

# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Winter 2011

Dear A.A. Friends,

We thank you for sharing your messages of hope during the holiday season. As many of us struggle with feelings of loneliness and isolation at this time of year, the words on these pages — from those finding freedom and peace through the Twelve Steps of A.A. — welcome us home with the warm embrace of our A.A. family. We thank you for this gift of your sobriety.

Now, 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."\*

## HANDLING DRINK SIGNALS — AND MORE

"My name is Tammy and I am a grateful recovering alcoholic. I've been an alcoholic for more than 20 years. I am 43 years old now and have been sober for five and a half years and have been in prison for five years for a crime that happened due to my drinking. I am learning so much here—the principles of recovery, the Twelve Steps, new life skills, how to handle urges and cravings, and how to avoid high risk situations. I had to get honest with myself—I will be 44 in a couple of days and this is it for me! I don't have another chance—another recovery. I have to put me and my recovery first now in order to lead a sober life on the outside." — **Tammy D., Southeast Region**

## 'A.A. ... BRINGING ME BACK TO SANITY.'

"I've been a member of A.A. since 2004 and the A.A. program of recovery has saved my life. It hasn't been an easy road at all, with many rehabs, detoxes, shelters, and a mental hospital. Yet A.A. and my spiritual connection with God have remained steadfast in my life. Even as drinking kept tearing my life apart time and time again, A.A. kept bringing me back to sanity. I now have 16 months of sobriety and I haven't felt like this in over 12 years, when alcohol

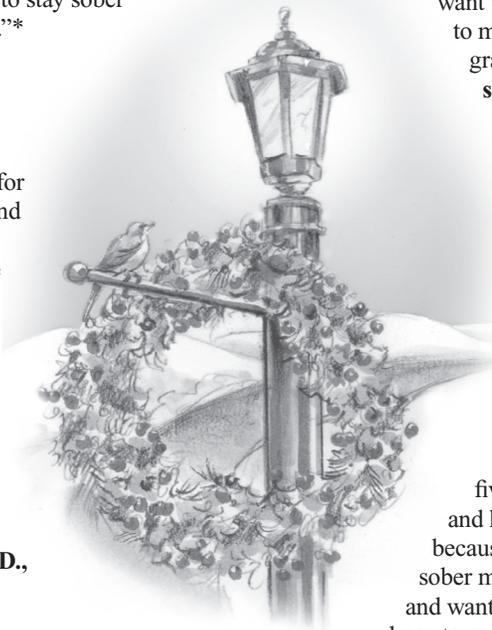
took over my life. I have a sponsor, I've started taking the Steps over again, and I'm currently in a program to keep my sobriety intact. I'm currently incarcerated for something that happened during a blackout back in 2005. Something I did many years ago has me in prison for two years now. But I must take responsibility for my actions and free myself of the thing that kept me going back to drinking. Thanks to A.A. I'm doing all of this now, and rebuilding my life in the process." — **Peter S., Northeast Region**

"I'm in a jail facility because of my alcoholism. I would like to read the Big Book and get some sober correspondence. I have finally accepted that my alcoholism is the cause for my bad judgment, which has resulted in many years of incarceration, loss of employment, and abandonment by my family. I am humbly requesting for any and all help I can get. At the present time I am attending the A.A. meetings that are offered in this unit. This is my fifth time down and I am very tired of this prison life. I'm missing out on my grandchildren's childhood. There is a lot of hurt because my family has shut all the doors on me, but it is my fault. I want them back in my life and I want to be the brother to my siblings that they want and a father and grandfather to my children and grandkids." — **Moises M., Southwest Region**

"About two months prior to my arrest, I was introduced to A.A. I am forever grateful because I believe it laid the foundation to grow from. Even though I was not yet ready, the seed was planted. Now I am active in my recovery, I have five months sober, and although I am in prison, I am the happiest that I have ever been in a long time!" — **Amanda B., East Central Region**

## 'A LOT OF LIFE ... TO ENJOY'

"My name is David and I've been sober going on five years now. A record for me. I'm 47 years old and have been in and out of prison for 20 plus years, all because of alcohol in some way or another. I've been sober my whole term. I'm very proud of my sober time and want to stay that way forever, one day at a time. I've been to many meetings inside and outside of prison. I parole in six months and yes, I'm a bit frightened about getting out for the simple fact of my past. I've always relapsed and eventually been sent back to prison. There's much I want to do in life, but haven't yet because of alcohol and doing prison time. Hell, I've never even been married or had any children. I've never been in a hot tub, eaten an oyster or a lobster tail. Sad but true. There's a lot to life that I want to enjoy and appreciate, but it all comes with a sober probability, right?" — **David W., Pacific Region**



## ‘...THERE IS HOPE...?’

“I was an alcoholic from the beginning. I always drank until I was sick and passed out. Never once have I drunk moderately in my lifetime. Today, I have more consequences than I thought I would ever have, but I still feel there is hope for me somehow. I’m here in prison and I am doing all I can while here to find what purpose I serve in life. I’m knowledgeable of the A.A. program but have yet to learn to apply these simple Steps in my life. Today, I want to truly change my life and live successfully, so I am willing to do what I have to and listen to who I have to.” — **Juan M., Southeast Region**

“I am very active and involved in A.A. here at this correctional institution and currently have a temporary sponsor, but at present she is very ill and I do not want to put any stress on my dear friend, so I am asking for your help for outside correspondence. I have been in prison for seven years. My own child died at three years of age because of my stupidity. I want to make a difference in others lives with my story. Thank you very much for all your help.” — **Mickey T., Southeast Region**

“I am about to celebrate another birthday of being sober. I have been fortunate to have started with A.A. at this brand new facility over a year ago. It has grown so much since then with some of the most dedicated members I have ever seen. I remember when there were just two of us; now it’s about fifty. I really look forward to doing service work upon my release. It’s my dream to come back to this prison to share experience, strength and hope and show people that A.A. really does work and that life can really be wonderful. Especially because it hasn’t been easy not having anyone from the outside come in or to help us get books and materials. We just kept on being determined and our meetings now are so amazingly strong with a power so great that it can’t be mistaken because we can’t put our finger on it!” — **Andre C., Southwest Region**

## ‘LITERATURE CARRIES THE MESSAGE TOO’

“My name is Rickie and I am an alcoholic! For many years now, my life has been unmanageable. I have lost everything and everyone I’ve ever cared for. I am only 28 years old and I’ve got over 10 years behind bars. The truth is I’m in jail now. Anyway, I just got done reading the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, from the front to the back. Some of the stories touched me. I know that I am not alone. I’m not totally sure what you people have in A.A., but I’m sure I want it.” — **Rick A., Southeast Region**

“Thanks for your letter; I have the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. It is getting used and means a lot to me. When I get parole, I plan to pass it on to someone here in recovery who is serious and can’t afford the book. I made amends to eight people and so far got one letter back! I’m trying to do my part so I can live with myself. Like my faith though, it seems the ‘fire’ is hot, then the flame goes down. But that’s when I know I need an A.A. meeting and to read A.A. stuff! Take care, one day at a time.” — **Andrew B., Northeast Region**

## THE TWELVE STEPS

“I am an alcoholic and drug addict. I was homeless on the street and was stealing to feed my habit when I was locked up two and a half years ago. Since I’ve been locked up, I have stayed clean and sober and have been an active member of both A.A. and N.A. for 30 months now. My sobriety date is February 6, 2009! I also have worked the Twelve Steps of the A.A. program to the best of my ability. Although I am at somewhat of an impasse, seeing how I can’t do the Eighth and Ninth amend Steps until I am released from

prison, I have sat down with an A.A. volunteer and poured out my very gut-wrenching Fourth Step. I felt a great weight lift off my soul and spirit when we completed the Fifth Step. I also have a deep belief in God [of my understanding], but I keep my Bible studies in the chapel and my Big Book studies in my A.A. meetings. I feel that I have grown spiritually and I am not the same person who was locked up two and a half years ago.” — **Kenneth W., Southeast Region**

“My name is Marty. I am a 44-year-old male currently serving a six and a half year sentence. This is my first prison term, and hopefully, my last. The only time I get arrested is when I have been drinking. I do believe I am an alcoholic. I have been to meetings on the outside. I have struggled with this disease since I was 18 years old. I guess I gave up on myself and A.A. in the past because I quit working the Steps. I never worked a thorough Fifth Step with a sponsor. The Fourth Step is as far as I’ve ever gotten. I have a son who just turned 13. I love him and want to be a good, sober father to him. He lives in Florida with my ex-wife. I have been sober over a year now, and I have been incarcerated for about 33 months. I attend our A.A. meeting here at the prison once a week. That’s a blessing! I love to surf on my surfboard in the Pacific Ocean. I love my family and want to be a productive member of society. Today I am grateful that I am not waking up from a blackout, like I did when I got arrested.” — **Marty C., Pacific Region**

“I have been sober since 2005 and I have been locked up since 1998. A friend on another unit asked me to attend an A.A. meeting. I went, and my life has not been the same. It has been the last two years of my sobriety that I have given it my all and I work my Steps each day. We have two meetings a week on the unit I’m in. I’m looking for someone to correspond with within A.A. I could be going home next year. My life is very important to me and I want to continue to grow.” — **Andrew G., Southwest Region**

## AN ‘OUTSIDE’ A.A. SHARES

“Since joining the A.A. Fellowship 30 years ago, I have enjoyed sharing experience, strength and hope with other alcoholics through the Correctional Correspondence Service of A.A. We discuss the same topics that are often discussed at meetings. We exchange thoughts about our lives, hopes, health, sober living, and spirituality. Because I habitually abused alcohol in my younger years, corresponding with imprisoned A.A. members who want to maintain sobriety helps me maintain distance from those years when alcohol controlled my life.” — **Joel F., Northeast Region (outside A.A. member)**

## 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.