



CONNECTIONS

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How Hospitals & Institutions Volunteers Make An Impact

By Rachel K. - A Grateful H & I Meeting Beneficiary



As we all know, jails, institutions and death are the three ultimatums addicts face while we remain active in our addiction. June 2012, in my last weeks of active using, I became the “lucky winner” of a four-month stint inside the Saint Louis County Justice Center jail facility.

During my stay in what I had always considered to be one of the most unforgiving places I could imagine, I found a little sliver of light. With the help of the C.A. Fellowship—those who brought the message into the jail through H & I meetings—I discovered something much better than I ever thought possible to gain while incarcerated. I found love, hope, faith and, most importantly, the courage to share my experience which consisted of countless failed attempts at sobriety, along with all the shame and guilt manifested by each of those attempts.

The 90-day in-house corrections treatment program in which I was enrolled required me to attend at least one of the three 12-step meetings per week brought into the jail by H & I volunteers. At first, I opted strictly for the Thursday night group (not C.A. but another fellowship). I was also delegated to be responsible for the weekly sign-in sheet, which I didn't realize at the time, but was a valuable accountability tool for me. Learning about commitment meant that if for some reason our chosen “Anonymous” meeting didn't show, I had to make it up by going to one of the other meetings. Sure enough, the third week of the program, our Thursday night 12-step meeting volunteer failed to appear for us. To make up our required meeting, my cell-mate and I decided that we would go to the C.A. meeting on Sunday instead. I don't remember exactly what was said, but I do remember how I felt when it was over. I felt **BETTER!** I was happier, and even kind of peaceful! Yep . . . *in jail* I felt ALL of that! “How crazy!” I remember thinking to myself! So powerful, in fact, that I discussed my feelings with my cell-mate, who, much to my surprise, emphatically agreed!

The next evening, on Monday, another different anonymous fellowship meeting was scheduled. Still feeling the effects of the C.A. meeting the day before, we both decided to go and try this one out also. Then, when for the second week in a row our Thursday meeting didn't show up, we were really bummed out. By the time Sunday rolled around, we were so happy to have a C.A. meeting to go to.

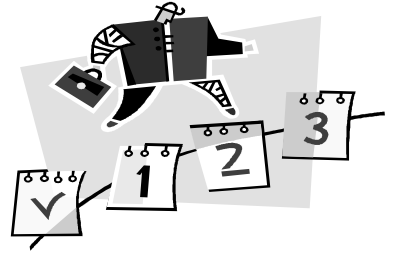
Well, that was it for me—from then on, I decided I would continue to go to ALL THREE meetings every week until I was released—and that's exactly what I did. A few more times during my stay, the Thursday night meeting fellowship volunteer didn't show up; and every time they didn't, I felt it. It left a hole in my program agenda, and it seemed to me that the week didn't go as smoothly as it would have if I'd had the extra meeting under my belt. C.A. volunteers, however, were always there on Sunday, making sure the women inmates got their C.A. meeting in for the week.

I have been out of jail now for two weeks, and have been to a meeting EVERY DAY, with the exception of Sundays when I go to church with my mom and dad. I am happier than I can remember being in many years. I think if no H & I meetings had been brought in to us at the jail, things may have gone differently for me. The people that bring those meetings in for the inmates have a much larger impact on us than they might realize. They help make our transition back into the “real world” and, most importantly, a clean and sober recovery lifestyle a lot easier. It's really amazing to show up at a meeting and find not only a familiar face, but a welcoming one! C.A. does the very best job in this regard.

So, for those of you who do it . . . PLEASE continue your incredibly selfless H & I service work! We NEED H & I meetings! After all, isn't that part of our own recovery—being able to work our 12th Step on some one else?

Be All That You Can Be . . .

By Vicky M.



Every year about this time, the District starts promoting our annual elections. Service commitment rotation is a key component in assuring our Fellowship's propagation; and, typically, we use tactics ranging from cajoling to laying guilt trips in our efforts to get new bodies involved. This year, **Matt R.**, our Public Information/Cooperation With The Professional Community District Committee Chairperson, put out a wonderful flier for elections, explaining all the different positions available. If you haven't seen it at your meetings, you can pull it up on the Missouri Area website, www.camissouri.org (look under the "Events" tab on December 9). With that wonderfully comprehensive information already out there circulating, your *Connections* Editor thought it might be well to try a different approach in our newsletter build-up for District elections.

I have been involved in District service for almost 20 years and have held literally every single position at one time or another—some positions more than once. When considering the content for this article, I got the idea that perhaps you might like to hear what it's like to wear a few of these titles from the standpoint of someone who's been there—a personal rendition of experience, strength and hope as it were.

My involvement started in 1994 when, a year after moving to Saint Louis from Los Angeles, I decided to start a C.A. meeting close to my Brentwood home. In conjunction with that endeavor, I attended my first District business meeting to let the rest of the C.A. local community know about the new group. I was met by an enthusiastic, friendly cluster of folks who seemed delighted with my intentions, offering suggestions and support to help me get the newly formed "Fried Pipers & Cocanuts" up and running. I learned we should have a Group Service Representative (GSR) attend the District business meeting every month to keep the line of communication open. Being the only home group member at my new meeting, I acquired this job by default. Hence began my education and indoctrination into the world of C.A. service. To be quite frank with you, after my first couple of monthly business meetings, I formed the opinion that "this poor collection of souls really needs my help to get organized and do things more efficiently." I wondered how on earth they'd managed without me thus far, a notion, although way off-base, kept me coming back month after month to try and set things straight.

Certainly, I did have some good ideas for fund-raising that we put into action and helped enormously with our bleak financial picture. But I had much to learn about practicing traditions and relying on the group conscience in making decisions regarding the Fellowship. My patience was often short when individuals failed to follow through with assignments or duties, and I didn't make any effort whatsoever to conceal these judgments about my comrade trusted servants. "Principles before personalities" was an alien concept to me. Looking back, I am truly grateful for those individuals with more time and experience who showed me, by example, how to conduct business cordially and allow for plenty of human error along the way ("we are not saints!").

I believe my first District level assignment, in addition to the GSR hat I was already wearing, was the secretary position. This seemed a logical job for me to take on since I earned my living as an administrative assistant and had years of experience behind me in the field. Taking minutes at the monthly meeting and typing them up afterwards was a breeze. The hardest part of this job was turning it over to someone else when my term was up. "Would they be able to do it as well as I had? What if they messed up the files I had so meticulously assembled?!" My brain raced with these questions and many others—but I was moving on to something different and more challenging, and I didn't have time to dwell on such issues for long.

My next position was that of Telephone Hotline Chair, and the first decision made by the District after I got this job was to discontinue using the outside answering service we'd been paying. This meant setting up and training a team of Fellowship volunteers to take over answering our local C.A. phone line by using call forwarding, a relatively new concept being offered by the telephone company. Needless to say, the project fell squarely onto my shoulders and I agonized over every detail of constructing a Hotline Volunteer Handbook and recruiting enough willing bodies to fill the schedule. I will never forget the day we took our new system LIVE—I was a nervous wreck, worrying about every detail and whether or not the new recruits would pick up the calls correctly, signing on and off the call forwarding system without leaving any gaps in our coverage. I believe this all happened in 1996, and the Saint Louis District Hotline has been operating under our own power (with God's help, of course!) ever since. The best reward from this endeavor came when someone who had called the Hotline showed up at a meeting and told me their phone call had been the catalyst they needed to start on the road to recovery. It doesn't get any better than that!

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Sometime soon afterwards, our District Treasurer had to step down due to employment reassignment out of state. This is a crucial position that cannot be left empty, and I vividly recall a handful of the other District committee members at the time cornering me with a desperate plea to assume the job. Although I knew how to successfully balance my checkbook, I felt totally out of my element in the world of bookkeeping and was extremely resistant to their request. "PLEASE!" they said. "We really need someone responsible who understands the workings of the District." Well, you've all heard the basic suggestion that you shouldn't say no to any reasonable program request for which you don't have a valid excuse. I couldn't come up with a strong enough reason to refuse, and the next thing you know, I'm taking care of the District finances. Little did I know when I took on that job it was training me for what would essentially become my future career. Years later, can you believe I now earn a living taking care of people's bills and banking?!

In both instances of the last two jobs described, I DID NOT WANT any part of the assignment. If I'd have followed my own will, I'd no doubt have passed on both opportunities. It's a clear case of God doing for me what I could not do for myself. I never expected the ultimate gifts I received in return for my labors.

Space limits my ability to tell you in detail about all of the other work details with which I've had the privilege of assisting. Suffice it to say the experiences at every level have taught me a great deal about our Fellowship, recovery, relationships and spirituality. They have made me a better person and helped me grow so much. Please understand I tell you these things not in any way trying to "toot my own horn." My hope is simply that something you read in this article will ignite an interest in YOU to take on a service role in the upcoming elections. At the very least, you owe it to yourself to investigate the options by attending the election meeting on Sunday, December 9 at 4 PM at the 212 Club (see below for details and directions). It COULD impact your recovery journey in a positively huge way you'd never have guessed!

DISTRICT DONATIONS				
<i>Meeting Name</i>	<i>July 2012</i>	<i>August 2012</i>	<i>September 2012</i>	<i>October 2012</i>
Come & Get It	\$6			
End Of The Line		\$20		
Fried Pipers & Cocanuts	\$10	\$25	\$15	\$25
Men's Meeting	\$10	\$28		\$20
Serenity On Saturday		\$10	\$5.25	
The Thursday Night Meeting				\$60
There Is A Solution	\$15	\$10	\$10.25	\$20

H & I DONATIONS				
<i>Meeting Name</i>	<i>July 2012</i>	<i>August 2012</i>	<i>September 2012</i>	<i>October 2012</i>
Fried Pipers & Cocanuts	\$25	\$31.61	\$17.57	\$20.52
Serenity On Saturday	\$9	\$13.47		\$29.39
The Thursday Night Meeting				\$43

Detailed financial information is available at our monthly business meetings. All C.A. members are welcome and urged to attend if possible.

The Greater Saint Louis District Central Service meeting is held the second Sunday of each month at 4:00 PM at the 212 Club, 204 West Pittman, O'Fallon, Missouri 63366. If the second Sunday falls on a holiday weekend, this meeting is held the first or third Sunday. Confirmed meeting dates are always available on our website www.camissouri.org. Directions—Take I-70 west to Exit 217 Highway K. Go Right on Main Street off the exit ramp. Go .3 mile to left on Pitman. Facility on the left.

The Hospitals & Institutions Committee takes meetings into facilities where addicts cannot get out to attend a meeting on their own. H & I volunteers are constantly needed and should express interest by attending a District Central Service meeting or contacting the H & I Chair, Vicky M. at 314/846-2346.

Connections is a quarterly publication published by the Greater Saint Louis District of Cocaine Anonymous. It is intended solely to provide information for the fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous. We hope to communicate the experience, strength, and hope of C.A. members, reflecting recovery, unity, and service, within the bounds of friendliness and good taste. This Newsletter presents experiences and opinions of Cocaine Anonymous members. Those opinions expressed herein are of the individual contributors and are not to be attributed nor taken as an endorsement by Cocaine Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous World Service Office, Inc., Greater Saint Louis District of Cocaine Anonymous, or Connections. The editors reserve the right to edit any submissions in adherence to the Twelve Traditions of Cocaine Anonymous. If you would like to know more about Cocaine Anonymous, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, please write and ask about C.A. World Service Conference approved literature at CAWSO, 21720 South Wilmington Avenue., Suite 304, Long Beach, CA 90810; e-mail to info@CA.org or fax to (310) 559-2554. Contact C.A. by phone at (310) 559-5833. Also note that the C.A. World Service Office web page is www.ca.org. This publication and all its contents are copyrighted by the Greater Saint Louis District of Cocaine Anonymous. Any unauthorized duplication or publication is prohibited. In the spirit of Tradition Six, "C.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution."



Happy Birthday

Congratulations to each of our members who celebrated a sobriety milestone this issue. Birthdays are generally reported via your group GSR, so if you don't see your meeting/birthday listed, please check with your GSR. Or, you can contact the Editor directly. Birthdays printed are those that have already been celebrated since the last newsletter printing at the time this edition went to press.

End Of The Line

Sunday 5:30 PM
Blessed Hope Bible Church

Denise A. 15 Years

Fried Pipers & Cocanuts

Wednesday 6:45 PM
First Unity Church

Steele B. 30 Days
Todd R. 30 Days
Brian T. 90 Days
Rachel K. 90 Days
Jenifer W. 6 Months
Logan D. 9 Months
Josh G. 1 Year
Mary N-H. 1 Year
Caitlin H. 18 Months
Jim L. 7 Years
Joe B. 7 Years
Michael M. 22 Years
Susan C. 31 Years

The Thursday Night Meeting

Thursday 7:30 PM
Saint Mary's Hospital

Sylvester I. 17 Years

There Is A Soluion

Friday 7:30 PM
Father Dempsey's

Aaron S. 30 Days
Amy B. 30 Days
Bob A. 30 Days
Dean D. 30 Days
Donivan C. 30 Days
Jason 30 Days
Keith W. 60 Days
Stephanie C. 60 Days
Mike S. 90 Days
Varnay T. 9 Months
Carl W. 11 Years

Serenity On Saturday

Saturday 1:00 PM
Harris House

Anthony B. 30 Days
Don B. 30 Days
Laura G. 30 Days
Laura L. 30 Days
Mitchell L. 30 Days
Shavon B. 30 Days
Steve 30 Days
Tricia G. 30 Days
Lena 60 Days
Larry 90 Days
Mary 90 Days
Melissa Q. 90 Days
Mike L. 90 Days
Nancy O. 90 Days
Jennifer H. 6 Months
Damon C. 1 Year
Jerry C. 18 Months
Leslie A. 21 Years

WHERE IT'S AT-- Our Newest Local C.A. Meeting

Friday Nights 7:30 PM



Big Book Study



409 South Florissant Road
(Provident Health)
Ferguson 63135

Did you hear the one about

the newcomer who was due to celebrate 90 days on his home group meeting night? He came in all depressed, and when someone asked what was wrong, he lamented, "I relapsed yesterday, so now I only have 89 days and won't be able to get my 90 day chip until tomorrow."



Staying Connected...

Our local Saint Louis Cocaine Anonymous Hotline (314/361-3500) is answered 24 hours a day by volunteer members of our Fellowship. It's a Fabulous resource for anyone feeling squirrely—pick up the phone—NOT THE DRUG!!!

Staying Connected....

The Missouri Area website (www.camissouri.org) has lots of helpful information, including a link to the C.A. World Services pages. Here, you can not only learn many things about C.A. and their upcoming events, but you can also be directed to one of our on-line meetings, accessible anytime, anywhere you have a computer.