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Get ready for San Jose!

Largest NA meeting ever expected at WCNA-27 this September

As the summer season comes to a close in Northern California this year, thousands of addicts from all over the world will be arriving.

Could it be a Sixties revival? A Summer of Love reunion? No, but close. It's the Twenty-Seventh World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous!

Up until 1996, the world convention was an annual event. Now it's biennial; that is, it only happens every two years. Perhaps because of this, members have been anticipating this convention with more enthusiasm than has ever been shown toward a world convention.

Registrations began flooding the World Service Office within hours of the convention flyer's distribution to the fellowship. The pre-registration pace is about twenty percent ahead of what it was for the 24th World Convention, held in 1994 in Baltimore, Maryland. To date, that has been the largest world convention, with 10,597 paid registrations and approximately 2,400 newcomer registrations. We expect attendance at the world convention in San Jose to far exceed those numbers. The theme of the convention, "Our Diversity is Our Strength," will be reflected in the sheer variety of addicts in attendance.

For those who have been to a world convention, no explanation is necessary. But even veteran world convention-goers will be amazed by the world convention in San Jose. We're expecting the main meeting on Saturday night, which will be held in the San Jose Arena, to be the largest meeting of Narcotics Anonymous ever to be held. Imagine up to 20,000 addicts in a professional hockey stadium. If the sheer exuberance expressed during the clean-time countdown doesn't bring you to tears, the moment of silence followed by the closing prayer surely will.

The World Unity Day Celebration will again have live telephone hookups with NA communities all over the world. These local NA communities are able to listen to the Saturday night meeting from beginning to end and so share in the world convention from afar. The celebration also includes a "mega-Seventh Tradition." The funds collected go directly to world services to help carry the message around the world.

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THE
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EXECUTIVE CODIRECTORS

Anthony Edmondson
George Hollahan

EDITOR

Cynthia Tooredman

STAFF WRITER

Jeff Baker

COPY EDITORS

David Fulk
Lee Manchester

TYPOGRAPHY AND DESIGN

David Mizrahi

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anne Peters

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Rogan A, Ron S, Stu T

World Service Office, Inc.

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

Telephone: (818) 773-9999

Fax: (818) 700-0700

Web Site: <http://www.wsoinc.com>

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From the editor

It hasn't escaped our attention that the WSO database is often the butt of jokes in our fellowship.

While we certainly don't mind being made fun of once in while, there are some things about the WSO database that, if taken seriously, we can all benefit from.

Address changes: Our fellowship is made up of a very mobile bunch of people. Most of us seem to move about as often as we change our socks. All kidding aside, please let us know when you are moving. Simply giving a change of address to your local post office will probably result in you getting your mail—at some point. Please include your full name, old address, and new address when you notify us.

Surnames: Let's see, how many Susans are there in NA? About 150, according to our database. We even know what some of your last names are. Please, please, please—anonymity doesn't mean keeping your last name secret in NA. We'll send your mail in a plain brown wrapper.

Zip codes: Please include them. Please.

Group subscriptions: Individuals can get the *NA Way* by asking for it. Groups have to be registered. Some people think this isn't fair. We're sorry, but it has to work this way. If we didn't do it this way, our database would be filled with duplicate information and we would be very confused when we went to look for a group. Don't know whether or not your group is registered? If your group hasn't received an *NA Way*, it probably is not, or it probably hasn't been updated. We encourage the use of area PO boxes for group mailing addresses because they are usually the most stable address. Please contact fellowship services at WSO, extension 771, to request a group registration or update form. You can also download these forms from the WSO website: <http://www.wsoinc.com>

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The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in the *NA Way*, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The NA Way Magazine, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

San Jose is the eleventh-largest city in the United States, which makes you think it's a big city. In terms of population, that's true. But in terms of atmosphere, San Jose feels like a small town.

It's bigger— it should be better, too

Up until 1992, we could fit comfortably into two or three large hotels, and we could usually hold the main meetings in one of the hotel ballrooms. Sometimes we were actually able to *serve a banquet* on Saturday night in the same room as the main speaker meeting.

As attendance grew, we moved the main meetings into convention centers. Even with that allowance, the logistics of serving a sit-down dinner (edible or not) to several thousand people were simply beyond the capabilities of most caterers.

We grew to the point where we were occupying a block of rooms in every hotel in sight. We found that even the largest halls in some convention centers no longer held our main meeting. We found ourselves sitting in huge arenas, with banquets a distant memory. No caterer in his right mind would attempt to serve even a handful of peanuts to a such a crowd!

We had grown into a fellowship that could consume \$50,000 worth of espresso and cappuccino, \$17,000 worth of candy by the pound, and \$12,000 worth of lemonade and funnel cakes, and tax the resources and supplies of every area restaurant.

The Baltimore world convention marked a significant change in what the world convention represents to our fellowship. Before Baltimore, many people had expressed the opinion that the world convention was getting to be kind of like a giant regional convention—or maybe it was that regional conventions were getting to be like mini-world conventions. In any case, world convention planners felt that the world convention should be a special celebration of our recovery and a demonstration of our unity as a fellowship. It should have elements that can't be found anywhere else. So planning began to be geared toward meeting that goal.

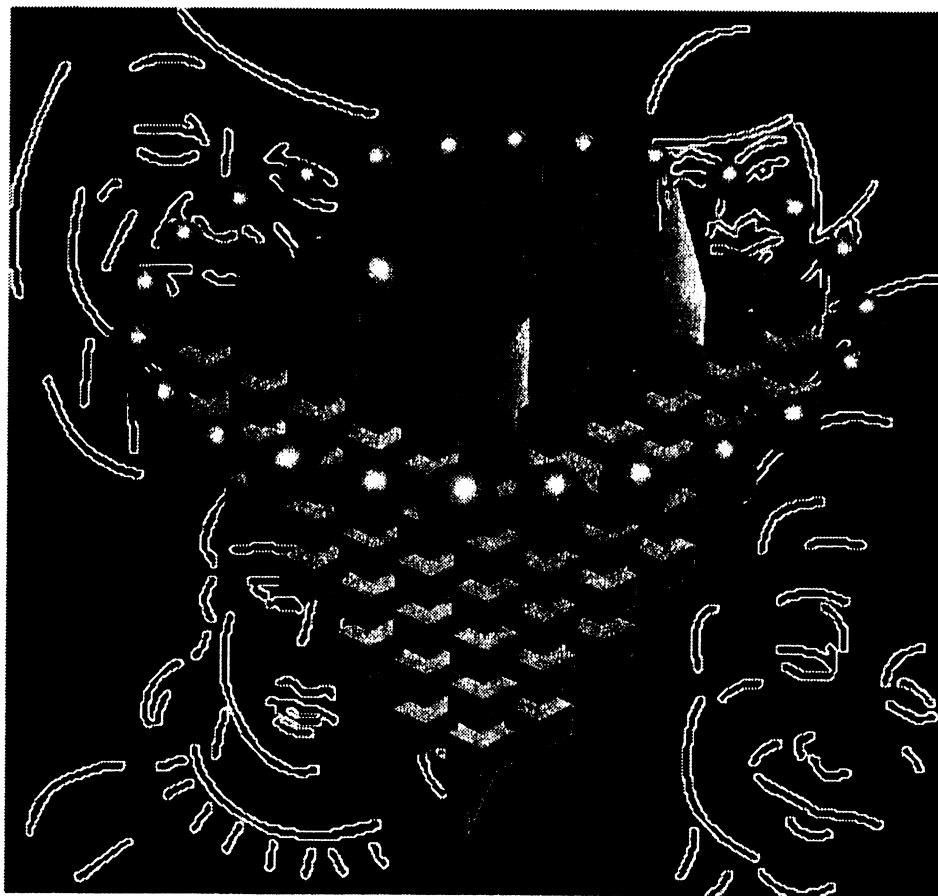
First and foremost, convention planners focused on the recovery meetings, trying to add something special to the traditional mix of main meetings with speakers each evening and workshops during the day. One of the new additions was to have the final meeting of the convention on Sunday morning feature a panel of speakers from around the world. Following on the heels of the Saturday Night Unity Day Celebration, where attendees from more than thirty countries will stand up and be recognized, the speakers will drive home the fact that recovery in NA transcends geographic and cultural boundaries.

The definition of "workshops" has also expanded to encompass service-related concerns or topics that are challenging our fellowship. In the past, topics have included HIV and AIDS, prejudice, and how our fellowship defines abstinence. At this writing, the workshop topics for WCNA-27 haven't been finalized, but they're sure to center on the most important issues facing NA today.

The on-site WSO will be back again for an encore after its debut at WCNA-26 in St. Louis. Members will be able to visit this temporary office and register or update their group information. Other WSO services will be available and staff members will be on hand to answer questions about WSO and how the services it provides can help members, groups, and service committees. Copies of the *NA Way* will be available, and members can sign up to receive it in any of its different language editions.

The WSO is very excited to be presenting a historical display this year. It will include some of the material that the WSO received from Jimmy K's estate—original writings of early NA members, records of business meetings, general information about how the fellowship started, and even some photos of early meeting places. The WSO will also be introducing *Miracles Happen: The Birth of Narcotics Anonymous in Words and Pictures*. This will be an oversized coffee-table type book, approximately 100 pages, in color.

Continued on page 4



Waiting time: You signed up for an *NA Way*, but it's been four months and you haven't received one yet. Have we messed up your request? Possibly. It does happen from time to time, but it is more likely that you put in your request just after the labels were run for a mailing of the *NA Way*. If that was the case, your name wouldn't be included in the labels and you may not receive an *NA Way* till the next run—three months later. We believe that you shouldn't have to wait that long, and so will send you a current issue when you sign up; however, we can only do this if we have enough extras after our current subscribers receive their copies.

Calendar listings: The *NA Way* is published four times a year in January, April, July, and October. Our cutoff for calendar listings is approximately 2½ months before the beginning of the month of the magazine's date of issue. For instance, if your event is in March, you will want it listed in the January issue. That means you will need to notify us by 15 October. If you're notifying us at the last minute by email, please include a phone number so we can contact you in case you've omitted any essential information. If you've already missed the cutoff for publication in the *NA Way*, you may still want your event listed on the WSO website. It is updated around the first of each month.

Part of our mission to facilitate the continuation and growth of NA involves ensuring that members receive the *NA Way* on time and that our mailing lists are accurate. We appreciate your help with this.

Cindy T, Editor ♦

And there's more . . .

Even before Baltimore, world convention planners had created programs that are diverse and fit the theme of the convention. At WCNA-17 in New Orleans, a Mardi Gras parade, a masked ball, and a riverboat ride down the Mississippi River were among the highlights. At WCNA-23 in Chicago, Illinois, the convention featured a blues concert and comedians from the Second City Comedy Troupe.

WCNA-27 will continue this course with a Seventies kickoff party on Thursday night. A costume company will be on hand with all sorts of retro-duds from that era—platform shoes, flare pants, and double-suede-polyester whatever. The music will fit the theme and the entertainment will feature Kurtis Blow as Master of Ceremonies and disco divas Gloria Gaynor, Evelyn "Champagne" King, Thelma Houston, and Kathy Sledge.

Friday's comedy show will be headlined by Craig Shoemaker, aka "The Love Master," who, since his performance at WCNA-26, has won the American Comedy Award for the stand-up comedian in the country; Craig is host of the VH-1 series, "Our Generation." Craig received an uproarious response in St. Louis and we're sure he'll be just as warmly received in San Jose.

Saturday morning will start on a cool note with the Jazz Breakfast headlined by Larry Coryell and featuring an all-star band of top jazz musicians. And Saturday night, in what promises to be a unique and intimate event, there will be a concert starring legendary guitarist Eric Clapton. Eric Clapton was a founding member of world-renowned bands Cream, Derek and the Dominoes, and Blind Faith, followed by a long and distinguished solo career. He has been twice inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

In addition to these paid events, there are many activities that are included in the registration fee. There will be a dance each night of the convention. Some will have music provided by a DJ; others will offer live entertainment. Once again, there will be the coffee house each night. On Thursday night, Marty Balin, lead singer and founding member of both Jefferson Airplane and

Jefferson Starship, will be performing. On Friday night, Chuck Negron, the voice of Three Dog Night, will perform. Saturday night's coffee house entertainment was not booked as of this writing, but it will also be a talented national performer. During the dinner hour on Friday night, there will be a Salsa Festival featuring Latin-flavored food and music.

Other attractions

The World Convention Corporation has negotiated a thirty percent discount at Paramount's Great America Theme Park. Discounted prices are \$21.50 for adults and \$16.50 for children 6 and under. Take your family and have a blast!

While you're in Northern California, take a few extra days and take advantage of one of the pre- or post-convention tour packages available in San Francisco or Monterey.

Coinciding with our convention, the city of San Jose will play host to the "Talent in Tapestry Festival," one of the largest arts and crafts festivals held in the United States. It usually attracts more than 100,000 people. Offering international food and music throughout the day on both Saturday and Sunday, this festival will offer convention attendees yet another fun activity.

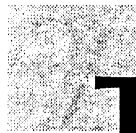
It's your world convention

Whether you decide to fill every second with fun and recovery and attend every possible event or get into the true California spirit—that is, laid-back—we hope attending the world convention will be the experience of a lifetime for everyone.

Make no mistake, we will virtually take over the city of San Jose. WCNA-27 will be one of the largest conventions ever to be held there, so our presence is a big deal to local merchants and business people. People who might not otherwise ever hear the name Narcotics Anonymous will get an up-close look at us and the quality of our lives expressed through our collective recovery.

Does this sound like something any member should miss? ♦

On violence



T

he first time I ever led a discussion meeting, I was terrified. I had not yet made a commitment to NA (though I knew doing so was the politically correct thing to do), and I was afraid I would make an "and-er" slip and get yelled at. I believed I had responsibility for the tenor of the entire meeting.

Well, I thought I did okay with what I shared (this was based not on recovery but on what folks would think of me), and then I called on a newcomer to speak. The guy was upset because the night before, he'd come to a meeting and a man there had, of all the filthy things, hugged him, like he was some kind of . . . Then the newcomer pulled out a hunting knife and started "sharing" in detail what he was going to do after tonight's meeting to the man who hugged him .

No one said anything in response to this. The meeting stayed on topic, until the person who had been threatened shared about fear. The newcomer left and didn't kill the older member (he's dead now, but that's another story).

Over the years in this fellowship, we've all lost many friends and loved ones. Sometimes I think I have more dead friends than living ones. Sometimes I think I "know how" to deal with grief or that I've "dealt with" my own mortality. But every time I receive the news that someone I know in NA has died, I find out once again that I still don't understand much about grief or mortality.

Receiving the news last year that the WSC treasurer had been kidnapped and killed while in Puerto Rico for a convention was an example of this. What aggrieved me so much about this loss was that he died violently while being of service to NA (so much for all the chatter about "junkets"). My feeling at receiving this news reminded me of how I felt when I sat in that meeting with the guy with the knife. The degree to which we can protect each other, and the degree to which doing the right thing protects us, is limited. Even in NA, we're vulnerable. Just because we got off the streets, the streets didn't go away. Even in recovery, violence is very much a part of our experience.

A recent comment from another member in defense of someone's violent act (because he could relate to the person's pain) got me thinking about this random act and our experience in the fellowship. I fear for people whose lives are affected by the unquenchable rage and instinctive violence that so often accompany our disease. I have genuine concern for people who say, "They tried to make amends, but..." I worry about

vulnerable people who mistake intransigence for steadfastness. I fear most that we might fail to defend one another from violence—physical or emotional—because we're so sympathetic to the perpetrator's pain.

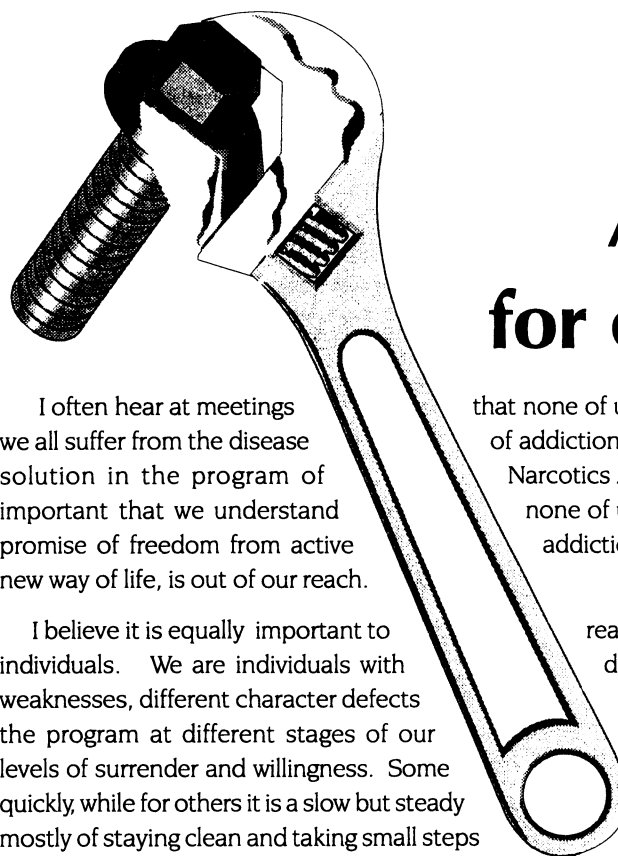
Our ability as addicts to understand the pain and suffering experienced by people who have hurt other people might be one of the most distinctive features of "the therapeutic value." It's part of what makes sharing a Fifth Step so marvelously freeing. But this ability absolutely must be accompanied by a steadfast refusal to tolerate violence as an ongoing way of life, especially in our meetings or against one another.

When one of us has died, we come together in our grief, and once we start talking we often share more than just our fondest memories. I've been to memorial services in NA where some pretty wild stuff, and pretty strong feelings, were part of the eulogies and the process of grieving. Sometimes we shared that stuff to bury the anger along with the friend, but there was always a sense that it was happening in the spirit of fellowship, of family even. We'd spill that stuff because we were safe to do so, and because it helped us get through our loss.

But that's different from condoning violence. It's different from smugly disregarding someone else's feelings. It's different from grinning at someone else's pain. We don't do that here. It's not acceptable behavior. When I hear someone condoning violence, I don't say to myself or anyone else that "someday they'll get better." I say, loudly if need be, that you cannot do that here—the same way I've told people that they cannot wear swastika pins to a meeting. The same way we now tell people that they can't bring weapons or drug paraphernalia into a meeting. It's not okay to compromise the safety of our members. It's not okay to treat people like they don't matter.

We live with dignity today. We treat our fellow members with respect. Anything less is simply unacceptable. And not NA.

Andrea L, Pennsylvania ♦



A wrench for every nut

I often hear at meetings we all suffer from the disease solution in the program of important that we understand promise of freedom from active new way of life, is out of our reach.

I believe it is equally important to individuals. We are individuals with weaknesses, different character defects the program at different stages of our levels of surrender and willingness. Some quickly, while for others it is a slow but steady mostly of staying clean and taking small steps

One of my favorite clichés when I was first coming around was, "There is a wrench for every nut." To me that meant that no matter how different I may have felt, I would find someone I could relate to. I have found that when people honestly share their experience, strength, and hope from the heart, it does not always fit into any single message of recovery. I have also found that by practicing the principle of being open-minded, I actually learn more from those whose experiences and thinking are different from mine.

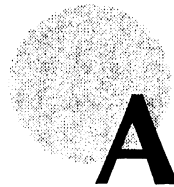
Many people in the program feel that there is a single message of Narcotics Anonymous. It has been my experience that, while they may all have a common theme, there are as many messages as there are addicts. I believe it is in this richness of diversity that lie our true strength and the hope that no addict seeking recovery need ever die.

that none of us are unique. It is true that of addiction and have found a common Narcotics Anonymous. It is also none of us are so different that the addiction, or the opportunity for a

realize that we are different strengths and assets. We come into disease and at different of us seem to recover process consisting toward recovery.

Rich McC, California ♦

How I learned to overcome my fear and love the male chauvinist pigs in NA



As you might guess from the title of this story, I've found that keeping a sense of humor is more important to my recovery and general peace of mind than almost anything else.

For example, I just don't seem to know any of those sensitive Nineties guys with ponytails. I've heard rumors about them, but I've never seen one. Maybe I need to go to meetings in the city instead of hanging out in suburbia all the time. Anyway, the men I hang out with (including my husband) are men of the Sixties; they call women "chicks," and seem to think the height of our ambition is to macramé the perfect plant hanger.

I do service with these guys, too. As a matter of fact, we got to be friends during our reign of terror as the ASC executive committee. Now when one of these well-meaning dears automatically assigns the women on the activities committee to do the cooking and cleaning up, or assumes that the fun, interesting service jobs require an addict with a "y" chromosome, I just say something like "Hey, stick an apple in his mouth, wouldja?" It lightens things up. It makes my point. It's a lot more effective than wearing my "Ladies Sewing Circle and Rifle Society" T-shirt to every service meeting.

Let's face it. NA is not some utopia we can retreat to when we can't handle drugs anymore. The ills of society are not suspended when we walk into our home group (though they may not be so glaringly obvious there). Our doors are open to anyone who has a desire to stop using. And people who have to go to NA for help have often traveled down a road where prejudice and tunnel vision were the only signposts. Were *you* concerned with social justice at your first meeting? I know I wasn't.

So for me, forgiveness is also an essential component of staying sane in NA, not to mention keeping my gaze on *my part* of the situations in my life. I am not innocent. I've called men far worse things than the male equivalent of "chick." Beyond that, I am ultimately responsible for what goes on in my life.

I got clean as a single parent with an infant son to raise. My then-husband was still using, didn't pay a dime for child support, and didn't show up when he was supposed to most of the time. Oh, I got angry. I had every right to be. I blamed him for the fact that I was living pretty far below the poverty line. I screamed and cried and carried on. I tried to shift the responsibility for our lives onto someone else, but the price tag for acting on that defect was much larger than I could afford to pay.

I had to move past that behavior or I would have remained forever a victim. The line in the Basic Text that says, "Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems" became my mantra. I had to remind myself on a minute-by-minute basis that the converse of that maxim would also be true: If I accepted personal responsibility, I would stop creating my own problems.

I stopped spending money I couldn't afford to spend. Conventions were an extravagance. Dances were affordable—sometimes. I put what I could afford in the Seventh Tradition. I bought our clothes at thrift shops, and I clipped coupons. I went to the library for books instead of buying them. I worked overtime whenever I could.

It really wasn't that bad. I had wonderful NA women in my life. We did so

much on so little. We had parties just to celebrate our lives. We would get together at one or another of our houses and talk about recovery, toasting our brilliance in choosing each other as friends with glasses of sparkling cider. We played cards and talked trash. We bared our souls to one another and were healed by the love and acceptance that greeted our revelations. These were some of the best evenings I ever spent in my life—far more nourishing to my spirit than the most expensive night on the town.

So, yes, there's sexism in NA—and a thousand other cruelties we visit upon each other. If I start with the assumption that it's unintended most of the time, I feel less like a victim and more like just another addict who's trying to learn how to live.

Barbara G, California ♦

Women in service: what a concept!

Recently, we had a conversation about women in service at my home group. Someday, I have faith, we will not need to have such a conversation.

I do not feel that I am treated as an equal when I do service in NA. Is that the victim inside me? Sometimes, yes. Something happens to trigger emotions that I used to feel in response to things that happened all the time in my past: yelling, obscenities, and violence.

However, being told my ears are too sensitive—that is sexist. Trust me, my ears have heard plenty. Having another member stand in my face and yell—that is disrespectful. Being labeled a bitch—that is sexist. Many times I've seen men in service being considered bright and assertive, while the same behavior from a woman is viewed as managing and controlling.

I understand that I need to work on my issues outside of service in NA. I need to work on my insecurity and I need to take a look at the times I victimize myself and others. I need to be willing to not act on my defects in service. I need to hold my head up and not victimize others or take on as a reality someone's poor treatment of me. I try to the best of my ability.

All of us in NA are the same—no matter what our gender. The ways we acted in the past need to change. I am changing. I hold my head up and continue to be assertive. What a wonderful feeling! Other members help me, both male and female. The women who continue to stay clean and be of service inspire me. The men who treat me as an equal give me hope.

Even the members who practice sexism help me grow. This is NA. It's my home. It's where I trust, where I grow, where I learn, and where I seek comfort. We're all the same here—sick addicts trying to change defects into positive living skills. I am not treated differently because I'm a woman; I'm treated the way each person I encounter knows how to treat a woman. Not because I am, but because they were.

Michel B, Quebec ♦

Nan O, New Brunswick ♦



Growing

I recently discovered something that led me to grow in an unexpected way.

With three years clean, I discovered that some members contribute to my growth while others cause me to grow. I shared this with my sponsor; he only smiled. I also shared it with some other old-timers; they thought it was very good.

There was a member in my local fellowship who was elected to be the chairperson of a subcommittee assigned to set up an event. I attended a couple of the subcommittee meetings, returning home after each one devoured by resentment toward this guy. In my estimation, he was the most incompetent person I had ever known to fulfill such a mandate.

The event took place anyway. Not once during the event did the coordinator place himself in the limelight. He left this to the people who, unlike me, had assisted him during the many months of planning and hard work. He kept busy during the event, running left and right to patch whatever holes needed patching.

Two weeks after the event, the coordinator presented the ASC with his final report, which showed beyond any doubt that the event had been an unprecedented success in our area. I'm a GSR, so I was present. I caved in. I publicly congratulated and thanked him for the lesson in humility he taught me during the event. From then on, I gained ground in an unexpected direction.

First, I realized more than ever that pride is no problem for me, but humility is. I came to the conclusion that people will *cause me to grow* when I resist learning the lesson that my loving God wants to teach me. Finally, whatever my loving God chooses to put on will happen the way He wants it to happen.

What's truly wonderful about the lesson I learned is that this coordinator and I got close and are now great friends. I never miss an opportunity to let him know that I love him.



SERVICE

On diversity

Over the past few years, the word “diversity” has been heard with increasing frequency in Narcotics Anonymous. Workshops on the topic of diversity have begun appearing on learning day programs. Convention committees are striving to make sure the diversity of the fellowship is represented in their speaker lineups. In fact, diversity is often appearing as the central theme at conventions, including the upcoming world convention. But what is diversity, and how did it get to be our strength when it so easily could have become our weakness?

NA has had to deal with diversity since its inception. NA’s founders wanted to adapt the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for a program for drug addicts, but they faced a challenge. How could they promote an atmosphere of identification—so necessary for recovery—when there were all different kinds of addicts?

A simple shift in focus proved to be the answer to a tough dilemma. NA’s founders could have had the First Step read, “We admitted that we were powerless over drugs. . . .” Instead, they used the word “addiction,” knowing that all addicts, no matter what their drug of choice, suffer from the disease of addiction, that thing inside us that makes it impossible for us to control our use of drugs. An issue that had the potential to divide and destroy instead became one of the strongest ties binding the fellowship together.

This, however, wasn’t the end of diversity-related challenges. In the late Eighties and early Nineties, several areas of concern began surfacing.

First, there were “special interest” meetings—women’s meetings, men’s stags, gay and lesbian meetings, HIV-positive meetings, young people’s meetings, etc. Many people took the existence of these kinds of meetings for granted. They appeared in meeting schedules around the fellowship, and people either went to them or did not.

But some members felt the existence of these meetings were a violation of the principle of unity. Men attended women’s meetings—and vice versa—as an act of protest. Some area service committees decided that such meetings wouldn’t be printed on the local meeting list. One letter to the WSO said, “Special interest meetings exist solely [for] a special segment of our fellowship. They are therefore out of keeping with the spiritual foundation of our traditions.” Another countered, “[Special interest meetings] are a place for us to feel safe enough, long enough, to learn

the acceptance of self that we all must acquire for the steps to work." The argument heated up. Fingers were pointed, and cries of "tradition violation!" became more and more frequent.

Supporters of special interest meetings were not encouraged by the passage at WSC'87 of the *Convention Guidelines*, which contained language saying that special interest meetings were inappropriate at the world convention.

Finally, NA's worldwide growth sparked some of the deepest concerns about diversity. Was the concept of a God of our own understanding strictly a Western idea? What would happen in countries where admission of drug addiction was an offense punishable by death? What about sponsorship? Did our message *really* transcend cultural differences, as was asserted in a resolution adopted at WSC'92?

The Twelve Traditions are often cited as rigid boundaries we dare not cross—and they do give us a secure space within which to carry the message. Encompassed in this space, we are safe from anything that might tear us apart. We need not fear the differences that make up our membership. In fact, the more strength we have as individuals, the stronger NA as a whole will be when we join together in our common purpose. When we surrender our individual wills to NA's ultimate authority—a loving God—we tap into the strength of a power greater than our own.

The controversies that could have torn NA apart have instead led us to recognize our diversity, accept it, and even celebrate it. The fact that these controversies arose—accompanied by high drama and predictions of NA's demise—peaked, and then faded away gives us living proof that the ties that bind us together are indeed much stronger than those things that would tear us apart. ♦

***...fingers were pointed and cries
of "tradition violation!"
became more and more frequent***

Finally, the controversy came to a head at WSC'88. At that conference, an ad hoc committee was formed to "help us as a fellowship come to grips with and perhaps [come to] a solution to the issue of special interest meetings."

The ad hoc committee reported back at WSC'89. The upshot of the report was that there didn't seem to be anything in the Twelve Traditions that contradicted special interest meetings, and that if a need existed for them they would flourish; otherwise, they wouldn't.

Another plank in the diversity platform became apparent at WSC'92. A panel presentation had been scheduled on the topic of prejudice.

Panel members shared personal perspectives on their struggles with prejudice—racism, sexism, etc.—in NA. Then the microphone was opened to attendees. Within seconds, the line waiting at the mike was ten-deep. Everyone, it seemed, had felt the sting of prejudice. People talked about feeling excluded because of skin color, gender, body image, age, religion, disabilities, educational level, and so on. As people shared, a feeling of identification swept the room. People related to one another *because of* their differences, because of their...diversity.

Again, it seems that NA's worldwide growth has only added to its strength. As meetings have sprung up in new countries, the need for recovery literature in a variety of languages has grown. The fellowship as a whole has responded to that need, time and again establishing the translation of NA literature as a priority.

NA meetings themselves are one of the finest examples of our fellowship's diversity and why it's so good for addicts seeking recovery. In most developed NA communities, you can go to a speaker meeting, a discussion meeting, a topic-oriented meeting, or a combination of those formats. You can go to a large meeting where the atmosphere is happy and boisterous and there may be many people you don't know. You can go to a small, intimate meeting where the atmosphere is quiet and low-key and a regular group of members attend each week. You can go to a meeting that's streamlined (very few readings, no keytags or anniversary celebrations) for maximum sharing time, or you can go to a meeting where recovery anniversaries are the main focus and are celebrated with a birthday cake and singing. With so many different styles, formats, and moods represented in our meetings, each addict can find a meeting that answers his or her needs.

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NA at the ACA

By Craig R, Chairperson
WSC H&I Committee

Can you imagine spending three solid days with prison wardens, correctional administrators, and parole and probation officers?

No, it's not a using dream. It's the American Correctional Association Winter Conference. The ACA is the largest organization of correctional officials in the world, and its winter conference, held in San Antonio, Texas, was attended by more than 3,400 ACA members. ACA conferences are a bit like our own conventions. There are meetings and workshops, but there are also a great number of displays—portable jail cells, security devices and sensors, prisoner uniforms—everything from guns to bibles.

I had the opportunity to attend the conference while serving as the WSC H&I Committee chairperson along with Bob Stewart, the WSO marketing director. What a milestone for NA, and what an exhilarating experience for me personally!

Though this was the fourth ACA conference at which we've set up a booth and displayed information and literature about NA, it was the first time we

were able to make a presentation. We were asked to participate in a workshop along with presenters from Hazelden and the Cornerstone Treatment Network. The theme of the workshop was "The Effectiveness of Twelve-Step Programs vs. Other Treatment Modalities." With sixty-five to seventy people in attendance, we presented information about NA and how we carry our message into hospitals and institutions. What an exciting experience! The panel fielded questions from the audience, and many of the questions reminded me of some we usually hear at an NA learning day. For example, I was asked to explain the difference between AA and NA. I thought for a minute that one of my NA friends had "planted" that one just to keep me on my toes.

As you might imagine, we left with a sense of gratitude and optimism. My gratitude revolves around how NA has changed my life and how I am privileged to share that fact with others. My gratitude deepens when I realize that these efforts will almost certainly result in more addicts being able to experience our way of life. I appreciate the efforts of NA members who served before me. Their foresight and vision made it possible for us to attend and participate in these kinds of events. I have great hope that NA's best days are ahead as we become known and recognized as a viable program of recovery. ♦

From our readers

Dear NA Way,

I wholeheartedly agree with the articles about our fellowship's financial needs, as meeting those needs has been an ongoing problem for all of the eight years I have been in service. I'm sure that it was a problem long before that. What I have a concern about is the fact that the first two issues of the new NA Way had articles of this nature on the front page. I believe that to have articles of that nature on the front page too often may turn some people off, just as my church constantly asking for money turned me off. I've heard addicts make comments about the WSO/WSC really pushing this money thing in our faces.

I am not offended by articles about money. I'm a defender of talking about money issues because I see the needs we have at the regional and world levels, but I don't see the money to meet those needs. I believe that the way to encourage people to dig a little deeper is to talk about it (but not too much) and be an example. In my home group, it is not uncommon for people to put more than a dollar in the basket. In my area, it is not uncommon for people to pay a great deal for auction items. At our functions, we almost always take in enough money in voluntary donations to cover the cost of refreshments. The way I view the "NA fundraising effort" is that it's about giving some of my money to NA because I have gratitude. I want all addicts to be able to experience this wonderful thing I've found in NA. I have money to give today, not just because I'm clean and have a job, but because I'm a lot less self-centered.

We don't like to hear about the fact that we should give more money to the fellowship. We as addicts would much rather keep that money for ourselves so we can buy more stuff. I feel that way too, but I also know that I need to support the fellowship I love. I've heard a couple of people say things like, "Why do we have to have auctions and raffles at our functions to raise money?" or

Continued on page 16

What types of addiction does NA treat, anyway?

By Jeff Gershoff,
WSO Group Services Coordinator

"I have been a member of NA for six years. I attend meetings three or four times a week. I have a sponsor who is also a member of NA. I follow sponsor direction. I work the steps to the best of my ability. I have written on the steps under sponsor direction. When I came into the fellowship I weighed 158 pounds; now it's 190. I'm only 5' 8" tall. Why have I gotten so fat; why can't I lose weight? I must not be working a program. I eat all the time and can't seem to control my eating. Every day I say that I'm going to cut down on my eating, and every day I fail and eat cookies and chips all night in front of the TV until it is time for bed. I feel discouraged."

You can take the example above and substitute any one of a number of scenarios for the one given: "I can't stop shopping, I can't stop smoking, I can't stop going to prostitutes or cruising singles bars, I can't stop gambling. What is the matter with me? Why can't NA cure me of all of these problem behaviors?"

We hear addicts complain about these things all the time, at meetings, at coffee after the meeting, on the telephone. This can give rise to a perception that either NA is failing many people who come here for help, or else the addicts themselves are failing in the execution of their program. Is this so, or is there some other explanation? Is NA not delivering the goods, or is it possible that people expect NA to be more than it is. In other words, to be all things for all people.

Our first step states that "We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable." To try and dispel any notions about what type of addiction the first step is addressing, I've researched our literature: In WSO Bulletin #17, "What is Addiction?" it says: "What about other kinds of addiction? By the word addiction we do, in fact, mean drug

addiction. Our Third Tradition says, *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.* Clearly, we mean ...a desire to stop using drugs. . . . If we were to broaden our focus beyond drug addiction to include other types of addiction, we believe we would seriously damage the atmosphere of identification in our meetings."

In our Basic Text, on page 3, it says: "Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs." and finally on page 12 of *It Works How and Why*, we find "No matter how hard we fought, we finally reached the point of surrender where we realized that we couldn't stop using drugs on our own. We were able to admit our powerlessness over our addiction. We gave up completely."

It would certainly seem by all that is said above, and by other passages in our literature, that Narcotics Anonymous is simply a program focused on recovery from active addiction to drugs, and that any other benefits that might come along are completely gratuitous and are not necessarily within the scope or control of an individual addict, or of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

But what if we look deeper in our literature. Is it possible to find statements seemingly in conflict with the above? Again, from page 12 of *It Works: How and Why*: "The disease of addiction can manifest itself in a variety of mental obsessions and compulsive actions that have nothing to do with drugs. We sometimes find ourselves obsessed and behaving compulsively over things we may never have had problems with until we stopped using drugs. We may once again try to fill the awful emptiness we sometimes feel with something outside ourselves. Any time we find ourselves using something to change the way we feel, we need to apply the principles of the First Step." And from page 9 of the same source, "We address obsession and compulsion here as they relate to our drug use because, when we first come into the program, our drug addiction is how we identify with each other and the program. As we continue in our recovery, we will see how these aspects of our addiction can manifest themselves in many areas of our lives."

It appears that what seemed black and white initially is really much more ambivalent than we had previously as-

sumed. Because Narcotics Anonymous has no professionals, and is a program of suggestions rather than "musts," there are many instances where there is not a definitive right or wrong way of doing something. This is not always the case (as might pertain to our traditions, etc.) but in this situation, i.e. applying the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous to behaviors in our life causing us grief, other than drug addiction, it seems that the individual member must ultimately determine what works for them and what doesn't. In interviewing some members with substantial amounts of recovery in NA, one thing is clear: almost every NA member with whom I spoke believes that our Twelve Steps can be applied to virtually any area of one's life where obsession and compulsion have taken root and refuse to leave. It is also clear by the spate of other self-help fellowships, Overeaters Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Prostitutes Anonymous, etc., that the belief that the steps will work in other problem areas as well as drug addiction, is widespread.

In concluding, I'd like to offer a couple of observations. Number one is that in Narcotics Anonymous we are all drug addicts. There should be no mistake about this. There is one requirement for membership in our fellowship and that is the desire to stop using (drugs). Number two is that some of us might have to loosen up a bit on our too tight grip on what the Twelve Steps might or might not be applied to. Although in Narcotics Anonymous our focus is on the desire to stop using drugs, it appears that the Twelve Steps might help many addicts as well with other problem areas in their life in addition to drug addiction. Number three is that we are confident in the outcome when someone applies the Twelve Steps of NA to their drug addiction, but this outcome is not nearly as clear when the same 12 Steps are applied to other areas. In other words, bottom line, NA is a program for recovery from drug addiction. Granted our methods for this recovery may be applied to other areas of our lives, however the results are not nearly as predictable and are, by definition, not the province of Narcotics Anonymous. ♦

Anyone may join us: building a truly diverse fellowship

By Melissa W, Advisory Member
Monika C, Pool Member
WSC PI Committee

As simply stated in the Fifth Tradition, NA's primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This principle assures us that regardless of age, race, sex, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion, we have a home here.

Now contemplate this principle while thinking about the community in which you live. Then look around your meetings and see, really see, who is there. Even more, notice who is not there. How can we help that still-suffering addict find the rooms and relate to the things we all share?

It is our responsibility as NA members, as well as members of PI committees, to notice our local membership and to formulate plans to reach out to those who are missing. Start within your own home group. Do the familiar faces you see every week reflect the make-up of the surrounding community?

At first this task may prove difficult. If they're missing from our rooms, how are we supposed to know who they are? But it's really quite simple. Think about the entire range of people in your community: for example, seniors, youth, people with disabilities such as hearing or vision impairment, single parents, people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, men and women, professionals and the working class—you get the idea. If our meetings do not reflect the diversity around us, it's probably not because those subgroups don't have any addicts. It is more likely that we have not, as yet, successfully reached those addicts.

At this point you may find yourself asking, "What's so important about di-

versity anyway? And what exactly does this have to do with public information? And me?"

Diversity is an essential part of NA's foundation. In the essay on Tradition One in *It Works: How and Why*, it says, "[We] all have an interest in maintaining the unity that underlies [NA's] common welfare... The importance of unity encourages our groups to look beyond their own little worlds to the common needs of the worldwide NA Fellowship... With an attitude of open-mindedness, we seek to understand other perspectives... When we work to ensure the vitality of NA, we're not working just for ourselves but for those yet to join us... Our ability to survive as a fellowship and to reach out to others depends on our unity."

In the essay on Tradition Five, it says, "Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." In our Basic Text we are reminded that "the only thing that will defeat us in our recovery is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Three of these that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness."

We'd like to focus on the open-mindedness part of that quote for a minute. Encouraging diversity is open-minded work. It requires an open mind to see that we as individuals or committees may not be doing everything in our power to make NA a welcoming place. It also requires honesty to admit our shortcomings and willingness to change. If there are addicts out there who haven't heard of NA or don't come to NA because of something we've done or failed to do, then we're letting the suffering addict, the fellowship as a whole, and ourselves down. Narcotics Anonymous was here for us when we came in. It's up to us to do what we can to ensure it's here for all addicts who need NA.

Why should we make a special effort to reach out to addicts who aren't represented in our meetings? Won't traditional PI efforts reach everyone eventually?

Not necessarily. As much as we'd like to live up to our Third Tradition—having no membership requirements other

than a desire to stop using—we often find that the ways we carry the message do in fact create requirements.

For example, if an addict can't read, he or she can't hear about NA through a billboard or a newspaper announcement, or by picking up the Basic Text at a public library. Or perhaps all our meetings in a particular area are inaccessible to wheelchairs; that would create a "membership requirement" that you must be able to walk. What if all our posters are put in parts of the city that certain addicts will never see? What if our public service announcements are all in one language, and it isn't the language that half the people in our city speak? What if these PSAs aren't closed-captioned? What if you did go to a meeting and found it filled only with people who weren't at all similar to you in regard to class, race, gender, etc.? You may not stay long enough to hear the suggestions to the newcomer to focus on the things we all have in common—addiction and recovery.

In certain places our membership is growing by leaps and bounds, but only in numbers, not in diversity. The newcomers are, by and large, of the same ethnic background and class as those already represented in the meetings. If that were simply a reflection of the surrounding community, there would be no problem, but that is often not the case.

We can view such a situation as signifying that there has been success in carrying the message to particular segments of the community. It's now time to take that success and adapt it so it reaches *all* the addicts in *all* our communities.

One way to begin is to conduct an inventory of your group, area, or region. It should focus on the different aspects of your group, how well you're carrying the message, the general composition of your meetings, location characteristics such as wheelchair accessibility, availability of supplies such as large-print literature, and literature in the appropriate languages. The WSO product catalog provides a complete listing of NA literature and service material, including large-print editions and various languages. For information about conducting inventories of groups or service

committees, please see *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*. Knowing the resources that are available and having a clear picture of both your local fellowship and the surrounding community will give you a starting point from which to target your PI efforts.

Consider choosing a segment of your local community that is not represented in your meetings and develop a specific plan to help get NA's message out to that part of your community. Here are a few ideas:

- Approach a local community-specific newspaper to see if the editor would arrange for a PSA or a story about NA.
- Create culturally relevant posters and ads.
- Approach local community service groups that serve your target group to see if they would like a PI presentation.
- Ask for help from professionals or agencies who work with your target group.
- Approach NA members from the group you are trying to reach; offer your support for their recovery and enlist their help in your targeted PI efforts.
- Encourage and support common needs meetings.
- Make a commitment to learning about cultures other than your own.
- Think about ways to make your meetings more welcoming.

The goal of public information work is to let the public, all of the public, know what NA is and how to find us. How and where we provide information about NA is central to encouraging the growth of a diverse fellowship. Every effort we make, no matter how small, has an impact. The results are worth the effort. ❖

Carrying the message into adolescent facilities

By Javanne P, Voting Member
WSC H&I Committee

All of my feelings about carrying the message to adolescents come from our *H&I Handbook* and my personal experience. One of the most rewarding and challenging service commitments I've ever had was chairing an NA meeting at an institution for young women.

It was challenging because I didn't get clean until I was thirty-eight and I never had children of my own. My first impulse was to tell these "girls" not to waste their lives and to say I wish I had gotten clean at their age. But before I went to this meeting the first time, I read the *H&I Handbook*. It said that addicts are addicts regardless of age. This stuck in my mind and allowed me to show respect for these young women who were addicts just like me, and who had suffered just like me. By me showing respect for them, they were able to return that respect.

It was rewarding because I was able to carry the message. Although none of these women believed they were too young to be addicts, they might not have known about NA if it weren't for the meeting we brought in. It was rewarding to let these women know there was a place for them, where people just like them have fun and help each other get clean and live lives that before were only a dream.

Whenever I carry the message, it's important for me to remember what I was like before I got clean. I rebelled whenever anyone told me what I needed to do and how I needed to do it. I felt "less than" when people talked down to me, expressing how they knew more than I did. How easy it was for me to tune out anyone who came off as older and wiser . . .

I was very grateful to have the *H&I Handbook* to look in for experience, strength, and hope. I'd like to say

thanks to the people who shared with me through the handbook. When I have faith in NA and surrender to the program, I am able to practice that faith by following the suggestions given to me by the addicts who came before me. ❖

Part of my foundation

by Jimmy K, Puerto Rico
WSC H&I Voting Member

When I first got involved in H&I, I had no idea how much it would help me in my personal recovery. Early in my recovery, I was asked to be the panel leader in a detox. At the time we didn't have any formal elections or procedures by which we selected panel leaders. We just did things as they came up. Because the *H&I Handbook* wasn't yet available, we often had to learn by trial and error.

At the H&I committee meetings in my area, I learned how to do the commitment the right way. We talked about our problems and asked each other questions, and that helped us not to make the mistakes others had made.

My sponsor at the time had started H&I efforts in our area. In succession, two of his other sponsees took the chairperson's commitment. Little did I know that I was carrying on a tradition in our "bloodline." What started as a favor, filling in for someone who was ending a commitment, led to a devotion to carrying our message of hope and freedom from active addiction.

This commitment was the beginning of many that would help me understand the importance of Twelfth-Step work as carried out through H&I. The level of gratitude we feel from such efforts far exceeds the energy we put into it. When I was feeling down, or even maybe like using, those H&I commitments helped me "keep it green" and keep things in perspective. The gift of seeing a patient, inmate, or client from an H&I presentation at an NA meeting, clean, was always especially rewarding.

I also didn't know about the gift of contact with other members when I first

started H&I work. I've since made many friends, and it's only because I was willing to take a commitment and then show up.

I've done many different kinds of service in our fellowship, some geared toward social events and fundraisers and other areas necessary to our continued existence. But it's H&I service work that is solidly grounded in my heart. Because there's no great credit or recognition for doing this work, it helps me stay focused on recovery-oriented service. ♦

Policy "bits"

By David R, Vice Chairperson
WSC Policy Committee

In early spring of this year I had the opportunity to attend a regional conference weekend (MARLCNA). I was invited to a policy workshop scheduled for early Saturday morning. I attended the workshop and, as I might have expected, once I was introduced to the group (of eight addicts), one of them said, "I want to hear from the world policy guy."

Well, this was my cue to give the disclaimer spiel. You see, the World Service Conference Policy Committee, unlike most other WSC committees, has (or by now it may be "had") a very limited focus: WSC policy. We generally didn't communicate regularly with regional and area committees when the conference was not in session, unless we were contacted for a particular reason.

Once I ran through the disclaimer, as I might have expected, there was a bit of disappointment in the group. They were hoping for feedback on a few problems they were having. They did end up with some input, just not from the source they expected.

So where does a member go to get policy guidance? Where do area and regional committees turn when there is a question of procedure? I'm not sure that there is any "one" answer; instead, I think there are a variety of resources that we can use to help get some direction.

The first that comes to mind is our Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. Just as the answer to our living prob-

lems is usually in the Twelve Steps, the answer for policy questions is somewhere in these guiding principles.

Don't expect it to work like a textbook in which you can go to the index, look up "voting," for instance, and find the code of law dealing with all aspects of voting. Instead, the concepts and traditions point us toward ideals of how we should interact, what we should expect of others, and our own responsibility in matters. If we are willing to take the time (and it might take considerable time), we usually can find something that relates to our problem. My own experience is that what I find may not be what I "want" to find. The answer sometimes requires me to take an action that I don't want to take. I guess this is where the steps come in!

The next resource is our (not so) "new" *Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*. Yeah, I know. Lots of members have yet to read their copy. You're not the only one by a long shot. Well, maybe it is time. There are many options, based on past experience, for avoiding or resolving policy and procedure problems on the group, area, and regional levels. One of the most important simple principles maintains that "form should follow function." It means simply that we should be careful to not create any more structure than we need to get the job done. Valuable guidance, I think.

Another very valuable resource can be found in other groups and committees. Our problems are usually not unique. Others have often dealt with

the struggles we find ourselves in, just like in our personal recovery. So how do we get to these other groups and committees? A great place to start is at our ASC and RSC meetings. Another opportunity is attending workshops like the one described above.

Finally, the World Service Office is a great resource for policy and procedure questions. No, there isn't a "policy expert" on staff there, either. But there are examples of guidelines used by other committees from all over. Copies can be sent to you; just ask. You can reach the Fellowship Services Department of the WSO by phone, fax, email, or regular post.

I guess it would be irresponsible for me not to mention *Robert's Rules of Order*. Groups and committees like our own have been using *Robert's* for, well, 100-plus years! I think that the larger the group, the more we need *Robert's Rules*, and, of course, vice versa. While *Robert's* has its good points, it sometimes causes us to perform confusing and confounding "parliamentary gymnastics." And without a parliamentarian at our disposal to aid us in our efforts to apply the rules of order, we often misunderstand or misuse the very procedures that we think are helping us.

So, the next time there is a question of policy or procedure, don't forget that you're never alone. Remember, you have many resources available to help you. ♦

Where will you be tomorrow?

Going on vacation? Moving? Want to know where the meetings are? If so, please don't wait until the day before you leave to call the WSO. The WSO needs two weeks, at the absolute minimum, to respond to requests for meeting or contact information in a particular area. Whenever possible, contact Fellowship Services at WSO a month before your departure. Fellowship Services can be reached at:

WSO Fellowship Services

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409

Tel (818) 773-9999, x771

"Functions aren't supposed to be fundraisers; they're supposed to be safe places for addicts to have fun."

My reply to comments like these is that the Seventh Tradition funds generated by passing the basket rarely cover our financial needs as a fellowship. If we want to see newcomers at our meetings, we need to get the message of recovery out to the places that practicing addicts go—and that takes money.

Yes, there are things I don't like in parts of our service structure, but I am involved and I believe in our fellowship and our way of doing service. I'm not afraid to tell people that if they don't like the ways things are, then they should get involved and do something about it. We are all here for the same reason: recovery. We may choose to work our programs in different ways, but we all need to support our fellowship. If NA wasn't here, we probably wouldn't be, either.

Andrea P, Wisconsin

Dear NA Way,

I would like to respond to the letter in the January *NA Way* (Vol. 15, No. 1) titled: "Let's live according to our principles."

The author argued on behalf of common needs meetings at conventions; he thinks there should be special meetings for gays and lesbians. What would the author think if someone defended the creation of meetings for "macho guys only." Scary, right?

When I got to NA they taught me to look at those things that unite us, not those which make us different. They taught me that this does not mean that we are all the same, but that we are working on a common goal and that NA embraces all of its members.

At the beginning of my recovery I could only see those things that separated me from the rest. I had not been to jail. I am educated. I speak, behave, and relate well. All of these things made me feel different. In my active addiction, I used these things to tell myself I was a different kind of addict. I didn't use like others did. I was more "elegant" when I bought my dose. I was better, more handsome, sharper, less of a junkie. It was very difficult for me to realize that I wasn't so different, that I

was not better or worse. At first I could never relate, I was alone in my fantasy, and I only looked for the differences.

Now I am much happier, realizing that I wasn't so different after all. What joy to be able to go to a meeting where there are people who are white, black, brown, and yellow, both men and women, both heterosexual and homosexual addicts, rich and poor ones. What joy to be able to relate to them all, because when all is said and done, we are all addicts and, ultimately, human.

You say there is homophobia? Yes, I realize this, but there are also racism and other prejudices that haven't resulted in people asking for special meetings. There are hate, rage, and many other defects of character which we all humbly ask God to remove. If we were perfect, we would have no need to go to meetings or to be in recovery.

When I go to a meeting called "Understanding" or "Gay and Lesbian," I feel discriminated against. Even though they may not intend to, they make it known that my presence is not desired, that what is most important is what I do with what's between my legs, that besides our being addicts and our having the desire to stop using, there are other considerations. I feel sadness and

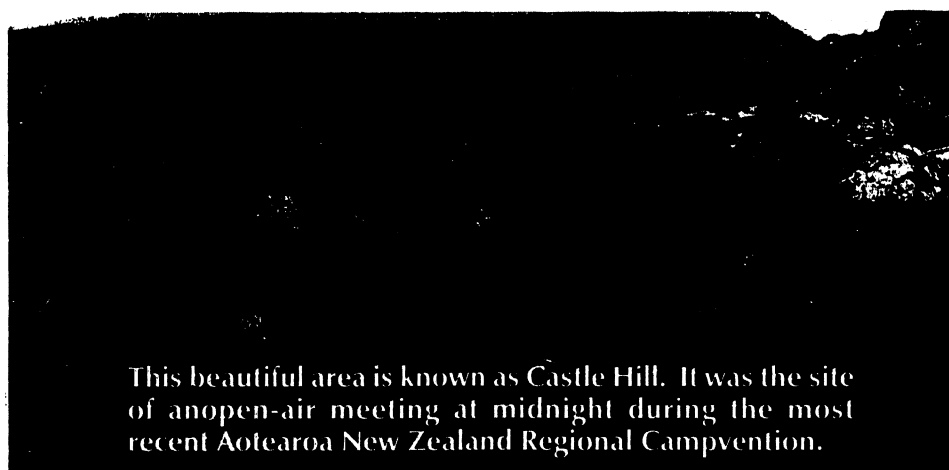
shame and, above all, lots of rebelliousness due to my feeling pushed aside, separated, and segregated. Gays and lesbians have never been a threat to me, but it seems that I, because I don't condone separation, am a threat to them.

If you have a problem with people who are not like you, work on it. If you have an acceptance problem, work on it as well. If your sponsor has the same problems you have and can't help you, get another one. And please, don't give so much importance to the fact that you're homosexual. Become one with the world and you'll realize how insignificant we are. When all is said and done, our sexual tendencies are of the least importance.

Pablo S, Spain

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in the *NA Way*, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line, unless the writer requests anonymity. ♦

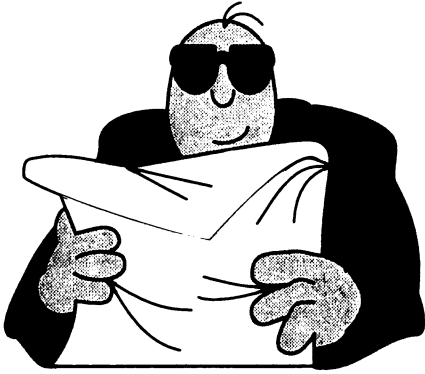
Picture this



This beautiful area is known as Castle Hill. It was the site of an open-air meeting at midnight during the most recent Aotearoa New Zealand Regional Campvention.

NA communities are invited to send us photographs of their meeting places. We especially welcome photos that include meeting formats, recovery literature, posters, dirty coffee cups, etc.—anything that makes the meeting place look "lived in." Sorry, we cannot use photos that identify NA members. Please tell us about your meeting: the name, the location and city, how long it has been in existence, what your format consists of (speaker, participation, etc.).

H&I Slim



Readers of *H&I News* are familiar with H&I Slim. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure, H&I Slim is the ultimate H&I kinda guy. He hangs out in hospitals and jails all over the world. You might say he's always in the know, and always on the go. Got a question about H&I? Need some help? Write H&I Slim in care of WSO.

Dear H&I Slim,

I know what our policy states about giving our phone numbers out at correctional facilities, but what about treatment centers? We have both short- and long-term centers, and are frequently asked. This has become an issue at our subcommittee meetings. Please help!

Recovering in Memphis

Dear Recovering,

It is never a good practice to give out our personal phone numbers to residents of any facility. We can, however, give out our area and regional helpline numbers, make local meeting lists available, and tell potential NA members that we'll be glad to see them at a regularly scheduled NA meeting where members' phone numbers are readily available.

H&I Slim

Dear H&I Slim,

Our H&I subcommittee has had meetings/presentations in the State Department of Corrections facilities for twelve years. New problems arise with each change in the department's administration. The latest is a requirement that panel leaders fill out an in-depth volunteer form; there is a briefer form for panel members. They have assured us that only the program director will see these forms and that the information we give will not be used to prevent us from going into the prison. Many committee members don't like this. What can we do?

Needs Suggestions

Dear Needs,

A PI/H&I presentation to the administration with emphasis placed on our Twelfth Tradition might be helpful. Using this time to present your concerns and listening to what the administration has to say may bring a resolution that both you and the institution will find workable.

The decision ultimately rests with the individual addict. Some addicts may simply be too uncomfortable with providing the information requested on the form, while others may not have a problem with it at all.

H&I Slim ♦

Spotlight on staff

Have you ever called or written the World Service Office? Or have you ever wanted to call, but weren't sure you should? A lot of members wonder what the WSO does besides ship literature. Some know what else the WSO does, but aren't sure which staff person to ask for assistance when they call.

We thought it might help if we began introducing you to some of the staff at WSO and describing their responsibilities. "Spotlight on staff" will be a regular feature of *The NA Way Magazine*.

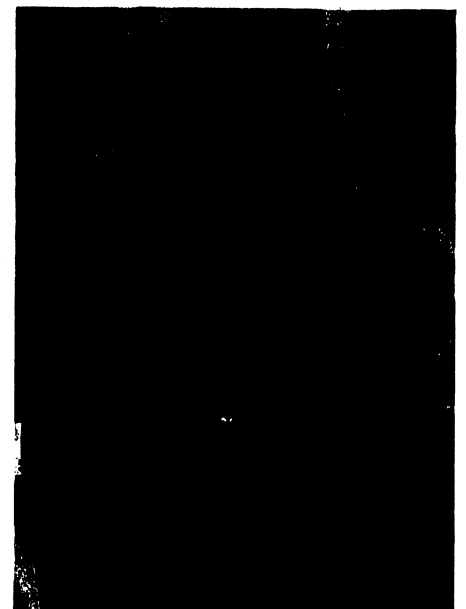
This month's staff member is Sylvia Cordero. She began working for the WSO in August of 1988. Her original job assignment was to enter group and trusted servant registrations and new *NA Way* subscriptions into the WSO database. She also entered meeting listings into the now-defunct World Directory. WSO management recognized not too long after Sylvia's hire that it was impossible to publish a world directory that wasn't out of date before it went to the printer.

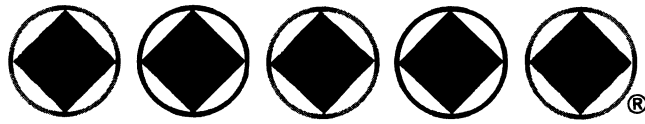
WSO immediately began taking advantage of Sylvia's bilingual skills, assigning her to mail out Spanish Group Starter Kits, translate some correspondence, and talk to Spanish-speaking callers.

In 1994, Sylvia moved permanently to customer service and began helping the Spanish-speaking literature customers. She takes literature orders over the phone, and can also answer any questions about any of the products offered by WSO. She also processes all the orders that are shipped from WSO-Chatsworth and WSO-Canada, and she processes payments for literature orders and deposits the day's receipts at the bank.

Sylvia began learning Portuguese several years ago and is now capable of helping Portuguese-speaking callers, too.

So if you speak Spanish, Portuguese, or English and are calling for customer service, say "hi" to Sylvia. Her favorite part of her job is talking to people, and she'll be glad to hear from you. ♦





CALENDAR

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales: 16-18 Oct.; Combined Sydney Area Convention; Clancy Auditorium, University of New South Wales, Sydney; info: scacna1998@hotmail.com

CANADA

British Columbia: 4-7 Sept.; Central Vancouver Island Area Campout; info: (888) 265-7333; Box 107-67, Victoria Crescent, Nanaimo, BC, Canada V9R 5B9

2) 13-15 Nov.; 12th Western States Learning Days; Coast Plaza Hotel, Vancouver; info: Box 43056, 4739 Willingdon Ave., Burnaby, BC, Canada V5G 3H0

Nova Scotia: 14-16 Aug.; 9th Annual AVANA Pig Roast and Campout; Blomidon Provo Park; info: (902) 681-0831 or (902) 678-1516; AVANA, Box 522, Kentville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4N 3X3

Prince Edward Island: 10-12 July; Prince Edward Island Annual Campout; Twin Shores Campground, Damley; info: (902) 436-2230; email: agillis@auracom.com

DENMARK

North Jutland: 2-4 Oct.; "Together We Can"; info: ASC-Northjutland, Box 1212, 9100 Aalborg, Denmark

FINLAND

Uusimaa: 14-16 Aug.; Finnish Convention; Jollas Institute, Helsinki; email: finxnac98@hotmail.com

NETHERLANDS

IJsselmeer: 2nd week of August; Clean & Crazy II, NA Sailing on the IJsselmeer; info: 49/611/379262

NORWAY

Oslo: 14-16 Aug.; Area East Convention; OØNA-98, Nordseter skole, Oslo; info: 47/90677306; email: na@os.telia.no; OØNA-98, 10 AR I ENHET, PO Box 7, 1206 Oslo, N-Norway

UNITED KINGDOM

Dorset, England: 3-5 July; 6th Wessex Area Convention; Beaufort Community Centre, Beaufort Road, Southbourne, Bournemouth; rsvns: 44/1202/451700; info: 44/1202/417143

Greater Manchester, England: 6-8 Aug.; 15th European Conference and Convention of Narcotics Anonymous; The Palace Hotel, Manchester; rsvns: 44/161/2881111; hotel fax: 44/161/2882222; ECCNA, Box 57, Manchester, England, UK M60 1HP

UNITED STATES

Alaska: 2-4 Oct.; 14th Alaska Regional Convention; Princess Hotel, Fairbanks; rsvns: (907) 455-4477; hotel fax: (907) 455-4476; info: (907) 452-7378; website: <http://www2.polarnet.com/~akna>; ARCNA-14, Box 82824, Fairbanks, AK 99708

Arkansas: 3-5 July; Central Arkansas Area Convention "A Decade of Dreams Coming True"; Riverfront Hilton Inn, North Little Rock; rsvns: (501) 371-9000; info: (501) 988-1846

California: 3-5 July; California Inland Convention; Palm Springs; info: (760) 951-5935 or (909) 658-3206 or (760) 323-0169; email: visualbuff@eee.org; website: <http://members.aol.com/cirnaconv/index.html>

2) 3-6 Sept.; 27th World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous; San Jose Convention Center & San Jose Arena; info: (818) 773-9999, x 200; WCC, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

3) 10 Oct.; 10th Annual Contra Costa Area Unity Day; Ambrose Recreation Center, Pittsburgh; email: unity_day@mailcity.com; website: <http://members.delphi.com/unityday>

Connecticut: 25-27 Sept.; USANA Spiritual Weekend; Enders Island, Mystic; info: (401) 596-6239; Spiritual Weekend, c/o USANA, Box 1807, Groton, CT 06340

Florida: 2-5 July; Florida Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency, Tampa City Center; rsvns: (813) 225-1234

2) 4-7 Sept.; 6th Annual South Florida Regional Convention "Rooted in Recovery, Planted in NA"; Wyndham Hotel and Resort, Ft. Lauderdale; rsvns: (800) 247-9810 or (954) 389-3300; info: (954) 938-8478

3) 20 Oct. - 1 Nov.; 4th Uncoast Area Convention "Life is Good"; Adams Mark Hotel, Daytona Beach; rsvns: (904) 254-8200; info: (342) 337-9018 or (352) 373-6606; website: <http://gnv.fdt.net/~ncoastna>; email: mikek@fdt.net; UCACNA, Box 12151, Gainesville, FL 32604

4) 25-29 Nov.; Serenity in the Sun; Airport Hilton, West Palm Beach; rsvns: (561) 684-9400 or (800) HILTONS; info: (561) 882-0754 or (561) 747-1497; Serenity in the Sun, Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

5) 9-11 Apr. 1999; Daytona Area Convention "An Oceanful of Miracles"; Ramada Inn Ocean Front; rsvns: (800) 654-6216; info: (904) 253-8962 or (904) 676-2409; DACNA-I, Box 741468, Orange City, FL 32774

Georgia: 30 July - 2 Aug.; Midtown Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Atlanta; rsvns: (800) 282-8222 or (404) 873-4661; info: (404) 243-8339 or (770) 907-9701 or (770) 996-0765 or (770) 477-2467; MACNA, Box 17557, Atlanta, GA 30316

2) 4-7 Sept.; Serenity in the Sand, World Unity Day Celebration; Jekyll Island; email: kathamp@aol.com

Hawaii: 11-13 Sept. 1998; 11th Annual Maui Gathering; Camp Keanae, Maui; info: (808) 572-5100; email: chas@t-link.net; Committee Chair, Box 3002, Kahului, HI 96733

2) 29 Oct. - 1 Nov.; Hawaii Regional Convention "We Are One"; Turtle Bay Hilton; rsvns: (808) 293-8811 or (800) HILTONS; info: (808) 676-9125 or (808) 834-4867 or (808) 262-5298; email: schredz@aol.com; HRC, c/o 575-C Keolu Dr., Kailua, HI 96734

Idaho: 23-25 Oct.; Pacific Northwest Convention; info: (208) 345-6768; email: www.sima.org or gratful2@aol.com; PNWCNA-21, Box 3051, Boise, ID 83705

Illinois: 10-12 July; Greater Illinois Region's 6th Annual Campout and Fishing Derby; Weldon Springs State Recreation Area, Black Locust group camp site; Clinton; info: (309) 392-2602; email: HAI3@aol.com

Iowa: 3-5 July; 15th Iowa Regional Convention; Sioux City Hilton; rsvns: (800) 593-0555; info: (605) 232-6280 or (712) 276-5770

Kansas: 3-5 July; Mid-America Region's 20th Annual Free Campout; Milford Lake; info: (785) 825-6892; email: imnna2@midusa.net or sharon.hill@greatbend.com

Kentucky: 15-17 Jan. 1999; Louisville Area Convention; info: (502) 774-5361; LACNA-9, Box 70246, Louisville, KY 40201

Maryland: 6-8 Nov.; Ocean Gateway Area Convention, Ocean City; info: (410) 208-2709; email: jutes@juno.com; OGANNA, Box 112, Berlin, MD 21811

2) 27-29 Nov.; Freestate Regional Convention "Experience the Power, It's a Spiritual Journey"; Hunt Valley Marriott; rsvns: (410) 785-7000; info: (410) 778-3178 or (410) 604 0694 or (410) 758-1033; website: <http://www.erols.com/barsc/fsrcon6.htm>; FSRCNA-6, Box 873, Stevensville, MD 21666

Massachusetts: 13-15 Nov.; South Shore Area Convention "Surrender to Serenity"; Sheraton Inn, Plymouth; rsvns: (508) 747-4900; info: (781) 925-3009 or (508) 588-7562; email: KSTC3@aol.com; send speaker tapes to: SSACNA-2, Box 4631, Brockton, MA 02402

Michigan: 2-5 July; Michigan Regional Convention "Hope—The Light Ahead"; Valley Plaza Resort, Midland; rsvns: (800) 825-2700 or (517) 496-2700, mention group number #5772; info: (517) 548-4043

2) 31 July - 2 Aug.; Northwestern Michigan Area Retreat "Our Message is Hope and the Promise of Freedom"; Jellystone Park, Traverse City; info: (616) 947-5592; email: 14spnsrshp@northlink.net; Retreat, Box 3433, Traverse City, MI 49685

Mississippi: 3-5 July; Another Chance Group's 6th Annual Fourth of July Campout; Tishomingo State Park; email: joetammy@tsixroads.com

Missouri: 24-26 July; Ozark Area's 19th Annual High on Life Picnic; Buck-saw Resort, Clinton; info: (417) 782-3298 or (417) 781-9420 or (417) 624-2630 or (417) 626-3804; Picnic, Box 2923, Joplin, MO 64803

Nebraska: 9-11 Oct.; 15th Nebraska Regional Convention "Surrender to the Possibilities"; North Platte; info: (308) 345-6564 or (913) 475-2555 or (308) 534-7609; NRCNA, Box 156, North Platte, NE 69103

Nevada: 17-19 July; 7th California-Arizona-Nevada Convention; Laughlin; info: (760) 326-5199 or (520) 704-9743 or (520) 754-4260; CANAC, Box 21975, Bullhead City, AZ 86439

New Jersey: 14-16 Aug.; Northern New Jersey Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, New Brunswick; rsvns: (800) 233-1234 or (732) 873-1234; info: (973) 676-4481; NNJRCC, Box 1019, Maplewood, NJ 07040

2) 6-8 Nov.; Northeast New Jersey Area Convention "In The Spirit of Unity"; Newark Airport Sheraton; info: (732) 326-0204

New York: 10 July; Greater New York Regional Events and Activities Committee Presents "NA Cruises to Recovery" Summer Boat Ride; info: (718) 329-4718; email: D666Storm@aol.com

2) 24-26 July; ABCD Area Convention; Omni Hotel, Albany; rsvns: (800) THE-OMNI; info: (518) 433-1380; ABCD-ACNA, Box 71, Albany, NY 12201

3) 24-26 July; Northern New York Regional Convention "Promise of Freedom 12"; Binghamton Regency Hotel, Binghamton; rsvns: (800) 723-7676; info: (607) 724-5996; NNYRCNA, Box 6764, Syracuse, NY 13217

4) 16-18 Oct.; Western New York Regional Convention "Eighth Wonder of the World"; Fallside Resort, Niagara Falls; rsvns: (716) 285-2541 or (800) 519-9911; info: (716) 832-1369 or (716) 863-9813 or (716) 632-0927; WNYRCNA-3, Box 151, Buffalo, NY 14207

North Carolina: 17-19 July; New Hope Area Convention; Omni Durham Hotel, Durham; rsvns: (800) THE-OMNI; info: (919) 560-7456 or (919) 479-1225

2) 11-13 Sept.; Central Piedmont Area Convention "More Powerful than Words"; Holiday Inn, Salisbury; info: (704) 637-3100 or (704) 637-9152; CPANA, Box 4316, Salisbury, NC 28145

Ohio: 3-5 July; Dayton Area Convention; Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dayton; rsvns: (937) 224-0800 or (800) 2CROWNE; info: (937) 256-2948 or (937) 237-0037; email: DASCNACCII@aol.com

2) 17-19 July; 10th Annual Great Lakes Area Campout; Buccaneer Campgrounds; West Jefferson; info: (440) 255-1583 or (216) 691-1024; email: mentorey@harborcom.net

3) 1-3 Jan. 1999; 10th Columbus Area Convention "Where Death Ends ... and Life Begins"; Radisson Hotel Columbus North; info: COACNA-10, 1561 Old Leonard Road, Columbus, OH 43203

Oklahoma: 17-19 July; Roman Nose 5th Annual Spiritual Retreat; Roman Nose State Park, Watonga; rsvns: (405) 623-7281; info: (918) 225-4685 or (405) 624-8466

2) 31 July - 2 Aug.; 13-1/2 Annual Northside Area Stroll and Troll and Flying Chicken Contest; Greenleaf State Park, Braggs; info: alodell@busprod.com

3) 8-9 Aug.; Cushing NA Connection 3rd Annual Birthday Party and Campout; Heyburn Lake, Bristow; email: wolfangel@wolf-web.com

4) 9-11 Oct.; Shawnee Fall Convention; Ramada Inn, Shawnee; info: (405) 382-4173 or (405) 332-4233 or (405) 275-4052; Box 3615, Shawnee, OK 74802

Pennsylvania: 27-29 Nov.; Tri-State Regional Convention "Start to Live 16"; Doubletree Hotel, Pittsburgh; info: (412) 441-2535

Puerto Rico: 14-16 Aug.; 9th Puerto Rico Convention; Hyatt Hotel, Dorado; email: jppk@coqui.net

Rhode Island: 3-5 July; 1st Greater Providence Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Warwick; rsvns: (401) 732-6000; info: (401) 421-0553 or (401) 722-2811

South Carolina: 9-11 Oct.; This is HOW We Do It Convention; Quality Hotel, Spartanburg; rsvns: (864) 503-0780; info: (864) 586-4612 or (864) 583-0183 or (864) 574-7335 or (864) 599-0702; HOW Convention Committee, Box 8068, Spartanburg, SC 29305

South Dakota: 18-20 Sept.; South Dakota Regional Convention "Unity—The Ties That Bind"; Elk Creek Resort, Piedmont; rsvns: (800) 846-2267; info: (605) 534-3144; email: SDRCA@hotmai.com; SDRCA, Box 901, Brookings, SD 57006

Tennessee: 31 July - 2 Aug.; Middle Tennessee Area Convention; "Together in Harmony"; Holiday Inn Select Opryland, Nashville; info: (615) 320-7386

2) 25-29 Nov.; 16th Volunteer Regional Convention of NA; Memphis Marriott Hotel; rsvns: (800) 228-9290 or (901) 362-6200; info: (901) 386-8848 or (901) 761-0049; website: <http://www.phix.com/~recovery/na.htm>; VRC-16, Box 22056, Memphis, TN 38122

Texas: 3-5 July; Houston Area Convention; Hotel Sofitel, Houston; rsvns: (281) 445-9000 or (800) SOFITEL

2) 2-4 Oct.; Best Little Regional Convention "Lost Dreams Awaken and New Possibilities Arise"; Clarion, Abilene; rsvns: (800) 592-4466; info: (915) 672-9344 or (915) 673-0180 or (915) 658-3429 or (915) 695-4600

Utah: 24-26 July; 15th Annual Utah Campvention; Mukuntuweep RV Park and Campground, 1/4 mile east of entrance to Zion National Park on Hwy. 9; info: (801) 957-0320 or (801) 265-0856; website: www.xpressweb.com/zionpark

Vermont: 6-8 Nov.; 9th Annual Champlain Valley Area Convention of Narcotics Anonymous; Ramada Inn & Conference Center, Burlington; info: (802) 863-3638; email: narecovry@aol.com

Virginia: 7-9 Aug.; Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Center, Front Royal; info: (304) 262-2492; AHACNA-12, Box 1761, Martinsburg, WV 25402

2) 2-4 Oct.; OLANA Unityfest; Doubletree Hotel, Virginia Beach; rsvns: (800) 313-0099; info: (757) 943-1849

Washington: 3-5 July; WA-RI-KI Freedom Retreat; info: (360) 256-4467

2) 6-7 Nov.; Washington-North Idaho Regional H&I Learning Days; info: (425) 303-0272 or (360) 293-9531 or (360) 426-4115 or (360) 274-6437; WNIR Learning Days, 1821 Broadway, Box 122, Everett, WA 98201

Wisconsin: 31 July - 2 Aug.; Kettle Moraine Area's 10th Annual Unity Jam Campout; Camp Y-Koda, Sheboygan; info: (920) 458-7078 or (920) 892-4769 or (920) 458-7078; email: junkman@danet.net or smayhem@bytehead.com; KMASC, Box 1022, Sheboygan, WI 53082

Wyoming: 3-5 July; Western States Unity Convention; Casper; info: (307) 638-1144

2) 25-27 Sept.; Convention of Unity; Jeffrey Center, Rawlins; info: (307) 789-4846 or (307) 875-5867; CUNA-7, Box 445, Evanston, WY 82931



WSO PRODUCT NEW ITEM UPDATE

Norwegian IP #23

Rusfri etter behandling

Item No. NR3123 Price US\$0.20
In quantity of 100 or more, US\$0.18

Swedish IP #6

Tillfrisknande och återfall

Item No. SW3106 Price US\$0.20
In quantity of 100 or more, US\$0.18

Sluggfest: A Home Group Anthology

This two-color book contains the Home Group comics strips published in
The NA Way Magazine over an eight-year period.

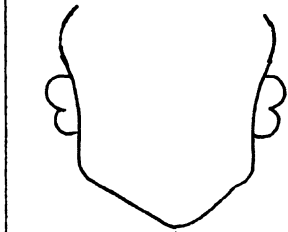
Item No. 9406 Price US\$8.95

Home Group

HEY EVERYBODY...IT'S
TIME TO LEARN -

HOW TO DRAW YOUR OWN SLUGG!

FIRST, DRAW A SORT OF
OPEN, ROUNDISH SQUARE,
WITH A POINTY THING AT
THE BOTTOM. SOME
INVERTED THREES
FOR EARS...



... LOTS OF SCRIBBLES
FOR HAIR AND A CURVE
ACROSS THE MIDDLE
FOR THE GLASSES.



NOW FOR THE FACE.
FIRST, FOCUS ON ALL
YOUR DEFECTS OF
CHARACTER...



...DWELL IN SELF-
OBSESSION...



...STEW IN YOUR
RESENTMENTS...



...TAKE EVERYONES
INVENTORY BUT YOUR
OWN...



THE REST SHOULD
BE EASY.

