

REACHING OUT

VOLUME 4

NUMBER 1

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.

FROM THE INSIDE

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is V---, and I'm an addict. I'm presently serving time at _____. I'm twenty-three years old and should I add this is not my first time down. I started doing drugs at the age of fifteen and by the time I was sixteen years old, I was in a youth adjustment program in Kansas. I was there for four months. The whole time I was there I was always getting high. When I was released, I kept using only my habit was getting worse. I always thought I could control my using. I never thought I was addicted. Two months before my eighteenth birthday, I caught my first felony and was sentenced to two to five years in the Kansas Department of Corrections. I was paroled in November 1984 and was out for four months and caught a parole violation for various reasons--using

was one of them. I was back in the Kansas Department of Corrections for four months and paroled again. Upon my release I went back to using my drug of choice and my drug habit got worse. My girlfriend, who later became my wife, told me time and time again I needed help but I couldn't listen. I couldn't hold down a job because of my using, so I would leave home for a few days and do nothing but steal and use drugs. My stealing finally caught up with me again and I was arrested here in Missouri, January of '87. I was sentenced to four years in prison. After coming here I realized I needed help. I was introduced to NA in March of 1987, here at _____. When I started, there were only four guys in our group. The group began to grow and later I became secretary. I was secretary for about four months, now I'm chairman, since being in this group, we've went from four members to about twenty active members, and I'm very proud to be a part of this group. I realize now that my problem all through my life has been drugs. Its kept me behind prison walls most of the last six years of my life. I owe so much to Narcotics Anonymous for showing me a new way of life I will never be able to repay, except for sharing with other addicts like myself. I'll be here at _____ for another nine months and then I will be returned to Kansas to finish up my time there. I've been clean for almost a year now, but sometimes I still have the desire to use. I guess that's why we have other fellow addicts to turn to. They understand better and they care. Thank you fellow N.A. members for helping me to find a new way to live without the use of drugs and for being here when I need you the most. I would also like to give special thanks to our outside sponsor for caring the Narcotics Anonymous message to us. This group loves you!

V---,
Missouri

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm writing you today for two reasons, the more important of the two is for myself. The other is being on addict I know that the program tells us that one addict helping another addict is the heart of the N.A. program. If you think about it who better to talk to, another addict?

Really there is a third reason for wanting to write. I don't wish anyone to have to go through the pain and suffering I did and am now going through.

I'm a drug addict. I've been one for 15 years. I started off smoking in the 60's. I went through using every drug there was. I

don't want to go into a lot of war stories. Not that I don't like to talk about them, but, every body has war stories of one kind or another, they all end up in the same place jails, death, or insane.

Right now I'm doing a 4 year prison term in one of the most modern prisons in California. Before I came here I was on the streets about 45 days, I got out of another pen, before that. Before these two terms I've never been in jail, and I'm 35. So you can see I started out of jails quite a while. Before coming to jail I thought I was real slick. Wrong again! I was one of those functioning addicts for a lot of years. I worked, had a wife--a beautiful wife--for about 17 years. I owned a \$125,000 home I had a child--a boy, a beautiful boy--money, the American dream come true. When I finally reached this point in my life which took so long for both my wife and I to build up together, I let it all go.

What I mean by this is, I have been coming in and out of the program before I lost everything. Never able to build up more than 90 days of being clean. The reason for that, I never really wanted it. I tried to make it look like I did for my wife, my family, my job, but it never worked and never will that way. Today after getting divorced, losing the house, not being with my boy when he most needs a dad, not to mention my mother and father, brothers and sisters, and friends I've hurt in the process. The reason I'm telling you these things is you people out there who still have some things, you don't have to go as far as I did. But, and it's a big but, you do it for yourself, you work the program, you do what the book says. You do the steps, you put as much effort into the program as you did in using or harder. Being in prison at this point in my life is a blessing. You may think that sound nuts. I need to be here. I must change my life. The next step for me is death. Today I like myself. I'm doing for myself today things I would never have done if I was not here. I thank God every chance I get, and I mean that. I could go on and on about good and bad that has happened. But my point to you out there, there is help, you do have a choice. You don't need to suffer any longer.

Look at me, I'm in prison, I'm happy, I'm secretary of a meeting here in prison, only one day a week but we just started.

The way I do it is keep it very simple; listen, keep an open mind, do what is suggested and don't use. Again my life is not great today by any means. But it gets better each day with the program in mind.

B---
California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am 22 years old and now serving a five year sentence for simple burglary in a Louisiana prison. I've just started serving my time, 7 months ago.

I heard about *Reaching Out* through our weekly N.A. group. We only meet once a week here, but it does work.

The reason I'm writing is because my need for drugs got me this five year sentence I have now, I've just realized a couple of months ago that I have had a bad drug problem for about ten years now. Before I didn't think I had a drug problem because, there was no problem to get the drugs I needed even at 12 and 13 years old.

The other reason I'm writing, is because I am involved in the N.A. way here. I only wish it wouldn't have taken so long for me to understand my problems with drugs as it is today. Even though I've only been clean for two months now, I'm really doing the best I can at a good start. Hopefully through N.A., I can stay clean and help other addicts stay clean also, the N.A. way.

I really don't know if I can or should give advice at this point in my recovery to other addicts, so I guess I'll just pass along a good idea to my fellow addicts. Everyone stay clean with help through N.A. and don't think, I can quit on my own if I tried, because I myself have tried it and it just won't work, we all need N.A. and a sponsor with clean time also.

So everyone stay clean the N.A. way it works so work with it.

D.L.
New Jersey

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is G---, and I am an addict. I am presently doing a life sentence for murder, and have been down twelve years. I am forty two years old and I used and dealt drugs for over twenty years-including the time I have been down.

Three years ago, myself and some friends started a Narcotics Anonymous group at this institution. I helped to start this group because I knew it would look good on my jacket-little did I know that this program would become my way of life. I thank God daily for my program and my recovery.

During all my years of using and abusing, I had times of riches where I had many nice things-but I now possess one thing that means more to me than anything I have ever had before. I

recently celebrated my first birthday, and our outside sponsor gave me a one year chip. That little bronze circle feels like solid gold to me.

As we hear so often, Keep Coming Back - It Works! If it worked for me, it can work for anyone - that's a promise from this grateful addict.

G--- B.
California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My heart goes out to all you N.A. members in prison because I truly do know the feeling of being in prison, as I'm writing this sitting in my cell. Anyway, I have been sitting here in my prison cell now for the last 5 years with a 4 month break, 2 months each time. I was one of the easily caught ones, so stoned out of my mind I didn't care if I got caught. However, I thank N.A. for giving me the hope and faith that I have been missing all my life. Oh man, I started this letter a couple of days ago, in that time I have been up for parole. I have to thank my Higher Power for giving me the courage for what I wanted to say which was the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for once in my life. Well fellow N.A. members, I truly believe now that honesty will set us all free. I love you all. I have been member of N.A. now for 10 months. And the courage it has given me is unbelievable. I always thought I needed drugs to give me courage, how wrong I was. Well over here we are a very small N.A. meeting, however, the rest of you out there in the world are reaching us, because we are growing all the time. We love you all for it. I for one am staying clean the N.A. way. I go into treatment March 1989. I will write again and let you know how we are getting on over here in New Zealand.

M---
New Zealand

Dear *Reaching Out*

The Holidays were just around the corner, there I was, doing my best to avoid any type of Holiday spirit. Feeling miserable had become an old friend and being in jail starting to feel like home. I could no longer control my life, destroying the people I cared the most for in my inept way. So being behind prison walls I felt safe, only the walls didn't hide the pain I brought with me, like extra baggage that I didn't know how to put down. I felt this was my burden to carry, my penance.

I started attending our weekly N.A. meeting, here at _____, telling everyone "I am only doing this for the parole board", because I didn't wish to admit that I felt totally out of control. For the first few months I had so little faith that I could stop using. I had convinced myself that our volunteers would get high as soon as they hit the parking lot, so why listen to them? Only I kept coming back, to this day I can't explain why, but soon some of the people started making sense.

After twenty three years of addiction I found I had no concept of living clean and found the basics of turning my will over to the care of my God and working the steps relieved me of the baggage I carried around for so many years, now I had help in setting it down.

No longer do I fear this 12 year bid, with a 4 year stip, it has become an adventure in working a program and I've only begun working on the person behind the image I portrayed through my addiction.

When the Holiday Season rolls around, I will be busy sharing myself with the people I care the most about and celebrating my gift to myself, which will be my second clean year. This has become more than a program in staying clean, it has become my life.

D---- H.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is R----, I am 13 years old, I am serving 1 1/2 to 2 years in a institution. I started drug use when I was 8 years old. I started doing it every single day of the week. I got into _____ when I was 10 years old. I got into it really heavy. I've been abused through my whole life. I met N.A. here in the institution. First I said to myself "Look at these people they're all crazy, I won't be like that." But I kept going and then I started to go to other groups. I started seeing my powerlessness over my addiction. I am now at a drug treatment cottage. I am starting to learn about myself a lot more. I can feel and talk and trust and listen to others. It's a really good feeling to have in yourself. I am really grateful to this program that I am still alive now. N.A. really works if you work it.

R----

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am presently doing time at _____ Oahu, HI. I am a recovering addict! My drug-a-log, for the purposes of this sharing is not as important.

What is important is that I now have a new way of life. I thank the God of my understanding for doing for me what I could not have done on my own.

As I continue to live the "N.A. way" a day at a time, life--ever behind bars--is given new meaning. No longer do I sulk and seek attention through my self-centeredness. Believe me, I am still self centered. However, by God's grace and the faithful nurturing of this fellowship I am learning to be a productive person.

Before incarceration I was fortunate enough to have gone through a rehabilitation program. By using the tools given me then, and by hanging out with winners I have recently celebrated my second year clean.

If there is anything that I'm sure of, it is I'm doing this for me & me only. It would be great if I could help someone else to recover from this disease. Fortunately I have also learned of the perils of "attempting to help" someone else recover.

My message is simple. I am here because of the crimes I committed as I began to hit my bottom. After realizing that I had been defeated by this disease I gave up.

Now that a power greater than this disease itself is in control of my life nothing can stop me from doing what I want, even behind bars.

Thank you God, for your love which flows freely and abundantly throughout the N.A. circles around the world.

R--- S.

Editor's Note: As a result of recent editorial changes, we will, starting with this issue, print original artwork submitted by our readers. We invite the submission of such original artwork to *Reaching Out*, c/o H&I Coordinator, WSO, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.



.....TO A NA MEETING,
IT'S JUST ON OUR WAY HOME.

Editors Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a world-wide perspective of H&I activity. In future issues, this section will be written from 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 N.A. message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. Therefore we are requesting members and H&I subcommittees to submit input to the section to the H&I Coordinator at the W.S.O., P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

FROM THE OUTSIDE

FROM WSC H&I

Additional Needs Concerns in H&I Work

The role of Area Hospitals and Institutions Subcommittees is to carry the message to addicts in facilities who do not have full access to regular Narcotics Anonymous meetings. H&I subcommittees are responsible to initiate, coordinate and conduct all H&I meetings within the area. In relation to additional needs concerns, when performing H&I services, the following are some points that should be a part of the H&I committee's considerations:

- 1) When dealing with a limited number of members involved in H&I work, the H&I subcommittee has to set priorities as to which facilities will get an H&I meeting and when. One of the major considerations should be the addicts in the facilities access to regular N.A. meetings. Facilities that have a number additional needs residents will, many times, by the logistic difficulty of transportation and other considerations, fall into a fairly restricted category. It is a good idea to take this into consideration when establishing which facilities will have the highest priority for an H&I meeting.
- 2) When exchanging information with the facility at the initial interviews, it is a good practice to inquire about any additional needs considerations of the residents. Whether or not this is applicable at the particular facility, we should inform these contact people about the availability of specialized N.A. materials. These

include literature in braille and on audio tape, large print White Books and speaker tapes that have been approved for sale from the WSO. Area/regional service committees who compile the meeting directories may be encouraged to make some designation as to which have wheelchair accessibility. Although not necessarily in the same vein, much of our literature is available in a variety of languages.

3) Members of your subcommittee who have disabilities should be encouraged to participate in H&I work. Many of the facilities you will work with are equipped to facilitate these members. If this is applicable to your subcommittee, the options available should be explored with the facility.

The concept of making the effort to make our message more available to the addict who still suffers is as old as our fellowship. Taking a little extra time to find how we may best carry the message can make a difference in how effective our efforts will be. We know that this disease does not discriminate whatever our race, background, education or nationality may be. It also doesn't matter whether we are physically challenged. The good news is that recovery also crosses all language, social, ethnic and impairment barriers as well.

S----- S.

NEWS FROM REGIONAL AND AREA H&I SUBCOMMITTEES

Dear *Reaching Out*,

In the Florida Region we have experienced a lot of growth in our H&I Committees. Through a lot of work and effort we continue to grow. We are proud to tell you that the Florida Region has 19 areas and all 19 are H&I Committees are represented at our regional meetings.

Several of the ways we have been able to get people involved are:

- 1) Of course, making H&I announcements at the end of regular meetings.
- 2) Hold H&I committee meetings on a regular basis.
- 3) Sponsor H&I awareness days through out our region.

- 4) Having people from other areas show up and chair workshops. This helps create enthusiasm for those people who have often thought of getting involved in H&I.
- 5) Through sponsorship and sharing on a one on one basis with addicts in our fellowship the thing that has helped us in our region is a Region sponsored H&I awareness weekend, workshops and speaker meetings held all weekend.

Our second annual H&I weekend is the last weekend in April 28, 29, 30th, 1989. For more information please contact:

Florida Regional Service Office:
1110 N.E. 34th Court
Oakland Park, FL 33334
(305)563-4262

H&I work helps me in a lot of areas of my recovery to interact with people in our fellowship on a daily basis, to agree and disagree with people on our committee without being wrapped up in personalities but being a positive, productive member of our fellowship. To better serve so we may carry the message to the addict that still suffers.

Most of all H&I helps me in my recovery when I go to that jail week after week to carry the message of hope and to see people in that facility ask questions and share things in their lives and how N.A. can help them.

H&I work helps me to get grateful for being clean and being involved in our fellowship. To get the opportunity to see people get clean and stay clean through the efforts and selfless service of our H&I committees; for if there were not H&I committees I may not have heard the message of recovery. For that I am forever grateful.

J----H.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The Ohio region hosts an H&I AWARENESS day at which our most dedicated H&I workers attend. We discuss our weak points with each other and with the staff members of the facilities in which we carry our H&I meetings/presentations.

A large focus is placed on opening and maintaining lines of communication. We feel this is vital to our ability to carry a consistent message of recovery. We get other N.A. members

involved in H&I work through example and by sharing our experience of working with others.

H&I service work started for me before I really knew what I was doing or what I was getting into. It guided me right into the center of recovery oriented service rather than service oriented recovery. Doing H&I work has shown me lots of gratitude and helps to keep me humble and involved in my own spiritual progress.

As a sponsor I ask all my sponsorees to work the steps and at 3 months Clean begin H&I work. They later seem to do the same with the people they sponsor. Carrying the message of recovery to addicts who otherwise do not have the opportunity to attend outside N.A. meetings is important to all of us. Getting involved helps us grow and enables us to keep what we have.

I--- F.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The New England Region was formed in 1984. Our H&I commitment really began when one of our members attended a regional convention in another part of the country (Florida) and brought back a lot of information for us.

With this information we formed our H&I Committees by using sign up sheets and area workshops. From our first sign up sheet we had enough willing and able people to begin twenty-five H&I commitments! Today the New England Region has some one hundred H&I meetings/presentations on a regular basis.

Our area H&I committees hold area Learning Days. Some areas hold them every three months. This is very beneficial to us. Our regional H&I is very strung as well. On the regional level we have an H&I policy Ad-Hoc committee to help our committees stay uniform in carrying the N.A. message of recovery into facilities.

For myself, H&I work is very important to me. I am a product of what can be done through H&I commitments. I just heard the N.A. message in an institution. I began to work with H&I soon after I left treatment.

Seeing people leave institutions and come to regular N.A. meetings is the greatest feeling for me. I have seen a lot of these same recovering addicts later work with us in H&I. It is wonderful.

I also enjoy working with so many competent H&I people. I have worked with many people from many different regions and the feelings and goals are the same. I have worked on H&I committees

for five years now and it had been one of the best things I can do for my recovery.

D---F.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The H&I committee of the Bayou Recovery Area, formally the Baton Rouge Area has had for years a weekly meeting at the Detoxification Center here in Baton Rouge, a state run facility. As well as a monthly meeting at Louisiana training Institute; convicted inmates ages 12 through 21 near Baton Rouge. Attending these meetings for nearly three years now has been very good for my recovery. Nine months ago an H&I meeting was started at D.C.I. Dixon Correctional Institute after members of the H&I committee met with staff members there. Inmates named the meeting "Freedom by Choice", Forty six inmate members attended with less than ten. Some have been released with the freedom by choice to attend a regular meeting of N.A. within twenty four hours of their release. A meeting on another unit of the prison was started two months ago, by other H&I committee members. Freedom By Choice is one and one half hours long on Tuesday evenings. It's sometime discussion, usually bookstudy and discussion. Area H&I has provided Basic Text to the best of it's ability, fundraisers are upcoming and inmate members wanting to do there fair share to insure every member has a book, have contacted prison officials in regard to the inmate welfare fund. Inmates attending there first meeting are the most important people. They attend from many dorms, they share one on one with members form the outside, on the side or by the coffee pot as the meeting goes on. There is some time for fellowship before and after the meeting. Members staying in the same dorm, help each other in their recovery. Myself the H&I and former H&I chairperson are usually all present each week, for six months there was four of us. Inmate members express it to be the highlight of there week. We keep what we have by giving it away and get what we need. There is love not drugs at the Freedom of Choice Group H&I meeting at D.C.I. part of the Louisiana State Prison system. It's one of the H&I meeting sour Louisiana Purchase Region has. And hugs not maybe a coming thing in the unit one dining room of D.C.I. on Tuesday evenings. If not they can get them upon release.

J--- F.

MEMBERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH H&I WORK

Dear *Reaching Out*,

As I sit here, thinking about how H&I work has helped in my recovery, my past comes back to when I first got clean. After a few months of going to meetings and just not using, it became clear to me that there was more to recovery than just staying clean. So I did the things that were suggested to me.

The first thing I did was to get a sponsor. The sponsor I chose was into H&I service work, so I figured that I too would take H&I work. My sponsor informed me that was all too well and good, but there were clean time requirements that had to be met and that I did not meet those requirements yet, but I did have enough clean time to be a panel guest. I asked him what a panel guest was. He told me that a panel guest was an H&I member who met the clean time requirements of the facility but not the clean time of the H&I committee. The H&I committee would allow the member to go into the facility as a non-participant as a regular H&I panel. In other words, I could go in and listen, but not participate. I didn't like this concept. Who were they to tell me I could go to a meeting but not share and you had to stay clean. Was not that what N.A. was about. I was reminded I was to keep an open mind and be willing to do the things suggested.

I started going into that facility once a week with my sponsor and could not wait to get the clean time I needed so I could share in that H&I meeting. I often think that that desire alone kept me clean in my early recovery. Finally, the time came and I had stayed clean long enough to be able to participate in that H&I meeting that I had been going to faithfully for several months.

I remember calling my sponsor and informing him of the fact that I now met the requirements to participate in that H&I meeting. He said, "That's great", and then asked me what I was going to say. Instantly, I was in fear. I had no idea what I was going to say. I related this to my sponsor who chuckled and said, "Why don't you just talk about how you have worked the first couple of Steps". When it was my turn to share in that meeting, I talked about how I worked the first 2 Steps and how staying clean was more than not using dope. The N.A. program of recovery offered me a new way of life. The things were better now than when I was using.

After the meeting one of the inmates asked me to explain again how I worked the First Step. He told me that he had been watching me come to the meetings since the last couple of months and had noticed a big change. He said that when I first started coming, I looked full of anger and hostility. Over the months, he had seen a smile come to my face and a certain twinkle in my eye that told him that things were O.K. with me.

As I left my meeting with my sponsor, I had tears rolling down my cheek. My sponsor asked me what was wrong. I told him what had happened. With tears running down his cheeks, he said, "You see why we try to carry this message to the addict who suffer!" I didn't say anything. We were both crying. Words could not explain how I felt.

D---- A.
California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a panel member today. A service commitment I waited three and a half years to receive and one I had given up hope on receiving. One day I received a phone call from a panel member asking me if I would be willing to take her once a month chair commitment. I said yes; part of my dream is coming true.

My next question. Had enough time passed? Would the administration believe I have changed? Would they trust me? For today; yes. To be able to go into the institution where I was incarcerated does my heart good. For me, a simple statement, NA does work. Recovery is yours if you want recovery.

Recently I had a disappointment on one hand and a gift on the other hand. I had been asked to pick up a member on her release day. For today, she chose addiction. I pray for her. I love her and God knows I hope she makes it back to NA. I heard twelve women of the forty that were in my cell block have died. A fact of our disease, a hard cold reality for me.

A gift the same week, sponsorship. Another member asked for guidance in working and writing our steps. Thank You.

Another part of my dream came true December of 1987. I was able to be in the same institution for apart of the Christmas holidays. I remember feeling no one really cared whether I lived or died and how one day I wanted to be able to spend part of the Christmas holidays in that institution. I am happy to add, I will also be spending part of New Year's Eve there. Gifts of my recovery.

Because of the efforts of H&I members before me, I was able to attend my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting in an institution. I am grateful. I want to thank all of H&I members and as an addict said to me Thanksgiving Day, 1983, "just because you are here, you don't have to give up hope on yourself."

Anonymous

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: As many of you know, we have been in the process of reformatting the *Reaching Out*. Any of you who have comments about or 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 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**
