

SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Fall 2016

Dear A. A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."*

'...A MOMENT OF CLARITY:'

"I have been drinking and using drugs for almost 20 years, and have been coming around A.A. for nearly as long. However, I got only minimally involved, and have proven, time and time again, that half-measures availed us nothing. While I am no stranger to incarceration, being 36 now and having spent most of my 30s and a majority of my 20s in jail or prison, this time something just feels different. It's as if my eyes have suddenly opened and I'm able to see my life from a different perspective. It may be a moment of clarity, or the very beginnings of one. I'm doing a lot of introspection and I'm looking back over my life thus far, and the reality of all the wasted time, missed opportunities, severed relationships, and incarcerations — all behind a drink — is really starting to set in and hit home. Now I'm trying everything possible to do something different and hold on to this gift of sobriety. That includes attending meetings whenever they are offered, trying to keep a positive outlook, practicing spiritual principles, praying and reaching out with this letter. I no longer want to continue on as I have for the past 20 years and am eager to embark on this journey of recovery. I'm willing to do anything it takes." — **Steven K., Northeast Region**

"I claimed my membership on February 1, 2014 when I turned to face my challenges and quit running away. I have been in and out of the prison system, managing to hold on to that precious gift we call sobriety, regardless of the 'opportunities' that seem to always present themselves when we have truly stepped on the path to recovery. I know that I have found a home, for on every page of my Big Book and my Twelve and Twelve I read a piece of my story." — **Ron H., West Central Region**

HELPING EACH OTHER

"I started going to some A.A. meetings and discovered how much they help. I now host my own little meetings and they don't just help others but everyone also helps me. I know that when I am released the temptation to drink again will probably be greater because of how easy it is to get. But I know that I can go to any A.A. meeting out there and they will help me stay sober. I have been sober for almost five years and at times I still want to have a drink, but other members help me to stay sober. In our meetings we talk about and help others with their troubles. We also like to read and study some of the A.A. books." — **Jeffrey B., East Central Region**

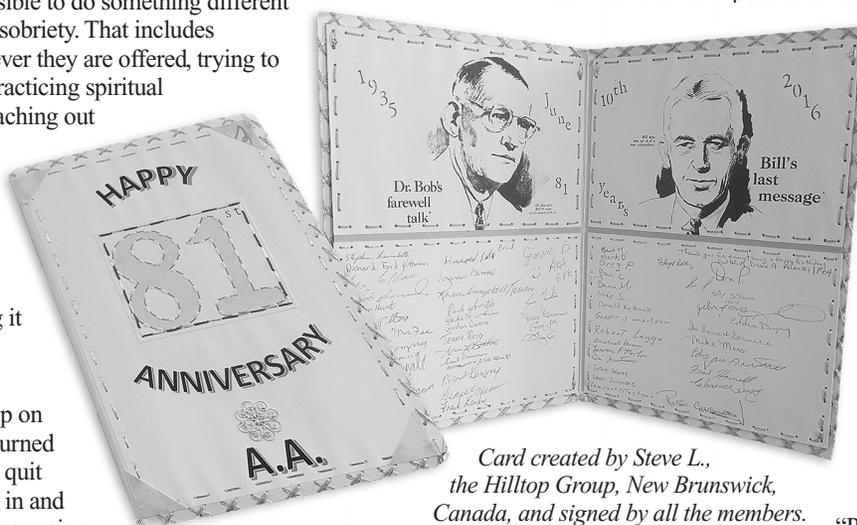
'A NEW WAY OF THINKING:'

"Before coming to prison my family and close friends were telling me that I would be dead within a year if I didn't change the way I was living. The sad thing is that instead of trying to prove them wrong I was trying to prove them right. I was my own worst enemy. I think about what I have put my family, friends, and my oldest daughter through every single day. Through it all they never turned their backs on me or complained. I was someone who would complain about the smallest things, yet I've had such blessings in my life. Because of them I now know what unconditional love really is. Thanks to A.A. I now have almost a year of sobriety and a whole new way of thinking." — **Shawn M., East Central Region**

HOPE

"The Big Book continues to fill my heart with so much hope. Hope that I have never experienced throughout my 16 years of being a hopeless alcoholic. I am learning so much from Bill W. and Dr. Bob, as well as the 'How It Works' and 'Into Action,' chapters in the Big Book. There is a solution. I have never felt the way I do today, and I thank A.A. for that. I am a very enthusiastic person and I carry the message on a daily basis. The Grapevine is also very inspiring and I hope to one day have an article published in it. Between it and the Big Book it all just makes so much sense." — **Joseph S., East Central Region**

"Prior to a relapse I enjoyed 14 years of sobriety. As a result I've attended many meetings where I have met some of the smartest, most caring and helpful people I have ever encountered. It's a pleasure to find that these attributes extend well beyond local meetings. Many thanks to all those who have helped. By reaching out to one, you have helped many." — **James R., Northeast Region**



Card created by Steve L., the Hilltop Group, New Brunswick, Canada, and signed by all the members.

"I attend A.A. meetings here and feel inspired and have a sense of hope. The meetings don't always happen as planned due to the prison and other reasons. However, I spend a lot of time reading my Big Book. I try my best to watch and maintain proper conduct. I stay in constant prayer. I even made an attempt to write a moral inventory, but it was very hard to complete. Through A.A. and certain events I have truly let God into my life; I feel brand new. Honestly, I don't even know exactly what I'm asking for. I just wanted to reach out and say thank you. You provide me with hope. You maintain the path of light for people like me. This simple program could and will save my life. I know this in my heart." — **James H., Northeast Region**

"I've had a difficult life full of drunken decisions, bad choices, and harsh repercussions. Through A.A., God, and the kindness of people in A.A. I've begun to see that all isn't lost. Just because I've reached bottom doesn't mean I have nowhere to go. I can go up! Thank you, A.A. Thank you, God. It all starts here! A change from the inside out." — **Jeff H., Pacific Region**

"I am writing because I have been reading the Big Book and working the Steps. I have currently been sober for 40 days. I don't know where else to turn. I don't have anyone around who is interested in getting sober and I am in a maximum security prisoner so they don't offer A.A. meetings to us. I feel the power of God and the Steps changing my life, but I would really like corresponding with someone who is sober and like-minded." — **Jordan A., Pacific Region**

A.A. LITERATURE

"I would like to give a big 'Thank You' to the A.A. member who provided me with a subscription to the A.A. Grapevine. The power of one alcoholic sharing their experience, strength and hope is so powerful. I'm very thankful for the help local A.A. members offers incarcerated alcoholics. Without that help my sobriety would be more challenging for me." — **Donald R., Southeast Region**

"I am going on 20 years fighting this battle with drugs and alcohol. I have tried A.A. before, and also N.A., but this is the first time I ever read the Big Book and I am willing to try this way of life. Reading this book it's shocking to me that people have found a new way of life after so long. I am 33 years old, and I am tired of being tired, and I am ready to live a happy life. Thank you so much for whoever wrote this book, and everyone who has made it possible for a new way of life." — **Joshua T., Southwest Region**

'WE KEPT GOING BACK.'

"One day a friend of mine named Mike, who has passed on now, asked me if I wanted to go to an A.A. meeting, to get out of the cell and drink some coffee. I said yes, because I did not like being in the cell with my cellmate. We went to the meeting and drank a lot of coffee and had a lot of fun. Little did we know that something from that meeting stayed with us, because we kept going back, and I found what I had been looking for all these years — the answer to my problem, that I am powerless over alcohol! It started with alcohol and it ended with alcohol. It will always be one day at a time, and I will enjoy that one day, if not for me then for Mike. That was 15 years ago and I am still fighting to hold on to my sobriety." — **Clyde D., Pacific Region**

'... FREE IN SPIRIT AND MIND.'

"I was asked by another inmate to attend an A.A. meeting with him. I didn't want to go at first, but I gave in. Let me tell you I was shocked! I could not believe how well put together A.A. meetings are. How caring and devoted the people are who come into the prison to bring an A.A. meeting and to say 'Hi, I'm so and so, and I'm an alcoholic.' I began attending the A.A. meetings every week. Thank God for the A.A. members who know what we have gone through. Thank you to my sponsor, and to A.A. members all over the world for accepting me and giving me guidance, caring and understanding. After 13 years of sobriety, I no longer have or need to hide myself in a bottle; I am free

in spirit and mind. I look forward to a better, brighter future by attending A.A. meetings to stay sober. Thank you, for giving me back my life!" — **Eugene D., Northeast Region**

"After 50 years of denial, I have finally admitted and accepted that I am an alcoholic. This simple step had impeded my progress my whole life. I have learned that, as a repeat offender, I don't have the option to relapse. If there is a next time in prison, I will leave in a coffin. A.A. has given me a solid foundation to transition back to society. Now, I have to work it. Two new quotes I would like to share: 'I understood myself only after I destroyed myself, and only in the process of fixing myself, did I know who I really was.' And: 'There is no chemical solution to a spiritual problem.'" — **Robert B., Southwest Region**

'... PROFOUND AND POWERFUL.'

"I could sing from the mountain tops about the benefits of A.A. and how it works. About me, well I remain sober. I have no desire whatsoever to use alcohol, or any substance for that matter. I have seen too much destruction, and have spent too much time in a cage. When I get home it is going to be all about good stuff, sobriety, and living a life of making amends, playing it forward one day and one step at a time. I truly get it now! When I started the process, I couldn't admit I was powerless — but the days of living in the land of Egypt and the Nile, I mean DENIAL, are over! A.A. is so simple and pure, yet so profound and so very powerful, especially if you are honest about your situation and allow it to help with the desired and necessary change." — **Eric B., Pacific Region**

PEACE

"A.A. has changed my life forever. I didn't know how or why that 30 minutes changed my life. Something about that meeting grabbed me like nothing had before. I wanted desperately to be a part of what was being offered there. Peace. Understanding. Acceptance. Healing. A tangible place of refuge and fellowship, not just in hope of receiving something, but hope to give or add to the meaningful time spent together." — **Dolly E., East Central Region**

POWERLESS

"Once I joined A.A., I began to piece myself back together. I was able to understand how an inanimate substance became master over me. The program gave me the diagnosis of my problem: I had a physical allergy and a mental obsession. But before I could put the Twelve Steps into practice, I had to overcome my arrogance, because no one could tell me anything! However, the more I began to participate in the program and read the material, the more I grew up and realized how ignorant I really was! After listening to others open up about their struggles of powerlessness over the same inanimate objects, I began to listen more attentively. The more I listened to others, the more I began to see myself in their reflection. The program works when we are consistent with its application." — **Peter J., East Central Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.