

ASIA PACIFIC FORUM

Aotearoa New Zealand . Australia . Hawaii . Hong Kong . Japan . Philippines . Singapore
Bangladesh . Nepal . Indonesia . India . Malaysia . Thailand . China . Pakistan . Guam . Gulf States

a network of  communities

PI at a public conference...

Recently I spent a day looking after the NA Public Information table at a conference in the city where I live. The International Conference on drugs & Young People was attended by a whole range of professional, semi-professional and other concerned participants. Around two hundred people including doctors, lawyers, teachers, D&A workers, police and parents passed by the table and most of them took away something.

How did I get to be there? Well one day I put my hand up at a meeting when they were asking for help with Public Information presentations. I don't really have that much time or inclination for the committee work but I am happy to make myself available to talk to members of the public about NA. There are others like me who are not part of the PI committee but we are on a resource list and our local PI calls on us when needed.

The PI Guide gives plenty of very clear suggestions about how to conduct one's self when dealing with the public, like dressing appropriately. On this occasion, I thought something smart but non-threatening like leather jacket with clean shirt, khaki chinos, and clean shoes, plus a pleasant, responsive attitude at all times.

Aside from my own personal attempts at looking presentable the table looked great, in fact there were quite a few other tables at the conference and in my humble opinion, NA had the best one there. Many Information Pamphlets in every colour, plus the blue Basic Text and the green and gold It Works How and Why and Step Working Guide. Various other publications, The NA WAY, APF Newsletter, NA Today and in the middle of the table a large assortment of keytags. The piece de resistance however was the event-specific info

pack, including the Youth In Recovery pamphlet, a local meetings list, and business cards with all the regional help-lines, plus web-sites and E-mail addresses.

You could tell that people were impressed, and here I need to mention the great work of Ken S. our Area PI Chair and Peter T. Regional PI Chair. The success of our presentation was due in no small way to their energy, commitment and inspiration. It would not have happened without them.

It was great to be able to say to people, "Help yourself to anything on the table, except the books, they are twenty bucks". This immediately got them a lot more interested. Then I always asked, "Where are you from?"

This proved to be a good conversation opener. "I'm from New Zealand do you have contacts there?" "Yes just look up this web-site www.na.org, contacts all over the world". "I am from Indonesia, is NA there?" "Sure, check out this web-site www.na-bali.org, it has contact numbers and meetings listed throughout Bali and Java in English or Bhasa Indonesian". I am from Wagga do you have meetings there? You do? That's great! And this is the meeting directory? Thankyou very much."

All these conversations are very warming to the heart of a grateful

addict; people then want to know more about how it works. "Can anybody join?" "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using". "What if people go to meetings stoned?" "Well they are in the right place" "And what are these key-tags for?"

People just loved the idea of key-tags to celebrate milestones, so much so that they always took a least one or more. Interestingly the most popular were the black 'multiple year' key-tags. There were many straight out positive

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EARTH-SHAKING MIRACLE

A member from Mumbai who had shifted to Ahmedabad, Gujarat, wanted to start a NA meeting. As I was visiting Ahmedabad, we decided to hold a meeting at this member's house on 6th January 2001. This meeting was also attended by a local addict. The three of us had great fun at this meeting.

Two weeks later an earthquake struck Ahmedabad, especially in the area where the meeting was held. At that moment, there were four more members from Mumbai staying in the very house where the meeting was held. Buildings fell right, left and center in this area, but the building where the meeting was held stood strong. None of our members had any injuries and were safe and sound. Miracles happen in NA.

Ivan, Mumbai.

PI at a public conference...

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comments too from those who already know about our fellowship. "It's really good to see you people here." And "Keep up the good work."

The other good thing about these big conferences is that they often have good catering. It is not a good idea as a representative of NA to start pigging out on the food as soon as they put it out during the breaks, especially as this is when you are supposed to be busy talking to people. But I didn't have to worry. More than one person asked if they could bring me some coffee, cake or fruit. I had more than enough to eat.

In the PI guidelines it recommends that we always send more than one person to represent NA to the public, and there should be a gender balance. Unfortunately we were unable to cover all the days of the conference with female members. So on this particular day I was on my own, no problem, but I hope more people are inspired to get involved in this rewarding service work. During the afternoon I checked out one of the sessions, it was the latest research findings about cannabis, (the so-called soft drug) it just made me even more grateful I don't smoke the stuff any more.

A Grateful Recovering Addict (Australia)

From the desk of the APF Newsletter Committee

After a year of instability and confusion, we finally have a chairperson at the APF. Erik, our new chairperson, needs your support to fulfill his commitment and bring order in our zone. We wish him all the best and look forward to a time of growth in our zone. We also thank Tali and Ramesh for holding the APF together for the past one year.

This issue has been dedicated to Public Information Service. We hope to answer some of your queries by members sharing their experiences in PI. Our experience has shown that it is difficult to get volunteers to serve in this committee. But on occasions when a presentation has to be made to a group of the opposite sex, volunteers overflow. Such is life in NA service.

Our next issue will be dedicated to H&I service. If you have a problem or question, send it at the earliest and we promise to be as thorough as possible. In closing, we want to thank all the members for contributing to this issue.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE ASIA PACIFIC

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

A new web-site; <http://www.nzna.org> is now on line. This site attractively displays a map of New Zealand, with meetings-lists, events, public Information and links included. The creation of e-mail lists has facilitated improved communications and decision making between committee meetings.

Another recent asset was launched at the Regional Gathering in April. This is the national toll-free phone-line. This has been ten years in the making and it is hoped this will provide support for smaller communities and PI initiatives.

Currency exchange rates are high in this part of the world and continue to put pressure on literature prices. According to the Regional report, local literature prices may eventually have to increase.

The Aotearoa New Zealand fellowship is looking forward to hosting the World-Wide Workshop, which is to be held later this year. This will be the first such workshop to be held in the Asia Pacific Zone. Arthur F. has finished his two-year term as RD, and misses everybody in the APF already.

NA IS ALIVE AND WELL IN KOREA

NA is alive and well in Korea. The NA group of mainly ex-pat members in Korea, which has been up and down over the last few years, had ten people in attendance at a recent Saturday night meeting, six of whom were local Koreans. The meeting was mostly in English.

There are now thoughts on a second meeting. In a recent message, Larry, a member in Korea passed on that he has been grateful for contact with NAWS and the APF and has expressed confidence in the commitment to recovery of local Korean members. We in the APF send our best wishes and encouragement to our new members in Korea and look forward to more contacts.

INDONESIA FORMS R S C.

A Desire for unity and co-operation has seen the formation of an RSC to serve the growing fellowship in Indonesia. The committee has already hosted a successful convention in conjunction with the recent APF meeting, and is now focussing on plans to have Bahasa-Indonesian literature translated and approved by NAWS.

Regular meetings are now held in three Areas in Indonesia. Jakarta has four open meetings per week. Bogor has two open meetings, one steps meeting and one closed meeting. Bali has three step meetings, three open meetings, two special closed meetings and one topic discussion meeting. All information about meetings and contacts in Indonesia can be found at the impressive Bali, Indonesia, Basic Webpage: www.na-bali.org Check it out.

OUR CHAIR SPEAKS....

Aloha! I am a recovering addict named Erik. I am the new Chairperson the Asia Pacific Forum for the coming year. I am honored to be serving the APF in such a direct way. I ask for your support and participation in fulfilling the vision of the APF.

Our meeting in Jakarta was a resounding success for NA in sharing our common purpose of recovery and service. Representatives attending the APF meeting were from the Arabian Gulf, Australia, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, North Eastern Regional Forum (India), Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Singapore. Members of the World Board participated in our meeting in addition to the individual support to the NA communities. If only one thing can be said about the APF meeting, it is that the meeting is an important opportunity for NA communities to seek assistance and support directly from World Services. It makes so much difference in our service work when we can speak one-on-one with these World Services trusted servants. We learn so much about our service efforts and purpose in carrying out our work. I know that I can speak for all the APF members that we are very grateful for the attendance and financial support of World Services to the APF.

I also wish to thank the Jakarta Fellowship for the support we received from them in transporting APF members to the meeting venue from the airport, arranging for local services and the meeting venue. A heartfelt "thank you" goes to all those of the Jakarta Fellowship that helped!

Probably the most personally satisfying part of being in Jakarta was our attendance at the first Jakarta NA Convention. Hundreds of addicts and their family members attended the convention. The theme was "Learning Days" and those of us with the experience to give on being of service to NA felt drained after the event. It was an experience I will always hold close. It is so exciting to be a part of the dawning of the Indonesian Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

I want to announce that the next meeting of the APF will be in Byron Bay, Australia, at the end of January 2002: More definitive information will be distributed in the next Newsletter and posted on the APF website <<http://www.apf.au.com>>. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Australian Fellowship for their continued support of the APF. I am looking forward to our meeting there as it will be their first time hosting the APF and I am sure they will create an atmosphere of hospitality and Fellowship for us.

At this past APF meeting we elected two new persons to our pool of service resources. Peter T, or PT as he likes to be called, from Australia is our new Public Information Resource Person. He brings a large amount

of PI experience at the regional and area service. Please communicate with him your questions about PI service; he will do his best to serve you and your community. You may contact him by email at <pt999@ozemail.com.au>

Of particular note is that for the coming year, we created a Hospitals and Institutions Resource Person for the APF. We elected Bob W from Hawaii as this resource for H&I. He is passionate trusted servant with 10 years experience of bringing the message of NA to addicts in prisons, treatment centers and hospitals. Please ask him to share his experience, strength and hope on his passion for H&I, you won't be sorry you did! You may contact him by email at <Bobwssmn@cs.com>.

Simon T continues as the Webmaster of the APF website (<http://www.apf.com.au>). Simon requested input on the site so please check the website and send him an email <simont@bigpond.net.au>. Your participation is welcome and needed!

On my personal funding, I am attending the European Community Convention of NA in Montreal, Canada, at the end of June 2001. The European Delegates Meeting Zonal Forum will be held in conjunction with the convention. The APF has been invited EDM Zonal Forum to participate at their meeting and since I will be there, I will represent the APF as its chairperson. What is important about this event is that the EDM is hosting a "Zonal Conference" on common issues that face zonal forums. Since we don't have a World Service Conference this year, this will be a unique opportunity for members of Zonal Forums to share their experience, strength and hope with this level of NA service: I will make a full report on my participation at this event in our next APF Newsletter.

Our Eighth Concept states, "Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications." For us in the APF, the differences in language and culture are difficulties we most overcome to bring the change we so desire for our service structure, integrity and effectiveness. Communication is one of the most important functions of the APF as a service body and cannot serve effectively without it. The integrity of our communications can only move us forward in our service to the common goal for all of our service, to reach the addict that still suffers. The growing NA communities know how it is to feel isolated from others like themselves, so please take every opportunity when it arises to communicate your experience, strength and hope to your co-workers in recovery and service.

In closing I want to say thank you for placing your trust in me for the coming year. I will do my best to serve you and the vision of the APF so that NA grows in our zone, that NA communities help each other and that another suffering addict will find hope in their own language and culture.

May the blessings be,

Erik R, APF Chair

OUT OF THIS WORLD

I am Pritam, an addict from Mumbai, India and I have been in the fellowship from September 1991. For me the fellowship of NA is a gift from my Higher Power. My story is the same as all addicts around the world and I am no different. Recovery for me is spreading the message of NA to the still suffering addict. From my first year of recovery till date, I have been involved in NA service. All the service positions have given me satisfaction and lessons to learn, which I use in my daily living. I have served at my group, ASC, H&I, PI, Convention and at my region.

At first, I was very reluctant to attend a PI subcommittee meeting. I knew that a thin line separates spreading the right and wrong message. Also, it meant dealing with people (public) outside of NA to give the message that recovery in NA is possible. To be ready for such a service, I knew that my recovery has to be strong by working the steps and traditions and building a strong relationship with my Higher Power. I started working on them and one day I nominated myself for the PI chair position of my area. I also read and studied the PI guide thoroughly before submitting my nomination. I was elected as PI chair and to me my recovery got a kick-start from there.

During my using days, I had problems with the police and spent time in lock-ups and jails. My first assignment was to meet the Police Officer in charge of the Narcotics cell of Mumbai. For this meeting the previous PI chair accompanied me, as I was afraid. Many thoughts were racing through my head, will the officer be a typical arrogant police officer, will he be an old and rude man. But when I met him all my thinking was wrong. He was a handsome young man who stood and warmly shook our hands. I learnt a lesson from this experience. Slowly, I started feeling comfortable with the police as the PI committee and I started keeping in touch with the police. They became a friend of NA Mumbai.

Another spiritual experience I had while serving in the PI committee was when I visited one of the jails in Mumbai, where I was locked up. Being the PI chair, I got an opportunity to meet the Jail Superintendent along with another PI volunteer. While entering the jail, I started trembling looking at the police vans, the big gates and remembering the time I spent inside this jail. It was an out of this world experience that no drugs could have given

me. We had visited this jail on behalf of the H&I committee, to check the feasibility of starting an H&I meeting. The Superintendent was a cool guy and was very pleased to hear NA. When we had finished with our presentation, he asked us if we would like to visit around the jail. He asked, "I hope you haven't seen one?" We smiled at his question. He led us through the jail barracks with two bodyguards behind us armed with guns. I was full of gratitude for NA and my Higher Power. I thought to myself that not long ago, I was a convict in this same jail and today, the top officer of this jail is showing me around. I walked with my head held high. Well, the H&I meeting did not take off at this jail, but this experience had a healing effect on me.

I encountered many such out of this world experiences while serving as PI chair. But I believe that some basics have to be followed. I have to be in time for all appointments, I have to dress in a sober manner, no flashy clothes, I have to be humble and keep a smiling face, never go alone for a PI appointment, only talk about NA and nothing personal. I have come across women at PI presentations who were more interested in learning about me than about the NA programme. The only thing that stopped me from making my moves is my gratitude to NA. I would remind myself that I have come for a purpose, to pass on the message of NA. I cannot misuse a God given opportunity to give back what I have been given freely.

I have learnt that each and every member of NA is a messenger of NA. For this reason, my area's convention committee takes utmost care by printing the NA logo on merchandise. We never print "NA" on any merchandise. My experience tells me that living as a responsible member of society, is the best message I can carry that NA works. My gratitude speaks when I care and share with others the NA way...

Pritam, Mumbai, India.

The Asian Pacific Forum Newsletter presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publishing of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous.