a lot and study a lot. I have remained in contact with my sponsor and write to other members of this fellowship.

I am grateful I have a chance to live and be a member of this fellowship again. I have been working the first three steps for a year now. I still have a hard time because I don't have freedom to go to meetings, but I do have the freedom to choose not to use. I also have freedom from the prison I built in my head.

You don't have to relapse to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous. But—if you have relapsed and have found NA again—don't use, work the steps, and go to meetings. If your ass falls off pick it up, put it in a bag, and go to a meeting. NA will put it back together for you.

I am so grateful for the love in this fellowship. This fellowship has taught me how to love, how to feel loved, and how to feel accepted. Only through the Twelve Steps have I learned how to live. Many addicts have come to Narcotics Anonymous before me. I've had to learn to keep my mouth shut and listen to their experience, strength, and hope. That is how I have learned to live. It feels good to share my experience, strength, and hope. Now it may save someone's life today, just as mine has been saved by this fellowship.

My gratitude speaks when I care and when I share with others the NA way. God bless.

T.J., New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is A____. I am a grateful recovering addict. I'd like to take time out to thank Narcotics Anonymous for reaching out to us, the addicts, and the ones that are not addicts before they even get there.

I'm incarcerated in a Delaware correctional center. I've been trying to stop using for twenty-three years. Thanks to my Higher Power, I have NA and *Reaching Out*. I never thought it would work, either, like most people think, but it works if you work the steps one day at a time. I've been in jail for three years and seven months on a twelve-year bit, but I'm free from drugs. I've been clean for the whole three years and seven months.

I came to jail on March 27, 1989, and it's October 19, 1992. I should be going to work release very soon, but I know that if I don't attend my meetings on the outside of prison, I'll be back.

NA has given me a real sense of integrity. Greater than that, I have love for myself. I had lost the lady I loved and my three girls due to using. I give thanks to my Higher Power (God), NA, and all the rest of the programs here in prison. Thanks to *Reaching Out* and its fellowship also. I know it's a lot of people who don't believe in God as their Higher Power, but that's what *Reaching Out* is for and Narcotics Anonymous. They don't care about your belief or what you have done. They are there to reach out for you and help the suffering addict. They'll always tell you to keep coming back. It works if you work the steps one day at a time.

NA to me is like having God right here in my presence. Please put my whole name in with this because that is one of my steps to recovery—being honest, honorable, and respectful.

I've never felt so good in my life. I've never known how good it was to be drug free. I owe it all to NA, *Reaching Out*, and my Higher Power, God. Thank God for my loved ones and *Reaching Out*.

A.C., Delaware

Editor's Note: Although the addict in the previous letter wished to have their full name printed, in order to be consistent with our policies we decided not to do so.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict named D_____ and for right now I have the only promise our program has to offer—freedom from active addiction. I was never satisfied with the simplicity of that principle until just today.

I am one who always reached a point in my recovery where I felt I should have more of everything. After all, I'm sitting in meeting after meeting. I'm praying and working the steps. When am I going to get all the rewards? I forget real quick things like "Self-obsession is the core of our disease," and that's the very driving force that set me up for the belief there should be more magic to this staying clean stuff. (I shouldn't be getting a divorce, I'm clean. I'm clean. I should be making \$15.00 an hour driving a nice car, etc.) This has been some of my experience. I have plenty of that to share—the strength and hope I'm praying about.

I started using when I was thirteen. At fourteen I was in a boy's

school for eighteen months for stealing all the beer and cigarettes at a local grocery store. Today I know it wasn't just an adolescent prank. My disease had me and it wasn't yet apparent to me.

I continued to use and continued to land in jails. In 1982, I was arrested in a drugstore. At that moment I felt fear and a big sense of relief—I didn't get *arrested*, I got a *rest*. I needed it, for at that point in my active using, I was in pretty ill health.

I got out eighteen months later and that day I picked up. I used for the whole time I was on parole and I started falling a part inside and out real fast, as we addicts do when we use. In short, I checked into a hospital in 1985 and stayed at a halfway house for a year.

I went to work at a treatment center because I wanted to. After a year there, I relapsed. I blamed the relapse on loneliness. I've been clean a while. I should meet a lady by now. I deserve happiness and a woman would sure make me happy. Always, I want, I want—self-obsession.

Well, I used for over a year and met a girl who was mixed up enough to marry me. We had a little baby girl and I felt it was once again time to get clean. After a couple years we started having lots of problems. We tend to fantasize and project the outcome of our relationship. I was setting myself up for another relapse and didn't have a clue; after all, it was all her fault—not!

I had a heart attack last year. That was during a period of clean time again. To wind this thing up, I've been seeking recovery for years but, because I have failed to surrender to any depth totally, my thinking has not changed much in the past. I was always good at stating "the fight's over and I lost, but the truth is as I see it from behind these bars, when I fight, I lose."

Some of the things my sponsors told me early on keep popping into my mind. "It's a simple program for complicated people." "Watch for patterns." "Easy does it." "Keep coming back." "We love you."

Just for today I'm grateful for who I am, where I am, and that I'm not a famous recovered addict with years clean. I am just an addict, clean today.

It's back to the basics for this addict—one day at a time. I'm locked up, but free from the obsession to actively use. There is hope for me today because I have Narcotics Anonymous and some people back home who believe in me and want to help me in my recovery. From one addict to another, thanks for letting me share.

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is P__ and I am an addict out of the Varrios of East Los Angeles. I am writing this article to thank H&I for all the support they have given all of us here at this facility.

I remember when I first arrived here I had only nine days clean, and the NA meeting here was almost closed up. Some nights I would go out to the visiting room or down to education for our meeting and, many a night, there would only be the H&I panel member and me. We hung in there and today we have a meeting to be proud of. We have twelve to fifteen dudes every week and it feels real good to know that the people from H&I are still with us every other week. The road to recovery is not an easy road but together we can do it.

I would like to thank all of you at World Services for recognizing our meeting here. It really made all of us feel real good, and we all want to send special thanks to each and every one of you.

I stay in touch with quite a few NA members and they keep me pretty well informed on all the events taking place out there, and soon some of us here will be able to join all of you out there.

I bring this short letter of thanks to a close and, by the way, I have three years and twenty-one days clean today¹. My life today is dedicated to the addict who still lives in the world of the illusion; I pray he will find the happiness within that I have found.

I enjoy each and every day being clean, and I hope to join all of you soon. A clean addict behind the walls,

P.H., California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is Mary, and I am a grateful recovering drug addict. I am currently serving two years in a Texas county jail for a drug-related crime.

I have been in and out of NA since I was thirteen years old. I am now nineteen. When I was younger I believed NA to be a joke. Now I believe it to be a gift from God. It has saved me from a lifetime of sorrow, and I can't express how thankful I am.

When I first started using, I felt a great need for acceptance from others, and I thought that drugs were an aid to help me reach that goal. Before I knew it, I was so hooked that no one wanted to be around me.

I found NA for real last spring. I feel that my Higher Power was completely responsible for this eye opener and, once again, I can't express my gratitude. Where in the past I felt rejected, NA was there for me with open arms, not only to accept me but to show me that I'm not

alone. For once in my life I feel like people have faith in me, and the steps give me a guide to life.

I am finding it easier and easier to trust in my Higher Power. I am grateful for my jail term because in my eyes, my Higher Power is never wrong. I am also grateful that I am able to attend meetings while I am here. That really helps me keep on trudging.

My main reason for writing is that maybe there are young people out there who are reading this. Maybe they feel like their days of partying aren't finished because they "haven't had enough fun." I would like to tell these young people that I once had that attitude too, but I have more fun on my worst day clean than on my best day using. If they are reading this from jail, I'd like to ask them how much fun are they having now. There are only two more stopping points—institutions and death. I am very grateful that I have the choice today not to go to these lengths. To all you young people and anyone else, that choice is also yours to make for yourself.

M.T., Texas

Editor's Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a worldwide perspective of H&I activity. It reflects input received from H&I subcommittees and may address specific issues of interest to members in their H&I efforts as well as personal experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. Members and H&I subcommittees should send their input to the WSO H&I Coordinator, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999, USA.

FROM THE OUTSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

This is the personal story of an addict who ran from herself up until three years ago.

My name is G_____ and I'm an addict. With the help of the God of my understanding, my intention is to express the strength I've gained through the Narcotics Anonymous program.

I was introduced to the program in 1988 at a rehab just outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was at this rehab that I attended my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting. At that point I was in so much pain, and so sick and tired of being sick and tired. I was willing to do anything

to relieve some of the hurt. That first meeting was extremely profound for me. It was large in size, but very spiritual in nature. The profoundness for me was in the ability to identify. For the very first time in my life, I could actually see myself in other people. That power, the power of identification, induced an overwhelming feeling of relief. I needed to feel a part of. The feeling was so sensational that I made a decision that, yes, I would give it a try and keep coming back. As a result, I have been recovering for over three years.

There was another profoundness that I experienced at that very first meeting and that was the feeling of hope. Seeing people clean and happy who were addicts just like me let me know that it was possible to get and stay clean.

Today, I have a sponsor whom I love very much. I stay clean by working the steps, attending meetings, and sharing. Putting my relationship with the God of my understanding first has given my life a new meaning. I start and end each day with a moment of silence in prayer. My God loves me unconditionally and today I have people in my life who love me. It is truly a blessing to be freed from the oppression of my addiction. Every day has its ups and downs, but my days have improved so very much. No day clean in recovery has ever been as bad as even a "good" day using. Today I believe if I don't use I will stand a chance at overcoming any obstacle placed before me. By staying close to the God in my life, all things are possible.

After twenty years of using drugs day in and day out, recovery is beautiful. I look forward to my days now and you can too, if you give yourself a break and keep coming back.

G.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I would like to share one of my fears and experiences I encountered recently.

Although I have been involved with H&I service since early in my recovery, I always had a fear of someone from my past being present at one of the commitments I take part in. Like many of us, I was a very violent and angry addict when I was using. Although I am working on these issues through the steps, I hadn't encountered anyone from that part of my past.

Just recently, I was faced with my past in a correctional institution. We had just finished setting up for our regular presentation when in through the door walked my past.

Here stood a man upon whom I had sworn vengeance some years earlier. He and his brother had violated my home. My survival instincts kicked in, making me very uncomfortable.

After everyone was seated, I closed my eyes and asked for strength and guidance from my Higher Power. To my relief, I slowly felt the uneasiness dissipate. It was replaced with forgiveness, compassion, and understanding.

These were just a few of the principles I have learned through the steps in NA. I am not sure what took place in that room that night but, at the end of the meeting, we ended up face to face. I wasn't sure what to do, so I extended my hand and he took it and thanked me for being there. I have had a lot of rewarding feelings in the past through H&I, but nothing that compared with the way I felt that night.

I am real grateful to NA and H&I subcommittees around the world for allowing addicts like myself to take part in carrying the message.

P.L., Nova Scotia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

When I was introduced to NA, I was in a detox, a very sick puppy. This was my very first time ever reaching out for help.

While I was at the detox, this young lady I had met asked me how serious I was about getting clean. My answer was, "I'll do whatever it takes." She told me of Narcotics Anonymous and suggested to me that if I were serious, I should check out that evening's meeting. I did.

When I walked through those doors of NA, I was a man who was mentally, physically, and spiritually bankrupt. I had no self-esteem, self-confidence, or dignity left inside of me. I was so overwhelmed with hopelessness and worthlessness. I crawled into a corner of that meeting, hoping nobody would pay any attention to me. God was I scared! They were sharing on Step Four and talking about this thing called recovery. I don't remember too much of that meeting, but I'll never forget the sparkle in some of those addicts' eyes. What I did hear, I related to. I realized then and there that I had found something that just might help me.

A big man came up and shook my hand and welcomed me. He said, "Keep coming back." This surprised me because I couldn't understand why anybody would want me back, especially the derelict I was, living a life totally based on degradation and depravity.

After leaving detox, a friend gave me a Basic Text. Even though that book scared me, because it was like reading my life story, it became my bible.

The town I came from had no NA, so my girlfriend and I started a meeting. We also drove 120 miles four times a week to meetings out of town. I didn't have much clean time when I got involved in service. I didn't stay clean for the first year, but kept coming back. Since I made the decision to surrender to the spiritual principles of NA, I have not had to use.

I was labelled a "loser" and a "hopeless cause" by society, but NA accepted me for who I was. Thanks to this fellowship, I have been clean for five-and-a-half years and living the freedom that NA promised. How do you repay something like NA or God for saving your life? "Thank you" was just not enough for me. I showed my gratitude by performing service work.

Four years ago, I was elected as our area H&I chairperson. A committee quickly formed because we were deeply concerned about the meeting we held inside the detox that I was once a client of. The meeting was not an H&I meeting, but a regular meeting. As such, we were carrying a mess to the clients, not a message. Our subcommittee had only the small H&I booklet to work from and we held subcommittee meetings two or three times a week to figure out what we were supposed to do.

This went on for quite some time, trying to figure out how to screen NA members to be speakers, share topics, get literature, etc. After we had completed everything that we felt was necessary to carry a good message to that institute, I was introduced to the new H&I manual, which had been available for some six months.

This is the neat part: everything that our subcommittee worked on, especially the way we applied the spiritual principles of NA, was right on track with the new manual. It is true, spiritual principles are never in conflict with each other.

After seven months as area H&I chairperson, I was elected as regional H&I vice chairperson for B.C. After five months in that position, I was elected as the regional H&I chairperson, keeping my area position at the request of my area.

Since that time, I successfully finished my two years as area H&I chair and am nearing the end of my second year as B.C. regional H&I chair.

During this time I have gained a wealth of experience, and the rewards of my service to NA have been so gratifying. No money or materialistic thing could ever replace what H&I has done for my personal recovery.

I had one wish that I wanted to fulfill to NA and that was to help just one suffering addict find a new way to live without the use of drugs. That wish came true, not just once, but many times.

Who would have ever thought that I, who walked through the doors of my first meeting the person that I was, would be sitting here tonight, sharing this gift with you, my fellow friends and addicts.

For you my friends who are doing the work of H&I or who might be thinking about it, if you ever get frustrated about H&I work, look at the newcomer, then look up to your Higher Power; your frustrations will be gone.

If your area or region is struggling with H&I efforts, use the spiritual principles; you won't struggle half as much. Adapt the H&I manual as your guidelines; your struggles will be gone. Thank you NA. Thank you H&I

J.R.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi. My name is J____ and I'm an addict. I support an H&I meeting in a state-run institution here in West Virginia. We meet once a week with addicts who are often sent there through court action or by commitment papers. Often we go in and share and, at the end of the meeting, we ask if anyone would like to share or has any questions. Many times we get no response. Sometimes it is hard wondering what they are thinking and if anyone will respond. We also see many of them return to the facility time and time again. Yet there is hope and a light at the end of the tunnel. Some of us, as panel members, have talked with the patients after meetings and we have been receiving calls on our helpline from them after they've gotten out.

I think the commitment that I need to maintain to go in week after week is very important to me in my recovery. Many times I do not want to go. You know recovery has given me a life today and sometimes I think, "Gee, I'd rather go work out," etc. But every time I go ahead and make the effort, I come out with a charged-up feeling that I've done the right thing and, most importantly, for many people the seed has been planted. Narcotics Anonymous is available!

I got to the program through two members' H&I efforts at a local treatment center that had just opened up in 1986. There were not very many members in NA here at that time, but those who were here were willing to come in and share about this program with us. I saw many people get clean in this town and several are still around today because

of two addicts' willingness to carry the message. Thank you H&I. Yes, sometimes it is difficult and a struggle with panel members not showing up or addicts going back out with the H&I literature and format, yet this is the reality of our disease.

God bless all you addicts who continue to make the commitment to H&I meetings.

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a member of an area H&I committee. The reason I got involved with H&I originally was because meetings didn't happen twenty-four hours a day. I was new to the fellowship and was told I didn't need to have a lot of clean time to go to H&I meetings. That's how I became involved and started going to hospital meetings.

I was never in the penitentiary, only in the county jail for no more than two or three days at a time, mostly for driving while being intoxicated. For that reason I didn't feel comfortable with the thought of going into correctional facilities. Overcoming my fears and doing it anyway was what taught me what I believe is the true meaning of H&I or any service work—carrying the NA message.

To me it doesn't matter where I carry the message, just that I carry it. Today, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to become involved with H&I. This involvement helped build the foundation for all of my service work. H&I is where I learned about commitment and felt privileged to be given a commitment. When I went to meetings or presentations, people weren't surprised when I showed up, they kind of trusted that I would. I realized that meant they had trust in me. That carries a message to me, continues to give me hope, and has kept the promise of freedom.

As a member of my area H&I committee, I have been able to grow with people and watch people just like I was come in and grow. I feel the joy is in the process of serving and being a part of that process. Just for today, I am glad for the ability to serve.

Clean in West Virginia

