

What if we held an H&I meeting and no one showed up?

By David J, Vice Chairperson
WSC H&I Committee

Sad thought, huh? Well, it happened to four of us for almost a year. About six years ago, I moved into a very rural area in southwestern Pennsylvania. The peace and quiet were great—still are, as a matter of fact. Three years after moving here, I ended up in the county jail for a few hours (another story). While I was there, I thought about my H&I commitment in the city I had left, and wondered if my new area had an H&I committee.

A couple of weeks later, I got hold of the local H&I chair. He told me that several years before they had regularly taken a panel into the county jail, but it had folded and they were now struggling to fulfill the commitments they had. Anyway, to make a long story short, after several phone calls and a lot of coffee, we had an okay from the warden to bring a panel into the county jail. I had four willing panel leaders, and I was feeling great. We were giving it back; we would make a difference.

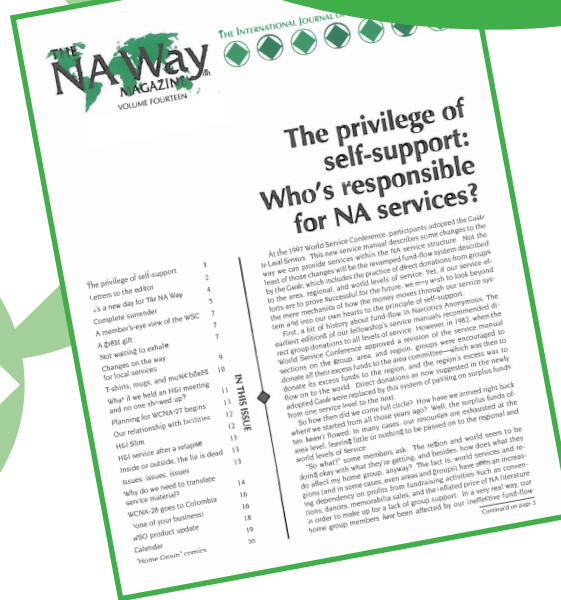
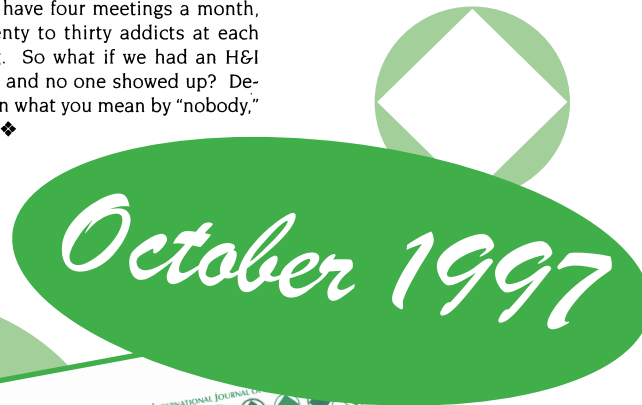
I brought in the first meeting, and it went well. Most of the good old boys in the facility hadn't heard of NA before, but they listened. After the first month, attendance started dropping. Over the next five months, it went from bad to worse. There was a period of several months when not one addict from the jail showed up at the meeting. Our hearts broke. After a year of minimal attendance, our area H&I chair called the warden, gave him a phone number to call if anyone requested an NA meeting, and closed our H&I meeting.

I felt worse than I had the night I was locked up in that very jail. I questioned my motives. Was I running on

In 1997, World Services underwent a restructuring that also affected *The NA Way Magazine*. Several subcommittee-specific newsletters were discontinued, and *The NA Way* was adapted to provide service information and updates from NA World Services. To mark this 20-year milestone in 2017, we reprinted articles from June 1997 (the last issue in the old format) and October 1997 (the first issue in the new format).

self-will? I went to meetings and shared about it. It was at one of those meetings that I saw him—one of the addicts from the jail who had come in the last months we were doing the meeting. He said he was trying to stay clean, and thanked H&I for making a difference in his life. Wow!

We now do a shared service H&I in another not-so-rural correctional facility. We have four meetings a month, and twenty to thirty addicts at each meeting. So what if we had an H&I meeting and no one showed up? Depends on what you mean by "nobody," I guess. ♦



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A member's-eye view of the World Service Conference

I'm just sitting here trying to formulate my report to the region about what happened at the World Service Conference. I'm sure I'll come up with a businesslike report, but right now all I can think of are the more touching moments of the conference. Perhaps it was because this was my last year as a participant that I found myself with that lip-quivering lump in the throat, the "I'm going to cry in public" feeling on more than one occasion—but I don't think so. I wasn't the only one who was moved when the representative from the Philippines appealed to the conference to get back on track, or when Anthony E, one of the WSO executive co-directors, stood at the podium fighting back tears about Debbie G, a staff member who had passed away at work during the year. I wasn't the only one who felt transported by joy when a newcomer with fourteen days clean asked, "How can I join?" and the whole conference stood and cheered and told him he already had. I wasn't the only one who fought back tears when the representative from Japan finished sharing through her interpreter and then stepped back to the microphone to say "I can't, we can" in English.

There are more things that make up a World Service Conference than are seen later in the parliamentary procedures and motions recounted in the conference minutes. Maybe some will measure the conference by what we passed or didn't pass, but I will measure this conference in a very personal way: by those events and the people who made them happen. Those things will continue to touch my life long after the last motion is passed.

Nick G, Massachusetts ♦