

ASIA PACIFIC FORUM

Aotearoa New Zealand - Australia - Bangladesh - Cambodia - China - Guam - Hawaii - Hongkong - Indonesia - India
Japan - Korea - Malaysia - Maldives - Nepal - NERF - Pakistan - Philippines - Singapore - Saudi - Thailand - Vietnam

A Network of  Communities

Asia Pacific Newsletter

26th Edition

Reaching Out & Women in Recovery

Welcome to the September 2006 26th edition of the APF Newsletter. The themes of this edition are "Reaching Out" and "Women in Recovery".

We have also included service, community and NA event updates and hope that you enjoy reading this newsletter. The committee is always interested in your feedback.

If you enjoy reading this Newsletter and believe that other people would like to read it, please print copies and take them to your home-groups and service meetings for distribution.

APF Statement of Purpose

The Asia Pacific Forum is made up of NA communities from the Asia Pacific Zone.

1. The Regions and communities of the Asia Pacific have joined together to discuss issues of mutual concern, address our common needs, exchange ideas and share experiences to further our primary purpose;
2. The forum is intended to compliment the existing service structure of NA;
3. Our goal is to develop and support NA in this part of the world;
 - a) To support translations of NA literature into our languages;
 - b) To support Outreach, H&I and Public Information efforts within Asia Pacific;

To maintain and support communication among NA members, communities and Regions within this part of the world; & To continue working with NAWS in all our efforts.

'Why Are We Here?' North East Regional Forum, India (NERF) Letter

In 1986, a small boy was murdered in Imphal (Manipur) by a drug addict who stole his gold earring to buy drugs. As a result of this the city superintendent ordered that all drug addicts were to be caught and more than 800 addicts were imprisoned.

Our reality is still very different from the rest of the world, even from the rest of India. Stigma and discrimination is high and intense. The general population rejects addicts and believes that we are useless and unable to change. Addicts have been shot in the legs as punishment to stop using drugs, shaved half-bald and humiliated in public and blamed as the people who brought HIV/AIDS in the society. We have been beaten up by various pressure groups of the community whenever we were caught using drugs.

Thank goodness a group of missionaries were given permission to select 6 addicts from prison, who were literate in english, to take to Kolkata for treatment. They came back 6 months later with the message of our fellowship. They struggled for some time, with support from one of the police officers who worked at the gaol. They had to move the meeting around and sometimes held it in members' homes. Finally the first group called "Karuna Group of NA" was formed in the entire northeast of India. Slowly but steadily the number grew and soon the meeting place was not able to provide enough space for them all, so another group called "Goodwill Group" was formed. An Area was formed with subcommittees in 1991 and today we have more than 700 members, 14 groups, including 3 isolated ones, and 2 Areas. Imphal Area is the mother Area.

We still face enormous problem within the region as the stigma attached to us is not yet erased. According to the Government more than 70 % drug users are infected with HIV and every day many addicts fall victim to this epidemic and among them many efficient NA trusted member who have been really effective leaders within our fellowship. Still we are focusing on to carry the message of recovery even to the interior part of the region, keeping in mind the vision statement of Narcotics Anonymous World Service. We are not disheartened and quite firm with our dream that our nightmares will not remain forever.

May GOD bless you all with wonderful recovery.

Poteh RK, RD NERF

Anonymously Happy

Sometimes when my area service seems a little dry or local meetings repetitive, and when silly things at meetings get me down I remember the APF. I remember that it is possible to love people I don't really know, get inspired by people whose experiences I will never share and get hope from the struggle and successes of members in places I have never been.

I am a member of one of the biggest clubs in the world and the admission price has been paid in dollars, rupees, rupiah, yen and coins of almost every colour.

Our meetings are held outside, in churches, temples, market places, government building, cafes and private homes but our message is always the same: If you want what we have and are willing to make the effort to get it then you are ready to take certain steps... It is surprising where they will take us! Nepal next year?

Asia Pacific Forum Newsletter

Report from the Minutes of the APF Meeting, Bangkok Feb 2006

We included the reports from the NA Communities in the last newsletter (Edition 25) and this report will include some of the discussion topics and outcomes from that meeting. (See the report regarding the NAWS Workshops later in this edition).

The APF Bank Account

This is now a separate account under the Kauai Area Service Committee as requested at the APF Meeting in Bangkok. The name of our bank account is the "Area Service Group NA/Asia Pacific Forum". All communities wanting to make contributions to the APF can contact our Treasurer Danny through the APF website.

The Hosting of the APF Meeting

We discussed how to determine the best places to host APF Meetings in the future. Criteria may include the cost of hosting the meeting in that place, ensuring that the country or community can support and host the events and that the country or community is relatively safe to visit. Although there is a desire to rotate the meeting some communities can provide cheaper and safer venues than others.

Dates for the APF Meeting

In the years when the APF and the World Service Conference are both occurring, there was discussion regarding holding the APF meeting after the WSC meeting in that same year so that people seeking election at the WSC will know their availability for standing for positions at the APF. The delegates were asked to bring this back to their individual communities for discussion, and the issue will be addressed at the 2007 meeting.

NA literature distribution point / APF HQ somewhere in the Zone

For discussion in 2007.

Strategic Planning

The Admin Committee will develop a process to use planning at our meetings to progress our vision, prioritise our activities and review our fellowship development focus. This will be discussed in 2007.

APF Listserver

There is now a limit of 3 people per NA community who have access to post on the APF listserver. This is ensure that the list can be well-moderated and that the amount of superfluous mails are kept to a minimum to assist those using internet cafes and dial up connections. Mark H from A-NZ will seek to make arrangements so that others can still access the list to read material but will need to go through their community delegates and designated participants to post.

Funding to participate in the APF

People seeking funding to attend the APF will now need to use the funding request forms and send them to the APF Treasurer at least 2 months before the meeting. This will make all funding issues clear and will assist the Admin committee to budget and make appropriate arrangements for the meeting. Download the funding request form from the APF website.

APF Membership and activity

The Admin committee will work on the guidelines to create a clearer description of who can be members of the APF. These guidelines will encourage wide participation with consideration given to funding capacity and current relationships with World Services. The Admin committee will also review who can bring motions and business to the meeting for consideration and the guidelines that describe APF goals and delegate's responsibilities. The Admin Committee will report to the meeting in 2007 with an updated process regarding managing trusted servants who do not complete their designated tasks.

Please contact the APF Admin Committee with any feedback or suggestions regarding these proposals.

Email articles or stories of recovery for the Newsletter to <newsletter@apfna.org>

26th Edition

Kunming (China) Update

I am currently in Yunnan and had the opportunity to spend some time with recovering addicts at the "New Life" NA meeting in Kunming in the PSI drop in centre at 4.00pm on Sundays. The focus of the meeting was Step 5 and sponsorship was also covered. It has a regular attendance of up to 15 addicts. The rent is covered and the group has a prudent reserve they may use if they need a bigger venue in the future.

The group has strayed from the original format & were reminded it's important to read the literature at all meetings to provide a clear message of recovery, assist identification and help visiting addicts to feel at home.

The group needs more Chinese Speaking recovering addicts to act as sponsors to members of this group. Anyone that is willing to do this service can contact either Geoff T or myself, Nick R.

Hello from Shanghai, China

NA China now has two official meetings. Our new group "New Life" in Kunming held of Sundays at 4pm in Chinese, and in Shanghai our first group "Shanghai Serenity" Saturdays at 3pm in English. In the past month Shanghai Serenity has also held 3 impromptu meetings on weeknights. We trialled a meeting at the Ningbo Addiction Research Treatment Centre on 6/16/06. After the meeting service positions were filled & money given to the new Treasurer. 3 members of NA China travelled from Shanghai for support. 15 addicts were present, 11 newcomers, 3 are women.

PI efforts are ongoing. The last was with Nan Men Keep Drugs Far Away Recovery Centre in Ningbo. That facility is owned by the Ningbo Government and permission will need to be granted to hold a NA meeting at the facility. Our volunteer Chinese translators and editors have been of great service. We are grateful.

Information on NA China is in our new linked website www.nachina.com in English and Chinese.

Love and Peace in Service, Sam

Next APF Meeting:

We are still discussing the dates and arrangements for the next meeting with the Nepal community. They will provide us with funding and accommodation information and we will communicate with participants via the listserver when we have some firm details to share.

We need all communities who will require funding to attend the next meeting to send us a completed funding request form before the end of November, otherwise we cannot guarantee that you will receive funding. We would also like to hear from those communities who intend to fund themselves.

Banking Discussions

We have been in close communication with the European Delegates Meeting (EDM) discussing the arrangements they use for their international bank account. We are seeking an account that would make the treasurer's job easier and assist us to change treasurers and signatories after elections.

Strategic Planning

As you are aware we agreed to commence a process of strategic planning to plan and prioritise our activities over the next few years. We have asked Mark H from New Zealand to help us to find a process that will assist us. Please contact us if you have any ideas about this.

Motions and activities from the last APF Meeting (see report)

We are still seeking input regarding literature point / office somewhere in the zone, changing the time of year for the APF meeting and the identified guidelines review.

We have been busy, answering questions from many of our communities and look forward in remaining in regular contact with you. The funding request form is downloadable off the APF website. Thank you for all your help. Yours in service, the Admin Committee: Tali, Danny and Paolo.

APF Webservant Report

Aloha. The website is running well. We are, however, suffering from spammers on the receiving end. We also are having our domain name being used FOR spam, so I see a lot of rejected email coming into our email box. There's nothing we can do about this, and I hope it ends soon, as this has been going on for three months.

All email communications received are distributed to the proper trusted servant or I have responded to them myself when applicable. All communications are shared with the APF Admin.

Please be advised that we have changed the way that you can access the APF-related minutes. They are now provided on a password-protected site page (<http://www.apfna.org/minutes.html>), and any APF member can gain access by simple request to the Admin. Committee at admin@apfna.org.

Since my last report we have added some new APF communities to the site. They are: Maldives, Nepal, and Vietnam. They can be viewed at <http://www.apfna.org/links.html>.

Again, please note that there is a new domain name for the APF: <http://www.apfna.org>, and that if you are still viewing the site from the old address, <http://apf.com.au>, you want to update your bookmark to reflect the new site address as the old one will be discontinued at the end of this year.

If you have any questions or concerns (technical or otherwise) regarding the website, please contact me at web@apfna.org.

In Loving Service, Charlie Q.

Report from Philippine Convention

The Philippine Region just held our convention March 17 - 19 in Lanang, Davao City which is a part of Mindanao area. The venue was located near the airport in the heart of the city and is surrounded by a lot of different kinds of establishments.

The theme of the convention is "Try just for today." 80 recovering drug addicts attended the convention from different parts of the Philippines. The Philippines is divided into 3 major islands namely Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. And members who attended came from different parts of the Philippine Islands.

The highlights for me were the speaker meetings with different topics like, "what does it mean to have smart feet" and "ready to go at any length to stay clean" which was my topic as a speaker.

We also held gender specific meetings and workshops on Hospital and Institution and Public Information. We held our Regional assembly on the second day where we met with the GSR's and ASR's.

The countdown gave all of us the natural high from the newest comer to those with the most cleantime.

Every time I attend a convention, I always experience a spiritual recharge. I will never forget the hugs, friendship, understanding and love of the fellowship. Attending conventions gives me the chance to see old friends and newcomers and also a feeling of being home. Thanks to Narcotics Anonymous who continues to save my life.

George RD Philippines

Feedback from the participants at the last APF Meeting**Steve from Singapore**

Another APF forum has been and gone, and as always, it was very cool to be surrounded by so many people with the same vision. However upon reflection, and after talking with another delegate, I felt the need to write and give some feedback about our meeting.

It is clear to me that our communities are very different from the US or similar countries. Our communities are generally multi-language, multi cultural and multi religious and some have complex political and economic situations. Therefore any NA service workshops need to include not only usual activities using existing NA service literature but opportunities to learn from each other.

For example, though the H&I successes achieved in Asian countries may be sporadic, they will sound like good news to other delegates in our communities who have experienced none at all. I would appreciate our Forum utilising the knowledge, experience and first hand input from our own local members for future workshops rather than focusing on activities that take place in geographical locations that have no relevance to our own.

I would also like to spend more time discussing specific issues of relevance for our members, sharing reports and successes and discussing solutions to problems that relate directly to home groups in our communities.

I believe that the APF can not only host workshops about service but can also become more pro-active by funding and linking members with relevant experience to communities struggling with issues eg linking a Tamil-speaking member from India to speak to Tamil speaking addicts in Singapore who need to hear the NA message.

I am grateful to be a member of the APF community and to feel free to comment and make suggestions to make our service meetings more effective. We are a growing community in the APF and we need to take responsibility for assisting each other to grow.

Guam Update

Hafa adai to all, just letting you know that we finally met as a group for our area service. We are an area under Hawaii and we are committed to keeping the group structured. Our fellow ship is starting to grow and it's an awesome feeling. We have elected new office bearers and our area has agreed to meet every month so we can better structure ourselves.

Yours in service, Frank B

Feedback from David from Malaysia

I believe that it is important for the RDs to work with Admin Committee and NAWS to brainstorm possible solutions for the "3 Challenges" faced by each Region/community. The RDs were given time to share their respective challenges, but had no opportunity thereafter, to explore solutions. The workshops, although educational, did not adequately address these challenges.

Asking the RDs to share their opinion of the 3-day forum at the end of the APF, although most welcome, may only serve to enhance the 'feel good factor' of attending an APF, and may not provide the much-needed platform to adequately address our challenges and obstacles.

However, NA Malaysia has found that the annual Forum provides an excellent opportunity to network and cement ties with other trusted servants worldwide.

We think it is the ideal vehicle for identifying issues of interest, brainstorming solutions to challenges faced by NA communities in Asia, and networking with other communities/regions to find support to implement possible solutions to issues facing NA communities in Asia. If these objectives are made the primary agenda, I believe all will be well.

David K Area Service Chairperson Narcotics Anonymous Kuala Lumpur [NAKL]

Jimmy from Bangkok (Thailand)

Currently around 5 – 6 local Thai speaking members attend Bangkok meetings regularly and for the first time, the majority of them are women. I can't remember the situation being healthier in all the 7 years I have lived there. In the past there were no women members at all. We have as yet still not re-established the H+I committee either and we need to consider amalgamating the Bangkok Area Pi and H+I committees so we can maximise the limited human resources that we have available. We have very few members at the moment and even fewer that can speak Thai conversationally.

Maldives (Republic of Maldives) Update

We attended the APF meeting in Thailand and were accepted as participants at that meeting.

We have been conducting NA meetings since February 2nd and are successful in having a wide NA community and have requested registration as a group at the WSO

Our meetings are on every Thursday night 2030hrs at G. Greenge, Alikilegefaanu Magu, Male', This group is called NA Male'.

Regards Mohamed Rashid (Rado) NA Male

Important News from Indonesia

The Indonesian LTC committee just submitted 4 more IP's for approval to NAWS, IP 7, 11, 16 and 22.

Women in Recovery**Kimmy from Hawaii's experience of the APF service and her trip to India**

Wow, it is so wonderful to be a woman in recovery with the possibilities and chances and opportunities to see other places, hear other addict's tales, and recover from addiction.

Attending the APF in Bangkok was indeed a gratitude building experience for me. I was reminded that being a recovering addict in the US affords me opportunities that other people, especially women, don't have in other parts of the world. When our fellow addict from Saudi Arabia said that women and men cannot be in the same room unless they are related, I got a clear picture of how cultural differences influence how, when, or even if, the message is carried.

There were few women representing their communities and some participants talked about the difficulties they face when trying to attract and support women members. These members were seeking advice and support and I believe that we can confront and solve these problems, just as NA has confronted problems in the past, and that our strength and commitment will greatly influence the future of women in our fellowship.

After Bangkok, I travelled to Kolkata (India) with friends. We went to this little room up a few flights of stairs in a very old school building, with wooden shutters letting in the breeze, sights, sounds and smells of Kolkata. It was a women's meeting with small benches, peeling paint and a small chalkboard with the name of the meeting on it (see report this edition). There were eight of us and I felt blessed and hopeful and "a part of" our fellowship. A mixed meeting followed the women's meeting and the room was filled with at least 60 men and us, crammed into this tiny room. I could truly feel the excitement and energy of the Indian fellowship. Tea was served in little paper cups and it was all so inspiring.

I feel very blessed and humbled to be given the chance to do service and carry the message, and I know it is a direct result of working and living the steps and staying teachable about spiritual principles. That is when the genuine Kim comes out. When I allow God in, ego moves out! One day at a time I experience courage and commitment. Thank you so much Narcotics Anonymous

Supporting women to attend NA meetings, Krissie from Australia

Many women want to attend meetings and join NA but find it very difficult. Krissie, the RD from Australia was asked what she thought were the challenges that women face and her own experience with finding her place in the fellowship.

I believe that the biggest challenges that women wanting to attend meetings face in Australia are having children and family responsibilities to consider, having little access to child minding and having to use public transport at night. Even when there are women's meetings; it is not uncommon for newcomers to feel unwelcome and alone when they first reach out.

When I made the decision I needed to go to meetings I just dragged my kids along, sometimes left them at home unattended and dumped them on my mum whenever I could. I was fortunate to have a car so did not have to struggle with transport like so many others.

I went through a period of feeling judged and ostracised by some influential women with time up because I worked in the sex industry for a first few years of recovery, however I kept going to meetings where I felt safe. I clung to the 3rd tradition and shared about it for about two years until I felt okay enough to let go. Although it was difficult to find the time to manage my family as well as do my step work and develop a consistent daily program I knew I needed to make that commitment to stay clean.

Shortly after I got clean I decided to help other women to find recovery and took up service at a women's meeting. I believe that we can all take an important part in welcoming new women to the fellowship and that this service work helps us to grow. We need to welcome them warmly, smile, say hello, give them our phone numbers and encourage them to ring. We can tell them about our struggles and our solutions and show them that recovery is possible by the way that we live and do our program. We can encourage them to seek support from others with the same family issues, share about their struggles and go to meetings where they feel safe. We can also suggest that they start or join a women's meeting, help others and do service themselves.

As a fellowship we can hire professional childminders at conventions and provide things for activities for children at meetings. Our group made a decision to provide some "quiet activities for all the children that a suburban meeting can have eg colouring in books and pencils, quiet games and building toys. This has made the meeting more welcoming to women and gives out a message that we care and want to help.

Hi from Kolkata

Hi, I am Anindita, an addict. I am taking a look at my life. And how fulfilling it really is and how I am content in almost all areas of my life. But it was not like this always. Only a few years ago...I was dying inside. I had packed up my life and moved into my self-created prison in active addiction. I was desperately using and equally desperate to give up drugs. I was walking in and out of NA meetings for years but couldn't understand the meaning of "first high does the damage." And then it happened! I not only got clean but started staying clean. One day at a time I have been through so much of searching and doubting and questioning that I felt like I can't relate to sick people at meetings ha! ha! But when addiction rears its inevitable head and I am on my knees again looking for relief...and I find it only with other sick people. NA is nursing me through all of that...and I know it will continue to do so. I have certainly come face to face with my addiction again and again. When I do, I realize that without a practicing programme I am just an addict. The programme teaches me unconditional love/acceptance and I am trying that not only with just a few but in all my relationships. That makes me feel grateful for my recovery and my growth. I hit at least three to four meetings a week. For me, there are degrees of practicing the programme. I go to meetings, pray, meditate, be in service, keep in touch with the fellowship...but so is dreaming, talking, living life.... all are part of it. Of course, the steps must be worked on that's the inner that helps the outer, every new thing in recovery (or life) when I share—it's like a little piece of me is with others and vice versa. I think we all sustain each other with a spiritual bond unique to recovery. I have learnt to share and I was/am grateful to share with them all that I have today.

When I started attending meetings there were no other women present. I was the only one. I remember reading an article in NA WAY magazine which said that you have to have a sense of humour to hang around with a bunch of guys—that piece of wisdom helped me survive the all-male meetings. Within a few years of my recovery we started a separate women's meeting. Other meetings are just as valid and important

Greetings and news from Kathmandu (Nepal)

I am Suyash and I am an addict from Kathmandu Area in Nepal. NA is growing and getting better here all the time. We have women's meetings and for the first time in Nepal we have approx 25 female recovering addicts and they run their meetings every Friday at 5.30 with regular participation from 8 to 15 members. We are hoping that the meetings stay strong.

We are also reaching out through H&I and have targeted the hospital, detox centre and jails in the Kathmandu Valley.

but this is a very special place where women come to share with each other, where we can begin think and express the particular ways and forms our addiction has taken. The need for a women's only meeting was brought home to me when I went to the APF in Nepal. There I met other women who were recovering addicts like myself. They were from many other countries/communities. It opened my eyes to the global phenomenon of NA. There is nothing like meeting other recovering addicts face to face. At the APF, I attended three days of service meetings where discussions were held in a civil manner. This along with my own experiences has taught me that the keyword in NA Service is humility. Without humility, "it is business as usual—rat-eat-rat world." Life is so fragile and yet we get caught up with such petty issues.

It was at APF that I met my sponsor. Meeting her has been a life-changing experience which is on-going. It is not possible to put in words what this has been for me. Someone even at the other end of the world... Understanding/empathizing/caring. For me, that's the real element of spirituality — not placing conditions. "Grace" and "dignity" are no longer merely two words — they guide me everyday and I try to live by them.

My family never discarded me, never shunned me or pushed me away, so they remain my rock. My husband and I have an additional bond—he, too, is a recovering addict. Together we have overcome many obstacles but have shared many joys as well, the most important of which is the light of our lives, our daughter. She is the epicenter and weathervane of my life. The smile on her face tells me where my life is today.

This programme has given me a life which was beyond my wildest expectations. I have had to unlearn to learn. Today, I am comfortable with who I am and I don't have to reinvent myself as a social chameleon. Words fail to express my gratitude to the programme of Narcotics Anonymous...Thank you N.A. for this brand new way of life.

Love always, A

We do not send H&I presentations to the treatment centres because they run in-house NA meetings there already. I am really happy to be able to report about our NA news and the development of NA in Kathmandu. We invite your support and experience to hold workshops about PI and H&I. We have plans to do PI in the Kathmandu Valley and I am looking forward for your kind support as usual, take care and big NA hugs from Suyash (KTMASC)

Suyash

A message of hope from Janet (Aotearoa–New Zealand)

I went to my first twelve step meetings because I was made to! It was the last place I wanted to be; it was full of older men, seeing the steps on the wall with words such as powerless, god etc were not my cup of tea. Hearing old timers were still going to meetings twenty years on, I thought what kind of life is that! What I couldn't deny was hearing about the disease for the first time; hearing that I wasn't responsible for it but that I was responsible for my recovery and that drugs were only a symptom of my problem really hit home. I did see people living drug free and happy that I hadn't seen before. Deep down I felt hope. At the time I was on a geographical in another country and had ended up in a rehab.

I was just 23 and I had tried countless times to stop using, changing boyfriends, drugs, jobs, psychiatrists, detoxes, cities, you name it, nothing had worked, I was so afraid of life without my cuddly rug because when I stopped I felt so uncomfortable, life felt foreign. I thought I was too young to get clean. I looked around the room, most people in those days were older they weren't hip, used different drugs etc.

By the time I came into recovery I had been in unhealthy dependent relationships for years and I didn't trust other women. My boyfriend at the time was still using and I knew if I went back to him I would too, but I wouldn't let go. I was lucky that we were in two different countries as it gave enough distance to start to see the reality of staying together.

I suddenly go a lot of attention from the opposite sex; I hadn't experienced a clean relationship for years. I was warned of the dangers of a relationship in early recovery and was protected by the rules of the rehab I was in. The problem was I only new how to relate using my sexuality. I was so full of fear and self doubt and I was looking for external acceptance because I had none of my own. I lost my voice without the drugs in my body. My self-esteem was low so I appreciated anything that fed my ego.

I could grasp the group as my higher power as they could love me more than I could love myself. Their collective thinking was much healthier than mine. I used the serenity prayer over and over to get me through the day.

I begun feeling physically well, the fog was lifting enough to hear what I needed. I started to really laugh, to sleep properly and to survive the days without the obsession to use. My spirit was awakening. Then I began my journey through the steps. Step four was another significant turning point; I saw how little

responsibility I had taken for my life. I saw there had always been a loving god and that I didn't need to be dependent on anything and most of all I came to believe I never needed to use again if I did the suggested things. I started to feel the freedom of being in recovery. No longer being weighed down with shame and guilt. At two years clean I felt safe enough to return to my homeland

There was no NA and I needed it, so began the journey of starting NA meetings. It was hard in those early days as the fellowship was so small. There were sometimes more people using than clean in meetings. By then though I had faith in a greater power, the experience of living drug free and all seeing my needs being met. I had developed patience and was learning how to have healthy relationships with people especially women. In the past whenever there had been a conflict I just walked away but now I needed those people, we needed members. This was my lesson in principles not personalities, and the importance of unity.

I understood by then why it was destructive to have sexual relationships in the rooms. Plus we had so few members we couldn't afford to lose them!

It was a steep learning curve about the traditions till then I hadn't even looked at them.

My first sponsor was living overseas and communication in those days was slow and difficult. We had to communicate by mail or fax so I had to call on the little literature available and yes God for guidance. Doing so much service really helped me stay out of self-obsession a lot of the time. I was learning to respect others and myself. I found I had a voice and that I could state my opinion and that I wouldn't be rejected for speaking out. I had to be willing though to let others have theirs, that was new too.

I love what I have these days, I am still very passionate about our fellowship. I have strong bonds with women and men, I no longer condone violence and abuse especially in our rooms. I feel very protective of the women especially newcomers. The thought of someone being denied the right to recovery because of feeling unsafe angers me. As an older member I have the responsibility of being an example and sharing my experience strength and hope. My life is full, I stay committed to my recovery by staying involved, and have a rich and wonderful life in and outside of the fellowship I feel very blessed to have this program. It works!

**Email articles or stories of recovery for the APF Newsletter to:
<newsletter@apfna.org>**

Narishta, our home group, will be three years on the 9th.of August. It is the first and only women only meeting in Kolkata, India. We will be celebrating on Thursday, 10th.of August.

The name we chose is a play on “N.A.” and “rishta” which means relationship but also contains the word “nari” which means woman. For our celebrations we invite all members—regardless of gender.

Every Thursday we meet at 5.30pm till 6.45 pm. We have come a long way in these three years. The need to have a special interest group meeting was just that... Special. In the beginning, there was one woman in recovery. In couple of years there was another. We were waiting for the third addict to show up and we could start the meeting. And she did.

A meeting is a meeting is a meeting. Regular or special. When we first walked into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous.... broken and defeated we had no idea about how the meetings were going to help/change our lives. We are so very thankful to our peers who had the meetings going for us to walk into.

A handful of us started the meeting without any fuss. Most of us were very comfortable /used to hanging

around with the guys. It seemed strange that we could be intimate with other women. We decided that we would meet once a week. There were about five or six of us attending the meetings. There were times where there would be just one of us. But we persisted....It took us about a year to join the ASC.

Today, the number of members remains the same. Some of the original members are gone while new ones have joined us. All of us look forward to this meeting. The bond that we share with each other is overwhelming. Learning to be friends with other women. Trusting each other.

The format of the meeting has changed over time. Now, the format we have is sharing as well as step working. There were challenges we had to overcome. After a while only couple of us would turn up for the meetings. It took more than commitment waiting week after week for members to show up.

The rewards of seeing the members walking in are very difficult to put into words. The watch word in our home group is equality. We connect with one another effortlessly with respect and with empathy. The bond we share is very unique.

Reaching Out

Reaching out to gay members: Hamish from Aotearoa New Zealand

I know that gay men can recover in NA the same as anyone else when you have a level of self-acceptance and you wish to carry the NA message to members of your community (and if you feel safe to do so) you can start a common needs meeting. When starting and supporting these meetings it is important to remember to not only carry the message to people with specific needs but to also balance this with focussing on the similarities and not differences. It is very rewarding to be able to carry the message to your community and

see members get clean.

We had a gay and lesbian meeting here in Wellington (New Zealand) for over 10 years, but sadly it became a place where members could hide out and stay away from the wider fellowship, and it eventually closed. We must always remember that we all need each other.

Courage is in the Serenity Prayer as are Serenity and Wisdom. You will know when the time is right for you and of course there must always be love.

Reaching Out in Cambodia

All current members are expats. Our recent PI activities revolve mainly around authorised translations of selected NA literature that is being supervised by Simon. In Phnom Penh we have met with various relevant persons eg, NGOs, Drs etc to increase awareness of NA. These contacts have varied from information sharing to poster blitzes however, we have yet to attract any local addicts for a sustained period of time. Our best successes have been with the Khmer/American returnee community, guys who have

been returned from the States as felons. Several have attended our meetings following PI or professional work by one of our members but unfortunately none are presently attending our meetings. Our hope is that someday one of these guys, most are bi-lingual, will get the message and be able to help carry it to Khmer speaking addicts.

Regards, Chris H. RD Cambodia.

Our next Edition will be called “Diversity” and will be devoted to hearing about the experience of recovery from our communities. Email Convention report, articles or stories of recovery for the APF

Newsletter to: <newsletter@apfna.org >

An English Thought from Mumbai (India)

In the early days of NA in Mumbai, meetings were held in English. A few non-English speaking members, who stubbornly stayed clean in this English atmosphere, would share in Hindi, a local language. Over a period of time, these few non-English speaking members grew in large numbers. They began voicing their need to have meetings held in Hindi. Many members, who earlier shared only in English, began to share in Hindi for the benefit of the newcomer. Some even spent time and energy to translate our literature from English to Hindi. Eventually, all meetings held in Mumbai were entirely in Hindi.

This caused a peculiar problem. The English-speaking member from being a majority became a minority at meetings in Mumbai. They found it difficult, while sharing in Hindi, to freely express their thoughts as they would in English. A need sprung up for a meeting exclusively in English for members who had English thoughts, aspirations and dreams. As soon as this need was identified, in typical addict reaction, many members resisted. The irony of this resistance was that it did not come from Non-English speaking members, for they understood the situation. Resistance was mainly from lost and ignorant English speaking members, who voiced several surreal reasons. Some said that a sharing done from the heart is best empathised by addicts, language is insignificant. Many reasoned that these meetings would not grow due to lack of support, for statistically, there are fewer English speaking addicts in Mumbai. A handful of members, who had an altered perspective of the situation, went to

the extent of negating this idea by blaming it on elitist English speaking members living in South Mumbai. When all arguments failed, as a final recourse, they screamed 'NA Unity' was at stake. They claimed that an exclusive English speaking meeting would cause disunity in the fellowship. But reasons given on how and why 'NA Unity' was at stake were blurred and obscure.

After many arguments, counter-arguments, resistance and doubt, an exclusive English speaking meeting was started on 3rd December 1996 at the YMCA, Colaba, South Mumbai. Meetings are held on every Tuesday between 8.00 pm to 9.00 pm. We call our meeting 'A Ray of Hope'.

Nine years have passed since we have started this meeting. It has not caused disunity, but instead, brought about more unity within the fellowship. English speaking members, by attending 'A Ray of Hope', experienced a feeling of belonging to the NA fellowship. A few Non-English speaking members regularly attend 'A Ray of Hope' to learn or brush up on their English. Seeing the success of our meeting, another English speaking meeting was started in Mumbai. Delhi too has an English-speaking meeting.

'A Ray of Hope' meeting, if not the best in the world, is a devotion of love, openness and empathy. If you ever find yourself in South Mumbai, you are welcome to join us in our devotion.

Ivan (Mumbai)

Bali Convention Report

The 6th annual NA Bali convention held on June 2-4 was a big hit for all involved. We had over 150 attendees from a number of APF countries including Australia, Hawaii, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and Thailand and also had representation from Europe and the USA. Almost all the NA communities of Indonesia were represented including addicts from Bandung, Bogor, Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Lombok and Surabaya.

The theme of the convention was "12 steps of Awakening" and we got to hear how the miracle occurred for folks from all walks of life. Some of the topics shared on were "The 12 steps", "Freedom of Living Clean", "Sponsorship", "Our Message is Hope", "12 Traditions, The Forgotten Principles" and "An Awakening of the Spirit". Recovery and unity were clearly in the air at this bilingual event with meetings occurring in English, Bahasa Indonesian and mixed language as well.

Indonesia NA also held our RSC meeting during the weekend (We are geographically challenged to hold a

regular RSC meeting). Official Bahasa versions of IP 1, NA reading cards and 12 steps and 12 traditions banners were handed out to all the Indonesian communities present at the event. We are excited that the presence of these fundamental elements of our program will lend an air of credibility to our existing meetings throughout the archipelago. Major kudos to NAWS and to the Hawaii RSC for making financial donations that make it possible to distribute the literature and banners.

The event yielded a small profit and all funds were given back to the Bali ASC which is very focused on carrying the message to local addicts throughout Bali. Someone once told me that the primary purpose of holding conventions and activities is to promote unity through the sponsoring area or Region, if that is the truth then BACNA 6 can be considered a smashing success.

In Service,
Danny U

More from Nepal

The Nepal fellowship is going both through success & failure so I guess that we are moving. We used to have six ASCs however one Area has collapsed. They used to have 4 meetings and some newcomers have started a new meeting without having an area to support them.

Another Area has a financial crisis and has lost the funds to support their planned translations, PI and H&I work. This has created a lot of disappointment and confusion, however by the grace of god, strong commitment as well as our strong desire to serve prevented out members from getting frustrated, no project was dismissed.

The ASC called a grand meeting to address this problem & raise some funds.

We are currently experiencing a lack of leaders however we continue to do H&I in some rehabilitation centres.

One of the Home groups from Kathmandu is running a women's meeting but due to some of the cultural issues and social factors our ladies members have a hard time during the disclosure. This may prevent significant growth in the numbers of women at meetings.

Translations remain our major project. We have very few members who have access to english so to make

our message clear, convenient and accessible translation is in priority.

We are looking forward to hosting the APF meeting and our members are getting more energy. We expect to get a lot from this event and our members will get the opportunity to learn a lot from other communities.

We look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming APF in Nepal.

With big service Hugs - Sushil

Report via Aotearoa New Zealand about Rarotonga

12 Step meetings started in April 2005 and members began to visit the prisons and it became very clear to the meeting founders that the primary problem with inmates of the prison and the local community was drug addiction. They are attempting to establish regular weekly NA Meetings in the prison and potentially expand to a meeting for addicts outside the prison.

The Prison is Rarotonga Prison, which serves as the only prison for all the 15 islands which comprise the Cook Islands.

APF / NAWS Workshops

We held a number of Workshops at the last APF meeting in Bangkok regarding developing and maintaining a positive atmosphere of recovery at our meetings, reflecting on who are absent from our meetings and service.

Developing a helpful atmosphere of recovery to better carry the message to addicts

The NA message is that "an addict, any addict, can stop using and find a better way to live".

The APF participants confirmed that carrying the Message is the focus of group and services activity and that we need to regularly review our group and other service activities to ensure that we are carrying the message well and are reaching to addicts in our broader communities.

If the primary purpose of each group is to carry the message to addicts, from time to time we need to assess our effectiveness. We can do this by reviewing how many new members are coming to our meetings and how many are coming back. We also ask ourselves

whether we are reaching out to all the addicts in our community by asking ourselves are all community groups represented at our meetings.

This inventory can be done by the group or the area. Our program teaches us that inventories, although sometimes painful when we have to admit our mistakes, are what makes growth possible.

Do my group attendees represent my larger community, and are there people absent from my meeting?

The workshop identified a number of people who are not attending meetings in various communities and they were: Old timers, older women, women in general, people who have relapsed or made mistakes in service, celebrities and locals / native speakers.

Are they absent because we have not reached out enough through PI and H&I or our meetings unattractive to them, does our meeting not carry the message well to newcomers or other addicts?

How do we carry the message at group level?

We work with each other to provide newcomers with evidence that NA works and that we have found a better way to live, and we do this by:

- Encouraging old timers to attend meetings, involving them in service and using them as positive teachers and role models;
- Recognising and welcoming newcomers with keytags, literature and warmth and inviting them to share with us after meetings and in NA social activities;
- Having greeters, offering newcomers phone numbers and support and linking women with other women through gender specific contact lists and meetings;
- Demonstrating our commitment and love for NA by starting and finishing meetings on time and holding meetings on Public Holidays;
- Carrying the message by focussing on recovery when we share and reading the traditions;
- Encouraging honest sharing on recovery topics, trying new things, trying new topics to find a format that works;
- Providing literature, meeting lists and keytags;
- Creating a recovery focussed environment with banners, meeting format and good chairperson directions eg readings, summarisation if necessary;
- Giving simple service positions to newcomers and supporting them in their work eg coffee maker etc;
- Provide activities for group members and the NA community;
- Promote the home group concept for optimal support;
- Ensure that the meeting venue is accessible and doesn't intimidate people eg using circle meetings;
- Providing translators or holding the meeting in the local language for newcomers or visitors who do not speak english.

Things we can do to create and maintain an atmosphere of recovery in our home group

To make our meetings attractive and supportive for others we can take personal responsibility for:

- Sharing about my recovery and talking about the traditions and concepts;
- Personally welcoming visitors and newcomers and discussing my own experiences as a newcomer;
- Being respectful in meetings, avoiding talking or interrupting others and turning off my phone;
- Taking part in home group service and supporting newcomers to do service; and
- Coming early, staying late and talking to people after the meeting.

There was a general discussion regarding attracting members of community groups not attending our meetings.

Mahmoud from Iran and Khalid and Ali from Saudi said that their communities wish to better carry the message to women and asked all the other communities to ask their community to provide the names and email addresses of women. Ursula from ANZ discussed how the Wahine email listserver could offer support for women recovering in isolation from other women.

Other issues raised included ensuring that we hold our meetings in appropriate venues to avoid other people associating NA with religion, especially where there may be an impression that NA is a US based or Christian program. We also need to be careful when holding our meetings in rehabilitation centres where graduates, or NA members who are staff from other rehabs, may feel uncomfortable.

Krissie from Australia reported that the Australian NA community knows that they needed to reach out to indigenous and Vietnamese addicts.

Ford from Vietnam and Jimmy from Thailand talked about some of the difficulties that they have experienced by having translators at meetings but supported this service for newcomers and everyone agreed that translated literature helps to carry a clear NA message.

Next Edition – Diversity

Our next Edition will be called “Diversity” and will be devoted to hearing about the experience of recovery from our communities. Please write to us to let us how about how you got clean, what your community is like, and how you support each other in recovery. The next edition will be ready for the APF Meeting in Nepal and we look forward to seeing you there. All material must be received by December 1st, but please send it in as soon as possible.

Final Reminder to all APF Communities seeking funding to attend the 2007 APF Meeting: send your funding requests before the end of November to Danny, the APF Treasurer.

Upcoming NA events

The Aotearoa NZ Region warmly invites you to come to Christchurch New Zealand on 20th – 23rd October 2006. The theme is Choose Freedom. More information can be found on the events section of the NZNA website: <http://www.nzna.org/events/htm>. You can contact the Conventions organisers at ten@nzna.org

The Sikkim area welcomes you to attend our second convention on 9th - 11th of November 2006 at Shambala Resorts, Rumtek [25km from the capital Gangtok] The theme for the convention is "WE LIVE WHAT WE BELIEVE" Our email id is SACNA_2@yahoo.co.in. For more details you can call +91 9832388837 [registration chair Joydeep.m] +919434448617 [treasurer karma.c]

The Bangalore fellowship invites you to attend BLACNA-4 to be hosted on 7th - 9th of September 2006. We are also hosting the Indian Regional Business meeting on 4th - 6th of September. The Venue is Besant Park, Bharat Scouts & Guides Park, Doddaballapur which is 35 Kilometers from Bangalore. Convention Committee: Chair - Mahesh P 9886015414 jolmesh@yahoo.co.in and Information - Ramesh 9880361275 remirambo@eth.net. The Indonesian Fellowship would like your company at the 5th JAKARTA NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS CONVENTION "Enlightenment" on November 17 - 19, 2006 at Graha Wisata Kuningan, Jakarta. Contact person : - Charlie (+62-81510010750), e-mail: fountain_fsg@yahoo.com - Risa .A (+62-8176408182), e-mail: rfaapf@gmail.com

The Theme of the 4th Annual KACNA Unity Day Camp Out Katmandu, Nepal is “Unity Breaks Down Barriers” Please join the fellowship at the Lothen Guest House, Mahankal, Bouhda in Katmandu, Nepal Your convention contact is Suyash Email: suyash_clean1@yahoo.com

A Reminder

Start fundraising for the next APF Meeting and ongoing activities to carry the message in our communities

In the spirit of the 7th tradition of NA, whilst holding fundraising activities and selling merchandise to work towards being fully self-supporting, the reality is that we rely on and appreciate all the financial assistance that it receives from NA communities throughout the world. As we start to plan our next meeting in Nepal it is clear that we are in a tight financial situation and ask that out participating communities work to raise the funds so that we can put on this event.

The APF Newsletter

The APF Newsletter assists the NA communities in the Asia Pacific Forum to communicate about their activities between APF meetings, and provides information regarding Narcotics Anonymous in Asia and the Pacific to NA members and the public via the APF website.

The APF Newsletter is focussed on providing a description of the activities of the APF NA communities and committee members, and includes personal stories of recovery and the service experience of the members within the APF and other NA communities.

The current APF Newsletter Committee consists of Bella A (Australia), Geoff T (China), Anindita (India) and Sue H (Australia).

We would like to thank the members who have taken the time to send us letters and reports; your work and help is greatly appreciated. Send material to < newsletter@apfna.org >