
REACHING OUT

VOLUME 6

NUMBER 4

World Service Office, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999

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

Hello, my name is S. and I am a drug addict. Those words, four months ago, were the hardest words for me to say. You see, aside from being a drug addict, I never knew how to admit it. And because of that I've lost my freedom, family respect, and someone I loved dearly.

This letter comes to you from jail where I've been now for almost five months. I became incarcerated for violation of parole and other charges which stem from my addiction and my quietness about it.

August 1, 1988 was the day I was released from prison for other, unrelated reasons. Not long after my release, I met my true love and life was on a great up-lift. I had good work, a family that cared,

and time to make up for my past. But it all changed one day. I was, as they say, in the right place at the wrong time; that's when I started using drugs. It was at that time something special to be one of the crowd; a crowd that at that time I didn't know could and did hurt me in more ways than one.

You see, it started like, "Try this," or "Try that," until I became addicted and all that I had slowly built, started to go: first my money, then my job and now my family respect and the loss of my true love.

Today is a new day and I don't look at it as if I've lost anything. I look at it as if I've started a new life. Sometimes you must lose to gain. Well, I hope I've lost one main thing, the *want* to use. Yes, "I am an addict and want help."

Today I am waiting to see what's going to happen in court. I am really hoping they give me *one* more chance. With this chance I want to show others that N.A. really works and that there is life without drugs. All a person needs is the *desire* to stay clean and someone to help. This is the N.A. program.

Thank you and God Bless,
S.C., Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*

Hello, my name is J. and I am an addict. The reason I'm writing is to share my experience. When I was fifteen years old, I started doing drugs. I got kicked out of school for drinking. I got put in a detox, but it didn't work. I did thirty days, got out a week later and I O.D'ed. I got put in a hospital and I thought that my life was over. I saw my girl friend standing over me crying. That picked me up; I didn't want to die. It took me two weeks to get back on my feet. After two months, I got drunk and got in trouble with the law. I was put in jail October 17, 1988. I got six to eighteen months and got out six months later. I got picked up again for robbing a store at night; it was closed.

I got put in jail for the second time. I tried to kill myself four times and got put in a state hospital for four and one half months. I got fourteen to twenty-three months. I will be getting out in February of 1991. I've been going to N.A. for almost a year. It will be

a year October 1, of this year. I pray to God to help me through every day. I hope the people that read this story stay clean forever and believe in your Higher Power, because He will always be there for you. Well, I just want everyone to live a healthy life.

It works, if you work it. Give it a try. Thank-you Narcotics Anonymous and God for giving me a second chance at life.

Love ya all,
J.R., Pennsylvania

P.S. Thanks WSO for all your help.

Dear *Reaching Out*

Hello, I'm writing you this letter to share with other recovering addicts like myself. I'm twenty-seven years old and I'm doing a seven year sentence here in prison.

I have been wanting to share with other recovering brothers and sisters, but haven't gotten around to it. I've been kind of hesitant. I've been incarcerated for about a year and a half now. I got arrested due to a relapse I had after being clean for a little over two years, and what I've come to know now was that I was just being clean out there. Well I have gone through a very hard time this time doing time. This isn't my first time, but it sometimes seems like it. I was going to a lot of meetings out there, but again, that's all I was doing, going to meetings. I started going to meetings when I got out the last time I was doing time. I liked attending meetings and being clean. I had some good times out there and met some nice people that were clean also. I didn't really let go of myself through a surrender to the fellowship. I have tried to shut off or forget my past experience being clean, but even though I was just clean out there, I did change and grow a little. I ended up in a relationship with another recovering addict who had the same amount of clean time as I. Well, I couldn't handle it to be honest. The relationship ended with both of us going back out. It was a horrible experience after getting loaded again and being back out on the streets, trying to run from my problems and trying to ease the hurt. I did want to come back and get clean again, but I couldn't do it on my own or for myself. I had to finally get arrested, thank God!

After getting arrested, things didn't get better right away. I still had to withdraw from the misery I put myself through. And, being separated from my family after being with them when I was clean was hard. The court ended up giving me seven years. Like I said, it hasn't been easy, but it is getting better. I have gotten over the horrors of the relapse and I'm now looking forward to recovery in my life, maybe with others who have experienced the same thing as I have. Today, I'm trying to take it one day at a time and hope things will continue to get better. I don't have any desire to use and have not used while being incarcerated. I have hopes of getting out and staying clean, but this time not just staying clean. This time enjoying and experiencing life and learning to be responsible and being able to love and help others.

I would like to end this letter now by saying it was nice to write to you and good for me to express myself the best I could. If possible I would like to hear from you. Well, I'll end now by saying, take care and thanks for reading my letter.

S.G., California

Dear *Reaching Out*

My name is D. and I am a recovering addict and I am grateful to be in the program of N.A. I have spent my last fifteen years in prisons and institutions and I am currently in a halfway house awaiting my release. N.A. is my sanity to recovery along with working my step program. I find serenity and peace of mind. I used to think that just being a recovering addict meant that everything will be okay. Little did I know the work of self-disclosure and humility. Working on self was quite difficult and quite tedious at times and still is to some degree. I struggle at it just like most addicts do. And my impatience to do everything at once was short lived. Today, I follow the N.A. text to the best of my ability and today I am asking my Higher Power, who I choose to call God, for guidance and patience to make it for just one more day. Just for today. Today, I have an unconditional love for my program and everything N.A. represents. I speak at meetings; I share and find gratitude when I do. Most importantly is that today I can love and

I can honestly say to myself that I have not used today. I have started to rebuild my life through the N.A. program and it gives me a sense of worth and understanding of who I am, today. And finally through the grace of God, I will be clean another day, just for today. And if no one has said they love you today, I will. I love you.

D.M., New Hampshire

Dear *Reaching Out*

My name is D., I am a grateful recovering addict. I have just completed my ninth month of staying clean, thanks to N.A.

I was sent to prison on February 2, 1990. That was the day I decided to stop using drugs. I knew that I was going to need help and support in doing this, for as any inmate knows, you can get anything you want anytime you want. This is where N.A. became a part of my life.

N.A. has helped me to control my urges to use drugs. Through N.A. I have found that I am not alone with my disease and that there are people who care. N.A. has shown me that I can once again live my life.

N.A. is a *we* program that gets us addicts together so that *we* can share our past and receive the help we all need, through each other as a whole.

N.A. has helped me to become grateful for my recovery, *one day at a time*.

Forever yours,
D., New York

Dear *Reaching Out*

I'm an inmate in the Alabama prison system. I've tried my best to be a part of Narcotics Anonymous.

I feel there is a message in my heart that needs to be told to N.A. I have three daughters who I haven't seen in 16 years because of my using and because of their mother's using problems.

Two of my oldest sister's boys were killed. One in a car wreck the year I came back from the Marine Corps. He and three other young men were killed on the south side of Chicago. The other

brother was killed in 1980 in a drug ring. My oldest brother's only daughter was killed in north Mississippi, drinking and driving.

The only thing that keeps me going is my Higher Power and the hopes of getting to speak to people about N.A. now and when I get out of prison. There isn't any N.A. here at this facility yet. I have *The N.A. Way Magazine*. I wrote the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions on poster board for the inmates in hope that they will learn to take part in N.A.

Please pray for me that I don't go back to using when I am out of prison.

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*

In letting go of the past it was shown to me that I needed to build a new identity and this process required a new model. The model I've chosen to pattern my new identity after is this definition of a recovering addict:

Most of us don't have to think twice about this, we know. Our whole way of life and thinking is centered in recovery. Very simply we are men and women whose lives are lived practicing spiritual principles. We are people in the care of a loving God, one that gives us the opportunity to experience the unbound freedom stemming from spiritual awakening and continuing with progressive spiritual growth.

The most difficult problem encountered in letting go of my past was that my past was my identity. It was my whole way of life and whole way of thinking and I was chained to it. It justified not only the drug addict (way of life), but the addiction to resentment, anger, self-pity, self-condemnation, self righteousness, etc., etc., ad nauseam (way of thinking). Letting go all at once would have been like dropping an ice cube into boiling water; the abrupt change would have devastated me. How grateful I am for the slow process that is called recovery.

Identifying with a recovering addict is what I need. The simple direction it gives and hope it conveys counters the despair and hopelessness of the Basic Text's definition of, "Who is an Addict?" How grateful I am to God and the countless number of people who have

struggled down the same road, guiding me and lighting the way, ever reminding me that traveling the road is a lifetime process. I am also grateful to be off the *road to recovery* and on the *recovery road*, thus keeping me out of **FEAR (a Frantic Effort to Appear Recovered)**.

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*

To whom it may concern. My name is N. I am presently locked up in a Florida prison. I received three and one half years for a drug related crime. I did almost ten months county time before coming to prison. While I was in the county jail, I was involved in a weekly meeting put on by the jail house chaplain. Since my arrival here at the reception center I have been looking for people to talk to associated with N.A. To my surprise they have no N.A. meetings here.

One of the counselors here gave one of my cell mates a booklet called *Reaching Out*. As soon as I saw it I read it cover to cover. I have been a drug addict for about ten years. I am twenty four years old and sitting in prison. I don't know if it matters what drug I used or not. During the last six months, my wife has given birth to my first son. I have been wanting to go to a meeting for the last two years. I have never found the courage to go. I used to tell myself that I didn't have a problem. What a lie that was! The reason I am writing you is that since I have stopped going to the meetings, I have been getting depressed and discouraged.

N.A. has been a big help to me. It has helped me realize that there is a lot more to live for than your next high. I hope to be put into one of the prison's drug programs. I have been told that they really care about people who are addicted. (Sounds like N.A.)

I just want to thank N.A. for being there for me when I thought there was no more hope. I plan to repay the favor once I am released from prison. I would like to get involved with a local group helping kids with drug problems. I should be out before next Christmas if I keep my nose clean. Thanks to N.A., I now know it's possible.

N., Florida

Editors Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a world-wide 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 N.A. message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings.. Therefore we are asking members and H&I subcommittees to submit input to the section to the H&I Coordinator at the:

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P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999 USA

FROM THE OUTSIDE

MEMBERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH H&I WORK

Dear *Reaching Out*

I often wondered why God had allowed me to get clean while so many other addicts were dying or being carted off to jail. I knew that by all rights, I should have been dead or in jail. Why then was I privileged enough to have been given the gift of recovery? As I began to work the steps and particularly the Third Step, it occurred to me that one of the reasons God has allowed me to get clean was so I could serve God. I soon discovered that God's will for me was to carry the message to the addict still suffering and to practice these principles in all my affairs. It was obvious that if I were going to stick around the program long enough to find out what these principles were, I had better start to give back what had been given to me.

Although I didn't feel as though I was ready to implement the Twelfth Step completely into my program, particularly since I had not worked the preceding eleven, I knew there were other ways

that I could be of service to God and to Narcotics Anonymous. I chose to get involved in the Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) subcommittee because that is how I found N.A.—or rather, how N.A. found me.

I attended my first H&I Subcommittee meeting with about thirty days clean. Immediately people began to ask me to share at H&I meetings. I felt honored that someone believed enough in my recovery to actually ask me to share it with others. Back then we did not require N.A. members to have ninety days clean to share at H&I meetings—there just weren't enough of us. Since that time, involvement in H&I has become part of my personal program of recovery. You see, I believe that **gratitude is an action, not a feeling**. "My gratitude speaks when I care and share with others the N.A. way."

I know now that I am the one who benefits most from my involvement in service. My involvement:

- Has reminded me of my past so that I do not become destined to repeat it.
- Has helped me to do my part in fulfilling our primary purpose.
- Has helped me to become more God-centered and less self-centered.
- Has gotten me to a meeting at times when I needed to go but did not want to.
- Has taught me about responsibility and commitment.
- Has allowed me to "get in the middle of the boat" and feel a part of N.A.
- Has taught me about our Twelfth Tradition in placing principles before personalities.
- Has taught me to stand up for what I believe.
- Has helped to keep me away from self-pity by getting me out of my problems and allowing me to focus on helping someone else less fortunate.
- Has taught me about compassion and empathy for those of us who are without hope.

- Has given me a way to express my gratitude.
- HAS KEPT ME CLEAN!

One of the areas where support for H&I is needed the most is in our jail meetings. I've heard every rationalization in the world as to why people are unwilling to attend the jail meetings. My favorite is, "I've never been to jail and don't feel that the inmates will be able to relate to me." Let's get honest—how many of us can truthfully say we never did anything to warrant being in jail? In keeping with our Twelfth Tradition, the only difference is, they got caught.

I believe most of us are simply afraid to attend the jail meetings. Let me assure you that we all felt that way the first jail meeting we attended. I know I did. It is perfectly normal to be afraid. Just remember: you are not alone. One of the rewards of attending such a meeting was stated by a member who said, "Last week a guy came to our H&I meeting who has been in prison for fifteen years and who has used drugs for over thirty. This week he came back to the meeting and told me that he had seven days clean."

Another area needing support in H&I is our adolescent meetings. For some reason we also seem to think that we can't relate to adolescents or that they won't be able to relate to us. I can only speak for myself, but I am most likely in my teens emotionally.

Anyway, H&I is simply about letting addicts know we are here and that we have found a way to live without using drugs. To quote one member who attends an adolescent H&I meeting, "I just hope that ten years from now when one of those kids is sitting there with a loaded gun in their mouth, they'll remember about N.A. and know there is another way."

It seems as though God began to restore me to sanity very early in my recovery by giving me what we commonly refer to as a conscience. It became and remains to be essential to my recovery that I continue to give back that which was so freely given to me.

Remember: "No addict need die without knowing there is another way."

H.

Tennessee Volunteer Region

Dear Reaching Out

I am a recovering addict with nine months recovery. I received my key tags for thirty days, sixty days, six months and nine months. I can now say a lot of the time I am clean and serene. My involvement in H&I work has helped me feel more serene by letting me realize I am a needed person and by giving the message away, I can keep it.

I went to my first N.A. meeting in December, 1988, on a Friday night. I had been handed an N.A. schedule by a person from another fellowship who knew I was miserable. Then this person told me to try N.A. meetings and maybe there I could get the help I needed not to use, just for today. I felt somewhat awkward and wasn't sure I belonged there at my first N.A. meeting until they read the regular opening readings, especially the reading "Who is an Addict?" All those readings were talking about me and I knew then I belonged and was desperate for help so I wouldn't have to use and I felt a warmth and caring inside that room. I was real stubborn at taking suggestions and I was a poor listener at first. And I came and went, back and forth, to N.A. meetings for awhile.

In August, 1989, I knew my life was unmanageable and had to muster up the strength to step back into the N.A. meetings once again. This time when I came into those rooms, I tried working the program the way others suggested. I actually read the information pamphlets that I picked up, including the IP #20, "H&I and the N.A. Member." I started reading the Basic Text that I had bought six months earlier. I asked for phone numbers, learned to share and started working hard at making this a WE program. I didn't have to do this all alone. I kept hearing, *Keep it simple, Get a sponsor, Work the steps*, and whatever pain or emotions you're going through, *it will pass*, IF, I just *don't pick up, just for today*.

One Friday night at a speaker meeting, I heard a recovering addict share how getting involved in service work helped her stay clean. She continued to tell about her experience with H&I and how we can't keep it if we don't give it away, and expressed a desire for any of us listening that we were needed in our area for H&I

work and involvement. She asked us just to come to the next sub-committee meeting of H&I and see what was going on there, to see and to hear the need for N.A. members to commit themselves to this service work and how it could help us stay clean, too, and the personal rewards of helping other addicts by spreading the N.A. basic message to those who couldn't attend regular outside meetings.

I had two weeks to think about this and read the informational pamphlet, "H&I and the N.A. Member." I talked to other addicts and called that speaker to ask a few more questions. I wasn't real sure this addict had what it took to be in H&I, but when the sub-committee was held, I was there. I felt needed in our area with this service work and that felt good to be needed. They suggested I attend a few H&I meetings to observe and just to listen. I did that, which was good for me because I need to learn to listen. While I sat and listened, I observed how the women at the meeting looked and saw the hope on their faces. Not all, but a lot of them had that hope that when they got released N.A. would be there and they would be equipped with schedules and a few N.A. contacts plus the helpline to call. As the weeks went by, then months, I finally earned my six months clean time to qualify me to chair a meeting for a halfway house and be able to carry the N.A. basic message through H&I service work. It has helped me to stay clean and grow in my recovery.

I love H&I for helping me realize I had something to give and was needed. I've learned to pray to God, my Higher Power, to help me give a good strong N.A. message at this meeting and I am grateful to be part of this opportunity to help spread the H.O.W. of N.A.: Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness.

A grateful recovering addict,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear *Reaching Out*

My name is S. and I'm an addict. I first saw N.A.'s *Reaching Out* newsletter when I got involved in H&I some months back.

I'm writing for two reasons. One, to tell you how grateful I am for this newsletter and two, to share with all of you my experiences with service work.

First of all, I got involved in H&I because I saw what it was doing for other people in the fellowship and I wanted what they had. I realized I couldn't do it alone any more and I also had to start giving back some of what was given so freely to me. H&I in our area didn't have much support so I decided to go there and help out. I started out as a panel member, and started learning the ropes of H&I. Each position I took, I learned more about it. It gives me such a good feeling, I want to keep going back!

I, myself, have only been in an institution for a short time, but I have someone in my life today that's doing a seven year bid and recovering at the same time. So, I realize how important inside meetings are to the addicts that want recovery.

Up until I got involved with service work, I really took my meetings for granted. I even took life for granted sometimes. I realize today that just being around the program doesn't work for me. I've got to be involved. Like we've heard so many times before, we can't keep what we have unless we give it away.

Being involved in H&I is hard sometimes, but it has taught me one of the most valuable lessons I could have learned. It's called, reaching out. For three years I didn't reach out and it caused me great pain till I almost used. Today, I can reach out to those newcomers and share with them and hopefully I can reach one of them, but even if I don't, I'm learning from it. I'm doing what I need to do and what my H.P. wants me to do.

I used to hate hearing those grateful addicts share about service work, but today I have a better understanding and, I am one of those grateful addicts.

Thanks for letting me share,
S., Connecticut Region

ATTENTION!

Beginning with the next issue (July), the WSC H&I newsletter, *Reaching Out* will be available by subscription. We have been informing you through fellowship publications for sometime now. The time has now arrived. All regional and area H&I committees who wish to augment their current allotments can subscribe for one year at \$28.00 per subscription. This will allow you to receive 20 copies per printing, for a total of 80 copies per year. Subscriptions are also available to treatment centers and institutions who may wish to subscribe for their clients and inmates. Subscription cards will be sent to regional and area H&I committees with this printing of the *Reaching Out*.

If you need additional subscription cards, or if we somehow missed your committee, please contact the WSO H&I Project Coordinator at the WSO.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: 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 Narcotics Anonymous 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!!**

H&I Learning & Awareness Days Coming Up

Michigan Second Annual Multi-Regional

H&I Awareness Day

May 18, 1991—10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Meeting/Dance 8:00 p.m.

Wayne Community Center

4653 Howe Road

Wayne, MI

Georgia Region H&I Awareness Weekend

May 18,19—Registration Fee: \$5.00

Claystone Park, Lake Tobesotkee Macon, Georgia

For Further Info: Mabale W. (912)745-6513

Mail registration to:

PASC

Box 4362

Macon, GA 31208

Chicagoland Regional Learning Day

June 15, 1991

Howard Johnson Hotel at O'Hare, Schiller Park IL

For Room Reservations:

Call Howard Johnson Hotel at 708-671-6000

For further information: Call (708) 848-2211

Write Chicagoland RSC H&I Committee

3212 S. Marion Street Suite 7

Oak Park, IL 60302

Carolina Regional Awareness Weekend

August 16,17,18, 1991

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Greenville, SC

For Reservations: Call Hyatt Regency at 1-800-228-9000

For further information:

Call Dale R. (704)394-5532 or Kevin H. (803)794-6497

Note: If your area or region is holding an H&I Learning or Awareness Day, and wish to have it listed in *Reaching Out* please mail a flyer or notice to the H&I coordinator at the W.S.O.