

# Reaching Out

October 2013



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*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>
January 2014	15 October 2013
April 2014	15 January 2014
July 2014	15 April 2014
October 2014	15 July 2014



# From the Inside

*Dear Reaching Out,*

Hi, my name is DB and I am an addict. I just turned 22 in January and have been using drugs since the age of 14. I'm currently in jail, which is where I've been since June. I was released from jail last year on 13 April 2012 and found myself getting high again and returning back here. Out of four cities, I've been blessed with a one year program. In July of 2012 I was told about NA. Little did I know that things were about to change. I've learned how to live "Just for Today." A guy named JA showed me that change can happen. I now know that the NA program is not difficult; I no longer have to smoke crack, and I can live free. Thank you, NA, for showing me a different way of life. When I get released, JA will be there to introduce me to my new family of caring, loving, successful people who want the same thing I do: freedom.

I have a daughter who just turned three, and she needs me. I haven't seen her since 30 October 2011 because of being caught in the web of active addiction. I have my Basic Text, good support, and the willingness, open-mindedness, and desire to live a clean life. Thank you so much, NA, for being my road map.

Sincerely,  
DB, VA

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is MW and I am an addict. I have been in the program for over six years now, and I'm so blessed to be where I am today. This is my second time writing to *Reaching Out*. I just read the January 2013 issue, and one of our brothers suggested we give an update on our program. I must say that I am very grateful to have this program and a Higher Power working in my life today. I am halfway done with a 16½-year prison sentence. To look back and see where I started and where I am today, all

I can say is “Wow.” Eight and a half years ago I was a mess but I thought I really had it all together. Boy, was I wrong. The big payoff was a “life without parole” sentence. That’s what it took for this addict to get it. I decided to work the steps and really take a good, honest look at myself and ask my Higher Power, who I choose to call God, for some help and direction. Only then did my life start to get better.

I won’t lie and say it has been easy. I have had my ups and downs over the years, but I can honestly say the ups outweigh the downs these days. Many doors have been opened since I have gotten clean. I went back to court and my sentence was overturned, and today I have a release date. My son, who hasn’t talked to me in over twelve years, has written me and we are working on rebuilding our relationship. I just became a grandfather to my first grandson. My daughter and I have a good, healthy relationship and many more small blessings, and I owe them all to the NA program. By working the Twelve Steps of NA I got to know myself, and the Twelve Traditions have helped me to get along with other people.

Today I have healthy relationships with other people. Today I’m working on myself to become a better person for myself and my family. I’m going to school and working on an apprenticeship, and I’m very grateful for everything I have today. I owe it all to the program of NA. There is a better way of life, and that’s the NA way. A special thanks to everyone who has written *Reaching Out*. I have gotten something out of each of your stories.

Thank you,  
MW, WA

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is NP and I am an addict. I want everyone to know that it is never too late to get clean! On my last day of using I was totally insane. I lost myself, and unfortunately I made bad decisions that landed me in prison, a place I told myself I would never come to again! I ended up in a super-max facility with limited movement while I was awaiting sentencing, so NA meet-

ings were not available to me. I admitted that I was powerless and that I was an addict. From there I told everyone that I was an addict and jail actually saved my life. Then one day I received the *Reaching Out* newsletter out of the blue. Someone had signed me up, and I am grateful to them for giving me *Reaching Out* so I could relate to the letters that were written from prisoners.

Over the past months I have been sentenced to nine years. It seems like a lot, but death is an eternity. They tell you that drugs lead you to jails, institutions, or death. Well, drugs made me insane and I ended up in prison, but with the help of God, NA, and *Reaching Out* letters, it will not lead me to death. Thank you, *Reaching Out*, for helping us prisoners even when NA meetings are not available to those who are incarcerated. I am pleased to say I am now in a facility that has NA available to me.

Thank you for letting me share.

NP, CT

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is AP and I am 30 years old. I just graduated from a drug program in prison. I've been fighting addiction for many long years. I'll never forget my first taste of alcohol at 15 years old. From there it went to other things: meth, crack, and then mixing them both. I've been running from this bug for so long, always thinking I was on my own or that I was the oddball and the black sheep of the family. I lost my business and my respect as a Christian lady in the pet grooming industry. I turned into a beast. I lost everything: my home, my children, and most of all, myself. At first it was so much fun — that mysterious rush, the stealing and the lies I told to get money from total strangers to support my habits — and then it wasn't fun anymore. It was cold, lonely, and scary. I even found myself selling my things and then myself for a fix. It was like a big merry-go-round. I've been in jail so many times that I can't count them, rehabs and prison now three times. But this time God grabbed me and sat me down and opened my eyes, mind, and heart. I've been clean for eight months now thanks to the Twelve Steps of NA and my

HP. I owe my life to the people who sent me to prison. I could be dead right now, but those blue and brown angels and their silver bracelets saved me from myself. They put me here to discover a new life of recovery and freedom from addiction. Thank you, NA. God bless you. I'm going home this year can't; wait to go to my first NA meeting in the free world. Hope to see you there.

Thank you sooooo much.

AP, AL

*Dear Reaching Out,*

I'm writing this letter to express my gratitude to all of you who make *Reaching Out* possible and to let you know that I'm going home in two weeks, so it is safe to stop sending the newsletter. Since I'm writing, it's only right to let you guys know how you've affected me.

As your eyes read this letter, know that you are a big part of my life. I have no idea who you are or what you are going through. I wish you only the best, though. You've given me so much more than you realize. I don't have to die an addict. More importantly, you've given me a choice where I never thought I had one.

Thanks, NA,  
AD

# 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 jpeg 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.



*Through H&I  
and my Higher Power  
I've found a  
freedom behind  
the walls I  
never had on the  
outside*

R. L. inmate ECJ

*Daniel A. inmate ECJ*



# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is A and I am an addict. I've been clean for four years. I was in and out of the rooms for years, and it landed me four-and-a-half-year sentence. When I was sent to prison, I had no plans of staying clean until I went to an NA meeting behind the walls. I heard someone share their story, and right then I knew that that's what I wanted. I worked my steps via mail, and when I got released I went straight to a meeting and got involved in H&I. I got a sponsor and I am now working my steps with her. This program has truly changed my thinking and my way of life. I will always be grateful for the NA meetings behind the walls. They saved my life.

Thanks, NA,  
A

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am an addict and my name is LH. I am a member of the Greater San Jose Area Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. My clean date is 21 June 1992.

I have been an active member of the H&I subcommittee here in San Jose since 1996, and involved in Northern California Regional H&I since 1999. I have done H&I meetings on a county level since 1996. On the state level I'm cleared at three of the state prisons and all of the Northern California fire camps.

Why was it important for me to get involved in H&I? The answer is simple. I am an addict who comes from a place where there was no hope; I spent almost 19 years in state facilities and in doing so I believed that lie, "once an addict, always an addict." On 21 June 1992, an H&I panel came into San Quentin where I was housed and brought me a message of HOPE. They had the keys



to the gates of hell, and they let me out that, day. I paroled from San Quentin State Prison shortly after that, and almost 15 years to the day later, I was allowed to go back into San Quentin and share at a meeting. It was a very emotional experience, with a lot of memories and a lot of feeling. So I understand the importance of doing H&I service: I need to carry that same message of hope to the addict who cannot go to an outside meeting.

H&I service has impacted my recovery in so many ways. I see a lot of addicts who were at those in-custody meetings, and who got out and found me. They share with me the gratitude that they have, because the H&I members cared enough about them to continue to carry the message of hope. These moments in my recovery tell me that what we are doing in H&I service is important and very much needed, and it shows me that sometimes we have the ability to touch the untouchable.

I would like to share one of many H&I experiences that has brought my commitment to H&I service to another level.

In 1999, the Northern California Regional H&I Subcommittee was looking into the possibility of starting a program that would provide sponsorship to inmates locked up in correctional facilities in the Northern California Region, due to the large amount of inmate mail received at the regional service office.

At that time I was the H&I representative for Greater San Jose. I had been doing an H&I meeting in a lockdown facility at the jail for some time, and it was my experience that I had been asked many times by inmates to sponsor them. One of the guidelines of doing H&I service is that it is not a good idea to give out personal information or sponsor the inmates with whom you come in contact. So my thought was that this would be a good way to provide a very much-needed service to these inmates who were asking for sponsorship.

I took the information back to the Greater San Jose H&I Subcommittee, and we formed a working group and started something that has become much bigger than myself or anyone else ever thought it would become.

Because I have clearance in California state prisons, I don't sponsor inmates through the mail in California, but I do sponsor out of state. I had been sponsoring a young man who was incarcerated in an Oregon state prison, and he had mentioned that his father was a member of NA somewhere in Northern California. I was asked to be the speaker at an H&I event in Chico, California. that included a bike run, barbecue, and meeting. All proceeds from the event were to go to buying literature for the Chico Area. When it came time for me to share, they asked me to pitch "Sponsorship Behind the Walls", because I was familiar with the project and there were some members interested in it. So I shared about the young man I sponsored in Oregon, the rewards that I receive from doing that type of service, and that the young man's father was a member of NA somewhere up north. In the back of the room a man stood up and said, "That young man you sponsor, he's my son. Today we have a relationship because of the steps. Thank you for sponsoring my son." Even sharing that now has the same impact on me as it did then. All I did was respond to an addict's desperate cry for help. What I received that day changed the course of my recovery.

WCNA 34 was held in San Diego, California, in 2011. History was made that Sunday morning of the convention, when all 33 California state prisons, hooked up on the call-in. It was a very emotional experience; prisons were calling and inmates were getting the opportunity to speak to the convention, expressing gratitude for the H&I members who were bringing the meetings into their facilities. Prison after prison got on the call. Salinas Valley State Prison announced that they were on the line; an addict got the opportunity to share a letter that the addicts on A-yard wrote. Right at the end of letter you could hear an addict in the background say, "Hey, don't forget about us in here." Because I have clearance at Salinas Valley State Prison, I got to meet both of those addicts, the one who read the letter and the addict who said, "Hey, don't forget about us in here." I told them both, "As long as I am able, I will never forget about you in here."

LH, CA

# 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. [HandI@na.org](mailto:HandI@na.org)





## Unity Day Call

### Narcotics Anonymous World Convention Sunday, 1 September 2013

*Editor's Note:* The Unity Day Call at the World Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was a resounding success; there may not have been a dry eye in the convention center. We were able to coordinate 98 institutions on the call, with a message of recovery being carried to 15,000 inmates. Institutions on the call, represented 14 US states and one institution in the United Kingdom. Hearts beat strong as the closing speaker directly spoke to addict inmates, suggesting that upon release they run, not walk, to the nearest NA meeting. Members look forward to welcoming you.

NA celebrated 60 years as a fellowship in Philadelphia, and this Unity Day call celebrated its first milestone with it being the greatest number of institutions involved to date. Needless to say, we are open to breaking that record and hope to surpass it at WCNA 36 which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2015. Looking forward to having many more hook-ups in Brazil!



## Dear Reaching Out,

I wanted to take the time to thank you for everything you did (I'm in Altona Correctional Facility) to make the NA Unity Day call a reality. It was an unbelievable experience. I felt like I was actually at Philly sitting in the audience. This has helped to reinforce my efforts in recovery and has recharged my batteries. The Unity Day call gave me hope that I hadn't had in a while. I wish more addicts in the prison system would embrace NA. It really does help to change people's lives. The NA program is about honesty, and I can honestly say that yesterday for a few moments I had tears in my eyes.

Once again, thank you for all your efforts.

TC, NY

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tears in my eyes. Once again  
thank you for all your efforts.

Do not write below this line

**RECEIVED**

SEP 03 2011

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE  
ALTONA CORR. FACILITY

Continue on back

## 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!

What was your first contact with NA behind the walls? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you work the NA program while incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your transition from incarceration to your NA community on the outside. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tell us about your first NA meeting on the outside. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What benefits of recovery have you experienced? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**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 to [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”*

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

Country \_\_\_\_\_

***Reaching Out***

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