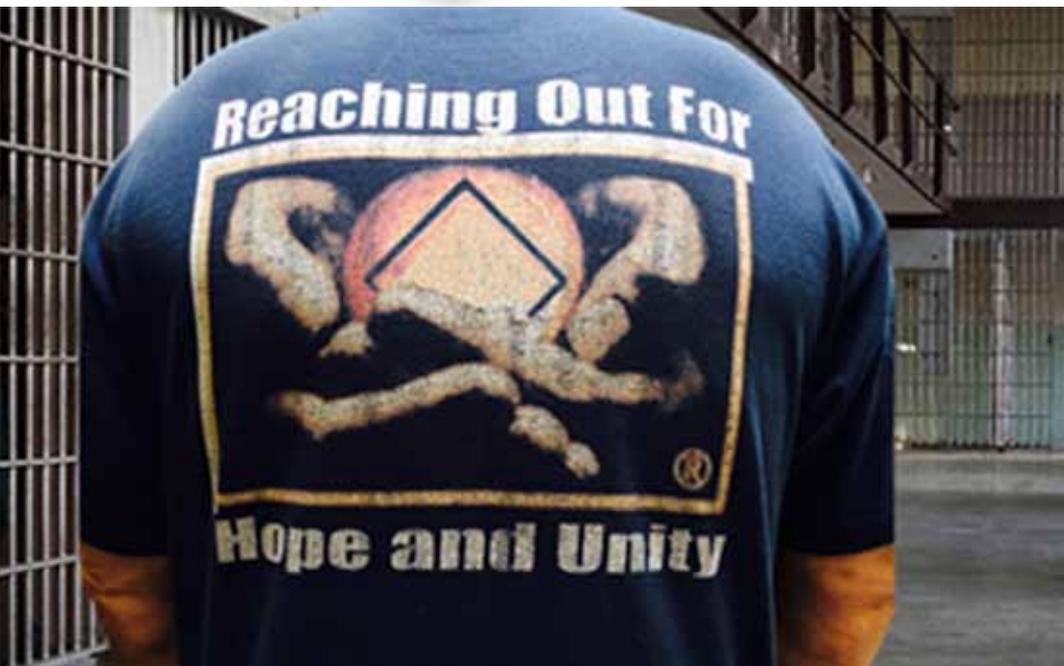


# Reaching Out

July 2014



Welcome.....	2
From the Inside.....	3
From the Outside.....	11
Order Form.....	16

*Reaching Out is the beginning of the struggle that will set us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us. A symptom of our disease is alienation, and honest sharing will free us to recover.*

Basic Text, "Recovery and Relapse"

# 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).

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
October 2014	15 July 2014
January 2015	15 October 2014
April 2015	15 January 2015
July 2015	15 April 2015



# From the Inside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is RB and I am an addict. After nearly five years of abstinence and becoming complacent in my recovery, I relapsed and found myself behind bars. Since my incarceration, I have aggressively worked the NA program and I am an enthusiastic member of the fellowship that NA has created for us inmates here “behind the walls.” With the help of the local H&I committee and the unwavering commitment of the NA H&I members who continually bring us the message of recovery, I’m proud to say that I have a newfound appreciation and respect for the NA Fellowship.

Recently, I experienced severe chest pain and an irregular heartbeat. I was rushed to the facility ER and promptly given aspirin and nitroglycerin, which made me feel “high.” It reminded me of the horrible times during my active addiction. I was scared and anxious. In the ambulance en route to the local hospital, the paramedics had difficulty getting proper vital signs on me. The EKG, blood pressure cuffs, and pulse readings weren’t registering properly due to my increased anxiety. I felt like I had relapsed, and I was scared. I had two blood pressure cuffs, a twelve-lead EKG, a pulse-ox machine, intravenous lines, and an angry officer with a loaded weapon sitting next to me. So I did what came naturally: I said the Serenity Prayer. As I quietly recited the first line aloud to myself, the paramedic looked at me and began to recite the remainder of the prayer with me, line by line, word for word, in stereo. I couldn’t believe it! She told me to keep coming back! Instantly I was overcome with a sense of well-being. Within seconds, my pulse, blood pressure, EKG, and heart rate all registered properly and my feelings of anxiety subsided.

I'm doing okay now and my heart is just fine. I know the special moment between the paramedic and me was a gift from our higher power. It goes to show that if you work the program and stay true to yourself, gifts and miracles are all around us. Thank you, NA! In more ways than one, you have given me my life back.

RB, NY

*Dear Reaching Out,*

I'm CMM and I am an addict. I am a lifetime substance abuser who has served over 30 years and I am on my fourth prison term. Finally I woke up, and by 2006 I began going to NA meetings in prison and doing step work. This past year a local H&I member started me with a sponsor. I've left a wake of destruction in my life, plus I brutally murdered a person while using meth and alcohol. So, as all honest prisoner NA members know, Step Nine just really kicks me in the gut. Time, circumstances, and a slim chance of release can be a real barrier to making amends.

A changed life and helping other imprisoned addicts are worthwhile endeavors for making amends, but I was really driven to make amends by helping stop a man headed down my road and knowing I helped other potential victims of murder. Well, my higher power put me in contact with a man who is the same age I was when I committed this crime. He has drug abuse issues as well as anger issues. So I want you all to know there is always hope to work the steps of NA and to be connected to humanity in a positive way. Just have faith and be willing.

Sincerely,  
CMM, CA

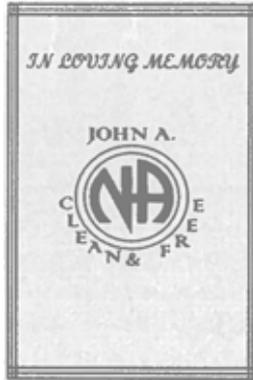
*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is DG and I am a grateful recovering addict here in Washington. I have been going to meetings since 1981, yet only have four years clean. This tells you how hardheaded I am, and even after I received my "third strike" and a life sentence ten years ago because of my actions while under the influence, I

thought it was okay to smoke marijuana “just one time” and that I wouldn’t have to change my clean date. Well, that “one time” cost me my custody and a transfer to the other side of the state to a more secure facility. Never mind having to explain the truth to my wife. At that moment, I realized that I was responsible for more than just myself today, and vowed never to pick up again.

Once I arrived here, there was no NA meeting. I could not understand why they would transfer me to a facility that didn’t have NA after I got a dirty urine test; yet, as my Higher Power would have it, me and a few other addicts got together and started writing our area service committee and NA World Services trying to get a meeting started. Soon we got a response from the area, and before we knew it, John A, another recovering addict and an ex-convict, brought Narcotics Anonymous into this facility. That was over three years ago, and today we meet once a week on Thursdays. Today I am active in service, and I sponsor others. I know that I can only keep what I have by giving it away today. This helps me to get and stay “out of self.”

Sadly, John A died in his sleep 2013 with 30 years a chair reserved in his name on it. He even came here on we love him and lives on, and we do do, reach out to the is exactly what we Out of the Cooker



Anonymous. We reach out to the newcomer, sharing our hope of recovery. We lifers always tell the men whose time is getting short that “we are doing this life sentence so that you don’t have to!” Sadly, too many men get out only to come right back. Yet for those of us like me who the state says will never get out, we are here to welcome them back and do our best to get them back on their feet. After all, no matter how many times I relapsed, every

passed away. He in November of clean. We still have his memory with was a great man, and Thanksgiving so that NA meeting. While miss him, his legacy what he asked us to newcomer. So that do here at the Get Group of Narcotics

time I walked into an NA meeting, there was somebody there with open arms to welcome me. Why would I not do the same? Narcotics Anonymous saved my life!

I also really want to thank our sponsors. We are way out here, and they drive two hours once a week just to make sure we have an NA meeting! Thank you, sponsors, and if you're reading this, please know how much you mean to all of us here at CBCC!! Without you folks, we would not be able to have a meeting!

In closing, I want to tell you that today I have freedom within, because "concrete and steel do not a prison make." The worst prison in life is the one within ourselves when we are in active addiction. I don't ever want to feel that prison again.

Because of this program, I have a loving wife and we are able to have weekend visits (extended family visits) once a month. That would not be possible without this program. I would never have been able to pass a urine test! Today, not only can I, but I look forward to it! Now, that's a miracle in and of itself. My worst day in prison is truly better than my best day when I was using. I have Narcotics Anonymous to thank for that.

Yours in Recovery,  
DG, WA  
Get Out of the Cooker Group – CBCC

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My choice is LIFE! I have been around drugs my entire life. My dad was an addict and drug dealer. I only knew one way to live; this was the life of drugs. This cycle led me behind these walls. In December of 2013, a letter was posted on the walls of this prison about NA meetings starting up. As you can see here, I signed my name to the list. I don't want the same life as before. I don't want to die a loser! I don't want to be known as a drug addict/drug dealer. We have just started our NA meeting on the unit. My goal is to learn and work the steps of the Narcotics Anonymous program so that I can start my new life when I am released from prison. Thank you, NA.

CH, TX

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

Two years ago, I had given up. I had committed yet another crime. The attorney said I was facing 15–30 years this time. My gratitude list was written in invisible ink. But today, I have a message of hope to share from my state prison cell.

My name is RP, an addict from a small town in central Illinois. For years I have had irregular stretches of cleantime, punctuated by several jail stints and treatment programs. In treatment the last time, we were brought to some NA meetings. There were comfortable couches there, so I decided to come back after I got out.

Staring at the door, I felt all the familiar feelings that helped keep me in my active addiction: fear, loneliness, desperation, and hopelessness. I had absolutely no faith that Narcotics Anonymous would work for me, but I went in anyway. Inside that room, I found more than just comfortable couches. I found an accepting group of caring people who helped me develop courage, overcome my fears, and tell as much of the truth about my lifestyle and my addictions as I could. I was astonished when they hugged me and told me to keep coming back!

Much to my amazement, an NA member agreed to be my sponsor, to help me put some effort into the steps, and to help me understand my seemingly uncontrollable feelings. Eventually, I came to understand that I could be of service to the group, provide a warm welcome to newcomers, stay clean, and be content with who and what I really am.

After my latest crime two years ago, I was seriously suicidal. I am almost 60 years old, and was not going to die in jail. My sponsor promised me that someday I would again find life to be worth living. I didn't believe it, but I figured I would make another push at the NA program. Because of the support from the fellowship, help from my sponsor to get mental illness treatment, and the love and hope I got from many other wonderful people, I stuck around long enough to accumulate some cleantime, work through my criminal case, and get a much better deal from the state than I had ever imagined possible.

So, even though I am incarcerated, I have tools to survive day by day in state prison. Through correspondence with my loving friends in the fellowship back home, I can work to keep my connection with recovery strong. I attend meetings here and rely on my invaluable core supporters for strength to battle through the bad days. And I have hope . . . hope and new confidence that Narcotics Anonymous can help me make life worth living—even “behind the walls.”

RP, IL

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is T and I am an addict. I'm from Texas and I love getting the *Reaching Out* newsletter. I really relate in some way with every story from the inside and from the outside as well. I have lived the NA program on both the outside and the inside. I am doing my fifth prison term here in Texas. At one point that would have been a badge of honor; not so today. This prison term has changed my life more than any other. The courts and my family are tired of dealing with my addiction. So, with the help of my higher power and NA, I was able to put my life back on track during the four months I had before court.

I've always held back when it came to a higher power and control. This time I did give myself over completely to a program of recovery and gave all control to God, which is my higher power. In that four months I was able to get clean, help my girlfriend get into an apartment, spend good quality time with family and friends, and most of all, live with a freedom previously unknown to me. I let God have total control over my days and the outcome of my sentence. My home group came over to my mother's house the weekend before court and had a going-away cookout for me. Only in NA does something like that happen—that is part of the freedom I was talking about. I went to court and am blessed to have gotten 20 years and not the 85 years that I was facing. I've been locked up for two years and have been able to keep up with my program and home group through the mail. There are no NA meetings where I am. I'm hoping to change that. I want to thank all who contribute to this newsletter; it shows me that I am not

alone and that the program of Narcotics Anonymous works on the inside and the outside. I only have to give myself today, and with that comes freedom from the past and the strength to face the future. Thank you, NA, and thank you, God, for the chance to share this and to become the person I've wanted to be!

T, TX



*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](mailto:Handl@na.org), or mail to: Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.*

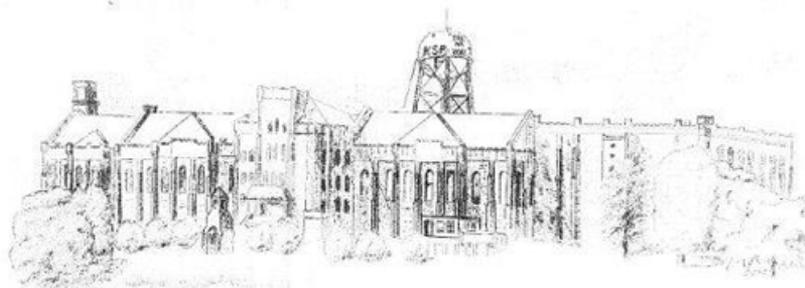
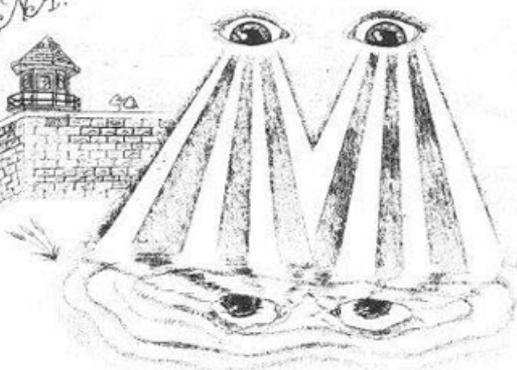
*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is OB and I am chairman of the Eddyville Memorial NA Group. This is art from the inside, and we hope to bless others with our experience, strength, and hope by getting involved beyond these walls.

Eddyville is a maximum-security prison and a lot of our members have been here, some for over 30 years, and some are never going home physically. We know the importance not only of being freed from addiction, but also of the fact that no one should be forgotten. The artwork reveals lots of our inner feelings and hopes. It was inspired by a number of things, and one in particular—the song “I Shall Be Released” by The Band from *The Last Waltz*, 1983. May we all find freedom.

OB, KY

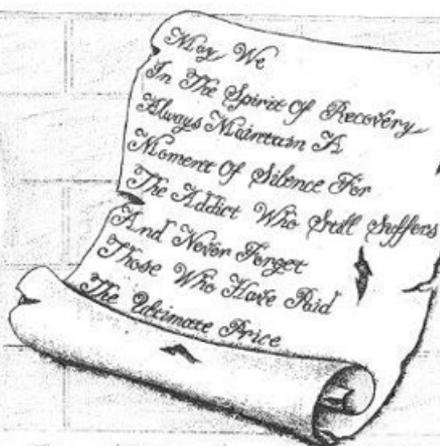
*The Eddyville  
Memorial Group of N.A.*



Freedom



Universal Program



*Design By C.C. Art By L.L. 2014 Inmates at H.S.P.*



# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is RB and I am an addict. My clean date is 27 March 2012. I am a fifty-year-old black man who has spent over 15 years of my life in and out of state prisons due to my addiction. From my experience, men who have been incarcerated face many issues when they are released, and reentry into society can be especially difficult for minority men. Prison did not stop me from using my drug of choice; it was readily available, so upon my release I continued to use. I would imprison myself within a four-block radius because that's where the drugs were.

The last time I was sentenced to prison, things began to change within me. The message of Narcotics Anonymous began to seep into my thoughts. I began going to meetings while inside. Once I was released, I called someone from Narcotics Anonymous and they came and took me to my first outside meeting. This is when the message started to become clear that I had a problem. I was beginning to identify with other people's stories and I realized that I was not unique.

It has been two years now since I have been clean, and I would never have believed that something as simple as calling my sponsor, making meetings, and doing step work would bring the changes within me that have come about. I am finally free, inside and out. I no longer have the need or desire to use; the obsession has been lifted. I would like to close by saying that "if I can do it, anybody can do it." The message is hope and the promise of freedom, which I have today!

RB, NY

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is BD and I am an addict. I was introduced to service work by my sponsor when I had six months clean. Of course, being a newcomer I was still looking for the differences, and I

believe my sponsor recognized this and invited me to an H&I panel he had been participating in. I told him I had not gone to prison and that I didn't believe I could be of any benefit to "those people," but I followed direction from my sponsor and he took me to a return-to-custody H&I panel for the county we lived in. Since that day back in 1989, I have continued to participate on an H&I panel. My sponsor reminded me that prison was still a "yet" for me and that I should learn how to give rather than take all the time.

I remember how fearful I was to be in a prison/jail setting at the time, and after a few H&I panel participations I was confronted by one of the inmates. He voiced that I didn't have any prison experience and didn't have anything he could relate to, and then one of the other inmates countered that by saying, "He is staying clean and you are not. You might want to pay attention to that!" From that day on I knew that I belonged to that H&I service commitment, and I have continued with H&I service for the last 25 years.

I would like to share with all of the addicts who are "on the inside" that staying clean is only the beginning! By working the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous, I have learned a new way to live and act, and by doing that I have learned how to get into acceptance and act like the new person that I have become. I would like to share that through the process of recovery I am okay today with who I am, as long as I stay in the process!

BD, CA

## CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

Please submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for recovering addicts like you to share their experience of finding recovery behind the walls and maintaining it on the outside. Your story carries a powerful message of hope for the incarcerated addict! Thank you.

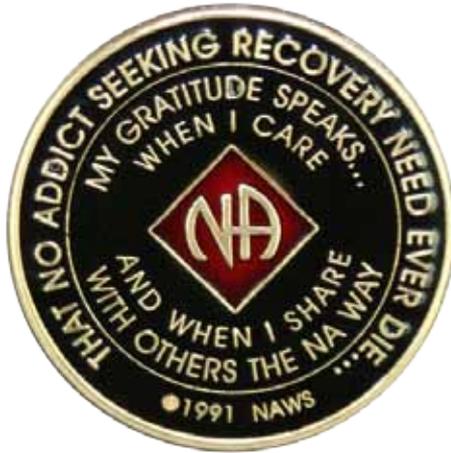
Please send your story and/or H&I T-shirt photos to:  
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;  
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,  
or [HandI@na.org](mailto:HandI@na.org).



# ART FROM THE INSIDE

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. [Handl@na.org](mailto:Handl@na.org)





“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***

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