

Sharing Hope.

Love is tH(&)Inking of others!

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

Since February is Valentine’s month, it got me to thinking, *what is love?*

It’s a word I struggled with mightily in my pre-sober days, and it certainly was a word never uttered under the roof of my alcoholic father. If I would’ve ever said, “Just to let you know, Pops, I love you,” I would have found myself living out in the yard six days a week as opposed to my usual four. “May I come inside, Dad, I’m sleeping in a snow bank?” “Well, if you can contain your emotions, possibly,” would be his response, I imagine; either that or “Fetch me another beer.” The disappointment on our Schnauzer Fred’s face when I had to remove him from my sleeping quarters would have been palpable.

Looking back, I can safely say it was not the healthiest of family dynamics. I’ll take love over fear any day, and that’s what I got when I finally made it to my first AA meeting on November 27th, 2007. After that meeting, Bob, the person who took me to the meeting and is still my sponsor, gave me a *Just for Today* book and signed it: “Welcome Home. Love, Bob.”

“Now, what is this all about?” I inquired to myself. (Not a good person to ask, might I add.) Bob is a person I had just met a few hours earlier, so how can he love me, and if this was home, where was I living before? To state the obvious, in darkness. And the love part? I’ve since learned it’s what we do for newcomers; love them so they can learn to love themselves. Wow, what a concept!

A great example of this is one of the ladies my panel partner Deborah and I met on our last visit to Twin Towers—her name is Melinda. To quote Melinda, who like most guests of the penal system struggles with life on life’s harsh terms: “I don’t know how to love myself sober; I *do* know how to love myself when I’m not sober.”

And that’s where AA comes in! What kind of life would we have if we didn’t learn to love ourselves and others in a sober world! Since I’ve been sober I can talk to every member of my family and tell them I love them without a sense of embarrassment or shame. I can meet someone who comes into AA in a much less fortunate situation than myself and express my love, because I understand what they’re going through and I know things will get better. I believe our purpose in H&I is to offer hope, guidance, and love.

Which brings me back to my original question: *What is love?*

To me, love is tH(&)Inking of others.

*Gene S.,
LAHIC Director*

The Los Angeles H&I Committee

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JANUARY CAN TOTALS:

Breaking some records somewhere, the combined total contributions to the literature fund (aka “the H&I Cans) last month was an incredible \$11,143.59! Thank you—and be sure to thank your group—for an amazing, 12th-Step start to this beautiful year!

LETTER FROM THE CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR

There is so much energy, debate, opinion and emotion swirling around this recent election. I found myself caught up in it and struggling to find a sane place to stand. Fortunately, we must leave our phones in the car or locker. This cuts off my connection to the crazy and brings my focus back to the real joy and work at hand – being of service.

When I enter the jail or juvenile hall or transitional facility, I feel peace again. And excitement. I know my place. I remember where I've come from. I'm happy to sit in a circle with the women of CRDF and the men of PDC, Twin Towers, or Men's Central Jail, and share my experience, strength and hope. I love listening to yours, and especially to hear them share their own. It's not a happy tale that brings us to jail. But it's a beautiful one that leads us out.

What is your experience leading panels or speaking? I see and hear so many great stories from you – from seeing someone later at a meeting that you had seen inside. Or just feeling great to be

there. Or simply – if you can call it that – staying sober. We are making a difference, certainly in our own lives. Though we stay out

of the results, we so often see a change in others too. Thank you, God.

Lastly, this is a call to action: please get more involved. We have a number of dark panels without panel leaders in all facilities. We also need panel chairs. WE NEED YOU! Now that I do the reports to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, I see what is missing across the board. We're doing a great job but have room to be greater. Please consider becoming a panel leader or chair. I'm sure you can find a time

and place that works for you.

Thank you all for your commitment and generosity of time and spirit!

In love and service,

Stephen B.,

AA H&I Corrections Director



COMES A TIME

If you survived the holidays, the politics and cold & flu season in a sober manner, you are a miracle indeed. There was a time when any of these would be enough to send us down the rabbit hole of intoxication. I'm not talking about those days when getting loaded was our full-time occupation, but the times when we thought that we had hit bottom, were finished, would never pick up again. Our intention was to stop the inebriated madness of the moment, and change everything. Time and again we realized that we could not stop, even if we thought that we wanted to, because something always came up. Then some of us were able to put some time together, we thought

that we had this, and something would come up. We soon realized that we had to want this more than anything in the world, that sobriety had to



become our new obsession. Early on the novelty of this newfound obsession was still with us, and we were able to make our program the most important thing in our world.

We moved through the physical, emotional and spiritual changes that came with our 12 step program and became sober people with full lives. After a time some of us went to fewer meetings, and began to take sobriety for granted. Then something came up...

This is why H&I is the perfect companion to a program of sobriety. Our H&I commitment keeps our commitment to recovery alive. It's a monthly reminder that suffering and death is just a drink away. It allows us to love and serve our community, which is the secret to our success.

Gregory Gardner

AA H&I Hospitals Director