

HISTORY OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND
1982 – 1985

MID-ATLANTIC REGION

In the fall of 1982 the geographic area covered by the Mid-Atlantic Region reached from Williamsport, PA to Maine in a west – east direction. Greater Philadelphia had just split off to form it's own region taking with it a lot of members with time in service. New York City was it's own region. Small areas existed in Northern and Southern New Jersey, upstate New York, Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Maine. The first Mid-Atlantic Regional service meeting I attended was in Connecticut in December of 1982. Many members of the service structure at that time were newcomers and service time requirements were not an issue. The burning desire to serve was the only requirement in most cases for service positions. The guidelines for service were an unofficial version of TWIGS. The first learning event for most of us was the one sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Region, a precursor to MARLCNA. The biggest event any of us could attend was an "East Coast Convention", a precursor to regional conventions. A few addicts were lucky enough to afford to travel out of the region to attend other fledgling conventions, especially the Tri-State Convention in Ohio and the first Florida convention in Miami. They brought back information on how it worked in other parts of the world and most importantly hope for the future of NA.

LOCAL MEETINGS

Meeting formats in most places in CT in the early 80's were handed down mimeographed copies of meeting formats gotten from somewhere. Readings were done from the white book. People served a multitude of positions, GSR in one group, secretary in another, chairperson in a third. Time was not considered except for treasurer positions; everything else was based on a "willingness to serve".

There were two cans at every meeting one for the 7th Tradition and one for H&I literature. As our understanding of the traditions increased and more people became exposed to service work in other parts of the world the H&I can was replaced by a line item in the Area Service Budget.

NA in CT originally started with a meeting in Waterbury in the mid-70's. There was one meeting a week. It died after a while due to lack of support. NA began again in the early 1980's spontaneously in Hartford, West Port and New Haven. In those days people corresponded directly with World Service and found out mostly to their own surprise about other meetings near them. This was the case in CT. In the early 80's there were 6 meetings scattered around the state with two H&I commitments, one in the Hartford Correctional Center and one on Sundays at a hospital in Portland, CT. An H&I meeting was added at the Niantic Correctional facility for women in 1984.

The number of meetings in CT grew slowly throughout the early 80's. It wasn't until the planning for the 5th ECCNA in 1984 that recovery took off in CT. There were little

pockets of recovery known to exist in other parts of New England, especially in the Boston area, southern and coastal Maine and in Vermont.

EAST COAST CONVENTIONS (ECCNA)

The East Coast Conventions were unique to NA. The basic format called for them to be held at a college campus at the end of the spring semester. An area was the sponsor. This format helped keep the cost affordable for many addicts. The college provided rooms for meetings, lodging and dining services. Initially there were few guidelines since no one had ever done this type of thing before. As each convention happened new traditions and guidelines were added to the format. Eventually the guidelines were submitted to World Services and this information helped create the current guidelines for conventions now accepted by the fellowship. Fundraisers such as dances were held by the host area to help pay for the initial cost of the convention site rental.

4th East Coast Convention (ECCNA)

The Little Apple Area of PA held the 4th East Coast at Lehigh College. It was the first exposure most CT addicts had to recovery outside of CT. It was also the place where copies of the first edition of the Basic Text were sold. Both the first edition blue book and the red numbered copies were snapped up. CT Addicts came away from that convention full of fire. They also had a mission since a couple of enthusiastic addicts from CT won the bid for the 5th ECCNA. These addicts did not have the benefit of area support when they got the bid but it was soon a mute point.

In talking to addicts from other areas in the country it has become apparent that the self-willing of conventions that happened was not unique. It seems that the first Florida convention in Miami Beach and the first Ohio conventions may have also come about because a couple of addicts acted on their own (with their higher power's help perhaps?). Placing egos before personalities is of course one of our traditions, but in the history of NA it often seems that occasionally individual egos actions promote a path of recovery that many may ultimately benefit all addicts.

5th ECCNA

Since the addicts in question were from New Haven the logical choice was Yale University. The official slogan of the convention was "Reaching Out". Unofficially the rallying cry became "Jail to Yale". Even though most knew this was a tradition violation the unofficial slogan stuck.

Three notable things occurred at or around this convention.

First, the convention itself earned close to \$10,000. This money was passed on to the next ECCNA partially as seed money and partially as H&I packages.

The second thing to occur was an informal gathering of NA members to discuss dividing the Mid-Atlantic Region. Members were present from New Jersey, New York, Maine,

Mass, and CT. Within a year two regions would form in New Jersey, CT became a region, and the New England Region was formed, consisting of the Mass, Maine and Green Mountain areas. Western Mass and New Hampshire developed areas of their own.

Pigs in Space

The third thing that occurred actually started as a fund-raiser for the ECCNA. A men's group in CT decided to have picnic in support of the convention. To this point the only fundraisers held in CT had been dances charging \$5.00. These events generally raised a few hundred dollars. Members of the men's group proposed charging \$10.00 per addict in advance and letting the kids eat for free. The men in the group would cook a pig and make the salads and other items to eat. Hence the Pigs in Space annual Pig roast was started. It was first held at a small state park. Permission was obtained from the park ranger to stay overnight in order to cook the pig. Lots of fellowship was gained from this experience, about 80 addicts and their families attended. Several hundred dollars was raised for the convention but the most important outcome was the fellowship experienced.

The pig roast is now an annual event that just celebrated its twentieth year. It is now held at a commercial amusement park with annual attendance in the thousands of people. Kids still get in free and a meal is provided along with rides, games, musical entertainment and speakers.

Further ECCNA

The ECCNA idea continued for several more years. There were a total of 13 ECCNA. The convention itself finally ended with the last couple of conventions going bankrupt. Regional and area conventions were becoming the thing to do. Also by that time the WSC had come out with convention guidelines and the ECCNA was labeled an "outlaw" convention. Without the "purists" support the ECCNA concept died. One footnote to the ECCNA history, if anyone reading this summary has any idea where the banners from these conventions went I am sure that the host areas (now regions) would love to have them back for their own memorabilia collections.

Recovery in New England after the 5th ECCNA

The enthusiasm that was generated from the 5th ECCNA caused NA in New England to flourish. Within a year there were CT formed a region with 5 areas going. The Pigs in Space Pig Roast became an annual event. By 1990 Rhode Island and New Hampshire had areas formed. The 9th ECCNA was held in New Hampshire in 1988 and helped solidify that state's area. New Hampshire and Maine formed the Northern New England Region shortly after that. This is not to say that all has been positive growth. Individuals and meetings in New England have come and gone. The original addicts who were present for the 5th ECCNA have moved on in their recovery geographically as well as spiritually and emotionally.

North East Zonal Forum

Since the restructuring of World Services in the mid 90's recovery in the North East has come full circle. What started as individual meetings and areas have become regions. The regions have banded together in the North East Zonal. Ironically, or justly, the geographic area covered by the northeast zonal form of the new millennium is almost exactly the same geographic area the original mid-Atlantic region covered of the early 80's. It will be interesting to see what happens next.

ENCLOSED

4th ECCNA buttons

mis. Other buttons

Mid Atlantic regional meeting list circa 1983

Flyers from CT

Pig Roast memorabilia

Mugs from east coast conventions

T-shirts

Group pictures from 4th, 5th and 6th ECCNA

Hartford CT billboard (ask Jane Nichols for history)

Hats (pigs in space, NORA {nature of recovery}, Australia)