

REACHING OUT

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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 of H&I efforts throughout the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

ARTICLES AND EXCERPTS OF LETTERS

Hi from Boise!

Received the last newsletter, and it really made me happy and overjoyed to see that there are others in institutions, who want to stay clean and pass the N.A. word on how they have done it.

I found that when I first started this group many of the people I contacted stated, "No I don't have a drug problem." However, as time went by they did see how much happier I was after over 25 years of drug abuse. They asked me how I did it and I told them the N.A. way.

The N.A. Program gave me a new life. Or should I say, gave me back my life so that I became a new person. "No more drugs," means more new friends, real friends, more social contact with those around me, which helped build my own self-esteem of me. Now four years of being clean means more to me then all the twenty-five years on drugs. Now that I've been clean, with the help of N.A. and the Fellowship, I feel it's time that I try to help others in any way I can, by word of mouth or letter. At this time I'm trying to write other institutions that want to get a meeting started or that may need help to keep their group going, in this way, I feel I can help pay back what N.A. has done for me, and will do for me the rest of my life.

I know that since I've been in N.A. and clean for the past four years, I feel much happier about myself and see other people for what they are, not for what I can get out of them, it makes me want the N.A. Program more and more. I feel left out if I have to miss a meeting, which is only one in the last two years. For, without the Program and the Fellowship I'd be back on drugs in no time. Thanks N.A. and all you who cared for me and others.

Yours in Service and Fellowship.
D.S.--Idaho State Correctional Institution.

My name is F.M. and I am a recovering addict. I want to tell the newcomers to N.A. that there is hope for us addicts. If you want what we have to offer and are willing to spend as much time getting clean as you did getting drugs. Myself, I got tired of hurting, and hurting the people I loved, and I wanted to stay out of prison and quit killing myself. I had been to physcs and conned them out of dope, and I've got a lot of time behind bars (both kinds). I started drinking at about 8 years old and started poping pills at 15 and by the grace of God (my Higher Power), and the Fellowship of N.A., I am alive and recovering at 44.

I went through treatment at a V.A. hospital in November of 1983 and got out in January of 1984. I found N.A. while at the V.A. hospital and decided I wanted what the people in N.A. had. I got out of the hospital and worked for 3 weeks before going to jail again for 45 out of 90 days. As soon as I got out of jail I went to my first N.A. meeting and found something I had been hunting for all my life (love and understanding), from someone other than my family. I had been married 7 times and still didn't know what love was. The people at the meetings showed me that they cared about me and wanted to help me without any paybacks. They told me to get a sponsor and work the steps of N.A. (which I was very reluctant to do). I talked the program and walked the walk (halfway), for about 14 or 15 months, and I finally woke up to what the Steps and Traditions of N.A. really meant to me as an individual--which was freedom--and I finally started getting somewhere in my life. Now after 25 years I have a GED and am working in a chemical dependency unit of a hospital here in Oklahoma. I personally know that my Higher Power works when I get honest and work the Steps and live them in my everyday life. I found out that this is a simple program (but we can make it hard). Anyone can work it by

getting honest with ourselves, becoming willing to listen to suggestions and being open minded to new ways to live.

We are here to help one another because, "We can only keep what we have by giving it away." I know that I don't write too good today, but I do better than what I did yesterday and I want everyone out there to know that if F.M. can work this program, one day at a time, so can anyone else!

N.A. is the only way for me today, and with God's help I will be here for a long time to come.

Yours in loving service.

F.M. H&I Chair--Oklahoma Region.

Hello!

I am an addict. I am writing this letter to say thank you to the Fellowship.

I want to briefly qualify myself, although I know you are not interested in what or how much I've used or who my connections were, what I've done in the past, how much or how little I have, but only in what I want to do about my problem and how you can help.

I just want to say that I'm an ex-con; that no one ever trusted me until I came to N.A. You folks have given me keys to meeting places, invited me into your homes as a guest, trusted me with money, and allowed me the right to be me. I have never experienced this before N.A.

You have helped me to stay clean and free with your love. You have told me I don't have to ever go back to prison or use drugs again, one day at a time, I never knew that! I thought I was doomed to always use and always return to prison.

After I got a few of those days behind me, you told me If I knew how to stay out of prison and stay clean one day at a time, perhaps I should carry that message to addicts like me that are still incarcerated. Even though I trusted you, I had to think about this real hard. Could I overcome my resentments against the prison authorities and carry an effective message of freedom from addiction wherever you are? The answer my sponsor and I came up with was, if I know how to stay clean and out of prison one day at a time and don't share it, then I'm not sharing what was so freely given to me, and If I don't do that I can't keep it!

The first time was really scary--going in through the gate, all the sounds and smells and sights that occupied my worst

dreams until I walked into the meeting and felt right at home! I was the outside sponsor of that meeting for over a year, and you know what? My dreams went away for the most part! The prison guards made me feel welcome, their count always came up one extra, me! After chairing that meeting for over a year, I had to give it up with a heavy heart, so as not to deny someone else the joy, serenity, love and Fellowship of being a part of H&I.

I've remained active in H&I since then, not because I'm an angel or do-gooder, but because it works! Sometimes during that year when I felt like using, that meeting would come to mind and I would think, "I'll use after the H&I meeting, those guys need me," and you know what? I needed them too, because I'd always forget about using because of them. These guys in the H&I meeting would be talking about the Second Step, or the Third Step and it would blow me away!

So, thank you N.A., thank you for my life! Thank you for my friends! and thank you for a set of principles so simple, anyone can follow them! And especially thank you guys inside for teaching me that the Program works--if you live it!

Recovering because you cared,
P.C.--North Carolina

HI!

I felt terrific this morning when I found the *Reaching Out* newsletter in my mail box here at work. It wasn't addressed to me, but wouldn't you know it, how we get what we need!

I am a recovering addict as well as a social worker in a government drug and alcohol program. When I began work here 4 years ago, I had just come out of a treatment center. It was in treatment that I had first been introduced to the Fellowship. Let me tell one of my favorite stories here. My group "suggested" I get to some outside meetings. I resisted, had excuses, plain did not want to go, and didn't. Every week I was asked if I had gone, "NO." "Why not?" came back the response. "Just Go!" they said. Finally one week I went. I came to group just waiting for "the question," just waiting to say, "yes, I went, so there!" Then to my surprise, instead of hearing and expecting congratulations, I heard, "How many?" What? What do you mean how many? What about me? Well, I was deflated. I finally answered, "One." Everybody just looked at me and shook their heads. I didn't impress them like I thought I would. I was lucky I didn't. From then on I began attending 3 plus meetings a week for the next year.

Thank God for N.A. During that next year I learned more about myself, other people, human nature and addiction and recovery than I had in all my formal education and psychotherapy.

Now, back to my other story. So here I am, just out of treatment and in the middle of a tough bunch of addicts. Now, this is 1981 in Wisconsin, thought to be civilized and reasonably in contact with the modern world. Well, wrong again. "What do mean you've never heard of N.A. around here?" I was aghast! Well, to make a long story shorter, the next year was spent overcoming various officials' paranoia of N.A. in their program. Yes, now you see how that year went. Lots of anger too. Things have gotten better. Thank God and thank N.A. and H&I here in Wisconsin. With their guidance and support we jumped through many hoops, but got what is most important, N.A. in this institution for addicts. We now have former patients coming back and leading N.A. groups, N.A. literature everywhere and a staff that has an N.A. way of life.

So, there you have it. A slice of life from Wisconsin. I would add that I am also involved with other major treatment facilities here in town and the community in general and am proud and happy to say "N.A. is alive, breathing and strong and vital here in my little town and Wisconsin in general." The people of N.A. made it happen. I too am grateful, for I owe my life and continued sanity to N.A. and the people of N.A. May we go forward together with happiness in recovery! Oh Yeah!

With warm regards,
B.B.--Wisconsin

Hi! My name is J— I'm a grateful recovering addict. I was very moved by a letter in the H&I newsletter, *Reaching Out*. I am responding to my feelings of gratitude towards a clean and free life from the old way of life, all through N.A. and the winners of our program, who go to any honest level to carry the message of recovery. My writing and spelling is not good, but my pride has never stopped me getting sick and with the help of Steps Six and Seven, it helps me to be me today. So I would like to share in writing.

There was no N.A. in England in 1980, when I came into the Fellowship through another 12 Step Fellowship. Thank God for those who were on the phone and involved in service, I came in from the street broken. For many years, police, probation and those who knew me were very worried about

my sanity. I had spent over 5 years in prison the last sentence was for something I did in a blackout. Prison saved my life, even though I hated that way of life in jail. Freedom meant a lot to me then. For other reasons, at the end of my active addiction and insanity, all doors were closed. The only bed I slept on for many years was the ground or park benches, or at times, if I was lucky, somebody's couch.

In August of 1980, a handful of addicts alone, we started our first N.A. meeting in England. In a hospital that had once closed its doors on me and in an area where the police said if they ever saw me, they would arrest me on sight. Today, through N.A. that really is my past. But from that first N.A. meeting, I put my life and soul into N.A., and at times I had had to work on that too. Such is life and normal living. N.A. deals with all of my addictions. For 2 years N.A. took time to grow. For awhile there were only 3 of us in the room. We contacted drug places and did all we could to carry the message, and we grew slowly; it kept me clean and happy.

From that first N.A. meeting we had in that small rundown hotel in 1980 till now, there are hundreds of recovering addicts in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, the rest of Europe and the World. We now also have many meetings in Jails too and we have a very good H&I committee. We visit hospitals and help carry the bond of recovery that much further. All it takes is surrender, willingness and the honest desire to change. They even let me into prisons now. Well, most of them. We started our first jail meeting without the prison letting me in. Today there is very strong recovery in that jail.

I believe in tough love, and keeping an open mind; also in not being that hard where I won't listen. I still know what its like to suffer. I also know what pain feels like, its all part of growing up and living clean. One last thing, last week a member in prison wanted somebody to meet them on their release. Several recovering addicts were asked. They were too busy. I went myself, because I know it is different the day you walk out to the free world. I waited. Somebody on the prison staff came out also because they too cared. When the person came out of prison they ran away. I did not feel any resentment towards them, but I understood and N.A. is there when you are ready. If you don't die first from the illness. It kept me clean. We do recover and N.A. loves you.

Love and Care
J.H. --England

Hello!

I'm T— and I'm an addict. I'm not sure what to say, but I'm in prison now also. I found N.A. 20 months ago, and I haven't had to pick up a drink, drug or anything mood or mind altering. It was hard in the beginning, but that passed. Today, I have good and bad days, but nothing like my past. Sometimes I choose to let my life, mind and will take over. I end up hurting and feeling, then growing. I'd like to tell you that N.A. does work as long as you choose to work it. It takes actions, not just words. I know that without N.A. I wouldn't be alive today, or at least not getting out of prison in less than 2 months. I've found my Higher Power today, and He does work for me. If you're thinking about whether this program will work for you or not, well it will as long as you have just a desire to stop using and can try to become open minded willing and honest with yourself no matter what, you never have to use again. Just for today give yourself a break and try our way of life. It's worked for so many of us as long as we have tried to work our Steps and Traditions.

An Addict Seeking Recovery.

T—

Dear *Reaching Out*:

I have been involved in H&I work for the last several years of my recovery. Going into a state hospital in the Southern California area for penal code offenders. Unlike a lot of other people in H&I work, who had been institutionalized, and incarcerated prior to the program, I had been in the county jail only once overnight as a result of my disease.

The first time I went into an institution, I wasn't sure what I had to share. I have subsequently discovered that what people in jails and hospitals want and need to hear is how addicts on the outside are making it clean; that there is hope regardless of how you got to be an addict and where your addiction took you, that we are all brothers and sisters regardless of how much or how long we used.

There have been many times during the last several years where going on my panel, by myself a lot of the time due to last minute cancellations by other members or my own procrastination in getting people ined up, has seemed like a real chore. I always feel better for giving a part of myself though and the greatest sound in the world is the sound that

last gate makes when it clicks shut with you on the outside, clean, free and living clean.

I guess the real message I would like to get across is to those members of the "outside" Fellowship, like myself who feel that they have nothing to share with addicts "inside." I would encourage them to try H&I work as an investment in their own recovery as, in my experience, people in service tend to stay clean. H&I work is not all about war stories and how many jails and institutions you have been in, but how you stay clean today, one day at a time, using the Twelve Steps and the people and program of Narcotics Anonymous. "High bottom" addicts do have something to share with addicts in jails, institutions and hospitals. You are depriving yourself, if you don't get involved.

Yours in service,
D.C.--Riverside, CA.

NEW MEETINGS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

CANADA	Toronto Jail Toronto, Ontario, Canada
DELAWARE	Delaware Correctional Center Smyrna, Delaware
MARYLAND	Brockbridge Correctional Facility Jessup, Maryland
NEW JERSEY	Southern State Correctional Delmont, New Jersey
PENNSYLVANIA	Rockview State Prison Bellafonte, Pennsylvania

INSTITUTIONS INQUIRING ABOUT STARTING MEETINGS

ARIZONA	Federal Correctional Institution Safford, Arizona
FLORIDA	Sumter Correctional Institution Bushnell, Florida Seminole County Correctional Facility Winter Springs, Florida

MISSISSIPPI	Adams County Jail Natchez, Mississippi
NORTH CAROLINA	McCain Prison Aberdeen, North Carolina
NEW YORK	Green Haven Correctional Center Stormville, New York
PENNSYLVANIA	Youth Development Center New Castle, Pennsylvania
VIRGINIA	James River Correctional Center State Farm, Virginia
WISCONSIN	Black River Correctional Center Black River Falls, Wisconsin
INDIA	King Edward VII Memorial Hospital Bombay, India

These next four articles are being reprinted from the MCI Newsletter in Hagerstown, Maryland, which is published by the N.A. group at that facility.

A PERSONAL RELATION TO STEP ONE

(We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives have become unmanageable.)

I have to admit now that I was powerless over my addiction, that in fact it had power over me. All my thinking and actions were indeed centered around the getting, finding, and the using of drugs. All my problems with life and concepts as I once knew them to be, were those only in relation to drugs. I never knew of any other life than that of using, just getting high on whatever was at hand. No wonder I had an unmanageable life when it was being managed by everything that was outside of me.

My wanting to be accepted and cool with everybody, impressing everybody that I could party all the time, getting and buying of drugs, being hip and having it on me all the time so I could show off, all the stealing so I could have

money for more drugs. The B&E's and robberies and harm I brought to others and myself, for the sake of drugs: my fears and resentments, and anger towards people places and things when I couldn't have my way, or they wouldn't go the way I wanted them to go; my cowardice and insecurity towards those things I was confused or in doubt about; how I just ran and took drugs to make things better; what a phony and pretender I was, wanting to be everything but myself. At the time I didn't know that it had to come from within, that it couldn't be had from anything or everything without. My searching was for me, not for any of that other stuff. So I ask you, how could I have power over my addiction? When all this time it had power over me and my life!!!

R.S.B.

THE YOUNG MAN WITH NO DIRECTION

The year 1977 was a bad year for me. Why? Because I was a drug abuser. I didn't want to face reality about myself. Why not face reality about oneself? Well as for me, I had no purpose or direction in life. Drug abusing was my life. Following that course is how I find myself incarcerated. I wanted to be what was happening. As I look back to the past, I saw myself as an individual who needed help to the utmost. Reality was what I feared most, so I decided at that time that the best way to escape reality, was to take drugs. I felt I was a person who didn't exist mentally, I didn't like life or myself for that matter. I had to end up in prison before I found myself, and you know what? I am happy now!!!

To all who read this, learn from it, also learn about yourself before it's too late, cause life is better outside these walls.

W.C.

SOMETHING NEW

I first became involved in N.A. mainly for the betterment of my chances at parole. I went to my first meeting, thinking, here I go again, attending another one of those jive drug meetings. Because the other institutional groups I have been involved in were a joke, just a bunch of people, all sitting around cracking jokes over who could tell the biggest lie. But

N.A. was different, there was no pressure to speak out, I was made to feel welcome, and given plenty of time to feel comfortable, and at ease with those around me. But what really struck me was the sincere honesty of the group, it was more than a surprise, it almost knocked me out, because honesty and openness is not something you see every day among inmates. So when I saw this, it made me sit up and listen more closely, and what I heard was people just like me with more or less the same type problems I had. And they were talking openly, and no one was laughing, in fact, everyone was listening and giving encouraging advice.

This was what I was looking for, a chance to air my fears, and get back something positive, instead of wise cracks. The honesty and openness of the N.A. members are the reason I will keep coming back, because I know through them and their positiveness, I will overcome my powerlessness over addiction, and I will survive!!!

A Survivor--B.

FINALLY CLEAN

HI! My name is F— and I am a drug abuser, and have been for 11 years now. Which is one of the reasons for where I am today. But through a loving God and the togetherness of N.A., I am able to see life clearly for the first time in years. I have only been involved in N.A. for 7 months, but have been drug free for over a year. I started using in my very early teens. I thought at first it was so I could feel accepted by my peers, but the truth was I was using to escape reality, drugs were my way of making things easier to face problems at home, with family I felt was rejecting me. Later on it was problems at school and drinking. I felt the only way to deal with these problems was to be high and go with the flow.

But, as always in a drug abusers life, things only got worse. I was married at 16, and in the service at 17. Two weeks before I was to ship out, my wife and I had a fight over my use of drugs, which resulted in her having a miscarriage. I did not last in the service because after boot camp I was stationed close to home, and once again had easy access to drugs. Finally I robbed a concert to obtain more money for drugs. I was caught and received 10 years, but prison didn't stop my using, it only made me want it more, so I didn't have to face the reality of these bars everyday. Finally I realized that if I kept using I would keep coming back here. So I sat down and made a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself and knew that this was not what I wanted out of life.

I am clean now, and plan to stay that way. While I am here I will continue to attend our meetings and gather strength from the brothers of N.A.

I have learned the hard way, that N.A. was the only way for me!!!!

Staying Strong--F.B.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: We would appreciate any input for the next issue of the *Reaching Out* by mid-December. We will be putting together the January-February 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 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
