



Reaching Out

January 2015



Welcome.....2

From the Inside.....3

From the Outside.....6

Order Form.....16

Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons.

Basic Text, "More Will Be Revealed"

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.

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2015	15 January 2015
July 2015	15 April 2015
October 2015	15 July 2015
January 2016	15 October 2015



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is GP and I am an addict. I've been in Texas prisons on and off my entire life. I started with my first institution in 1988 and have been back five times. It is always because of drugs, booze, burglaries, car thefts, robberies, etc. I've done 21 years on a 25-year sentence. I lost everything—my mom and dad died; uncle, aunts, cousin, and grandparents all passed while I've been in prison. I never started out to be a drug addict, but it was fun to be with the “in crowd,” to be cool. Accepted by the in crowd, I was no longer a geek. Now I wish I was a geek, because that geek is my lawyer while I sit here thinking about my whole life.

I was 25 years old in 1988, and now I am 51. I will be 55 when this 25-year sentence is done. Was it worth it? No. If only I could go back, but I can't. My only daughter is 29 years old and hates me. My family that is still living has disowned me, but in the midst of all this pain and anger, I found a friend in NA. He is out of Austin and I thank my Higher Power-God for him. He is my sponsor and he guides me through our step study meetings. With the NA book and the step study, I have come to know that there is a life beyond these bars and that one day I'll be free to be what my Higher Power wanted me to be. So as I write this I hope I encourage someone, somewhere, to look up, not down, because we're at the bottom and we can only go up from here with the help of NA and brothers on the inside. To those who volunteer their time to do H&I service, we too can be the ones to help the next one to stay clean.

Thank you.

GP, TX

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello, family. My name is JB and I am an addict. I am currently housed in a California jail, and I have started an NA meeting in my dorm on Sunday nights. It is a small one-hour meeting that has a lot of potential for growth. Half of my dorm is here due to drugs. I miss my freedom, but thankfully I do have freedom from active addiction again. My clean date is 20 March 2014. This relapse was ferocious! This disease is a beast untamed. I let go of the reins years ago when I succumbed to complacency and socially accepted norms that did not apply to me. In desperation come desperate acts out of character, and unthinkable consequences as a result. It's crazy that all this had to happen to stop active addiction, yet I am somehow grateful to have survived and to have another chance at recovery/freedom from active addiction.

JB, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is SJ and I am an addict. I am 26 years old and have been an addict for twelve years, and this is my second prison term. Until NA I hadn't been able to stay clean for more than four months. Addiction was my crutch and my escape from reality. I used it to run from my past and avoid the real world. Toward the end, all I wanted to do was die. I believe my higher power put me in prison to save me from death, and without a HP I don't believe I'd be writing to you today. Now I am clean with the help of my higher power and NA, and I have a new outlook on life and a second chance. To the newcomer, we feel your pain, despair, and hardship. I owe so much to NA, to *Reaching Out*, and to all my brothers and sisters in recovery! Remember, it gets better. We are here for you; all you gotta do is Reach Out. Thank you for your help and support! "We Do Recover!"

Love,
SJ, OR

ART FROM THE ZSIDE

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.

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



Reaching



Reaching



5/01-172



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I've been of service in H&I for about eight years now. I did a little bit of service work right after I got six months clean, but it did not work out real well. I was coaxed into taking a commitment at a VA hospital treatment center. I didn't have all that much recovery; I was just barely clean myself. The guys who were in the program were pretty far gone—they had been using for a long, long time and they had been to decades' worth of programs oriented toward alcoholics. I could never get anyone to go in with me; it was not a good experience for me or for the guys in treatment. After that I did most of my service as a GSR or around activities and unity days, and helped out with the regional convention. I always thought H&I and PR were for the "experts," and I left that kind of service alone. For a while we had an outreach committee, and they put together a newcomer workshop to help people "get" what NA meetings were all about. I volunteered to secretary a meeting once a month for that, and I got a little better at sharing what NA had done for me and how NA could help any addict stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

Another friend of mine who was a "service junkie" got involved with H&I, and she raved and raved about how she loved the service. Eventually she became the chair of our local H&I committee. At that time, there were only one or two people who had been given clearance to go into the juvenile detention facility. My friend really pushed me to try and get cleared. My criminal convictions were now eight or so years in the past and I didn't have any violence on my record; so, I was cleared, and the next thing I knew I was going into the girls' pod to bring an H&I meeting. I was in a room full of adolescent women, and I thought to myself, I didn't know how to talk to 15-year-old females when I was a teenager, and now 40 years later I am still having trouble

communicating. But then, I remembered that I was not there to tell them how to be women; I was there to talk about recovery. I could see that they were no more comfortable in their own skin than I had been in mine. It was then that I “got it,” and I shared about how I had been the odd person out wherever I had been, in whatever situation I was in. I shared about how I had thought that using drugs was the solution to my problems and then how using drugs became the source of my problems. I shared about how I was able to overcome the morass that I had put myself into and how I came to appreciate life and to desire a better life enough to take the steps that were necessary to get out of my mud. I talked about having a life that was a gift and having the gratitude to appreciate the gift that my life had become.

I shared about how it was possible for anyone to become comfortable in their own skin, how NA had made it possible for me to find a fulfilling life, and I could point out to them that they in fact were entitled to be happy with themselves and with their lives. I was able to share that not only was their life not over because they were being incarcerated at such a young age, but that in fact they now had the opportunity to push a reset button on their life story and to begin a new way of life.

At first, I came out of those meetings grateful that I was able to go in. But soon, as I shared about my recovery, I really began to have a deeper appreciation for what the gift of living a life *clean* really was, and the feeling of gratitude grew into a closer relationship with my spirituality. H&I service became more than just giving back; it became the source of my growth. A little while later, I was cleared for the men’s jail, but my schedule kept me from going in until they got a Friday night meeting. Now I go into the jail at least twice a month on Friday nights. Who gets to hang out with a bunch of addicts and potential addicts in a relaxed atmosphere in jail on a Friday night, and then walk out and still make it to a 10:00 pm NA meeting? I do!! And I love doing it.

Going into the jail is a lot different from going into the juvenile hall because the guys in jail have a better perspective on how their lives have become unmanageable. Not every guy in jail

gets it, but they all have a chance to hear that there is a way out. Some of them get out, some of them get clean, some of them stay clean, and some of them go back with me to carry the message of hope and the promise of freedom. I feel damn lucky to be in their company. Thank you, NA, for letting me share.

CB, Peninsula Area, Northern California Region

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is S and I'm an addict. In order to set the stage I have to bring myself back about five years. I was literally powerless over my whole existence, being strung out as bad as I have ever been. I've ruined or at the very least severely damaged every meaningful relationship in my life. I'm broke, with no legitimate way of providing for myself, as well as being spiritually and emotionally broken. I have warrants out for my arrest. Things like sleeping, eating, and exercise seem like a distant memory. I'm on the verge of being homeless because I cannot keep a budget from my ill-gotten gains enough to stay high and pay any of my bills. Then, out of nowhere, I say to myself, "Enough is enough," and make a firm decision not to do this anymore. Literally ten minutes later, I am getting high, calling my connection, or doing what is necessary to get the money to do those things. My girlfriend tells me she is pregnant. A baby! I can't take care of a baby; I can't even take care of myself. I still run around in circles destroying myself and anyone willing to get close to me. My life will surely come to an end any day now.

It was right around this time that "what I now recognize as my higher power" stepped in. On 14 February 2010, the police showed up at my front door and took me to jail for a "residential" I had committed a few days previously. The process began. I can remember sitting in that cell, a broken man. I had zero faith in my ability to ever be able to live a normal life. Productive, successful, father, happy, provider, accomplished, accountable . . . these were nothing but pipe dreams that would never happen for me.

H&I came into my story about a month after my arrest. I signed up for the NA meetings, honestly just to get out of my cell. But in those meetings they were talking about things that applied to my life. They were talking about the same insanity and unmanageability that I had experienced in my life and about being able to face it a day at a time. They spoke not only about ways to stay abstinent, but about ways to really change your life. Ways to move forward. Ways to never have to use again, “a day at a time.” The idea sounded pretty good to me. Granted, there was still a voice in my head that had little faith this would work for me, but I decided I would try.

My program at that point was very simple: Don't use, and read the book I was given. I applied to a drug treatment program even though my public defender told me it was a waste of time and they would never accept me. I stayed clean, I avoided jailhouse drama, I read my book, I went to the NA meetings when I could, and I tried to stay positive. The judge ended up suspending my term and sending me to treatment. It was a first step in the right direction. When they moved me to a low level to await my transfer, I applied for the in-house drug treatment program. While there, I went to work for a half day, and I spent the other half day in treatment classes and H&I meetings. It was in one of these meetings that I met the man who would later become my sponsor.

Arriving in treatment, I was full of uncertainty. On the one hand, I was hearing all these negative opinions from my peers. On the other hand, I was hearing people who seemed to be sincere and promised me that if I applied what I was learning there to my own life, I would be able to stay clean. I applied myself to the best of my ability. I listened in meetings. I got a sponsor. I started developing a support group. I tried to focus on the positive aspects of the program without letting myself get sucked into the drama you can find in that kind of atmosphere. Something was happening. I was starting to develop some faith. I was staying clean. My life was getting better. I was feeling better. I was starting to develop some confidence in my ability to stay clean.

After about three months in residential treatment, I went into the reentry phase. I had some new privileges and some new challenges as well. I got a job and was able to start to work on being accountable, showing up every day, and developing a work ethic. I also started being able to go to outside NA meetings. They were quite different from the H&I meetings. These people were there because they wanted to be there. There were rooms full of addicts who were staying clean and living their lives.

Three months later, I graduated from the treatment program. This is where I now got to put the things that I had been learning into action. I would apply the first couple of steps that I had worked in my day-to-day life, and continue moving forward. I would go to NA meetings because I wanted to go and because I was starting to enjoy them, too. I began to meet and hang out with other people who were staying clean and who were living life. The seed that was planted by those first H&I meetings was priceless. It was the start of the life I have today.

Right around the time I graduated treatment, my son was born and I was able to be there to see it. Life at this stage was quite intimidating, but I had developed some trust in the program and I was going to continue doing the right thing. One right thing at a time, I moved forward. I completed probation with no violations, and I have not been back to jail since. After I got off probation, I kept on meeting with my sponsor and going to NA meetings. Not only have I continued to show up, but I have also held numerous service positions and I am an active member in my local NA Fellowship. I have been able to hold a job successfully and eventually to become self-employed. Because of this I have learned to be financially responsible and to provide for my family. My son has never seen me loaded or in a fit of rage. I am currently on Step Ten, and I have learned so much about me that I didn't even know could be learned by working the steps. I am no longer consumed with the obsession to get loaded; in fact, the thought is extremely rare.

I am happy today; my life is manageable today. My sponsor and I sometimes laugh at the problems I come to him with, be-

cause he remembers where I came from. I have four years and seven months clean, and H&I definitely played a part in laying the foundation for that. I've recently joined my local H&I subcommittee and am looking forward to being able to give back what was so freely given to me. If you think you may have a problem, try to keep an open mind, give yourself a break, and go to an NA meeting.

SH, CA



ART FROM THE SIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented H&I T-shirts. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act and art. Please share your H&I T-shirt pictures with us! We would like to showcase your art. HandI@na.org

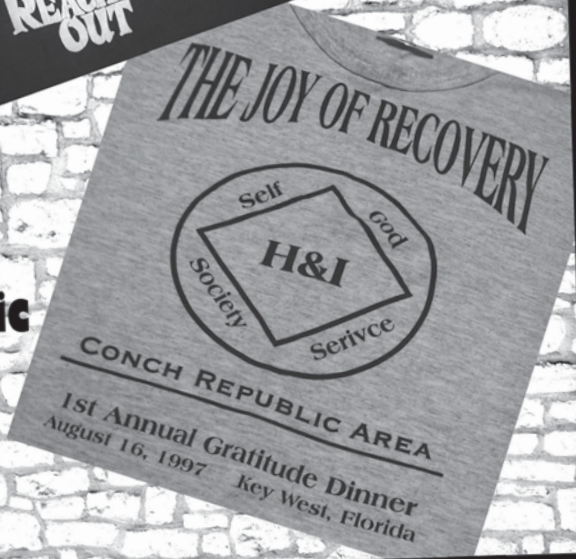


H&I T-Shirts



**Southern
California
Region
H&I**

**Conch
Republic
Area
H&I**

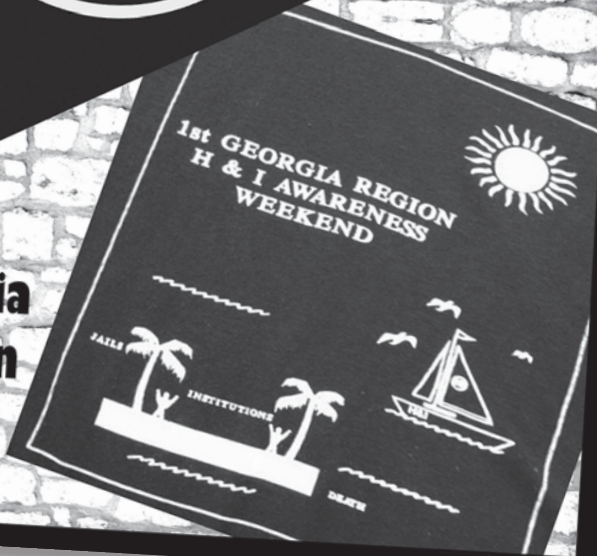


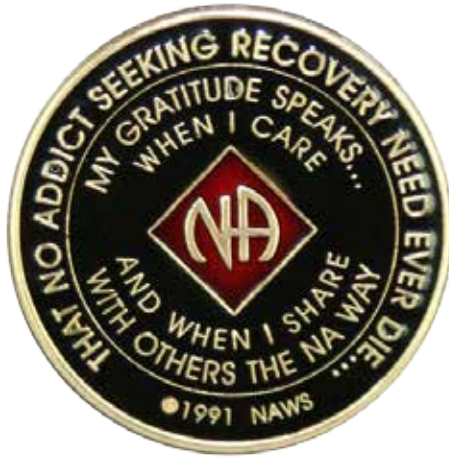
H&I T-Shirts



**Eastern
Inland
Empire
Area
H&I**

**Georgia
Region
H&I**





“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”

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 \$35.90 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* @ \$35.90 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Reaching Out

c/o NA World Services, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA