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Fostering fellowship growth

How NA world services promotes and supports the growth of local NA communities

At the 1998 World Service Conference, conference participants were presented for the first time with a plan for fellowship development.

Some of you are probably asking: A plan for fellowship development? You mean it doesn't just happen?

Well, yes and no. Fellowship growth does "just happen" through the usual means of local services, sponsorship, etc.; however, spontaneous growth doesn't rule out the need for a plan so that Narcotics Anonymous World Services can make the most effective use of its resources in the services it provides to the fellowship.

Judging by the number of questions about fellowship development that are directed to staff at the World Service Office, we believe it's time to do a little communicating about fellowship development and what it means to the fellowship as a whole. We've gathered what seem to be the most frequently asked questions and provided answers to them below.

What is fellowship development (as done by world services)?

In the simplest terms, fellowship development is any effort provided by NAWS to help the fellowship grow and develop. However, we hesitate to define it in such simple terms because it's always changing in response to the needs of the fellowship.

The types of fellowship development efforts offered to a local NA community depend on what kind of NA community it is, where it's located, and whether or not it has easy access to more experienced NA communities.

How much of the world services budget is devoted to fellowship development?

In truth, almost all of the money that we spend in world services is geared toward fellowship development, either directly or indirectly.

For direct expenses, we can use the example of last year's WSC budget of about \$500,000. About twenty-five percent of that budget went directly to fellowship development in the form of trips by trusted servants, providing free literature, and bringing people to participate in the World Service Conference.

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From the editor

I once heard a recovering addict say, "Two addicts, three opinions. Or four... or five... or six. It all depends on who they're talking to. There's the opinion we share in a recovery meeting, the opinion we share with our sponsor, and the opinion we share only with our Higher Power. Not to mention the opinion we have when we're angry, the opinion we had five minutes ago, and the opinion we'll have next week."

From where I sit as the editor of our fellowship's magazine, it seems like that member was probably correct. For every ten manuscripts that come in, at least five are "opinion" pieces. Not that we mind—in fact, we've created a section in the magazine just for this purpose. In the past, we had published opinion pieces in the "Service" section because they are usually related to service. However, during one of our editorial planning meetings, someone suggested that opinions should be clearly labeled as such. The Editorial Board agreed, and so it is.

Now back to what I was saying about manuscript submissions. While it's true that we're getting some, we're not getting enough. In particular, we're not getting enough for the "Sharing" section. So how about it? Have you got something to share about how you work the steps? Your relationship with your Higher Power? Why you chose your sponsor, and why you keep working with him or her? The way your home group creates an atmosphere of recovery? Or anything else related to recovery?

So c'mon. Write it down already. Don't worry about dangling participles, split infinitives, or choosing between the definite and indefinite article. We have copy editors who live only to find misplaced commas. There's a release form on page 12 of the magazine. Please attach it to your written experience, strength, and hope, and send it to us. We'll be waiting.

Cindy T, Editor

Letters to the editor
Follow on page 14

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in the *NA Way*, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The NA Way Magazine, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

Except for what are commonly known as operational costs—the cost of production and distribution, general administrative expenses, and the staff overhead for those specific expenses—the remainder of the world services budget is also devoted to fellowship development. This can be as simple as the WSO being there when people call to ask for information, or collecting information that can be used to help the fellowship grow. For instance, the WSO records as much as it can about NA's beginnings and growth in each local NA community. This information is very helpful when an NA community finds itself facing some of the challenges that were successfully met in another NA community. It sometimes saves a community from going through the same kinds of pain an earlier NA community went through.

Who decides how much of the world services budget is spent on fellowship development?

It's usually a combined decision of the World Board and the World Service Conference. The World Board develops a budget for approval by the WSC that includes such expenses, or sometimes the WSC will take action that affects the expenses devoted to fellowship development.

For instance, when the WSC decided to conduct a world services inventory, it suspended the work of all the conference committees with the exception of the world services Translations Committee. By that action, the conference expressed its belief that translating NA literature is so important that it should be among the services that are provided no

matter what. The conference could have decided that it was more important to have another world services meeting during the year, but it made translations a priority.

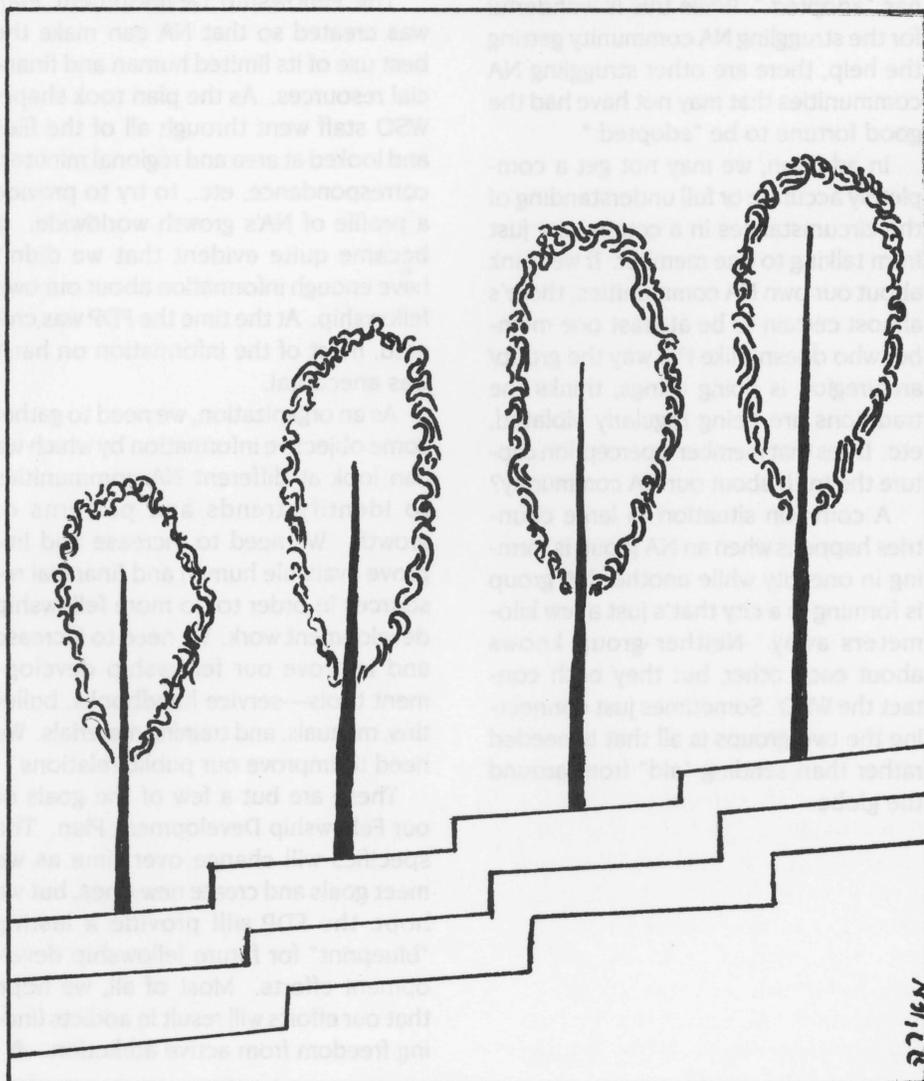
In the last several years, the WSC has concentrated more on setting overall priorities for world services and less on the details connected with carrying out those priorities. In other words, the conference will say, for instance, that bringing delegates from new NA communities to the WSC is important (in 1998, about \$30,000 was used to help fund fifteen participants at the conference); bringing a committee together to rewrite its internal guidelines is not so important. Then the conference delegates to the World Board the responsibility for allocating funds according to the priorities it set.

How is it decided which developing communities to target?

It's been done in different ways over the past ten years. Basically, it depends on what kind of help is needed.

As different communities around the world grow and develop, they create groups such as zonal forums where they're using their own resources to do some of the things that world services may have done initially. The communities involved in a zonal forum can share with one another their experience with forming a service structure and providing services.

An NA community's needs change from year to year, depending on what stage of growth it reaches. For instance, this year, the WSO has had many inquiries from the Middle East. The inquiries haven't been so much about basic issues like meeting formats, setting up a service structure, and distributing literature; they've been more about concerns that come up when they need to interact with their national governments. This is a developmental issue in many countries where, in fact, NA cannot exist unless it registers with the government. Much of the help world services has provided in the Middle East this past year has been in the form of information about how NA can organize itself so that it stays within the traditions and



also keeps the laws of the country in which it exists. Because there is no zonal forum in that part of the world, a great deal of the responsibility for helping falls on world services.

One of the goals of the Fellowship Development Plan is to establish criteria for deciding when a visit should be made to a developing community. Up to the present, it has usually depended on what information about the community is received by world services and whether or not a crisis exists. Even though world services has improved over the years by rotating its participation, there are still some glaring holes in the process. For instance, a single region is less likely to receive help than a group of regions, just because of previously established "criteria."

But that's beginning to change. For instance, two US regions are currently experiencing very real problems and have asked for help. In the past, world services has made visits to NA communities in crisis—not to tell them what to do, but to help them explore different options for solving their problems and find their own solutions.

Will world services visit a community that has either no NA meetings or just a few people trying to start NA?

No. NAWS is not a missionary organization. It provides people with information about NA, how to start NA, and how to keep NA alive in a community, but it doesn't go to a country and say, "We want to set up NA here."

Our group/area/region wants to "adopt" a developing NA community. Can we do that?

NAWS neither encourages nor discourages such arrangements. There are some precautions an NA group, area, or region should take when deciding to help a specific NA community. Usually, this kind of thing comes about because of some personal relationship between members from both places. Unfortunately, the members who want to help may not fully understand the scope of the problem or know about the culture

and local regulations. For instance, a few years ago, a large Eastern USA region tried to send a shipment of books to a South American country. Unfortunately, when the books arrived, the local NA community had to pay a significant amount of money in import fees to get the books out of customs. This could have been avoided had the shipments been coordinated through NAWS, which knows the proper procedure for shipping literature to countries around the world.

Another concern is that individual efforts tend to be haphazard. In other words, one struggling NA community may get befriended by an NA member from a large community who then champions the struggling NA community's cause with the local ASC. The ASC responds with compassion and sends all its extra money to the NA community it has "adopted." While this is wonderful for the struggling NA community getting the help, there are other struggling NA communities that may not have had the good fortune to be "adopted."

In addition, we may not get a completely accurate or full understanding of the circumstances in a community just from talking to one member. If we think about our own NA communities, there's almost certain to be at least one member who doesn't like the way the group/area/region is doing things, thinks the traditions are being regularly violated, etc. Does that member's perception capture the truth about our NA community?

A common situation in large countries happens when an NA group is forming in one city while another NA group is forming in a city that's just a few kilometers away. Neither group knows about each other, but they both contact the WSO. Sometimes just connecting the two groups is all that is needed rather than sending "aid" from around the globe.

Our group wants to be "pen pals" with a group in a developing country. Can the WSO put us in touch with someone?

Yes. The WSO publishes a newsletter called *Meeting by Mail* for members of the NA Loner Group. Members can join the Loner Group either as "loners" or "non-loners." "Loners" are members who are isolated by geography or other limitations from regular NA meetings. "Non-loners" are members who want to correspond with loners or other members. *Meeting by Mail* is published bimonthly and contains recovery sharing as well as addresses of members of the Loner Group. It is only distributed to NA members.



The Fellowship Development Plan was created so that NA can make the best use of its limited human and financial resources. As the plan took shape, WSO staff went through all of the files and looked at area and regional minutes, correspondence, etc., to try to provide a profile of NA's growth worldwide. It became quite evident that we didn't have enough information about our own fellowship. At the time the FDP was created, most of the information on hand was anecdotal.

As an organization, we need to gather some objective information by which we can look at different NA communities to identify trends and patterns of growth. We need to increase and improve available human and financial resources in order to do more fellowship development work. We need to increase and improve our fellowship development tools—service handbooks, bulletins, manuals, and training materials. We need to improve our public relations.

These are but a few of the goals of our Fellowship Development Plan. The specifics will change over time as we meet goals and create new ones, but we hope the FDP will provide a lasting "blueprint" for future fellowship development efforts. Most of all, we hope that our efforts will result in addicts finding freedom from active addiction. ♦



SHARING

So you want to change NA?

I remember when I was serving on my area's executive committee several years ago. After almost every area meeting, a few of us would sit around chatting and debriefing. We'd complain about how angry and opinionated one of the GSRs was, how half the GSRs left after getting their literature and dance flyers, how consistently unprepared some of the committee chairs were, the half-baked motions and parliamentary puzzles that everyone seemed to get high on. We weren't just griping, and it wasn't just our perception. These things will sound very familiar to anyone who has done service. Anyway, along with talking about the problem, we'd also try to get into the solution. We'd propose one thing or another—not giving out literature orders until after new business, changing the agenda around, creating committee report forms, muzzling "Mr. Rage" (just kidding)—and we'd always wind up coming to the same conclusion: We could put bandages on the problem, but nothing would really change until people starting getting some clean time and recovery.

I also remember several times over the years when I've been appalled at some things I've heard about sponsors doing or requiring from their sponsees. People have told me their sponsors would fire them if they went to therapy. I've seen sponsors investing huge amounts of money and time in sponsees—with strings attached, and, of course, the ensuing rage and abandonment when the sponsee didn't get tangled properly in those strings. Most of all, I've seen a lot of sponsors act like the worst critical parent who ever drove someone to a psychiatrist's couch. Talk about shame! Just like the times after area service, I've talked about this with some of my friends. Again, we always seem to wind up saying the same thing: It's not going to get substantially better until we get more people who have worked the steps available to act as sponsors.

Last but not least, I remember a few years ago, it seemed like everyone was very, very concerned about prejudice in our fellowship. Every convention I went to had a workshop on the topic. I kept hearing horror stories about regions and areas splitting along racial lines. And, of course, once my consciousness was raised, I saw quite a few examples of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Because the vast majority of us are well-intentioned (I really believe this), we as a fellowship wanted to purge the ugliness of prejudice from our midst. So we wrote papers and presented them at conferences. We talked about changing references to God in our steps so they would be gender-neutral. And as I already mentioned, we found members who had felt the sting of prejudice and got them to talk about it at convention workshops. And after all that, we found ourselves concluding what was now very familiar: Our actions were a reflection of our recovery, and when our recovery got stronger, things would change.

Do you want NA to grow? Do you want to realize our dream that no addict need die without having had the chance to find a better way of life? You can make it happen. All you have to do is work on your own recovery.

Gina L, California

Growing and changing

The way we grow and change in Narcotics Anonymous is by working the steps and practicing spiritual principles. Just as personal recovery depends on NA unity, so NA's growth depends on personal growth.

Our fellowship is growing larger by the day, and it's because so many thousands of recovering addicts are here for newcomers to meet when they walk through the doors. When people share about how bad things were when they were using and how far they've come, they give the newcomer hope, and that hope is what makes people stay in NA.

Nobody needs to go to other fellowships to find recovery from addiction anymore. We have enough experience, strength, and hope in our own, and that is because the people who are our old-timers now stuck it out through all the painful times in their lives. They stayed here and led by example. They worked the steps and practiced spiritual principles, and because they grew, so did our fellowship.

One way our fellowship will continue to grow is by following the Twelve Traditions. NA unity, fellowship growth, and personal growth are all interdependent. Without one, the others would be lost.

Another way we can ensure the growth of the fellowship is to remember that the newcomer is the most important person in any room. When I had just a few days clean, I didn't feel like I was important. I wish I could say it was only due to my low self-esteem, but it was also because nobody told me I was. No one reached out to me. I was so frightened inside. But I kept coming because I had hope, and eventually someone did reach out to me—actually, it was two people, and I remain very grateful to them. If they hadn't come along just when they did, I don't know if I would have stayed.

Don't get me wrong. I did introduce myself. But most people just hugged me, said "hi," and then went on with whatever they were doing. I remember not knowing that I could just go along with

the group for coffee after the meeting and I would be welcome.

We need to tell newcomers they're welcome personally, not just read out loud at a meeting that they're the most important people in our fellowship. It is not their sole responsibility to reach out; it is mine as well. I am quite willing to meet anyone halfway today.

In our Basic Text it says, "We need to stay open-minded and willing to do that one extra thing, go to one extra meeting, stay on the phone one extra minute, and help a newcomer stay clean one

extra day. This extra effort is vital to our recovery."

Again, everything that is vital to our personal recovery is also vital to our fellowship's growth. If newcomers stop coming, our fellowship will stop growing, and soon there will be no NA. We all need to remember our first day clean and our first NA meeting. With that memory guiding our actions, we will reach many newcomers and our fellowship will surely grow.

Jason P, Florida ❖

NA in South Africa: A diamond in the rough

In 1991, in a tiny room in a recreation center in Johannesburg (known as "The Bronx" in South Africa), I reluctantly attended my first NA meeting. Inside there were five other addicts, the air thick with smoke, everybody clutching a bright blue book and talking at the same time. It was more out of defiance toward my family than a belief that I could go through life without drugs that I continued to return to that meeting. My mind was a mess, yet somehow something penetrated the fog: If you don't take the first one, you won't get loaded.

On 4 March 1992, on the brink of death, I stopped taking that first one.

At the end of 1992, there were only three meetings in the entire Johannesburg area. There were only six regular members. All the service was being done by one member who, sadly, picked up again a few years later and shot himself. In January 1993, we were told that all the existing members would have to attend to everything themselves: obtaining literature, getting a phonenumber, PI, H&I, the treasury, etc. How we hated that, but our love for the fellowship brought us through.

Today, NA in Johannesburg is thriving. Our country is undergoing many changes. Among other things, we have the unfortunate reputation of being the drug capital of the world. But the opportunity to carry the message is always there. We have meetings every night, often more than one. In October 1998, we had our Seventh National Convention in Durban. For the first time, a member of our fellowship represented us at the World Service Conference in 1998.

I've been clean for six years, four months, and I owe my life to NA. Being given the opportunity to do service since the early part of my recovery has allowed a dream to be fulfilled: that in the new South Africa, irrespective of race, color, or creed, we are all coming together in recovery.

Janet F, South Africa ❖



SERVICE

Something for everyone

Members from around the world converge on San Jose for WCNA-27

A middle-aged man with tattooed "sleeves" raced out from behind the registration counter where he was volunteering in order to hug a man he hadn't seen in more than twenty years. Their last contact had been on a sinking boat and the Coast Guard cutter that rescued them off the coast of California. For everyone who saw it, the reunion of Lee D and Johnny Y was a goosebumps-inducing experience. They've stayed in contact since the convention and, at this writing, have plans to do an H&I commitment together next week.

A Chinese restaurant near the convention center had prepared for the arrival of WCNA attendees by scheduling extra help and preparing extra food. They were poised for a huge rush of customers. Meanwhile, back at the convention, the kickoff meeting was taking place, and nobody seemed to want to break away for Chinese food. The following night, however, the restaurant was swamped—and not prepared. The owner of the small family-run restaurant was beside herself until a few recovering addicts good-naturedly pitched in, pouring tea, setting tables, and even serving a few other diners.

Passersby on Saturday night probably suspected a remake of *Grease* was being filmed in the local 1950s theme diner. Someone had fed the jukebox to bursting, and dancing couples filled up every square inch of floor space in the restaurant. So what if it wasn't meant to be a dance floor . . . ?

If there's a way to capture the prevailing spirit at the world convention, it's in these words from the essay on Tradition One in *It Works: How and Why*: "The unity that supports our common welfare is created not only by working together but by playing together."

Even veteran conventiongoers exclaimed about the sheer energy and excitement in the air at the world convention in San Jose. Rosalie R of New York, whose first convention was the 1979 world convention in Atlanta, Georgia, said that she was "blown away" by the event. "We've really come of age. Even the speakers and the meetings . . . were no longer about 'war stories'; it was steps and recovery all the way," she said. Recalling the days when NA wasn't so socially acceptable, she remarked on how well members conducted themselves and how NA has become a fellowship that commands the same respect as other fellowships. "We're right up there with everyone else—though always with our own slant," she concluded wryly.

For Joey M of Baltimore, WCNA-27 was like "the grand finale in a fireworks show." "I've been to a couple of small local conventions, but this was my first world convention. I'd never even been on an airplane before. There I was—flying across the country. It's a long way from the [prison] yard," he said. "I didn't even know there were that many clean addicts in the world. I'd heard it, but to see it! For a newcomer, it was the best thing I've ever done in my entire life."

Ensuring that everything goes smoothly is an awesome job. It takes more than five years to plan an event that almost 20,000 people will attend, and the last two years require the hands-on work of dozens of trusted servants and WSO staff, hundreds of hotel and convention center employees and vendors, and thousands of volunteers. At WCNA-27, these hardy souls were responsible for ensuring the delivery and distribution of 41,000 pieces of convention merchandise, the timely arrival and departure of 112 buses, and the check-ins of more than 15,000 registered attendees. They are the ones who made sure that the laminated convention badges, event tickets, programs, and mouse pads were taken from packing crates on four tractor-trailers and assembled so that a complete registration package with the correct number of event tickets could be handed out to attendees.

At the center of this whirlwind of activity was Mike Polin, the world convention manager. He is well aware of how many details have to be handled in order to put on a professional-looking event. "Our goal is to make it appear easy. Attendees shouldn't be aware of the effort it takes to put on a convention. If they are, we're doing something wrong," he said. There is also the celebratory and spiritual nature of the world convention to consider. "We wanted to make sure the convention program reflected the theme of diversity. So we took that into consideration when we chose speakers, workshop topics, and entertainment. There was something for everyone," Mike added.

The logistics required to produce "something for everyone" were very complex. Each night of the convention, the downtown San Jose area was dotted with several different events—each one attended by thousands—taking

place simultaneously. It couldn't have been done without the help of Tony Vergara, event coordinator for the McEnery Convention Center, and Sunday Minnich, manager of convention and destination services for the San Jose Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

Tony, who is used to coordinating on-site services for organizations using the McEnery Convention Center, was impressed with the size of WCNA-27. "It

Sunday was responsible for keeping the buses that were chartered by WCNA running on time. She was prepared to provide up to forty buses a day and drivers who were prepared to work grueling schedules. You would think that if any aspect of the convention presented an opportunity for a massive loss of tempers, it would be the bus service, but Sunday said it was just the opposite. "We didn't run across anyone who was rude or obnoxious. In fact, we got hugged a lot... and we hugged back."

Nothing would happen in Narcotics Anonymous without the efforts of trusted servants, and the world convention is no exception. Donald G, who chaired the World Convention Corporation¹ from 1996 to 1998, was very grateful for all the people who volunteered to dedicate two or more hours of their convention experience to working in the registration area or other places. He said, "I was surprised that registration lines never got as crazy as they have in the past." The reason? "All those anonymous people whose behind-the-scenes work is so important, especially the members from the Northern California Region," said Donald. "[More than 400] members showed up before the convention even opened and spent hours putting together the registration packages."

Along with his appreciation for all the people who helped, Donald expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve as chair. He said he

would always remember "looking out at the thousands of people at the main meeting. . . . It reminded me of why I do this." He was also pleased with the caliber of the entertainment, the speak-

¹ The World Convention Corporation was disbanded following WCNA-27, and the responsibility was passed on to the new World Board.



This painting by Peter McC of Manitoba, titled "The Newcomer," was one of the many works of art featured in the WCNA Art Gallery.

Photo by Rachel A

was so massive," he exclaimed. He also spoke highly of our positive impact on San Jose's economy, noting that downtown San Jose merchants would welcome us back any time we want. "It was really boring here after you guys left. We're back to doing trade shows," he joked.

ers, and special events such as the NA Art Gallery in which the artwork of members was on display. He also remarked on one of the most unique events ever to happen at a world convention, the "Thirty-Something Group," a speaker meeting at which all four speakers had more than thirty years clean.

In addition to adding unique recovery-oriented topics to the convention program, the world convention has evolved to include more of a focus on service. The "service delivery" portion of the world convention was introduced at WCNA-26 in St. Louis and greatly expanded for San Jose. Members of the newly created World Board chaired workshops with titles such as "Will I Have to Change My Clean Date?—Abstinence, Medication, Recovery, and Service," "What to Do When Your Meeting's Recovery Atmosphere Is in Jeopardy," and "NA's Future in Virtual Reality."

Though members can attend these forums and expect to learn, the World Board also views them as a rare opportunity to interact with a broad "cross-section" of the fellowship. Michael McD, chairperson of the World Board, spoke about the board's hopes and expectations for these forums. "One of the reasons we select these particular topics is to hear what the fellowship thinks about these issues. In this setting, we are able to hear from members of the fellowship who aren't necessarily involved in world services." The board hopes to develop bulletins or position papers on some of the topics addressed in these workshops.

Innovations are essential at the world convention, but old favorites are also welcome additions to the program. The 6th Annual World Unity Day was observed during the main meeting in San Jose. The idea for a worldwide unity day—as a time when addicts around the world could join together in celebration of our recovery and as a demonstration of our unity—was adopted by the World Service Conference in 1992. The first World Unity Day was held to coincide with the Saturday night meeting at the world convention in Toronto that same year. Since then, World Unity Day has been held each year during the world convention or as a distinct event in the years without a world convention. With each year, enthusiasm for, and par-

ticipation in World Unity Day continue to grow. The celebration in San Jose was broadcast by teleconference to dozens of fellowship functions in 22 countries.

Considering the number of people attending the convention, the crowds and long lines weren't as bad as expected, though they did occur in a few places. Not too long ago, people waited in long lines for everything. World convention planners acknowledge that it is a challenge to try to minimize the time members spend waiting in line, and they are committed to continued improvement in this area.

All in all, members had a wonderful time at WCNA-27. Everyone is very excited

about WCNA-28 in Cartagena, Colombia. More than 600 people pre-registered for it in San Jose, and people are already calling WSO. Registration flyers will be available toward the end of 1999, and more information will be revealed and communicated in the meantime.

There is one thing of which everyone should be made aware: There has been a change in dates for WCNA-28. Instead of early July, the convention is scheduled for 30 August to 3 September 2000. It was necessary to change the dates in order to put together the most economical travel packages to Colombia. Look for more information in the next issue of the *NA Way*. ♦

WCNA Factoids

15,516

people registered, including newcomers

19,000

was the approximate total attendance

40,000+

cups of coffee were sold in the convention center

2,200

flowers decorated the Jazz Breakfast

33

countries were represented at the convention

300

absorbent towels were used by the entertainers

726,000

square feet of meeting space was used

112

buses were used to move people from one event to another

The World Convention Corporation shipped

73,000

pounds of goods and equipment to the convention center

47,000

chairs were used throughout the convention center

A call for better communication

by Mauricio A, Chairperson
Colombia Regional Service Committee

Right after our Ninth Regional Service Conference, we wrote to all the groups and areas in our region to let them know about the new regional committee structure, and we asked for updates of groups, meeting times, trusted servants, and contact information. We wanted to initiate an exchange of experience and resources. Unfortunately, of the fifty-eight groups we contacted, only sixteen responded.

It has been a painful custom of ours, especially our groups, to neglect active and consistent communication. Not only do we fail to communicate amongst ourselves, we don't even respond when some level of service solicits a response from the groups for something required by our fellowship—for example, reviewing the Conference Agenda Report, writing articles for our publications, or ideas and opinions about some specific theme. We don't even prepare topics in a timely manner for the speakers at our regional convention.

It has generally been individual members—almost always trusted servants or "strong personalities"—who carry out these needs. This almost never results in a collective conscience of the groups. Most of the time, our meeting formats do not allow for time to discuss common-interest issues unless they relate to personal recovery experience directed toward the newcomer or about the way we stay clean on a daily basis.

Also, when it comes to group business meetings, workshops, and forums, very few attend. Usually, it's the same "personalities" who end up doing all the service work. It's almost as if the traditions (the Fifth Tradition in particular) and the suggested meeting formats in our Group Booklet hinder our ability to create a way of speaking and exchanging ideas regarding other issues.

I am not indifferent to the fact that the newcomer needs the empathy that such sharing offers, and that our groups' primary purpose is exactly that. None-

theless, we need to establish in our groups (the only place where we are all together every day) an open and varied dialogue about issues of interest to NA as a whole. We need to do this not as "announcements" at the end of a meeting when everybody is anxious to leave, but as "important time" in the middle—or even at the beginning—of our regular recovery meetings. If we don't, we should resign ourselves to continuing our slow and isolated growth. We should resign ourselves to a continued loss of interest and continuity among our members. We should resign ourselves to continue with our development of mediocre trusted servants who are only will-

ing to carry out their duties on the path of least resistance. We should resign ourselves to the continued presence of famous and powerful personalities and know-it-alls who are not strong branches of the great NA service tree through whom the sap of willingness and goodwill can run. We should resign ourselves to never knowing what our true collective conscience is about anything.

Today, let us reflect on and remember the simple principle that our symbol illustrates: "The greater the base (as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship), the broader the sides of the pyramid, and the higher the point of freedom." ♦

Once a camel...

by Uschi Mueller,
WSO Translations Coordinator

The *NA Way* asked me to write about my experience with translating NA's written message into different languages. This is a great honor, and I'm happy to share about this truly rewarding part of my life.

Quite a few years back, two things happened that changed my life and put me on a path of purpose and fulfillment. I attended the 1988 World Convention in Anaheim, California, and had the great fortune to meet some recovering addicts from Europe. They were among those on the European continent who spoke English and had gotten clean on a US Army base or in the USA. Using English NA literature, they had started some meetings, but they urgently needed translated recovery literature for the large majority of European NA members who don't read English. This was the first time I really comprehended NA's growth outside the US. Also, I found it amusing that these addicts from Europe were the ones who told me about the existence of NA's world headquarters in California, just a few miles from where I lived. They were planning a tour of the WSO as the final highlight of their WCNA trip.

Some time during the next year, I made a call offering to help translate NA literature (my native language is German, and I had some knowledge of French and Nederlands). Little did I know that this call would start me on a journey that eventually led to a full-time job at the WSO. In fact, the demand for NA literature translations grew to the point where soon we needed several full-time staff members to coordinate the work.

It turned out I didn't have much time to translate anything myself. Instead, I started helping NA communities around the world develop local translation committees. There were work groups in France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Japan, and Sweden, to name a few.

Everyone who has ever been involved in translating NA literature agrees that this work is a perfect way to grow in understanding of the NA message. Sitting through hours and days, weeks and months of discussion and struggling over terms like "addict" and the meaning of phrases like "easy does it" promotes understanding. It does happen sometimes that these initial discussions produce hilarious results. For example, the first-draft Farsi translation of "once an addict, always an addict" was "once a camel lies down at your door, it will not get up again."

It's been amazing to see how much NA can grow in a particular community once some literature in a locally understood language gets put on the table. In Brazil, for

Continued on page 16

Island meetings, NA conventions ...and fellowship development?

by Paul T.

Treasurer, European Delegates Meeting

The autumn in Ibiza brings clear, sunny days—a cool freshness replacing the summer heat, a quietness descending after the seasonal tourist frenzy. It's a melancholy time here, a time of reflection. Thirteen years ago today, I found that once again the drugs were used up and the dealer was back in India. It was time to either get clean or do that run we all dreamed about—the trip that would bring us money and drugs to last forever. Little did I know that I was about to become an NA member.

Today another friend and I celebrated our recovery anniversaries with the local fellowship. Thirteen addicts sat together in a small country home overlooking the pine-covered hills and vineyards running down to the sea two kilometers away. The silence of the valley below was breathtaking, a fitting tribute to the miracle that was taking place as we ate brunch together. Somehow, with a minimum of effort, the right amount of food, cups, and forks materialized (lucky we didn't get a committee to organize it!) and we had an informal speaker meeting. It was a wonderful morning.

It is a miracle that there is an NA community on a Spanish island in the Mediterranean. But situations like ours are becoming common as NA becomes a global fellowship and our message slowly spreads to hidden pockets across the planet. It is this slow and steady growth that has created the need for a special type of support, which we call "fellowship development."

There were no NA meetings on Ibiza when I got clean. I only heard about NA when I ended up in a treatment center in the UK, feeling less than useless for not getting that smuggling trip to India together after all. In treatment I got

clean. Slowly I learned the basics about the program and the disease, and began to think I shouldn't return to Ibiza. After a few months, though, other addicts with more experience packed me back off to my home and family in the sun. I was armed with a Starter Kit in English. My first experience of "fellowship development" happened when the South West England ASC in Bristol allowed me time on their agenda to stand up, turn red, and stammer that I was going to start a meeting in Spain. Their applause and support stayed with me much longer than the Starter Kit, and I felt that I had finally found a purpose.

Things were okay for about three years. One or two English-speakers got clean and stayed around, but no local Spanish members stuck. Our contact with NA as a whole was through *Meeting by Mail* and visits of friends from the UK. It was a time of survival. There was a world convention in London, which I heard about, but it was summer and the flights were full. Then we got in contact with an NA group that was happening in Barcelona. That's when we first heard of ECCNA—the European Conference and Convention of NA. The two people who were opening meetings in Barcelona were going to ECCNA in Germany. They said we should try to go with them. It seemed like a nice idea, but it just didn't happen.

Next thing we knew, the ECCNA was coming to us in Barcelona. Twelve months later a couple of us from Ibiza found ourselves on a flight to Barcelona to meet for the first time with other addicts at an NA event. It was a weekend that was to change everything in our recovery.

I remember clearly the reluctance and fear I felt as we made our way across town to the event. I had learned to feel safe in our isolation. What would other NA members think of us? Were we recovering the "right" way? Perhaps we were doing it all wrong. You all know the script that was running through my head: low self-esteem causing pride and shame to fight for the throne in my heart and mind. Somehow they both seemed to win. Result: a stammering, arrogant addict trembling as he said hello at the doors of the convention. Sound familiar?

The Spanish Region was born at that event. We met addicts who were trying to open meetings in other towns in Spain, and we decided to get together a couple of months later in Valencia. Experienced members from other countries explained how we could form a region. We saw that addicts in neighboring Portugal were also starting meetings and had many of the same difficulties as we did: the same doubts as to whether the NA message was culturally American/English-biased, the same problems with translations, the same uncertainties about forming a service structure, etc. We learned that NA had emerged and grown in Germany, that there were members in France, in Italy, in Belgium, and so on. And we saw that members from the US cared very much about the growth of NA in Europe. And on a personal note, I met the man who was to become my sponsor.

Two months later, I found myself elected as the first RSR from the newly formed Spanish Region. The others told me to get in touch with NA outside Spain, so I called WSO. They were very friendly, but told me that the best way to be in contact with NA as a whole was by attending the WSC in Los Angeles—and no, there were no funds available to pay for the trip. They suggested we contact the WSO branch in London.

After contacting WSO in London, it seemed that our best opportunity to take part in NA as a whole was at the next ECCNA in Portugal. So there I was again, less defensive this time, talking to members from all over Europe, and trying to find other European RSRs who would like to meet. At the ECCNA in Portugal the seeds of a "European Zone" were sown. We formed the European Study Group to look at different ways for European NA communities to share their experience, strength, and hope and to help each other resolve common problems. It was a very exciting time.

Meanwhile, the World Service Conference decided to fund RSRs from communities such as Spain to attend what was then called the "International Development Forum" at WSC in Dallas. There I met a group of inexperienced "foreign" addicts just like me. We were mesmerized by the grandeur of the con-

ference room, the amount of clean time everyone else seemed to have, the array of NA T-shirts to be acquired, and the mystery of a weird code of conduct called "Robert's Rules of Order." It was extremely exciting and totally bewildering. Somewhere inside there was a nagging doubt that this was really the best way for communities like Spain to participate in NA as a whole. The doubt stayed with me at each of the WSCs I attended over the next few years.

Back in Europe, ECCNA continued every year. It went to Rome, Antwerp, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Lisbon, Haifa, and Manchester. The communities in Europe chose from the options presented by the European Study Group, and the European Delegates Meeting was formed. It has been meeting regularly twice a year since then. A little like adolescent children, we went through a period of demanding independence from what appeared to be an overprotective WSC. We also fought amongst ourselves a little, but managed to remain focused on what we shared in common: a desire for NA recovery to survive in countries where it was previously unheard of.

We have come a long way since then, and every year the ECCNA continues to offer to addicts in Europe a place to participate in NA as a whole. Each year translation facilities are available for members who don't speak English. Every year we meet members from new or isolated communities—Turkey, Russia, Poland, Greece—the list goes on and on. The EDM still has its summer meeting at ECCNA so members from younger communities are able to benefit from the service experience of more established communities. The event itself is a very real example of what "fellowship development" can be at its best. It is very practical, very natural, and very effective.

Over the last few years, NA communities in Europe have acquired a vast amount of experience in facing the problems inherent in starting and supporting groups in isolated countries, each one with its own language and culture. This experience is pooled together every time the EDM meets. Over time, the EDM itself has become stronger and

more stable. Over the last year it has begun to reach out with fellowship development projects of its own—seeking to support those communities that are still isolated and inexperienced. Through the EDM, neighboring communities in Europe are supporting each other. For example, members from the German-Speaking Region just offered support to a regional event in a previously isolated community in Poland. The trip was coordinated by the EDM and financed by the WSC. It seems a very practical and efficient way to support fellowship development around the world. I feel sure the Polish NA members benefited enormously by feeling that NA cares about them.

ECCNA and the European NA community have been a huge part of my personal recovery. I feel I owe them so much. They gave my life a purpose when in early recovery I badly needed one. For me, my entire recovery has been connected with fellowship development. It is a tremendously exciting project to be involved with. I have seen myself mature as the years pass, and that maturity is paralleled by the development of NA in Europe and other parts of the world. It is truly a miracle to see.

My home group now has mostly native Spanish members. Our literature is well-translated, and NA has a legal status in Spain. Our service structure functions well, and we have regular regional conventions. I am now far from being a loner.

Members of my home group came back from the regional convention last week. They were speaking excitedly about the latest news. They told me that the next convention will be in Sitges, Barcelona, and it is the European convention: ECCNA! They are very excited at the thought of sharing with addicts from so many different places.

I will be there too, doing service at the EDM. I don't talk much about doing European service in my home group; it has never seemed appropriate. But it feels really good to know that the addicts from my home group—the addicts with whom I recover and celebrate my clean date—are about to participate directly in a celebration of fellowship development at ECCNA-16. ECCNA

certainly has helped the development of the fellowship here in Ibiza, much more than many local members are aware. I am sure the same is true for many other groups and addicts all over Europe, and it will be true in the future in many more isolated places where possibly an addict, right now, is wondering just how the hell of using will ever come to an end.

ECCNA-XVI will be held in Sitges, a coastal town just 25 minutes south of Barcelona on 2-4 July 1999. It promises to be a great event with participation from many different countries across Europe and the world. Please come join us if you can. You will enjoy being part of the miracle of fellowship development. See page 18 for more information. ♦

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I hereby grant permission to the World Service Office, *The NA Way Magazine*, their successors, assigns, and those acting on their authority to publish the attached original material titled _____.

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Convention controversy

I recently participated in a convention that was for women in recovery in NA. I guess we would call it a "special interest" convention. It was the first of its kind in my region. This event grew out of the group conscience of an NA women's meeting in our area. About seventy-five women came to the convention. It was quite a success. I was not involved in putting the convention together; I was only a participant.

I heard about this event despite efforts to keep it from being announced. Evidently, the event caused controversy at the regional level long before it was due to take place. An area representative decided the event was a breach of our traditions and threw away the flyers. Bad news travels really fast in our fellowship, so I learned about the event even without a flyer.

When I got to the convention, I shared with some of the women on the committee about the controversy the convention had created in my area. I found out that the controversy wasn't just in my area. It was in other areas, at meetings, and even at some members' homes in their romantic relationships. I met a woman whose boyfriend had threatened to leave her if she came to the convention. She came and he left. I was stunned that so many people were bothered by this event.

It's important for me to share with you about this convention. I was very confused about this idea of a women's convention being against our traditions. I really wasn't sure whether I believed this or not. I talked to my sponsor about it. I discussed it with other NA members.

The things I heard weren't divided along gender lines at all. Both men and women told me the same thing: Addiction does not discriminate against age, race, gender, culture, social standing, or religion or lack of it. Therefore, these gatherings should not take place within the context of NA.

I had read in our literature that spiritual principles do not come into conflict with each other; therefore, they do not create controversy. I was confused. Maybe this women's convention wasn't right.

I have been in recovery for five years. Sponsorship is a main ingredient in my recovery. I could not do without it. No way. Our literature suggests that we each have a sponsor of the same gender. I guess sponsorship could be considered "special interest," then.

For the first eighteen months I was clean, I was sponsored by a man. Of course, it was a cover-up. I had a sponsor and he was my boyfriend. He had eight years clean and he was God to me. I didn't have enough honesty or even just plain old common sense to realize that then.

Letters to the editor

It wasn't until I got a woman sponsor that I experienced the true nature of sponsorship. She showed me the path to a relationship with a Higher Power instead of becoming my Higher Power. She transmitted to me what I needed to stay clean and recover. She showed me how to be a woman, how to gain respect, trust, and dignity. I learned about humility. I shared my deepest secrets. I tasted recovery. It was so good, I wanted more and more. That made me stay in NA. My boyfriend and I broke up about a year later. I was left with a broken heart, and I was very disillusioned. Thank God I knew where to go and what to do.

I took my newcomer keytag in a women's group. During my first few years clean, my home group was a women's group. The women in that group supported me through it all. I was way too scared to share in a mixed meeting like I did in my home group. I was afraid of men. That group was my safe haven. Whether it was "politically correct" to go to that meeting didn't even cross my mind. I just clung to it like a lifeboat. It saved my life.

Today, my home group has both men and women. I realized at a certain point that I needed to learn to live with men if I was to function in the real world. Thank God for mixed meetings. I also learned that man-bashing wasn't the way to go. Men-bashing got me nowhere. It just made me angry and made me feel like more of a victim.

The controversy surrounding the women's convention troubled me because I cannot deny my roots in NA. I cannot deny the value of same-sex sponsorship, either. To me, it's the only way to go. At the same time, I don't want to participate in anything that will divide this fellowship. I can only share my experience and, I hope, demystify the women's convention.

First of all, please be assured that the convention was not for the purpose of men-bashing, but to celebrate our recovery with other women. In addition, the women's convention was not the only convention held in our region this year. It was one of about ten, and the others are open to everyone. It's not like anyone is deprived of the conven-

tion experience. It's not any different from what exists in many areas—that is, a women's meeting as one of many NA meetings held on a certain night of the week.

My experience at the women's convention was extraordinary. On Saturday night, I danced for the first time in recovery. I felt safe because there were only women at the dance. There was a meeting on the topic of sexuality. The atmosphere was very intimate and the experience powerful. That weekend, I celebrated being a woman in recovery. It nourished my soul. I want not only to learn about being a human being, but about being a woman. I can only learn that from other women. This gathering gave us a place for relationships between women to flourish, and that caused sponsorship to flourish.

It's not my intention to create more controversy. I am simply grateful for the privilege of sharing my experience, strength, and hope. I am but a single speck in the rainbow of colors NA produces in its members. I'm not the ultimate authority on anything; all I have is my experience.

It saddens me when I see other addicts reacting because of fear of and ignorance about these gatherings. In my opinion, negativity toward what other addicts do to strengthen their recovery only demonstrates a lack of faith in the Higher Power that governs this fellowship.

Julie V, Quebec

Tied together

Just the other day, I received my second issue of *The NA Way Magazine*. I experienced a strong feeling of belonging to something very special when I opened it, and I thanked God for it. That evening, I went to a meeting so I could share what I had read in the magazine.

I've been to fellowship events. I serve my home group as GSR. I go to other meetings regularly. I feel part of NA, but my feeling after getting the magazine was different. I understood that a fellow member from a different part of the world experiences recovery the same way I do. Before coming to NA, I was disconnected from the whole world. Now I'm part of a world that I'm getting to know. When I read the news about our fellowship and about the world convention in San Jose, my heart started beating fast and tears came to my eyes as I remembered the NA events I've attended.

Not for a moment did I feel like a member from an "emerging" country, but rather a fortunate human being who belongs to Narcotics Anonymous. I was reassured that NA has no frontiers, prejudice, or other barriers that can tear us apart. The only barriers are our own individual defects of character.

I thank the trusted servants who work on this magazine, and I thank God that NA exists. Today I am sure that by working this program I am restored to the world. I still have difficulties, but I have a new way to deal with them.

Thank you, all the members who read our magazine. Thank you, newcomers from around the world. Thank you, members who serve NA groups all around the world, keeping the doors open. For sure, we are tied together.

Davi R, Brazil

We all belong: medication in recovery

Have you ever thought about what it must feel like to have multiple years clean and still be conspiring regularly to kill yourself? How about those of us who suffer from a physical disease like cancer?

Fortunately, I have not had thoughts about killing myself since turning my life around in the Narcotics Anonymous program, nor do I have any serious physical challenges. Unfortunately, there are many recovering addicts who do have serious physical problems, and there are many addicts who suffer from a mental illness. In fact, some NA members have both physical and mental problems in addition to the disease of addiction, and their physical and mental survival depends on their use of some type of medication.

It is difficult for me to imagine what my life would be like if working the steps, going to meetings, talking to my sponsor, and relying on a Higher Power didn't work. However, some of us face this every day and need outside help as well as the support that is available in NA. Often, the outside help comes in the form of a prescribed medication. Have you ever judged people who need drug therapy and decided they were less-than-recovering addicts? I can remember the tremendous courage it took for me to walk into my first NA meeting. Surely it must take an equal amount of strength to seek help in other places; so why are we so quick to judge the recovering addicts who do so? Shouldn't the NA program be available to them as well?

Although our program promotes complete abstinence from all drugs, one must use some common sense when drug therapy is going to enhance the quality of one's life, save a life, or ease a death.

I am not referring to drug replacement programs, which are designed to treat addiction. I am talking about medication designed to make physical pain manageable, for instance, or antidepres-

sant medication designed to relieve depression that isn't caused by life circumstances or not working a program. I am only mentioning these two types of medication because I personally know of recovering addicts who suffer from these conditions and feel stigmatized by others in the program. These people need their medication, and they also need to recover from addiction in Narcotics Anonymous. I think they should be allowed to do both without being judged by those of us who figure we're better than they are.

I've lost two friends to overdose deaths which, in my opinion, were partially due to untreated depression. Maybe their deaths could have been

avoided if they had sought additional help outside NA as well as inside NA. How many addicts suffer from similar illnesses and feel they cannot find recovery in NA because their clean time is constantly being questioned? What can we do to make these addicts feel welcome in NA?

Until I graduate from medical school, I will refrain from giving medical and/or medication advice to my fellow NA members. We all need to be treated with equal amounts of love and respect without regard to our individual circumstances. From old-timer to newcomer, from clinically depressed to terminally ill—we all deserve the chance to find a better way of life in Narcotics Anonymous.

Anonymous

Editorial reply

To "What types of addiction does NA treat, anyway?"

July 1998

There was a question in the above article that asked, "Why can't NA cure me of all these problem behaviors?"

It has never been my understanding that NA could cure me of anything. In meetings I learn that I suffer from an incurable disease, which is called addiction. I can treat my addiction, but I will never be cured. After spending some time practicing the program of recovery, I believe this to be true.

In the dictionary, all definitions of addiction refer to drugs. But in our literature, as the author of the above article pointed out, it says that the disease of addiction can manifest itself in a variety of ways that have nothing to do with drugs. I am living testimony to that fact. Since having let go of drugs in 1986, I have experienced the need to "fill the void" on several different occasions. I have also tried to address those needs in other twelve-step programs.

Every time, I have come back to NA. The reason? My heart is in NA. My recovery is in NA. If it works, don't fix it! I can apply my powerlessness to anything, and my life becomes unmanageable... again.

Yes, my primary reason for coming to NA, in the beginning, was to deal with my addiction to drugs. That was the only thing I could see that was wrong with me. As I worked the steps, I began to uncover the layers of other mental obsessions and compulsive actions that plagued my life: food, sex, control, etc.

My primary purpose today, as a responsible member of NA, is to carry the message that anyone can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. There is no promise that we'll be "cured" of anything. NA gives me the tools to uncover and discover myself in new ways all the time. I will find out everything I need to know about myself if I am diligent in my efforts to work the steps, follow the traditions, and practice the principles of the program.

Continued on next page

I identify with NA's view that the drugs are only the symptom of our real problem: the disease of addiction. You smoked dope; I ate entire cakes in one sitting; she bounced from one relationship to another.

For me, the solution to the problem is the same, no matter what the substance was: NA. I work the steps on whatever ails me today. I am powerless over my addiction, no matter what form my addiction is taking at the moment. From that point on, I try to rid myself of the "stuff" in the way that works for me: the steps, the traditions, my sponsor, and definitely my HP. I don't burden my fellow NA members with all of my "stuff" at meetings. All I have to do is identify with other addicts about the things we have in common: our addiction and recovery.

One of the statements made in the article I'm responding to was this: "Granted our methods for this recovery may be applied to other areas of our lives; however, the results are not nearly as predictable and are, by definition, not the province of Narcotics Anonymous." I completely disagree. The results are predictable if I follow the plan.

This doesn't mean that I don't respect the newcomer's need for identification. I did not discuss my drug addiction at Overeaters Anonymous, and I don't talk about compulsive overeating at NA meetings. I did and do, however, talk about suffering from an incurable disease.

I work on whatever the problem is, whenever it's necessary, and I always use the same Twelve Steps. I cannot afford to get confused about which set of Twelve Steps I should be practicing at any given moment, so I look at the entire picture and use the plan for whatever arises.

The bottom line is that I'm an addict. I found a home in Narcotics Anonymous because of the drugs, and I don't believe I need another home because of anything else. I can deal with all of my addiction right here.

Barb P, Kansas

Editorial reply

To "Symposium: NA Comes of Age"

October 1998

Melvyn B from Australia, who was interviewed in the October 1998 *NA Way*, has inspired me to write.

Narcotics Anonymous has given me freedom from active addiction for the last thirteen years. I've found that what it took to keep me clean in the beginning is completely different from what it takes now. Like Melvyn, I was gung-ho on meetings, working the steps, praying, etc., and it kept me clean. I learned to be honest, open-minded, and willing. Having freed my mind and body from drugs, I was able to work the steps and find out who I was and what I believed in. It was very painful and frightening at first, but I felt I had to continue because I was unwilling to live a lie even if it was comfortable.

Ironically, one of the things I got from working the steps was that I did not believe in some of the steps. The most important thing in the world to me is not being clean; it is being a free, autonomous human being. My will is my own. I will die in active addiction before I will turn my will and life over to the care of anything, including God. So, as you can see, there are certain steps that do not fit my moral picture of life.

Also like Melvyn, I am an atheist. When I was in active addiction, I did not think; I was an animal. When I first came to NA, I was dogmatic. I thought to stay clean, you must believe in God and pray. Now I question everything. I did not come to my lack of belief in God lightly; it evolved over a period of years. I have a rational mind and I'm going to use it, no matter where it leads.

At meetings, I do not share about these things. I think newcomers need to learn the basics before they can start stretching and crossing the boundaries of spiritual growth. But I could be wrong. Maybe there are NA members who need to hear that there are alternative ways of looking at things within the framework of NA.

I go to one meeting a week. I talk to one of my sponsors every week. I am active in H&I work; I find it very rewarding. I study philosophy for my spiritual growth. I would never say my way is the only way or even the right way for anyone but me, but I do ask NA to show tolerance toward me and others in the program who want to stay clean, but do it differently.

Tom M, Missouri

Once a camel...:

Continued from page 10

instance, the meetings grew exponentially in the years following publication of the Brazilian Basic Text. NA's growth over the past ten years has been a miracle. We now have literature in eighteen languages, and there are members currently working on translating the NA message into twenty additional languages. These members selflessly give their skills and time as an ongoing twelfth-step call toward helping the suffering addicts in their neighborhood read about hope and recovery in their own language. It doesn't come as a surprise that members who were involved in the earliest translation efforts are today the backbone of their NA communities.

At the office, there are three of us working full-time on supporting worldwide translation efforts. The most time-consuming activity is the final proofreading before we publish a new translation. The most rewarding thing is that I get to see the results of everyone's hard work—hot off the presses. I still get choked up when we receive the first sample copy of a newly published Basic Text or the first piece of literature in a new language.

Whenever that happens, I think of my favorite part of our NA world services vision statement that looks toward the day when "every addict in the world has a chance to experience our message in his or her own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life." And I indulge my own personal vision for a moment: that one day we will have to write a new vision into our statement because this one will have been accomplished. ♦

*"...each group is a strand
in the supporting fabric
of Narcotics Anonymous
as a whole; without that fabric,
there would be no NA."*

—It Works: *How and Why
Tradition One*

Picture this

NA communities are invited to send us photographs of their meeting places. We especially welcome photos that include meeting formats, recovery literature, posters, dirty coffee cups, etc.—anything that makes the meeting place look "lived-in." Sorry, we cannot use photos that identify NA members. Please tell us about your meeting: the name, the location and city, how long it has been in existence, what your format consists of (speaker, participation, etc.)



The first NA meeting in Russia, called the "Vertical Group," began in 1990 at this house just outside St. Petersburg.

WSO Product Update

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**Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text
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For the Newcomer

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Staying Clean on the Outside

***Mengekalkan Bersih
di Luar***

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CALENDAR

CANADA

Alberta: 4-6 June; 14th Edmonton Area Convention "In the Spirit of Unity"; to reach committee, email: sue.s@shaw.wave.ca

British Columbia: 9-11 Apr.; Sisters in Serenity Women's Retreat "Releasing the Spirit"; Squamish; to reach committee, call: (604) 254-1962; or email: ivy_scott@bc.sympatico.ca

Nova Scotia: 22-25 July; 10th Annual AVANA Pig Roast and Campout; Blomidon Provincial Park; to reach committee, call: (902) 847-1779 or (902) 847-9319; or write: Box 522, Kentville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4N 3X3

2) 6-8 Aug.; 1st Central Nova Area Convention; Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro; to reach committee, call: (902) 463-2605; or fax: (902) 463-3240; or email: designs@ns.sympatico.ca

Ontario: 21-23 May; 12th Ontario Regional Convention "Nature of Recovery"; Windsor Hilton; mention ORCNA for hotel rsvns: (519) 973-5555; to reach committee, call: (519) 256-8684 or (650) 424-8232; fax: (650) 361-9420 Attn: Dafna; or email: orcna@windsor.igs.net; website: www.windsor.igs.net/~orcna/

2) 30 Dec. 1999 - 2 Jan. 2000; Turn of the Century Convention of NA; Waterloo Motor Inn; mention NA for hotel rsvns: (800) 361-4708; to reach committee, email: cadiman@golden.net; or write: 170 University Ave. West, Suite 12, Box 267, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3E9

Saskatchewan: 16-18 Apr.; Central Saskatchewan Area Convention "We Came to Believe"; Sutherland Hall, Saskatoon; to contact committee, call: (306) 373-3928 or (306) 652-7832

PERU

Junin: 28-30 May; 5th Peruvian Regional Convention; Huancayo; to reach committee, fax: +51/1/4268229; or email: femorote@hotmail.com

Lima: 28-29 July; 7th Regional Service Conference; to reach committee, call: +51/14/738566

2) 14 Nov.; 14th Anniversary Reunion-Lima; call: +51/14/738566

SPAIN

Barcelona (Sitges): 2-4 July; 16th European Convention and Conference "Living in the Moment"; to reach committee, call: +34/972/369910 or +34/93/4425324 or +34/910/733897; email: 16eccna@usa.net; or write: XVI ECCNA, Apdo. Correos 22-273, Barcelona, 08015, Spain

WEST INDIES

Bermuda: 9-11 Apr.; Bermuda Islands Area Convention "Serenity in Paradise"; to reach committee, call: (441) 292-7163 or (441) 295-5300; or email: gbotelho@ibl.bm

UNITED STATES

Alabama: 13-16 May; 11th Annual Alabama/Northwest Florida Regional Convention; Gulf Shores State Park; rsvns: (800) ALA-PARK; to reach committee, call: (205) 647-2691 or (205) 991-1083

Arkansas: 2-4 July; 11th Central Arkansas Area Convention; Greenleaf Plaza Hotel, North Little Rock; hotel rsvns: (800) 493-2271 or (501) 758-1440; to reach committee, call: (501) 835-3571; or write: CAACNA, PO Box 250516, Little Rock, AR 72225

California: 1-4 Apr.; 21st Northern California Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (707) 447-0643

2) 2-4 Apr.; 8th Southern California Spring Gathering; Burbank Hilton; hotel rsvns: (800) 445-8667 or (818) 843-6000; to reach committee, call: (714) 577-9392 or (619) 260-8059

3) 24 Apr.; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

4) 24 Apr.; Marin County Area Unity Day; San Rafael Recreation Center; to reach committee, call: (415) 459-0632; or email: hopeadict@jps.net

5) 29 May; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

6) 26 June; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

7) 31 July; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

8) 28 Aug.; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

9) 4-5 Sept.; Greater Los Angeles Area Convention; Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites, Los Angeles; to reach committee, write: PO Box 88747, Los Angeles, CA 90009; website: <http://members.aol.com/GLAACNA1>

10) 25 Sept.; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

11) 30 Oct.; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

12) 19-21 Nov.; Western Service Learning Days; Burbank Hilton; hotel rsvns: (800) HILTONS or (818) 843-6000; speaker tapes needed; to contact committee, call (626) 791-4235

13) 27 Nov.; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169 or (760) 778-8730

Colorado: 2-4 July; 14th Western States Unity Convention; Denver; website: www.bwn.net/wsuc

Florida: 9-11 Apr.; Daytona Area Convention "An Oceanful of Miracles"; Ramada Inn Ocean Front; hotel rsvns: (800) 654-6216; to reach committee, call: (904) 253-8962 or (904) 676-2409

2) 23-25 Apr.; Conch Republic Area's "Recovery in Paradise VII"; Knights Key Campground, Marathon; to reach committee, call: (305) 294-0522 or (305) 292-1067 or (305) 295-7312

3) 13-16 May; 11th Annual Alabama/Northwest Florida Regional Convention; Gulf Shores State Park; site rsvns: (800) 544-4853; to reach committee, call: (205) 647-2691 or (205) 991-1083

4) 22-24 Oct.; 1st Mid-Coast Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (561) 272-5999

5) 3-13 July 2000; NA Millennium Cruise to WCNA-28; sponsored by Northside Stroll Group of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Cruise leaves from Ft. Lauderdale; for more info, call: (800) 688-8033 ask for Patrick

Illinois: 2-4 Apr.; Rock River Convention "A New Way of Life"; Best Western Clock Tower Resort; hotel rsvns: (800) 358-7666; to reach committee, call: (815) 569-2285

Kansas: 2-4 Apr.; 16th Mid-America Regional Convention; Ramada Inn, Hutchinson; Use code "MARC" for hotel rsvns: (800) 362-5018 or (316) 669-9311; to reach committee, call: (316) 662-7491 or (316) 662-1139; email: tigger2@southwind.net

2) 23-25 Apr.; Mo-Kan Area Convention; Mount Convention Center, Atchison; to reach committee, email: MHansen272@aol.com

Kentucky: 2-4 Apr.; 13th Kentuckiana Regional Convention "Recovery Tour"; Hyatt Regency, Lexington; hotel rsvns: (800) 233-1234 or (606) 253-1234; to reach committee, call: (606) 226-9394

Louisiana: 28-30 May; 17th Louisiana Regional Convention; Shreveport; to reach committee, call: (318) 861-0945 or (318) 747-8400; email: markmong@worldnet.att.net; or write: LRCNA-17, PO Box 8535, Bossier City, LA 71113

Maine: 11-13 June; Nature of Recovery; to reach committee, call: (207) 623-9240

2) 17-19 Sept.; Southern Maine Area Convention "Miracle XVII"; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred; to reach committee, call: (800) 974-0062; or write: SMASCNA-CC, PO Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

Michigan: 1-4 Apr.; 7th Detroit Area Convention "Spirituality Starts Here"; Westin Hotel, Detroit; hotel rsvns: (800) 228-9290 or (313) 568-8200; to reach committee, call: (313) 361-4214 or (313) 839-8199 or (313) 898-2307

2) 1-4 July; 15th Michigan Regional Convention; Valley Plaza Hotel, Midland; use code "G5810" for hotel rsvns: (800) 825-2700; to reach committee, call: (248) 545-2179; or write: 220 East 9 Mile Road, Ferndale, MI 48220

Minnesota: 30 Apr. - 2 May; MNNAC VI "Vision Without Limits"; Rochester; to reach committee, call (507) 281-6319

Missouri: 11-13 June; 14th Show-Me Regional Convention; Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City; to reach committee, call: (753) 582-0436; or email: rfisher@maain.missouri.org

Montana: 20-22 Aug.; North West Montana Area Bitterroot Campout; Bitterroot Lake, Marion; to reach committee, call: (406) 752-6692; or write: 109 Quincy Loop, Kalispell, MT 59901

Nevada: 1-4 Apr.; 13th Southern Nevada Regional Convention; Riviera Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas; to reach committee, call: (702) 247-6168 or (702) 432-5585 or (702) 361-2700

New Hampshire: 25-27 June; Granite State Area's 9th "Fellowship in the Field"; Apple Hill Campground, Bethlehem; to reach committee, call: (603) 645-4777; website: <http://members.aol.com/gsaofna>

New Jersey: 28-30 May; 14th New Jersey Regional Convention; Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Cherry Hill; hotel rsvns: (800) 257-8262 or (609) 428-2300; to reach committee, call: (609) 259-0006; or write: NJRCNA, PO Box 7274, Colonia, NJ 07067

2) 2-4 July; United Area of the Northern New Jersey Region presents the 3rd "Monkey Ain't No Joke" Convention; Westin Morristown Hotel; hotel rsvns: (800) 221-0241; to reach committee, call: (973) 636-0513

New York: 19-21 Nov.; 1st Eastern New York Regional Convention "Recovery in the East"; Crowne Plaza Hotel; to reach committee, call: (718) 527-5473; email: EZLou10@aol.com

North Carolina: 1-5 July; Carolina Regional Convention "Freedom to Live IV"; Holiday Inn Market Square Convention Center High Point; hotel rsvns: (336) 886-7011; to reach committee, call: (336) 273-4204; or email: crso@bellsouth.net

Ohio: 28-30 May; Ohio Convention "Our Direction Is Clear"; Cleveland Marriott; hotel rsvns: (216) 252-5333; to reach committee, call: (440) 234-0393; or email: dbradt@mailbag.com

2) 13 June; Trumbull Area June Picnic; Waddell Park, Niles; to reach committee, call: (330) 399-3030; or email: Peace4Tony@aol.com

3) 11 July; Trumbull Area July Picnic; Waddell Park, Niles; to reach committee, call: (330) 399-3030; or email: Peace4Tony@aol.com

Oklahoma: 9-11 Apr.; 13th Oklahoma Regional Convention "Back to Basics"; Trade Winds Central Inn, Oklahoma City; hotel rsvns: (405) 235-4531; to reach committee, call: (405) 947-3757; or email: alodell@busprod.com

Pennsylvania: 7-9 May; 14th Greater Philadelphia Regional Convention; Philadelphia Convention Center; to reach committee, call: (215) 232-6599

Puerto Rico: 13-15 Aug.; 10th Annual Puerto Rico Regional Convention; Hotel Hyatt, Dorado; to reach committee, call: (809) 763-5919

South Dakota: 17-19 Sept.; 2nd South Dakota Regional Convention; Elk Creek Resort, Piedmont; hotel rsvns: (800) 846-2267; to reach committee, call: (605) 334-6872

Tennessee: 24-28 Nov.; 17th Volunteer Regional Convention; Sheraton Music Center Hotel, Nashville; to reach committee, call: (615) 742-1811; or email: crichards@reemay.com

Texas: 2-4 Apr.; 14th Lone Star Regional Convention; Harvey Hotel Dallas/Ft. Worth; hotel rsvns: (972) 929-4500; to reach committee, call: (972) 245-8972 or (800) 747-8972

2) 5-7 Nov.; Fort Worth Area Convention; speakers wanted; to reach committee, call: (817) 625-1358; or write: Convention, c/o 503 Brown Trail #105, Hurst, TX 76053

Washington: 30 Apr. - 2 May; South King County Area NA 14th Annual Men's Retreat "No Hiding Allowed"; The Lodge, Ashford; to reach committee, call: (253) 460-6989 or (206) 878-6993 or (206) 932-9243 or (206) 241-7118 or (206) 235-4463 or (253) 529-2520

2) 21-23 May; Washington/Northern Idaho Regional Convention; Doubletree at the Quay, Vancouver; hotel rsvns: (360) 694-8341; to reach committee, write: WNIRCNA-XIV, PO Box 4812, Vancouver, WA 98662; website: www.wnir-na.org/wnircna14.html

3) 9-11 July; South West Washington Area's Freedom Retreat XVII; Wa-Ri-Ki Campground, Washougal; speakers wanted; to reach committee, call: (360) 696-5875; or write: Freedom Retreat, 8002 NE Hwy. 99, PO Box 606, Vancouver, WA 98665

West Virginia: 7-9 May; Mountaineer Retreat "Step by Step"; Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley; to reach committee, call: (304) 346-5906; or email: mdc1504@aol.com; website: www.newwave.net/~mrscna/sbsconv.htm

Wisconsin: 22-24 Oct.; 16th Wisconsin State Convention; Yacht Club Resort, LaCrosse; hotel rsvns: (608) 785-9400; to reach committee, call: (608) 785-3255

Wyoming: 24-26 Sept.; 8th Annual Convention of Unity of Narcotics Anonymous; to reach committee, call: (307) 382-8308; email: Scotta@wyoming.com; or write: CUNA-8, PO Box 445, Evanston, WY 82931



Home Group

"HEY! CAREFUL WITH MY BAG!"

"WELL ... IF YOU HADN'T BOUGHT THOSE FORTY-TWO COFFEE MUGS MAY BE IT WOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM"

"I SPENT ALL MY MONEY IN THE MERCHANDISE ROOM, SO I TRIED TO GET SOME DEAD GUY'S REGISTRATION, IT DIDN'T WORK"

"WELL, I THOUGHT ABOUT HITTING THE BAR SO I COULD GET A NEWCOMER PACKAGE, I DECIDED AGAINST IT."

"I GOT SUCH A FEELING OF UNITY AND FELLOWSHIP ... WHAT DID YOU GET?"

"...UH ... THIS REALLY WEIRD RASH..."

"HEY! I JUST HEARD ON MY WALKMAN THAT THE ENTIRE TOWN OF SAN JOSE HAS SHUT DOWN DUE TO A COFFEE FAMINE!"

"I CELEBRATED TWO YEARS AND THREE YEARS CLEAN IN THE MERCHANDISE LINE THIS WEEKEND!"

"WELL, AT LEAST WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT IN CARTAGENA!"

... SHE DON'T LIE
SHE DON'T LIE
SHE DON'T LIE..."

