
WSC-H & I Newsletter

REACHING OUT

VOLUME 2

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World Service Office, Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

Welcome

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

Dear Reaching Out,

Hi, my name is E-----, and I'm an addict. I first started using drugs at the age of eleven. I've spent the last seven years in jails and institutions. My whole life has been centered around drugs in one form or another. I always told myself that I'd never use drugs, because of what they did to my mother. But one day I was turned on to drugs, and I fell in love with them. That was over six years ago, and I've spent the last three years in an institution for stealing to supply my habit. I didn't care who I hurt or who I stole from. Drugs controlled my life until I found Narcotics Anonymous. I've been clean for two and a half years now.

I was turned on to N.A. when I first arrived in the institution. I knew that I needed help in the past, but I didn't know how to get it. I started attending N.A. soon after my arrival in the institution. At first I sat in the meetings saying nothing until the other guys in the meetings kept with me and

wouldn't give up. They were very sincere in trying to help me whenever I needed someone to talk to. They really understood where I was coming from too! So I started opening up in the meetings, and started to study my Twelve Steps and learned to apply them in my daily life. I had heard about sponsors, but never took the time to find out more about them. Then in a meeting one day they asked if any of us were interested in getting a sponsor, so I signed up for one. One night we had an outside guest in our meeting and he became my sponsor. I knew him from the meetings and it was easy to talk to him and he really helped me in working my program. He would share his time with me and he loved me like a brother. If I had a problem and needed to talk, he would write me or we would talk at our weekly meeting. He's been there for me in times when I just felt like giving in, and he encouraged me to continue living the N.A. way. He taught me about my Higher Power, and that life is too valuable to just give up on. So I owe my life to N.A., and to my sponsor who kept me going. Just remember to live the N.A. way, stay clean and take it one day at a time. N.A. is love, honesty and faith in yourself and your Higher Power.

E.
Ohio

Editor's Note: We often receive items such as poetry, etc., and although many of them are excellent we do not, as policy, include poetry in the Reaching Out.

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is T---- and I am an addict. The N.A. concept has always been something which I shunned completely. Even through 22 years of addiction and 12 years of drug-related incarcerations--I just didn't need N.A. However, my acceptance of N.A. came a few months ago when an endeared lady addict on the streets underwent her first hospitalization and while there not only came into contact with N.A. but became a member. Or so she said.

On the pretense it might enable me to communicate with her, I picked up the N.A. Basic Text which I had shunned for so many years. But it seemed the more I read this book the more I noticed that my lady friend hadn't the faintest idea about N.A., or the Steps, and had no contact whatsoever with sponsorship. Even more pristine was my overwhelming consciousness of her deceptions. At this point the words in the Basic Text suddenly jumped right out at me. They said: THIS IS REALLY YOU AND YOU RECOGNIZE HER

BEHAVIOR ONLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN THIS WAY YOURSELF--FOR 22 YEARS! With each page I turned I learned more about humility, powerlessness, forgiveness, and all the other reasons this woman's recovery was likely to be as ill-fated as my own past attempts had been. I realized also that my tomorrows would be equally as ill-fated if I continued to let resentment, pride, and ego dictate my personal crisis. Accepting His way for me swept me into awareness and solutions became simplistic.

Because of my emotional gremlins, working the program made my dishonesty sing out. I mean, my example was another addict fresh out of treatment who was concentrating on every aspect of life except her own sanity. In other words--still doing it her way and insisting she was right. I could relate to hearing her say *my* lines and seeing her act out *my* part. It made me understand "excuses" and "relapse," because I had lived these excuses and relapses for 22 years and nothing ever worked for me until I picked up that text myself in search of communication. Boy, did I find communication! And it wasn't with my lady friend either.

What had began as a farce suddenly became my salvation; and my dear lady friend had become, by way of demonstration, my teacher. She made me realize how transparent I had been towards my parents and especially, how deeply I had hurt them. For many years my parents had watched me destroy myself and they had been powerless to help. Suddenly finding myself in their powerless position is what finally snapped me. I am very thankful they are still alive today. I have many more amends to make to them.

I am now co-founder of the N.A. group here in this prison. Recovery principles of the Fellowship have guided me out of two decades of darkness into a twilight bursting with eternal promise. To me, that's what faith is all about because . . . I *never* have to use again. And I'm fortunate to be alive to cherish it.

I would like to contact N.A. members in San Antonio, Texas, before my release in November. I also take this opportunity to thank those in the El Paso Area for your help in getting our inside N.A. established. Our group does more than exist--it lives!

Faithfully yours,
T---
New Mexico

Editors Note: We have forwarded the H&I contact for San Antonio.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M---, and I'm an addict. For years I seemed to know only how to do two things well, get high and go to prison. By the time I was forty I had been an addict for twenty-two years and was serving my fourth term in prison. No matter how long I stayed in jail I still wanted to get high when I got out. Even if I was clean physically I was still mentally addicted, so the moment I was released I immediately got high again. I felt I owed it to myself.

In between my stints in prison I worked as a drug counselor, ostensibly to show others how to kick the habit. I told my clients that they had to want to quit using to stop. I knew what I was talking about because I had never quit and had only stopped when time and circumstance prevented me from getting the kind of high I preferred. In prison I just substituted one high for another. I didn't know why at the time, but any drug I used became habit forming for me simply because I had no choice. I was an addictive personality and anything or anyone I depended upon quickly became part of my addiction.

Even women were addictive for me. Whether in prison or out, I always found a woman to cling to. Like the drugs I'd taken, women became a part of my sickness. The more I used them to feed my fears the more dependent I became on their presence. I was married three times and each one ended in failure. What began as a friendship became a sense of obligation for me and I married them as a payment for having fed me and taken me in or visited me while I was in prison.

I was a wash out as a husband. I got along fine as a leech or dependent but my sense of obligation wasn't enough to sustain an equal partnership between us. Whenever one of my wives got too close to the insecure man I was trying to hide, I managed to evade exposure by getting arrested. I ended all three of my marriages that way. So for me prison was just as much of an escape as it was a confinement.

Regardless of how successful I appeared to others I always felt like a failure inside. I was an excellent student and none of my wives could understand how I continued making the same stupid moves that landed me in jail. Even though I was a college student and a drug counselor, I had never come to grips with my own addiction. So no matter how good I looked to others I expected my competent facade to crumble at any second and expose the tearful child/man I was inside. Trying to stay a step ahead of that exposure kept me running to drugs and prison.

When I entered prison for the last time I was thirty-six years old and facing the longest sentence of my career. With

five years to the parole board on an eight to forty year sentence, I would be forty-one before I even had a chance of being released, and that scared me to death. It was the recognition and acceptance of that fear that eventually became the source of my recovery.

It took a lot of help for me to admit how powerless I was over my addiction. And I found that help in the form of one of my old addictions, a caring woman. She was worlds apart from any of the other women I'd known by discouraging my dependence on her and encouraging my belief in my own worth. It took a while, but I learned to trust her enough to let my real self emerge, and in the process discovered the person I'd kept in hiding for all those years.

The entire process of discovery was new to me, and finding a member of the prison psychology staff who sincerely cared about me was an even greater novelty. That woman and I became real friends and when she quit her job almost two years later we continued our friendship through letters. In the three years we spent writing and talking to each other on the phone, I learned to accept my fears and build on them. For the first time in my life I was able to stop using drugs while I was in prison, and I could never have done it without her.

But stopping and staying stopped was harder than I'd imagined. In prison I couldn't rely on external controls like a job or wife to keep me clean because everything outside of me represented "the man." And no self-respecting "con" ever does anything to please the man. Besides, I felt I owed myself a high every so often as a reward for all the stress I faced.

Because I stayed clear of the hole the authorities considered me a good inmate. But as far as me and the other cons were concerned, my staying free of the hole merely testified to how slick I was.

I served nearly all of three bits before I was caught using drugs in prison. During my second bit I worked as the pill center clerk and kept me and my friends high with illegal prescriptions. I held that job for two years and used daily on the job without my supervisors ever being aware of it. When I made furlough to attend The State University I was just as hooked as the day I had entered prison twenty-seven months earlier. On my third bit I landed a fat and lonely pen pal who became my "mule." She smuggled me drugs and money every visiting day in addition to the drugs she sent hidden in my sundry packages every ninety days. When I was finally busted receiving a package from her that contained drugs, I had been getting high nearly every day for a year.

Staying drug free in prison was always harder for me than it had been on the streets. In its atmosphere of constant

deprivation it was too easy for me to justify rewarding myself with a high. It took that woman psychologist's help for me to realize why I kept running to prison to hide. But even with her help I needed the intimacy of someone near who knew what I was struggling with and shared my desire to beat it. And that's where Narcotics Anonymous came in.

I joined the N.A. group at the prison and found the same kind of phoniness I'd met before. Eighty percent of the guys in the group were only there to impress the parole board, and the others were there for other reasons, only a few of which had anything to do with recovery. But I was lucky. After only thirty days in the Fellowship I was asked to give a lead. Once I'd publicly shared my hopes and dreams with the group it gave me a special place in the population unlike any I'd had before.

Although I'd been a phony for most of my life, for my own feeling of self-respect I prided myself on keeping my word. What a delusion that was. I knew from experience that no dope fiend would be depended on to keep his word for anything or anyone. But I needed to believe in that delusion. For my own good I had to have something on which to hang my riddled self respect, and keeping my word gave me the hook I needed. So when I stood up in a room full of my peers and said I'd stopped using, I knew I would be tested. I knew someone would try to get me to go back on my word.

Someone did but each time someone offered me drugs my refusal would go firmer. And each time I refused a high, I looked up one of the guys in the program who seemed sincere about his recovery and shared my triumph with him. Pretty soon, I could refuse drugs without feeling the need to explain why. After a while the word got around I was for real and guys just stopped asking.

Although I still have nine months to go before I'm paroled, I can leave with confidence this time because I have seen my life change. I have felt my power of refusal and of choosing my own path. I have found a woman whom I love and a Fellowship who loves me. I know I'll be the man I've longed to be as long as I stick with both of them, and if I falter I'll have the help I need to get back up.

This is in fact my last time in prison. I know it far better than I can explain it. For the first time in my life I have been able to say no to drugs and because of that I know I can say good-bye to jail. But even more than that, I can say hello to myself, my real self. And that's how I know that for the first time in my life I'm truly free.

M---
Ohio

Service Committee Input

H&I Awareness Day in a Penitentiary

The seed was first planted immediately following our 1987 H&I Awareness Day in Delaware, Ohio. The Ohio Regional H&I Subcommittee in its efforts to serve the Fellowship decided that it would vastly improve the message of the panels if there were professionals on them. These professionals, in sharing their knowledge in the fields they represent, could only help shine more light on our message of recovery. We know how essential lines of communications are in establishing and maintaining H&I meetings in facilities that our H&I subcommittees service, therefore we chose to have treatment center administrators share their views on our Treatment Center Panel and Psychiatric Unit Panel. We chose to have substance abuse coordinators on our Prison Panel, Lines of Communication Panel and our Do's and Don'ts Panel. These coordinators were from various penal institutions our subcommittee serviced.

One of these substance abuse coordinators was Ms. Rebecca Fritsche, who shared on our Lines of Communication Panel. Her enthusiasm and dedication for her chosen profession was obvious. She stated that it would be beautiful if we could bring our H&I Awareness Day into a penal institute in the state of Ohio. From that moment on there was great effort by many people to make this dream come true.

It was she who made the initial contact with her superintendent at the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville, Ohio, and gained approval for this project. The foundation of trust and acceptance had been built prior to this due to the dedication and hard work being displayed there by the local area H&I subcommittee whose members serviced and supported an H&I meeting there. Ms. Fritsche forwarded a formal bid to host the '88 Awareness Day at the Ohio Reformatory for Women, and the bid was accepted by the Ohio Region H&I Subcommittee.

There were a lot of obstacles that needed to be overcome in order to make this event successful. The most important tool used was our lines of communication.

The H&I subcommittee established a format and an agenda of the Awareness Day presentations. The schedule and panel members to make the presentations were established. The panel members were chosen with great care. They had proven their message of recovery and their willingness to

serve and they were very knowledgeable in the topics they were presenting. Once again we as a committee chose to have a professional on each panel.

The needs of the reformatory were far greater than ours. There were many restrictions that we, as a Fellowship, had never dealt with in creating a function.

The most important item on the agenda was security. Their needs were presented to our subcommittee and were passed on to the Fellowship in a special letter attached to the flyers. Due to security an absolute limit on how many people could attend had to be placed. We had to devise the means to accurately account for all members attending. It was decided that a registration form would be placed on the flyer, and all members of the Fellowship who wished to attend would pre-register for this event, and that only, the first 150 to register would be admitted. The institutions rules on security were also stressed on the flyer. There could be no women's purses brought into the facility. There could be no medications, weapons, or drugs allowed on the premises. There could be no children brought in. All members attending had to present a photo I.D. for positive identification.

Another problem we had to overcome was how to feed all those present at dinner. It was decided that the dinner had to be brought into the institution for there was no time to process everybody out for dinner and then back onto prison grounds. A local supermarket was contacted and they agreed to furnish cold cut sandwiches, potato salad, and jello dessert for 150 people. We made this a Seventh Tradition commitment. The "Lifers" club in the reformatory agreed to sell us soft drinks for dinner. So that problem was taken care of.

In order to present a full and comprehensive program of H&I awareness we had to start our schedule of the panel presentations at 8:30 a.m. and finish up the day at 4:00 p.m. and be off the premises by 4:30 p.m. We were allotted 30 minutes starting at 8:00 a.m. to process 150 people into the institution. In order for the fellowship to start the morning fresh and rested, a local motel was contacted and their services and accommodations were listed on the flyer along with an 800 number for pre-registering. This was for those who wanted to avoid a long early morning drive.

A special invitation letter was mailed out to all the substance abuse coordinators of all the institutions in the state of Ohio. Their area H&I chairs were instructed to invite the administrators of all the treatment centers they serve.

The flyers consisted of three items:

1. The Awareness Day time and location announcement along with a schedule of the day's events, and on the back of the registration form was a map.
2. A letter explaining the security rules and the registration process.
3. A flyer and a map of a speaker meeting and a dance following the prison presentations, but at another location.

The flyers were approved by the regional H&I subcommittee and then distributed throughout the Fellowship by way of the area service committees. They were distributed to the surrounding regions by members attending functions there.

A budget was planned and drafted to cover all the financial needs for this function. There were many small details that needed attention. We had special T-shirts with our own original logo.

The Ohio Regional H&I Subcommittee met frequently and all areas of the agenda were well planned. The lines of communication were used extensively. The subcommittee stayed in touch on the development and process in all areas of the function. We had weekly contact with the reformatory, each of us expressing our needs and concerns. Obstacles were recognized and overcome. Each step was a new area of growth. The spiritual principles of our Fellowship were utilized on a daily basis in order to share this historic event. The knowledge and experience of the members who have accumulated extensive service experience was used and appreciated. The *Guide to Service* and the *H&I Handbook* were applied to all areas of this event. When any questions or areas of doubt were presented to the subcommittee, the experienced members were very helpful with their suggestions and guidance.

The panel leaders were urged to go over their presentations and to be as informative as possible. They agreed to share on only the topic that their panel consisted of. This way there was no time wasted on duplication of information. They stayed in contact with the professional guests of the panels and shared with each other the contents of the information they were going to present.

As the time for the Awareness Day fast approached, more and more of the Fellowship began to respond to all the energy being generated. Addicts began calling from neighboring regions asking for information. H&I committees were urging their newcomers to be there. There was excitement in the air that we had never experienced before.

The registration number grew to 137, and we were very grateful. The night before the Awareness Day will stay in our hearts and thoughts for years to come. The Fellowship and love of one addict for another was overpowering that night. The addicts were arriving from everywhere and it was such a joy to greet them and share the excitement with them. There were addicts from Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. There were meetings springing up all over the motel. We felt a need for a midnight meeting, so a flyer was created and displayed in the motel office. At 12 midnight sharp the Marysville Midnight H&I Function Meeting was called to order. There were 31 addicts at that meeting sharing their hope, strength and recovery. A new sense of spiritual awareness came into the room that night. All the fears and doubts that the Awareness Day would be a flop were removed.

When we arrived at the penitentiary in the morning Ms. Fritsche and the prison staff were processing the guests onto the grounds. They checked I.D.'s and then we were processed through metal detectors. In 30 or 40 minutes 120 addicts were processed into the penitentiary as guests. The N.A. group from inside the institution was waiting for us with fresh coffee and breakfast cake. There were eight ladies in recovery who had worked real hard to enjoy the privilege of being part of this historic event. They had plenty of tables and chairs set up in the prison gymnasium. There was plenty of room. They also had set up a P.A. system that worked very well. At 8:30 a.m. in the morning of March 26, 1988 the first regional function to take place inside a penitentiary in the history of Narcotics Anonymous was opened with a moment of silence for the still suffering addict and the Serenity Prayer at the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville, Ohio.

The panels were very informative. They accomplished exactly what they were meant for. The first panel was "What is H&I?" That was followed by "Treatment Centers and Psychiatric Units," and then by "Carrying the Message to Adolescents." Each panel was allotted one hour to present their information and then have a question and answer session. Having a substance abuse coordinator on the panels was very useful. After each of the panel's time was up, we closed each presentation with a group hug and the Serenity Prayer. We could feel the Higher Power's presence wherever we formed our circle. Every person in the gymnasium, which included prison staff personnel, substance abuse coordinators from various penal institutions, inmates from the in-house N.A. group, and the N.A. members from the outside formed this huge circle. There were a lot of hugs given out that day.

Not only was our message of recovery being delivered that day, but we also saw it being lived.

At noon we took an hour out for lunch. The sandwiches, potato salad, and jello were great. We were able to meet and talk to some of the substance abuse coordinators who were very enthusiastic about having N.A. meetings from our H&I subcommittees. It was expressed to us more than once that the most positive results they have experienced was when a recovering addict from our Fellowship would take the time to come to their prison and share their hope, strength and experience with the inmates. The speaker meetings and Twelve Step Workshops were absolutely vital to the recovery of our family in the penitentiary.

We also got to share with several of the ladies who were sharing service work. They were amazed that so many people would come from so far away just to learn and share on how to better serve our Fellowship. They told me how they could feel the love and the unity that was present.

After dinner we opened the next panel presentation which was on Prisons and Jails. We had a guest on the panel who was a Marysville inmate who shared her message of hope with us. She had found the program through the prison. Her message moved all of us there that day to tears.

The panel on Lines of Communication was overwhelming. Much light was shed on different areas of the penal system that were previously unknown to us.

The Panel on Do's and Don'ts was the last one of the day. We received all the information presented in the WSC H&I Handbook draft, which is vital information and will help keep many newcomers from making mistakes.

The circle of addicts in our closing group hug took on a new meaning that day. We sensed a renewing of hope in carrying the message of recovery. We felt a new awareness of our unconditional love for one another, a love that razor wire and iron bars could never stop.

We could feel the presence in that circle of addicts who have died to make that day possible. We felt the awesome power of our Fellowship in that circle. The message that we are blessed with will be carried to the treatment centers, hospitals, jails and penitentiaries, bringing with it hope and love. The message of life like we have never known before will be carried to the suffering addict.

It was with a little sadness that we said good-bye to the ladies there. It was a gift to be part of these ladies' lives in doing something that will forever be a part of our lives and recovery.

As we walked away from the penitentiary we felt a spiritual presence. We felt a sense of freedom we had never known before. Thank you, N.A.

Editors' Note: The previous article was submitted by a H&I Service Committee in Ohio. The content does not necessarily reflect the H&I practices of WSC H&I Committee.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: As many of you know, we are in the process of reformatting the *Reaching Out*. Any of you who have suggestions for the new format, please send them to the H&I Coordinator at the World Service Office, P.O. Box 9999 Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

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. Many times the articles that we receive cannot be used because they concentrate on using and not on how N.A. has helped addicts in the institutions to recover. 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**
