



hollywood area newsletter

august 2011

from the editor...

My name is Mark, and I'm an addict.

It gives me great pleasure to present the first 2011 issue of the Newsletter. We hope that you will find both inspiration and food for thought in this issue, which we dedicate to

Clean But Not Dead: Living Proof, Youth Unity Day of NA's Southern California Region.

The Greater Hollywood Area of NA is proud and privileged, honored and humbled to host this event, which takes place on August 13, from 10 a.m. to midnight at the Hollywood Women's Club, 1749 N. La

Brea Ave. We ask all NA members of Greater Hollywood to support the youth of NA by attending this important event, which is designed to increase unity and further our primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers throughout the Southern California Region.

NA members from all walks of life have shared with us their pain and struggles, their surrenders and their triumphs, with astonishing clarity and excruciating honesty. We call to particular attention the heart-wrenching story of Andy and Holly, and the surprising candor in this month's feature story, the youth roundtable Q&A. The words of these four young recovering addicts moved this NA member deeply, and have helped me develop the willingness to take an inventory of my own behavior and attitudes toward these powerful examples of the program at work.

How can I, as an individual NA member, make the arrival of a young person in NA one of hope and promise? How can my home group extend a warmer hand of welcome to young person in pain? Do I make myself available as a sponsor, or as part of a support network for a young person in need of an example? Do I really do all I can to welcome the young people into service and encourage their efforts?

These questions do not mean we're about to let you young people off the hook! As our literature states, we are all equal members of the NA fellowship, "regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, creed,

religion or lack of religion." So here are some challenges for the teenage and under-thirty set. Instead of standing on the outside looking in, have you truly claimed your place at the center of your NA home group? Are you willing to call other NA members on behavior you feel is inappropriate? Do you reach out to older, more experienced NA members and share your concerns and needs with us openly and honestly? Finally, if you truly desire a youth meeting, as several members have suggested in these very pages, get busy and start one!

clean but not dead

In anticipation of the regional youth unity event here in Hollywood on August 13, the Newsletter staff asked four young recovering addicts to share their experience, strength and hope about their experiences--both good and bad-- in the rooms of N.A.

NL: What was the most challenging thing about getting clean young?

Kevin C.: Leaving my old friends.

Jesse T.: That was hell.

K.C.: I had no social skills to meet new people. In the beginning, I thought I could go to nightclubs and parties and feel all right, but the discomfort of being around people drinking or getting high took over right away.

Sirah M.: There were a lot of things that made getting clean hard. When I was new, I had an amazing support group, but no friends. I constantly felt like I was missing out on my life.

Melinda A.: It took me almost a year to get thirty days clean because I had so much trouble distancing myself from the girls I got high with.

NL: Has making friends your own age in NA helped your recovery?

K.C.: Absolutely. The best part of my recovery is the friendship I have with my roommates. We're all under thirty. We totally relate to each other, and I feel like I'm not the only one doing this young. Besides, I'm not going to go scope out future wives with forty-year-old dudes.

M.A.: I have girlfriends who are clean, and we go to school dances and football games. We go shopping, study together and go to the movies. At first, I thought being clean would be horrible, but now I have choices

clean but not dead *continued...*

about how to spend my free time that I never had before.

S.M.: I didn't necessarily run with a group of young people but I did go to youth meetings in other areas. I made a lot of intimate friends who know me better than anyone. But I've also watched a lot of my friends die.

J.T.: The best thing of all for me is to have a group of friends my own age who never judge me, who don't gossip about me behind my back and whom I know will do anything to help me stay clean another day.

NL: Were any of you pressured by your family to get clean?

K.C.: My parents definitely tried to talk me into it, but I never wanted to. Most of my family members are addicts, but it wasn't until my mother went to prison that my options ran out. I became willing to go to treatment and heard the NA message.

S.M.: Everyone in my family is in recovery but they didn't pressure me. They just held the door open for me. I scoured through "It Works How and Why" when I was new. I still love that book.

NL: Do you feel NA members treat you differently because you're young?

S.M.: Absolutely. Sometimes people say the most insulting things.

J.T.: It's very frustrating when someone jokes about my homework or a curfew. How would you feel if I made fun of your bald spot or losing your house?

K.C.: A lot of people seem to believe that I don't know certain things. But I have been extremely helped by many addicts who talk to me like a normal person and don't judge me for my age.

NL: What's the most annoying thing anybody in NA has ever said to you?

K.C.: That they wish they had gotten this earlier. I don't ever know what to say to those people.

S.M.: "You're so lucky to not have gone to the same places I did, or through the same pain." We've been through just as much as someone who's thirty, forty or fifty. These assumptions invalidate our experiences and our pain.

M.A.: I hate it when people speak to me as though they are my mother or father. I come to NA to stay clean, not to help you suddenly recapture your parenting skills.

NL: How can NA better serve our young members?

S.M.: I think NA has done a good job of incorporating its younger members, but I also know if we don't reinvent our events we will lose some of the younger groups. We need to be risk takers.

K.C.: It would be great if we had our own meeting, perhaps called "Under Twenty-Five." This would give the youth in Hollywood NA a chance to get together and build the relationships we all need to stay clean.

M.A.: We should start that meeting!
It would totally rock!

andy and holly -Andy W.

I got clean after my partner Holly died of an overdose at age 26. An unprepared friend found her in our apartment. She had gotten high, all by herself, and never woke up again. Holly and I were together for five years and had been using heroin together for a little over a year. At the time of her death, Holly and I had been clean for a few months, but were not working any program. Her relapse took her life. I had no idea how I was going to deal with this loss.

I coped by quickly returning to drinking and using. Before I knew it, my addiction had me using far more than I had ever used before. I no longer feared either addiction or death. Nobody from Holly's family or my family would talk to me, but I didn't care. I was on a suicide mission.

I felt I had already lost everything in Holly; there was nothing that would bring her back to me. That was the worst feeling, to have Holly be so far away from me, totally unreachable. Holly and I had grown up together and became a couple when I was twenty. Losing her was like losing a limb. I just didn't believe I could ever recover from her death.

I came to the program Narcotics Anonymous about a year and a half later. I heard people talk about their experiences in recovery, how they had been reunited with family members and friends. At first, such stories made me feel completely hopeless. I knew Holly could not return, and this certainty made it very hard for me to become willing to accept the program could work for me. This was going to be hard. But I also heard people in meetings talk about walking through incredibly traumatic things and staying clean, so I began to accept that it could be done.

And then an incredible, unexpected, wonderful thing happened. I began to work NA's second step, to search for a Higher Power that could help me stay clean, and I found Holly again.

I began to write Holly letters, to sit and listen for her answer. I am learning to recognize the millions of ways she is still around me today, in our friends and families (who are now on speaking terms with me) and in our passions and dreams. Holly's spirit became the strength in my recovery.

This connection to Holly, who seemed so far away from me in our addiction and in her death, became the most valuable gift of my recovery. I stay clean because I want to keep her as close to me as possible.

I am still new to recovery, and I have a lot of things to face, which are scary and hard. But now I can speak about these things with my sponsor and network. And I look to Holly to help me find the strength I need to move through them. I don't want to run away any more.

just for whenever -Bad Hair Days • February 30

"Oh blinding light, oh light that blinds,
I cannot see, look out for me."
Ancient addict spiritual

We've heard it said that addicts are not bad people trying to get good, but sick people trying to get better. Well, that may not apply to you. It could be that you are a fundamentally bad person, in which case you'd better just

straighten up and fly right. Or it could just be a Bad Hair Day.

A Bad Hair Day is when, for no discernible reason, everything's all screwed up. "What's happening here?" you ask yourself on Bad Hair Days. "Have I passed through some kind of dimensional portal into an alternative universe where green means stop and red means go? Or have I just always been this bad at living?" No, you're not in an alternative universe, and no, you're probably not just a walking disaster (although we can't rule this out completely). It's probably just a Bad Hair Day.

So how do we combat the spontaneous straightening of pressed curls, cowlicks that bite, parts that don't, spikes styled by demon hairdressers and the like? We take a very special Step, involving a very special prayer: "Mecka leak hai mecka hiney ho; mecka leck hai meckia chonnie ho." We say this special prayer three times while standing on our heads in the corner, chewing on wooden nickels—and voila, we will be relieved of our Bad Hair Days! Of course, we'll also be relieved of our hair, but you didn't really expect this to work on your terms, did you?

Just for today: I will strive to greet the Bad Hair Days along with the Good Hair Days. My hair used to be horrible and now it's wonderful and thank NA for God and thanks for letting me share.

***i'm not young
(technically)
but i feel youthful!***
-Maria D.

I started using drugs while I was in junior high, at age eleven or twelve. I can still pinpoint a conversation I had with my mother, in which I learned that everything I believed about my life was a lie.

Emotionally, I just stopped. I stopped trusting. I stopped feeling like I belonged, anywhere or to anything. I stopped loving life. I smoked marijuana, and then sniffed glue. I downed bottles of cough medicine. Pills. Methadone. Cocaine. Alcohol. Drug use quickly permeated my whole life.

For almost forty years, drugs chose my friends. They were the reason I stayed locked in my room or didn't come home at all. They were the reason that getting loaded was the only way I could act on sexual attraction. They were the reasons behind the criminal acts I committed to support myself financially. Drugs were the only constant in my life from that first joint, until I found Narcotics Anonymous.

Hope returned. Trust resurfaced. I began to feel a part of this welcoming fellowship. I met loving, caring addicts and became a woman who cares about others. Dreams emerged. I came to believe I could start again and, indeed, my life began anew.

Sometimes, people in the rooms share how they have no regrets. I was already forty-eight years old when I came to NA. Drugs had beaten me up from the inside out. In early recovery, regret haunted me. I realized it was impossible, but I longed to have lived life differently. All the things I would've and could have done! It was so painful knowing I could never get those years back. I see young people in the rooms and I want to shout: "Stop!" "Stay!" You have a chance at a wonderful life!"

But that is a decision they must make for themselves.

Finally, approaching fifty, I realized I didn't want to waste another moment. I realized that, if I was willing to do some work, I could still have a great life. I listened to members who had what I wanted and learned what to do. I listened to addicts just coming in or coming back from a relapse and learned what not to do. Instead of holding on to my regret, it started to live life to the fullest.

Today I have big dreams. Better yet, I've learned how to accomplish them. I've also learned how to let go of things that no longer serve me and zero in on those that do. There are days I am so filled with joy, I can barely stand it.

I decided recently that I didn't want to live life with a "Thank God it's Friday" attitude. I asked for guidance from my Higher Power to help me live like every day is Friday. This Monday, I woke up, prayed, meditated, wrote in my journal, did some yoga, walked my dog, and headed out with anticipation of a wonderful day. Recovery in NA has put the spring in my step, the song in my heart, the dreams in my head and the smile on my face.

I never could have imagined that the person who felt so used up, so done, so over it, so old, would become the person I am today. I may be in my sixties, but fourteen years of recovery have given me a life of vitality and great expectations. Each day presents an opportunity to face life with the exuberance of youth, and I am so grateful for every single moment of it.

***the joy of
watching my son
get clean in NA***
-anonymous

My son's addiction was a nightmare for me. I was only five days out of rehab myself (at age forty-four), when I came home to dirty glass pipes, torn little plastic baggies, broken mirrors and razor blades stashed all over the house. My son was only twelve years old. "Was this God's dirty trick on me?" I asked.

On second thought, I realized that this didn't come close to those years he suffered being brought up by a tweaker like me, with all my moral deficiencies, including an obsessive shoplifting habit that led me to jail three times. That's not counting the drug charges. Fine mother I was, all right. I knew that this couldn't be happening to a more deserving person.

Other NA members held me up. They comforted me and supported me the whole way. Being so new to recovery myself, I was often asked how I could stay clean with all that dope around. I still believe did a near-perfect first step: Admitting I was powerless not only over my addiction, but over my son's addiction as well.

Having a teenager who abuses drugs is a completely terrifying experience. Whenever he used, he did so excessively, and often ended up in the hospital or psych ward. He went to his first rehab at age thirteen; fourteen more visits followed. He had countless arrests, two failed attempts at Prop 36 and several suicide attempts. He fathered a few kids and lost them to the system. The last few years of his addiction, he was using heroin heavily. I new it was only a matter of time before getting that phone

call that every parent dreads: "I'm sorry to tell you..."

It felt like centuries passed before the day I received a collect call--from the county jail. At least my child was safe and alive! He was mistakenly put in the "gay tank," but the men there befriended him and, learning of his newfound desire to get clean, told him he could do it. It was like he experienced one big twelfth step call!

While serving six months in a court-ordered rehab, he found a sponsor, started attending NA meetings and working steps. I watched with awe as he became stronger and more determined one day at a time. One of my favorite moments from that time was hearing my son share at a meeting that he always knew if he wanted to get clean, the place to go was Narcotics Anonymous. He said, "I knew NA would work for me, because it worked for a hopeless addict like my mom. It NA could work for her, I knew it could work for me."

Last year, I watched with joy as my son took a cake celebrating four years clean. In June, I took a cake celebrating thirteen years clean.

NA has given us both wonderful lives. I am a better mother. He is a wonderful father to my little grandson, who we both love enormously. We both continue to work steps and sponsor other addicts. Because addiction is a family disease, my son and I sometimes speak together at H&I panels, giving away the hope that helped us both get clean. NA has been a saving grace for my family. We could never repay NA for all it has done. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous!



"Rude Jester" Sculpture
by Ron W.

HELP WANTED!

The Newsletter desperately needs two trusted servants with experience and/or interest in the visual arts.

Illustrator: Do you have a secret talent for line drawings or sketches? PLEASE put it work by doing service for this newsletter and creating original art work for our issues!

Alternate Designer: Do you have experience in publication layout or art direction? We need your skills to ensure our new ambitious publication schedule can be met.

Please email Mark H. at nl@hollywoodna.org or speak to him at a meeting!

CALLING ARTISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS!

In an attempt to address your concerns, we are experimenting with an online edition designed, in part, to properly showcase art work and photography in full color.

If you have not submitted your work in the past because you are concerned with how it will look, that objection is no longer valid. We hope you will submit this effort at reaching out to our creative NA community by sending in your work--by the BUCKET full.

This newsletter cannot continue to exist without your support and involvement.

Did NA let you down when it promised you freedom from active addiction? Of course not! We know you will not let NA down!

Please submit art and photography to nl@hollywood.org.

CLEAN BUT NOT DEAD: Living Proof

**The Southern California
Region Youth Unity Day**

August 13, 10 a.m. - midnight
Hollywood Women's Club
1749 N. La Brea Ave.
Hollywood, Calif.

Mark your calendar! Tell a friend! Bring a newcomer!
Let's show the region how we do things in Hollywood!

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The committee would like to thank all of our contributors and the Area Service Committee for supporting our efforts to share our experience strength and hope in words and pictures. The article herein are the views of the individual contributors. No endorsement by NA is to be implied.