

HISTORY OF N.A. IN PANAMA

In Panama there was talk about the Narcotics Anonymous twelve step program beginning in 1984; the A.A. program was known before that time. Psychiatrists were the first ones who tried to implement the N.A. principles with their patients because these people had attended seminars in other countries and they knew very little about the topic. It is important to mention that professionals had been treating alcoholic patients and the Narcotics Anonymous was an innovative program. It is also important to mention that these professionals were not addicts and because of that until that time addicts could not identify themselves as such because they were treated as patients, and since that year we had fellow addicts who were in treatment in foreign countries who knew about the N.A. program.

In 1986 the first N.A. group opened in Panama City, and its name was Joy to Live and it met in the cafeteria at the Santa Fe hospital. The group opened with three members and soon after there were 50 members in attendance. That same year the Clayton group opened in the old Canal Zone, and American soldiers and base employees attended it. Until that time the group service structure was controlled by one member, and this situation brought on some conflicts. From that point on new groups were opened and the group The Solution in Rio Abajo was opened in 1987 in Panama City.

Since then different experiences have enriched the growth of the groups and the service structure. We have had a Regional Service Committee since 1989, which is formed by a service committee and active H&I, PI, literature, help line and convention and activities committees.

As a region we have organized three regional conventions and we are planning our fourth. We are actively seated on the floor of the WSC since 1993, and we are part of the LAZF. We try to do things the best way we can.