

# Sharing Hope.

## The Real Gifts of the Program

*A Monthly Letter from the Director of Los Angeles H&I*

A little over 8 1/2 years ago I joined Alcoholics Anonymous because I had lost everything: my career, my place to live, my money, my friends, my drivers license, my ability to function in society, and even some of my teeth. I was devastated. I came to Alcoholic Anonymous on Valentines Day 2007 to get my life back. That's what I thought AA was for. Little did I know I would get so much more than that.

In my first year of recovery I went through all 12 Steps. I cleaned up the wreckage of my past and surrendered my will and life over to the care of God as I understood God. I came to know a freedom and happiness I never imagined possible. I was a free man. So then I came to believe that AA was about personal freedom.

When I got to Step 12 my sponsor suggested I get involved in H&I. I went through orientation and started speaking on panels. I began speaking in rehabs, hospitals, halfway houses, and eventually was cleared to speak in jails. It changed my life.

One day I was at an AA and the speaker was a gentleman I had carried the message to while he was incarcerated in Twin Towers Correctional Facility a couple years prior. He shared his story and then talked about how H&I brought in a panel that saved his life. He then looked at me and smiled.

At that moment, I realized AA was not about my career or money, and not just about my personal freedom. AA was about love and service. Or maybe it was a little about all of it. Maybe I had to be self-supporting so I could be an example, and maybe I need that personal freedom so I can be passionate about AA and have a message of depth and weight. But I have come to believe, that for me, AA is about love and service.

Sincerely,  
 Greg B.,  
 Director, LA H&I

### *The Los Angeles H&I Committee*

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Director of Policy Council .....	Andy V.
Director, Correctional.....	Gene S.
Director, Hospitals.....	Noeh C.
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### SEPTEMBER CAN TOTAL\$:

Thanks to your service, AA groups in Los Angeles donated a total of \$8701.33 in September to LA Hospitals & Institutions, for a total of \$80,790.81 so far this year. Keep passing it on, along with our thanks!

### VISIT CENTRAL OFFICE LATELY?

Plenty of opportunities to fill your free time with 12th-Step work! Help others, enjoy fellowship! More info: (323) 936-4343.

Get this and all back issues of the LAHIC newsletter (minus the panel grids) online at <http://lahic.org/newsletter.php>. And if you sign up for the mailing list, you'll never have to worry about missing an issue again. Pass it on!

## "YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR SENTENCE, YOU'RE FREE TO GO." "BEAUTIFUL, I'M GOING TO TRAVEL." "YOU'RE NOT THAT FREE!"

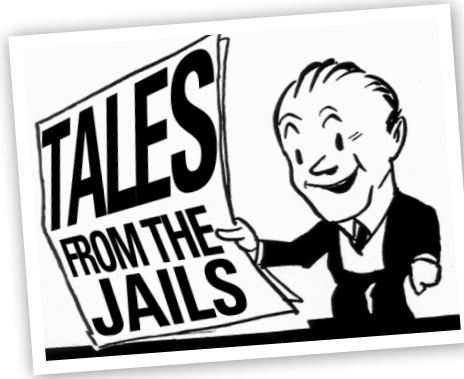
One of the great gifts of sobriety is the freedom to travel, unlike the guys and gals we visit behind bars (not counting their trips to the infirmary when a friendly conversation goes sideways).

When I was going through my legal issues (if you consider going to jail a legal issue), my traveling days were over; it truly is not the most serene way to drive when your license is suspended and every car looks like the coppers.

Thanks to sobriety those days are long behind me and I'm taking advantage: I am currently on a 7,000-mile road trip through the great Midwest. The highlight? Well, other than taking a water aerobics class at the YMCA with my mom and the other ladies of the AARP-red hat club-bingo set, it's going to different AA meetings in towns I've never previously been to.

One meeting I found online was in Niles, Michigan. When my GPS took me down a gravel road in the middle of the woods,

my first thought was that I was about to be dismembered by a lumberjack.



I felt great relief when I found a house with the AA triangle on it. I walked into the house only to find two old timers smoking cigarettes and watching a TV show from the 1950s.

I asked if this was an AA meeting. One of them looked at me and asked, "Well, are you sober?" "Yes," I squeaked. "Then, it is," was his reply, and we had a meeting I'll never forget.

It is truly quite amazing—the people we meet in the rooms of AA in our travels are the most welcoming folks we'll ever meet, and that's the hope we can offer our brothers and sisters behind bars, whom we pray will one day again be free to join us on the road of freedom and happiness.

Gene S.

AA H&I Corrections Director

## ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Hello H&I sisters and brothers,

It's a privilege and an honor to get to express to you my gratitude for the service work that all of you do at H&I. From the newest person with months of sobriety just starting out, to the crusty old timer with life long experience.

Here are a few excerpts from the "12 and 12" on the 12th Step that speak of "the joy of living", "the magnificent reality of Alcoholics Anonymous" and "the substance of what we receive". They are the basic concepts on which H&I operates.

*The joy of living is the theme of A.A.'s 12th step, and action is the key word. Here we turn outward toward our fellow alcoholics who are still in distress. Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards. Here we begin to practice all Twelve Steps of the program in our daily lives so that we and those about us may find emotional sobriety.*

When the 12th Step is seen in its full implication, it is really talking about the kind of love that has no price tag on it...

It later reads:

*Now what about the rest of the Twelfth Step? The wonderful energy it releases and the eager action by which it carries the message to the next suffering alcoholic and which finally translates the Twelve Steps into action upon all of our affairs is the payoff, the magnificent reality, of Alcoholics Anonymous.*



*Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, the one who is even blinder than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing. He does not expect his brother sufferer to pay him, or even to love him. And then he discovers that by the divine paradox of this kind of*

*giving he has found his own reward, whether his brother has received anything or not. His own character may still be gravely defective, but he somehow knows that God has enabled him to make a mighty beginning, and he senses that he stands at the edge of new mysteries, joys and experiences of which he had never even dreamed.*

*Practically every A.A. Member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than a Twelfth Step job well done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch those people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives—these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.'s message to the next alcoholic.*

I stand in awe of the magnificent example of action that you all continue to put forward.

In love, service and respect,

Noeh C.

AA H&I Hospitals Director