

# Reaching Out



Volume 26, Number 4

January 2012

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## From the Editor

Welcome to Reaching Out! Whether you are experiencing recovery on the inside or on the outside, this NA World Services newsletter is for you. As our literature says, "The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel." Reaching Out is designed to help incarcerated addicts connect to the NA program and enhance H&I efforts.

There are two sections; "From the Inside" is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA. In the second section, "From the Outside," NA members on the outside and Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees have a chance to offer their experience, strength, and hope. Many of these letters come from members who are deeply committed to carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.

We encourage submissions for Reaching Out from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated, rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of addiction. Thank you for helping us carry our message of hope! Send all submissions to Reaching Out; NAWS, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to [HandI@na.org](mailto:HandI@na.org).

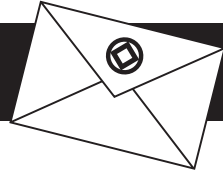
**Reaching Out** needs your letters! This issue features worksheets designed to help our readers contribute. On page 7, you will find a worksheet created especially for incarcerated addicts who want to connect with the NA Fellowship. Page 14 features a similar worksheet for H&I members who found NA on the inside and are now maintaining their recovery on the outside. If this is you, please share your experience, strength, and hope. Your story can help many addicts find hope for their future! Additional *Reaching Out* tools are available on our website:

**[http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching\\_out-index](http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index)**

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2012	15 January 2012
July 2012	15 April 2012
October 2012	15 July 2012
January 2013	15 October 2012

# FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is RM and I am a recovering addict. Next month, I will have nine years clean. I am glad to be drug-free, but I have been feeling nervous. I have not been fully working my program because I lost contact with my sponsor. I started slacking in my step work because I felt like I needed a sponsor.

I still don't have a sponsor, but I am going to start the steps again because I know it is dangerous to just be clean from drugs. Our literature tells us that just being drug-free is not enough. The disease of addiction is always looking for a way to attack, so I must work on my recovery daily to combat my disease.

When I was on the outside, I got distracted from working my program and had a big relapse. That's how I ended up here, serving 19 years. I know the danger of not working the program on a daily basis. I hope that all recovering addicts continue to nourish and value their recovery.

Sincerely, RM

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I've been receiving your newsletter for several years now. It allows me to identify with other recovering addicts who are in prison. My very first NA meeting was in 1982. I wasn't ready for recovery. When I got a federal bid back in 2003, I decided to do something with my life. NA has offered me a way out of the old destructive ways I was living. I found a sponsor and got busy with the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. I always remember the way I felt on 10 September 2003, when I chose to surrender to this program.

I wish I could say it has been an easy ride, but change from within is an ongoing process. I am at a facility that currently doesn't have NA meetings. My solution is to surround myself with positive people and work on myself. I do what I can daily for my recovery. Grateful addicts don't use.

If you are sitting in a jail cell or in prison, do yourself; a favor and don't wait until you get out to work on yourself; do it now! Just for today, you never have to use again.

MT, NC

Dear *Reaching Out*,

When I came back to prison four years ago, I was mad at the world. I could never get more than a few months clean. I have been involved in recovery since coming back here. I started an NA meeting and have worked the steps. I have had opportunities to use, but I want the freedom the NA program offers.

I get out in three months and I already have a sponsor and meetings I am planning to attend on the outside. I have worked on my defects of character and I am feeling freedom from anger. I know I will face challenges when I am finally free, but I have a plan.

I know I must stay active in the NA program and be of service in order to stay in recovery. I would like to say "thank you" to NA World Services for the help you gave when I wanted to get a new meeting started. I am very appreciative.

I love the part in our literature where it says that any addict can stop using drugs and lose the desire to use. I'm here to say to all incarcerated men and women: We can start a new life that is full of promise if we are willing to make the effort. Keep coming back; it works if you work it!

DM, OK



*At each world convention, institutions and NA areas are invited to join via phone link in the celebration of recovery. This unique event allows members on the inside and on the outside to hear the readings and speakers at the closing meeting of WCNA, which is our “Unity Day” celebration. This is an opportunity to make a connection to the worldwide NA Fellowship and hear the powerful message of recovery. The following is one member’s experience participating in the WCNA phone link behind the walls.*

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is F and I am an addict. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for all the hard work that went into the recent world convention in San Diego. The NA area where I live participated in the Unity Day phone link. During the meeting, I sat and thought about our fellowship’s growth and progress all around the world.

My clean date is 6 February 1989. I heard the message in a hospital in New York City from three addicts doing H&I who gave an hour out of their day to share with me. The message was simple and profound, and I was literally dying to hear it! I’m not gonna say that I knew I would get clean after that, but they spoke in a language (empathy) that caught my attention and it got me to my next meeting.

As suggested, I hit a meeting on my first day out. By the grace of a loving God, I found addicts there who loved me until I could love myself. That is why I have not used since February 1989. So, through the process of recovery, I have been placed in certain situations. For the past eleven years, I have worked in the county jail. As our fellowship grew, so did our presence in the community. NA is now recognized and relied upon as a solution to a problem that has an impact on many areas of our society.

During my interview, they asked about my criminal record. I explained to them about my program of recovery. Over the years, the jail has noticed that former inmates return to do H&I work. This eventually led to them allowing inmates to attend some outside meetings. They now permit sponsors to come in and do step work with

the inmates in a private room, and NA literature is being offered on the canteen order form along with candy and shampoo!

I see former inmates at local meetings, and it reminds me that our work is never done. There are addicts out there who we can reach. My sponsor told me a long time ago, "In the Twelfth Step, God asks us to do something." Thanks for all you work.

Forever grateful,  
FB, MA

# FROM THE INSIDE



Tell us who you are, where you came from, and how you found NA. Alcohol  
found NA in rehab, then in prison.

Tell us about your first NA meeting. It was sure like the person was talking to me about my life, only it was service on the inside? I find it amazing to help myself stay grounded & helping others.

How NA has changed you? It lets me live as if I can be honest and sincere and my family will one day see me again.

Thank you for sharing! Your experience with the NA program can inspire other addicts seeking fellowship and recovery.  
Please send your story to:  
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;  
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,  
or [Hand1@na.org](mailto:Hand1@na.org)  
To download a pdf of this worksheet, go to  
[http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching\\_out-index](http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index).

# FROM THE INSIDE



you are, where you came from, and how you found NA. He is James, Jim An Addict, Jim From  
and I found NA when I  
found up.

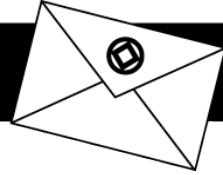
first NA meeting. I just listened  
to the message of NA and being of  
notice when I speak to  
someone who

it make me understand  
able to stay sober  
because I belong  
to help you be  
sustainable.

the NA program can

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text

# FROM THE INSIDE



Tell us who you are, where you came from, and how you found NA. \_\_\_\_\_

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Tell us about your first NA meeting. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your experience carrying the message of NA and being of service on the inside? \_\_\_\_\_

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How has NA changed you? \_\_\_\_\_

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What does being an NA member mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for sharing!** Your experience with the NA program can inspire other addicts seeking fellowship and recovery.

Please send your story to:  
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;  
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,  
or HandI@na.org.

To download a pdf of this worksheet, go to  
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## ART FROM THE INSIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented art. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act, and images provide a powerful message of the freedom we can find in NA.



**Image courtesy of John K and the Tuesday night NA meeting on the inside in London, OH**

If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpegs or pdf files to [HandI@na.org](mailto:HandI@na.org) or mail to:  
*Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.*



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is JK and I am an addict. I am writing to *Reaching Out* from a correctional facility in Ohio. I have over two years clean due to my imprisonment. Here in the facility, I attend a regular Tuesday night NA meeting. I love NA and recently started Step Nine.

I am sending a drawing to *Reaching Out* from my home group meeting. I hope to see it in the art section. It was inspired by the iconic image of "Rosie the Riveter" and her famous catchphrase "We Can Do It!" The picture has been reimagined for NA to include the WCNA 34 theme, "In the Spirit of Unity." Without NA unity there is no "we"!

I have a copy of this picture hanging in my cell. It reminds me that recovery is a group effort and I am not alone. I wanted to share the picture with other NA members because of the encouragement it offers me.

Into the solution, not the problem

Lots of love,  
JK, OH

# FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict and my name is MK. I'm a grateful NA member with twelve years clean. I have been involved with H&I for five years. I remember at the beginning of my commitment I was introduced to the prison environment. I was going to a prison twice a month to see the guys, talk to them, and share my experience, strength, and hope with them. One of them was serving a life sentence with no possibility of parole. He was to spend the rest of his life in prison, and throughout my H&I commitment, I was trying to instill some hope in this guy's heart, telling him to pray, do whatever he could to keep busy, and work his program to the best of his ability. I told him to always maintain hope; you never know what can happen.

I went back to school and could no longer go to the meeting because of my schedule, and later that meeting closed down due to lack of involvement and support. I would often wonder what he was up to. I hoped that he would remember some of the discussions we had and put into practice some of the tools that the meeting had brought to him. One day, I received a phone call from the coordinator at one of our facilities, asking me to share on a panel. I hesitated a bit, and he told me that he would really appreciate it and that he had a surprise for me at the meeting.

I arrived at the meeting and sat with the inmates having coffee before we got started. The door opened and one guy came in. My back was turned so I didn't see him, but as soon as I heard his voice I knew who he was. I turned around to look, and there he was, the same inmate from the prison where I used to do H&I service work. He told me how good his life had gotten and that he was getting out in just a few months. He thanked me for all the strength and hope that I had shared with him during those times I was serving that prison. Just to see him there in a minimum-security facility, ready to be released and regain his freedom, was one of the greatest gifts of my recovery.

With gratitude,  
MK, AZ

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is P, and I am an addict. I am 39 years old with a little over ten years clean. Narcotics Anonymous has become my way of life today, and I'm so grateful for this program. After reading the October 2011 *Reaching Out*, I was touched by the way addicts who are locked up are still recovering. I was that addict behind bars in January 1997, and I wish I could have seen this newsletter back then. I was locked up for two years, seven months, and three days, and I didn't change a thing. I did get my first introduction to NA, but I went to the meetings for the wrong reasons. I was told by other inmates that if I went to the NA meetings I could get early parole, and this was the only reason I got involved in the NA program.

I didn't change anything in my life at that time, so when I got out of prison I went right back to the same things I was doing before I got locked up. Since nothing had changed, my using got really bad quickly, and I was right back where I started in no time flat. I would like to share with the inmates who are on the inside today that taking the time to get involved with recovery and changing the way life is going are very important, because you may not get the second chance like I did.

Today, I go into prisons to share my experience with inmates in the hope that they may take a look at their lives now and want to make some changes for the good. I am very grateful that I went to the NA H&I meetings on the inside, because they let me know that there was a way out of active addiction when I was ready. When I arrived at the end of the road of my active addiction, I walked into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, and my life changed. Since that day in 2001, I have done things in my life that I never thought could be possible. I reunited with my family and became the husband and father I always wanted to be. I get to see my kids finish high school and go to college. I know that if I can do this, anyone can. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous, for the new way of life.

PM, CA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is A, and I am a woman in recovery.

I began using when my husband passed away. From then on I used continuously. I felt very down thinking about my late husband. I used it as an excuse. I thought I would die using.

But there came the day when I was physically not well. Even though I tried to stop, I would always start using again—just one more.

I became more and more desperate when I remembered one of my friends sharing some of her experiences, and how she was in recovery.

I went and spoke with her and she said to me, “You have to make the decision. Who do you want to be, and what do you want to do?” I made the decision that I wanted something different, and it was then that I was introduced to NA.

Not too long after my introduction I attended the area H&I subcommittee meeting. I decided to join the subcommittee.

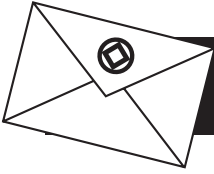
Being in recovery, and being a member of the H&I committee, I have learned a lot about myself. I have even become friends with a few of the other women in NA.

Being involved in H&I has carried me through my recovery. I look forward to my panel each and every month, having the opportunity to give hope to those who believe they are hopeless, with no self-worth or self-confidence, and to let them know that dreams do come true.

Today I know that one of the most important things I can do is show up at NA, and that H&I panel meeting. It shows me that it is possible for my Higher Power to work miracles in my life. Thank you, God.

I am truly grateful to NA and to H&I.

AC, India



# INSIDE / OUTSIDE

## CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

**You're invited** to submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for the experience of NA members whose recovery has been enhanced by working with addicts who are seeking recovery behind the walls. Tell us about your H&I service experience, past and present. If you are an incarcerated addict whose life has been touched by an H&I volunteer, please give them this form and tell them we need their story for *Reaching Out*!

Why did you get involved with H&I? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How has H&I had an impact on your recovery? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a particular H&I experience you would like to share?

\_\_\_\_\_

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What is one thing you would say to the addicts on the inside? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for sharing!** Your experience with the NA program can inspire other addicts seeking fellowship and recovery.

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*“When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man’s entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.”*

*Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”*

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

*Reaching Out* is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

*Reaching Out* is also available by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$32.60 annually. If you are interested in purchasing a bulk subscription, please complete the following form and return it along with a check or money order.

- I am an incarcerated addict (and will be for at least six more months) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.
- I want to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ 20-copy bulk subscriptions of *Reaching Out* @ \$32.60 each, total \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE type or print clearly)

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State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

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