

# Reaching Out



Volume 26, Number 4

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## Welcome

PAGE 2

## From the Inside

PAGE 3

## Inside/Outside

PAGE 5

## From the Outside

PAGE 8

## Order Form

PAGE 16

## 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).

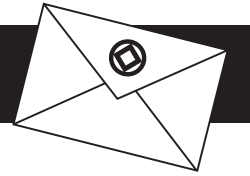
### Reaching Out needs more letters from the outside!

On page 14, this issue features a worksheet designed to help our readers contribute to *Reaching Out*. This tool was created especially 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
January 2012	15 October 2011
April 2012	15 January 2012
July 2012	15 April 2012
October 2012	15 July 2012

## FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is KP and I'm an addict. I'm originally from North Carolina, but am currently incarcerated in Texas. I have done all kinds of drugs my whole life. I am from a middle-class suburban family. I thought it was okay to use certain drugs. I found out that one drug leads to *every* drug for me.

I recently completed a ten-year prison sentence because of my drug use. As a condition of my release, I'm doing nine months in a prison rehab. I found NA through a Basic Text they had here in my unit. I read the book and decided to start my own NA group because we only had AA. At the first meeting, we had about 20 addicts. Only four of us spoke. Now we have over 100 people at our meeting every week.

I think rehab is the best place for me right now. Drugs are just as readily available behind the walls as they are in the free world. I need to learn to live clean. I believe that carrying the message to others in here is an important part of my recovery. It helps me and it helps them.

NA has helped me change from an incarcerated "dry" addict who still had cravings for drugs to a new man. I have had a spiritual awakening because of NA. I love meetings, helping others, and service. Being a member means I am part of a fellowship of others who understand. We share similar past experiences and we are looking for a new and better life through the NA program. Thank you!

KP, TX

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is MR and I'm in jail in Georgia. I found NA here. We have meetings twice a week and I look forward to each one. I recently got a sponsor and I'm starting my Twelve Steps.

At one meeting, I told my story and found out I'm not alone. I met others just like me. NA has shown me that I can live without drugs. At first, this thought frightened me because I had never tried

to stop. I am 29 and I started using when I was 15. This is the first time I have actually wanted to stay clean.

I have six months now, and NA means so much to me! I feel like I finally have a family that loves me for me, flaws and all. As long as I maintain my recovery, I believe that I can be a successful person. When I leave here, I plan on going to an inpatient treatment program. I have come too far, thanks to NA, to throw it all away.

MR, GA



*In the July issue, we invited all institutions to join, via phone link, in the celebration of recovery at the World Convention of NA. This unique event allows inmates 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 Unity Day meeting at WCNA 34 made history! All 33 California state prisons allowed inmates to participate. This gave over 5,000 incarcerated addicts a chance to hear the NA message, in the spirit of unity. The following is one member's experience participating in the WCNA phone link behind the walls.*

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a member of a group in prison that was allowed to participate in the 2009 WCNA phone link; it was awesome! Hearing our name announced and all the applause was an amazing feeling. We all talked about it for the rest of the year! The NA message shared at the event was powerful. I feel that all prisoners should have an opportunity to be a part of this exceptional day. That message can plant the seed of recovery and bring addicts together so the magic of empathy, support, caring, and service can help the addict who still suffers.

The NA World Convention is an event that brings addicts together. The phone link allows us to feel the magic of the group worldwide! We

even received letters from people who attended WCNA saying they heard our group being recognized. When our name was announced and we could hear everybody cheer and clap in the convention center, I felt strongly that I was part of something much bigger than myself.

NA in prison has done something for me that even the judge who sentenced me couldn't: it has given me freedom from active addiction. Being able to attend WCNA behind these walls was a great experience, and I look forward to the day when I will attend one in person. Just for today, I am grateful for the way this experience helped strengthen my recovery.

Sincerely,  
CJ, OR



*The next two letters tell a story. The first letter was written by a new member on the inside, who heard the message through H&I and began to transform his life. The second letter is from the H&I member who delivered that message. He has been involved with H&I for years, serving local jails in the spirit of love and empathy. These two members are now walking the same path, united by their gratitude for NA.*

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is RL from Colorado. For 20 years I walked the evil path of addiction. After twelve years of gang-banging, I had been to prison three times and in and out of jail. After being arrested in October 2010, I found myself back in the county jail facing another long prison term. I hit rock bottom harder than ever. No one was in my corner; I was broken spiritually and felt totally hopeless.

I prayed constantly for guidance or some kind of sign of a better way of life. On 23 December 2010 I believe my Higher Power brought me the answer. They announced there would be a new NA meeting in the jail that night. I saw these three white men walk past my cell. I thought, "What can those dudes do to help me?" After a few minutes of my addiction fighting with me to not push the button, I finally decided to go.

The three men were waiting for us with open arms. In the meeting, I related to everything they said. In an hour, I stopped thinking of them as the three *white* men, and they became the three *wise* men. At the end of the meeting, I told them I wanted to work the steps. One of the guys promised to bring the *NA Step Working Guides* to me the next morning. He did, and I started working Step One on 24 December 2010. That turned out to be one of the best Christmases ever.

Carrying the message of NA and being a leader in our H&I meeting has brought new meaning to my life. Instead of showing the guys the darkness behind jail walls, I can show them the light of NA. I have also been fortunate to be able to go into the community and share my experience, strength, and hope.

NA has brought honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness into my once-dark life. It has showed me that there is a better way to live, *just for today*. Being an NA member brings peace and love back into my heart. Today, I'm able to laugh when I'm happy, cry when I'm sad, and love and be loved. I know what it is like to be human again. Working and living the steps has given me choices, allowing me to do the next right thing. Although I'm in jail, this is the most freedom I've ever felt in my life.

RL, CO

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is AH and I'm an addict from Colorado. My clean date is 28 July 1988. I got clean when I was 24 years old, and I owe everything in my life to NA. In early recovery my sponsor told me to read Chapter Nine, entitled "Just for Today," in our NA Basic Text. It says, "NA is like a lifeboat in a sea of isolation, hopelessness and destructive chaos." He said, "If you remember anything I will ever share with you, remember this: Stay in the center of that f&#\*ing boat!" I took those words to heart. Even living in a rural area, I've always had some sort of service position. H&I has been the rudder of my recovery lifeboat.

In September of last year, my H&I committee was asked to bring an NA meeting into a local facility. It took several months of arranging the support of our regional H&I committee and local members. We took our first meeting into that county jail on 23 December 2010. The jail administrator asked if we wanted to wait until after the first of the year, but I said no. He didn't know that the 23rd is my belly-button

birthday. I couldn't think of a better way to spend my birthday than being of service to the still-suffering addict.

The night of the meeting, as we walked over the highly buffed linoleum tiles to the meeting room, we heard the announcement: "If you want to go to the NA meeting, hit your button and stand on the line." The indicator lights over the various pods began to come on. As we walked by, we noticed several men standing at the doors of their cells. I stopped to look back as we reached the program room and saw one final light come on.

The meeting went well. As we began to pack up, one of the guys asked me how he could work the steps. I agreed to bring him material from *It Works: How and Why* and the *NA Step Working Guides* the next morning, Christmas Eve. I'm grateful to my Higher Power for arranging the details of those days. Being of service, at that time and in that way, made it one of the greatest holidays I had ever had!

I've been honored to watch the man who I met in that meeting in December change from a leader of chaos to a leader of recovery. He has gone from being a man who controlled you with intimidation to a man who moves you through communication. The steps have helped take a man who had very little self-esteem and turn him into to a man who earns respect.

Today, I see a man who has changed through working the steps of NA. After sentencing he got involved with several community programs, where he's been able to share his own experience, strength, and hope. RL has learned how to laugh when he's happy, cry when he's sad, and accept the love he never felt he deserved. He talks about finding more freedom on the inside than he ever had on the outside.

Today, through NA, he has learned that he has choices. This time, he chooses the freedom of recovery instead of the incarceration of addiction. He's told me he dreams of the day when he can walk into the jail and carry the NA message, then walk out a free man. With every ounce of my being, I pray that his dream comes true! I just celebrated 23 years clean. Thank you, H&I, for making this one of the most fulfilling years of my recovery!

AH, CO

## FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is S and I am an addict. I first heard the NA message while incarcerated in a county jail in 1992. I was facing seven years as a habitual offender due to my active addiction. I heard the NA meeting being announced, and the rumor spread quickly that they were bringing coffee and cookies. I went for the cookies! Much to my surprise, I knew one of the girls on the panel. At that first meeting she told me: “You never have to use again, *just for today*.” I took that to heart. It was the first time I had ever heard the NA message, and it enveloped me with hope! I didn’t know if it would work for me, but I saw that it worked for my friend. I went back to my bunk and wrote the words *just for today* everywhere! I even wrote those words with washable colored markers on a white T-shirt to wear to the next meeting.

That H&I meeting changed my life; my hopes and dreams came alive. After the next meeting, I washed the T-shirt in the dark after the lights were out. I wanted to have a clean white T-shirt the next day. I awoke in the morning to find the shirt at the end of my bunk where I had left it to dry. This exact moment had an impact on my life. I feel that it was my first spiritual awakening. I looked at the shirt. All the colors had washed out except for orange. I had put the “J” in *just*, the “O” in *for*, and the “Y” in *today* in ORANGE! What was left was the word JOY on my T-shirt. I knew what that meant: If I stay clean, *just for today*, I will have JOY!

Now, thanks to NA, my Higher Power, my sponsor, the Twelve Steps, and H&I, I have been clean since 6 May 1999. I started doing H&I when I had nine months clean! I love serving the program of NA that saved my life. I have been a panel member, panel leader, and panel coordinator. Then they elected me as the H&I secretary for the area! Wow—NA helped me grow up so much! Since then, I have served as H&I vice chair and H&I chair for two different areas. I love helping others learn to serve in H&I. I am currently honored with a position at the region as the H&I chair. Who would have ever thought that this addict could be so blessed that NA would let me serve like this?

I would like to encourage anyone who is reading this while incarcerated, and has found recovery in NA: Please help us serve upon your release! We love you and need your support to help us continue to carry the message to addicts just like you and me. *Reaching Out* and H&I are awesome!

SH, GA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I’m an addict named M and I serve on my local H&I subcommittee. I really can’t thank our subcommittee enough for all of their hard work and determination. They are a great bunch of addicts. I first heard of NA through an H&I meeting held in a treatment center in 1995. I immediately knew I was an addict, and I related to the literature and the members who came in to share their experience, strength, and hope.

Unfortunately, I went back out for some more misery. When I got clean in 2002, I came in by way of a fairly serious arrest. I knew NA would help me stay out of jail. Boy, did I hate jail! I kept coming back and eventually started working the program for me, not the courts.

Seven months into my recovery, I had to go back to jail for a short period of time. Recovery in NA had become everything to me! Unfortunately, the jail had no NA meetings; I was miserable! I missed my new friends as much as I missed my freedom. Some of my friends from the fellowship visited me and sent me literature; that gave me so much hope!

Upon my release, I started working on myself and doing service. I went to an H&I panel with an addict who was stepping down as facilitator, so he could “show me the ropes.” When I walked into this jail, there were about 200 inmates; I thought I might have a heart attack! I sat there with my heart pounding out of my chest. I looked into the crowd and started to see some guys smiling! I felt overwhelmed, thinking back on my most recent incarceration. I wondered if they were feeling the same hope that I felt.

I went on to facilitate that meeting for over two years, and it was a life-changing experience for me. I love H&I! Now, I serve H&I in a prison facility and am currently involved with getting another prison meeting started. My personal experience with the Twelfth Step would not have been the same without the wonderful subcommittee on which I serve.

Oh yeah, back to that question about those guys feeling the hope. The answer is yes. Some of those guys are still clean today, and I am a grateful witness to their recovery. I was introduced to this fellowship by H&I, and I have found a deep, meaningful purpose in my life through H&I. Thank you, NA, for the promise of freedom and the message of hope.

MP, VA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Olá. My name is M and I am an addict in recovery. My clean date is 11 September 1995. I live in São Paulo, Brazil. I had been in prison four times when I heard the message of NA from an H&I panel. H&I planted the seed of recovery, and today I am clean!

Being of service to H&I has had an impact on my recovery, because when I was new I did not believe that my lifestyle was a problem. I didn't know the program would give me new friends. I thought my only problem was with drugs. The more I kept coming back, the more it worked!

I have an H&I experience that I would like to share. One time at a meeting, a man came up to me and asked, "Do you remember me?" I didn't. Then he told me, "You spoke on an H&I panel at the institution where I was incarcerated. I am here clean today, thanks to your message." Still distrustful, I asked, "What did I say that touched you this much?" He started to describe such pretty and inspired words that I felt moved. I thought, more than half of those words are not mine! I began to realize the message came from my Higher Power. This confirmed my faith. I can only conclude that I was used as an instrument of my Higher Power to carry the message on the H&I panel that night.

I want to tell the addicts on the inside that they can find freedom, too. They can change their lives through the steps, even in prison. Working the steps will free them from the pain they lived with in active addiction. I was in prison four times, and I am living proof that this program can work. I do H&I service, I have started meetings in my area, and I try to help the still-suffering addict to the best of my ability.

I am grateful to share that my life today is full of wonderful things. I'm clean, I went to college, I am married, and I take care of an adopted son. I have too many blessings to fit on this page! Thank you, NA.

MJ, Brazil

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm L and I'm an addict. I'm a member in California with 15 years clean. I'm so grateful for NA and my time clean. I really do love this fellowship! NA is giving me an amazing life I never imagined when I was getting loaded.

For me, the seed of NA was planted on the outside. I got twelve-stepped by an addict I'd known since I was twelve years old. I knew how she used, and we had gotten in trouble together many times. She was fresh from jail and had heard the NA message behind the walls. She was about to celebrate one year clean with the new baby she had while incarcerated. She asked me to come to the meeting on her NA birthday. I was loaded, but I could see how important that one-year cake was to her. That was my first NA meeting.

When I got clean, I took to H&I service right away. Through that service commitment I found out about NA members sponsoring addicts behind the walls. With some other interested addicts, I was part of starting a Sponsorship Behind the Walls (SBTW) committee in my region. I want to share about this with the readers of *Reaching Out*.

Inmate step-writing committees are becoming more common in the NA Fellowship. Most of you know something about H&I, but may not have heard about SBTW. It isn't always called Sponsorship Behind the Walls, but all of the committees do basically the same sort of service work. We sponsor incarcerated addicts. Some committees also help transition the paroled addict to an outside sponsor upon release.

We generally sponsor addicts who have one year or more left to serve and are assigned to permanent housing. This is because we need enough time to get you the NA books, assign a sponsor, and start you on your steps. We sponsor *only* through the mail. We do not telephone, visit, or sponsor an incarcerated addict we already know. A sponsor may eventually become your friend, but we're not pen pals. We want to help you work the steps. If you only want a pen pal, there are a couple of letter-writing committees in NA that may suit you instead.

We will sponsor you to the gate. Hopefully, you can start to sponsor on the inside at some point, or get an NA meeting going. We'll take you through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous and share our experience. We'll let you know how the fellowship works and offer some hope for a different life.

What we *won't* do is send envelopes, stamps, food, or other stuff to you. We won't put money on your books or contact people for you. We generally do not write letters to the parole board for you, but you can show them what you are doing with us.

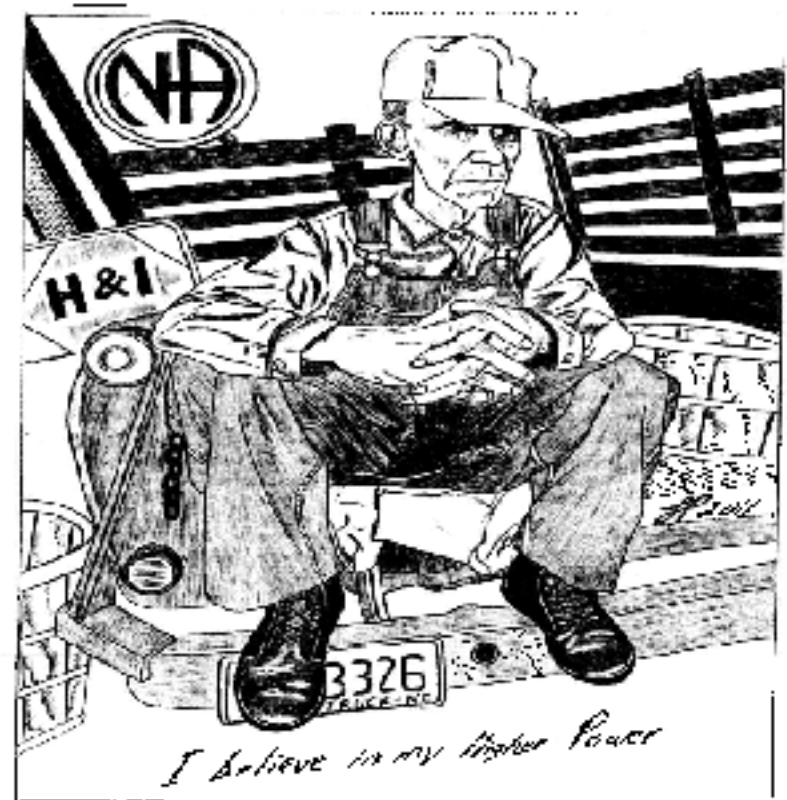
If you are interested in SBTW, you can write to our NA World Service Office to get some addresses. Ask around to see if anyone on your yard is a part of this; get in contact somehow. You can also talk to your local H&I committee when they come in for panels. Ask if their NA area has a committee like this. If they don't, maybe they'll start thinking about forming one!

I'm really excited about being a part of SBTW. Hopefully we'll keep growing and SBTW committees will be available all over the US and the world some day. Maybe one day I'll get the opportunity to meet you in the rooms of NA. Keep reaching out.

LS, CA

## 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.



Luis P, San Rafael, CA

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.

# H&I INSIDE UT

## 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?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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.

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



*“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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