

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE TRADITIONS

The following is not a policy statement from the World Service Board of Trustees. It is intended merely to stimulate thought and discussion on the importance of our public relations and their effect on Narcotics Anonymous

—WSB External Affairs Committee

We know how important our relations with one another are in NA, because we need one another to continue recovering from addiction. But, even though our groups are autonomous, our fellowship needs more than just the support of our own members. Our community relations also contribute to the fellowship's growth and survival. And that's what this bulletin is about: the principles behind NA's public relations policy. First, we'll look at two reasons why our fellowship seeks good relations with the community. Then, we'll look at what NA's traditions say about our public relations activities.

Community relations— practical importance

It's a given in NA that, as recovering addicts, we have to share our recovery with others in order to stay clean. The same applies to our groups. Without newcomers, the most important people in our meetings are absent. Narcotics Anonymous maintains its vitality by fulfilling its primary purpose: carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

What does that have to do with our public relations? Simple. NA cannot help addicts if they never hear of us, or if our reputation is such that addicts are advised to steer clear of us. True, NA will reach some addicts directly, good community relations or not. Our members will invite friends, family members, and co-workers who seek recovery to attend our meetings. Other addicts will hear of us at H&I presentations; if they need help, they'll know who to call.

The vast majority of still-suffering addicts, however, must be reached indirectly, through others in the community. Most addicts will only hear of us through media reports and announcements, professional referral, or direction given by members of the community-at-large—or they won't hear of us at all. To fulfill our

primary purpose, we will need to seek good, cooperative relations with the community around us. We can't fulfill that purpose on our own.

Community relations—a spiritual path

In NA public information work, we acknowledge that we're "a part of," not "apart from" the community around us. We cannot play our part in fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose on our own resources alone. And the actions we take to fulfill our primary purpose affect our community, not just our fellowship. Our group, our PI subcommittee, our ASC, our region, and our world services are but parts of a much greater endeavor—human society.

If humility means seeing oneself in proper spiritual perspective, then our community relations are a key indicator of our fellowship's spiritual condition. Public relations work offers us an opportunity, as a fellowship, to improve our spiritual condition. First, PI can help our fellowship remain teachable. As a spiritual society, as a recovery program, and as a social movement, Narcotics Anonymous can learn much from the society around us. Others have done many of the same kinds of things we seek to do. We can learn from them.

Humility also means recognizing our limitations. We don't have all the answers for every troubled person in our community; we don't even have all the answers for every drug addict in our community. In Narcotics Anonymous, one addict shares his experience, strength, and hope with another. Some of the problems related to addiction cannot be satisfactorily addressed that way, and require outside help.

NA is but one tool for addressing addiction, not the only tool. In many communities, a variety of organizations offer help to addicts seeking recovery. Some of them do so with great effectiveness. For whatever reason, some addicts might find recovery more readily through those programs than through Narcotics Anonymous. We don't pretend to have cornered the recovery market. If others can offer help where we cannot, then more power to them.

Humility means recognizing the place we occupy in our community. We have a particular role to play, and a very useful one at that. Our role is different from others'. It's not necessarily better or worse than the role played by others who focus on addiction and

recovery—it's just different. Our public relations and our primary purpose will be best served if we fill our place in the community with life and spirit, to the best of our ability.

Having considered some of the basic issues related to public information work, it's time to take a look at the specific guidance our Twelve Traditions provide for NA's relations with the community. We'll consider our public relations policy of "attraction rather than promotion." We'll look at what we're attracting people to, and whom we're trying to attract. We'll think about how NA relates to other organizations in the community. Finally, we'll touch briefly on the use of service centers in organizing and administering our public relations efforts.

Attraction

Our Eleventh Tradition tells us that "our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." One of the spiritual principles underlying that kind of public relations policy is humility. When we share our message in public, we state it simply and directly rather than making overblown claims about Narcotics Anonymous. We have had what our members feel to be significant success, but we do not claim to have a program that will work for all addicts under all circumstances or therapeutic views that should be universally adopted. All we say is that, if someone in the community has a drug problem, Narcotics Anonymous may be able to help. We've helped many addicts stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a healthy, productive place in society. We need claim nothing more than that to attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings and gain the goodwill of those in the community who might refer addicts to us.

It should be emphasized, however, that "attraction rather than promotion" does not mean we do nothing to make ourselves known in the community. It's not only all right, but encouraged, to get the word of NA's existence and usefulness out and about. We don't go around making wild, extravagant claims about ourselves or downing the work of others. But we're not a secret society, either. Narcotics Anonymous believes in personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity.

The Eleventh Tradition spells only one public relations restriction out in detail: "We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." We discourage public media use of full-face pictures of NA members or stories which identify NA members by name. We do this for two reasons. First, we must be able to assure newcomers that their identities as NA members will remain confidential. Second, we want to keep the public media focused on NA's credibility, not on the credibility of the person carrying the message.

The need to maintain personal anonymity in the public media does not prohibit the use of spokespersons. However, those spokespersons should appear not as NA members, but either as special workers whose job is to speak for the organization or as nonaddict friends of the fellowship. More will be said later of special workers, service centers, and their role in NA's public relations.

The Eleventh Tradition focuses on the need for personal anonymity only in the public media. At other levels, personal anonymity is a matter of personal choice. When we know someone with a drug problem, we may disclose to them our identity as recovering addicts and NA members if we think it might be helpful to do so. Likewise, members who make PI presentations at community events, sharing their personal recovery experience as well as general information about the NA program, have not compromised the Eleventh Tradition. So long as we maintain our personal anonymity in the public media, we are supporting the Eleventh Tradition.

Carrying the message

Why do we publicize the NA program? "Each group has but one primary purpose," our Fifth Tradition asserts, "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." How can we judge the usefulness of a service project? By considering the extent to which it will help our groups fulfill their primary purpose. PI's main job is to attract addicts to group meetings. As the Basic Text reminds us, "The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message." (Basic Text, p. 65.)

But what message? It's important that public information subcommittee members be very clear on this matter so that they do not convey inaccurate

impressions of our fellowship to the community. Our Third Tradition says that “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.” In Narcotics Anonymous, it’s clear that means “to stop using drugs”—not compulsive overeating or gambling or criminality or sex-seeking. The Basic Text goes even further: “The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. That is all we have to give.” (Basic Text, p. 65)

One thing more needs to be considered when we talk about the Third and Fifth Traditions and our community relations. Our fellowship’s primary purpose is “to carry the message to the addict who still suffers”—and that means *any* addict still suffering. Our Third Tradition reinforces the utter lack of restrictions, save one, on membership. Many NA areas begin with groups started among addicts who come from the same social, economic, racial, ethnic, or cultural background. There’s nothing wrong with that, provided NA grows to reach addicts of all backgrounds. It’s important that our public information subcommittees take the time to carefully study their communities. That way, they’ll discover the full range of the need for what Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. In the process, they’ll also learn how to effectively publicize NA’s solution to addiction throughout the community.

Relations with others

Our nonaddict friends have been instrumental in starting Narcotics Anonymous in many communities and helping NA grow. As we’ve already seen, Narcotics Anonymous really couldn’t fulfill its primary purpose without the cooperation of others. We do, however, have certain traditions guiding our relations with other organizations, among them the Sixth, Seventh, and Tenth Traditions:

“An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

“Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

“Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

We seek to provide helpful information about the NA program to others in our community. We seek to cooperate with others as much as we can as members of the community. At the same time, we maintain a clear distinction between NA and other organizations. We neither endorse nor oppose the work of others. We do not provide funds for the work of others and do not accept outside funding for our own activities. NA has a place in the community, and it’s NA’s responsibility to maintain that place.

An area’s public relations efforts ought to be supported entirely by its members and groups through its area service committee. Local businesses, government agencies, or civic organizations may approve so heartily of what we do that they offer advertising funds to help us carry our message. Public information subcommittees are encouraged to decline that kind of support, well intentioned as it is. Narcotics Anonymous needs to pay its own way.

However, it should be noted that self-support questions are not always black-and-white. A phonenumber ad in the local paper, annotated “sponsored by John Doe Chevrolet,” would clearly denote an outside contribution. However, most American TV and radio stations provide a certain amount of free public time to public-benefit organizations. Some transit companies offer reduced bus bench rates to nonprofit endeavors. On the one hand, these could be considered “outside contributions.” On the other hand, to decline them would be the same as to decline to drive on publicly funded roads while on a Twelfth Step call. Each public information subcommittee will have to exercise its own best judgment in such cases.

There is one final matter to keep in mind when considering our relations with other organizations. In order to maintain its focus, Narcotics Anonymous has established a tradition of neutrality on public issues. We do not take positions as an organization on anything outside our own specific sphere of activity. Narcotics Anonymous does not express opinions, either pro or con, on civil, social, medical, legal, or religious matters. We do not even take stands on secondary addiction-related issues such as criminality, law enforcement, drug legalization or penalties,

prostitution, HIV infection, or free needle programs. We believe our sole competence is in providing a place where suffering addicts can identify with others like themselves who've experienced substantial recovery from addiction. To remain free from the distraction of controversy, we focus our energy on what we do best, and only on that.

Community service centers

Public information work requires attention to detail, careful record-keeping, and consistent follow-up. Responsible administration of PI affairs can take a great deal of time—perhaps more time than subcommittee volunteers have available. To assist in the administration of PI services, some areas and regions have created service centers staffed by special workers.

“Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional,” our Eighth Tradition says, “but our service centers may employ special workers.” We don't have paid counsellors at our group meetings. Recovery is freely shared, addict to addict. Public information work, however, is not usually the kind of addict-to-addict personal sharing the first part of the Eighth Tradition refers to. Our goal is to provide consistent, responsible service so that as many addicts as possible can find their way to our meetings. If your area needs additional help doing this, a service center might provide that help. For information on the nuts and bolts of opening and operating a community service center, contact the World Service Office.

Good community relations are vital to the fulfillment of NA's primary purpose. Without the help of others in our community, many addicts will never hear of Narcotics Anonymous. We have a responsibility to maintain our relations with the community, so that our message is carried as widely as possible and so that, in turn, we serve our community as effectively as possible. For our fellowship's own well-being, we need to learn as much as we can from other organizations in our community and humbly acknowledge our place in the community. We in Narcotics Anonymous are “a part of” the larger community around us, not “apart from.” The Twelve Traditions provide specific guidance for our public

relations activities. But without the humble desire to serve our fellow addicts, we'll have no message to carry and no fellowship to publicize.

Keep Reading you are about to get to the good part.

This appears to have become the policy of NAWS Inc.

view the following at NA.org

under

WS Board of Trustee Bulletins

Bulletin 25: Public relations and the traditions

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
(818) 780-3951

May 14, 1992

Richard A. O'
8,
Callinlough Rd.
Cork
IRELAND

Dear friends,

We have received your letters regarding the bulletin on "PI and the Traditions" in which you expressed your displeasure with the development of the article. While we do not agree with your interpretation of the article, we do support your right to disagree with some of the statements included in the bulletin.

In closing, we are pleased that you have found hope and recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. We wish you well in your future service efforts. Please feel free to contact us for any further assistance we can provide.

In fellowship,

Becky Meyer, Chairperson
World Service Board of Trustees

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RE: THE ARTICLE IN NA "NEWSLINE" JAN
1992 BY, WSO B of TRUSTEES, EXTERNAL RELATIONS
COMM.

- (1) WE DO NOT CONSIDER OURSELVES 'PART OF'
ANY COMMUNITY OTHER THAN OUR NA
COMMUNITY, BECAUSE TO BECOME 'PART OF' WOULD
IMPLY SERVICE & NOT SERVILITY TO THE
IDEOLOGY OR IDEOLOGIES OF THAT COMMUNITY.
THE PROCESS OF ENDORSEMENT BY THE VEILED
CODEWORDS IN YOUR ARTICLE IS NOT SOMETHING
WE CONSIDER BENEFICIAL TO NA, ALTHOUGH IT
MAY WELL SERVE THOSE ~~WAYS~~ WAYS OTHER THAN,
OPPOSITE TO OR HOSTILE TO THE NA WAY. JUSTIFYING
THE WAYS OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS EQUALS IMPLIED ENDORSEMENT.
- (2) WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND
WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE 'OTHER
ORGANISATIONS' YOU MENTIONED, BECAUSE WE
FEEL THAT YOUR HEART LIES WITH THOSE
ORGANISATIONS. WE NOTICED HOW YOUR LANGUAGE
BECOMES VIVID AND EXCITED ('OTHER ORGANISATIONS' - GREAT
EFFECTIVENESS - "MORE POWER TO THEM") WHEN SPEAKING OF
OTHER ORGANISATIONS BUT WHEN SPEAKING OF NA YOU
CHOOSE RATHER PLUNDANE WORDS. NA IS AT
BEST "USEFUL" BUT OTHER ORGANISATIONS ARE "GREAT".
- (3) YOU DID NOTHING TO ENHANCE OR ILLUSTRATE
THE NA WAY, WHILE YOU DID A GREAT DEAL
TO EXTOLL THE ALLEGED VIRTUES OF 'OTHER ORGANISATIONS'.
YOU WERE THUS MOTIVATED BY DEFECTS OF
CHARACTER. ABOVE ALL, YOU CONFUSE HUMANITY

WITH SERVILITY. AS WE HAVE NO DIFFICULTY
IN CARRYING THE NA WAY, BECAUSE WE KNOW
THAT IT'S ONLY THE NA WAY ~~IS THAT WE ARE~~

~~SAFE TO UNDERSTAND FOR OUR OWN~~

ABOUT, YOUR ARTICLE ACTUALLY ATTACKED OUR
EFFORTS AS IT MADE US FEEL THAT THERE
WAS NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE NA WAY, AT
BEST IT HAS PARITY WITH A WHOLE VARIETY
OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS; SO, WE SAY TO OURSELVES
CARRYING THEIR WAY IS ABOUT THE SAME AS
THE NA WAY. YOU SEEM TO HAVE MISSED
THE POINT. WE CARRY THE NA WAY BECAUSE
OF ITS SPECIAL MEANING TO ADDICTS. WE

CARRY A PHILOSOPHY, YOU OFFER US A NOTION,
ONE THAT REDUCES NA TO THE SLAVE OF
A PROFESSIONAL CASTE. WE BELIEVE THAT
BECAUSE WE HAVE A PHILOSOPHY, WE SHOULD
BE STRAIGHT AND PLAIN AND DEFEND THAT
WHICH WE LOVE; WE FEEL THAT YOUR NEEDLESS
OBSESSION WITH GOOD PUBLIC - GOOD COMMUNITY
RELATIONS, IS NOTHING MORE THAN A LOOHPHOLING
AND OBSCURING PROCESS TO MAKE NA PALATABLE
TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS WHO
~~WHICH~~ REQUIRE A SPINELESS, PASSIVE NA —
THE BETTER TO SUIT THEIR CONCERN FOR
MONEY, PROPERTY AND PRESTIGE, ~~AND THEIR OWN~~ ^{FOR PARTICULAR}
AND ALSO TO PROPAGANDISE THEIR PARTICULAR WAYS.

(4) YOUR USE OF THE TERM "COMMUNITY" IN
SEVERAL DIFFERENT WAYS, EVINCES THE
CONFUSED AND CONFUSING ARGUMENT IN
YOUR ARTICLE. WE COULD NOT UNRAVEL

A MEANING HERE, BECAUSE WE FEEL SURE YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. YOU RESORT TO ENGLISH WORD AND PHRASE USAGE TO ESCAPE THE COMPLEX, PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION THAT THE TERM "COMMUNITY" INVOLVES.

(5) YOUR ARTICLE HAD ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL TIREDNESS. YOU SEEM JADED AND BEREFT OF INSPIRATION. YOU SHOW NO SENSE OF THE MOTIVATIONAL POWER OF NA OF ITS INSPIRATION, ITS MYSTERY AND MAGIC. YOU SEEM ONLY INSPIRED WHEN YOU TURN TO THINGS OUTSIDE NA. BECAUSE OUR NA

PROGRAMME OF RECOVERY FROM DRUG ADDICTION IS CENTERED ON THE GOD OF OUR UNDERSTANDING TO ^{WHOM} ~~WHICH~~ WE APPLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS / HIS PRECEPTS IN THE PREFACE TO OUR BLUE BOOK WE CAN AND NEVER SHOULD IMPOSE ANY LIMITATION ON THE POWER OF THAT GOD TO HELP US IN NA.

YOUR ARTICLE UNDERMINED THE VALUE OF OUR FAITH IN NA BY EXCLUDING ANY SENSE OF THE POWER OF OMNIPOTENCE.

(6) NA HERE, IS COMPOSED OF PEOPLE FROM ALL CLASSES & MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES. RATHER THAN ^{SERVE TO} UNITE US ALL IN SERENITY AROUND THE NA WAY, YOU INTRODUCED THE KIND OF UNNECESSARY & CONTROVERSIAL IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE THAT UNDERMINES OUR SERENITY AND RAISES UP ONLY THE ^{INFLATED} IDEOLOGY OF EGO. ~~GOOD~~ PUBLIC RELATIONS BY SERVING NA AND NOT THE COMMUNITY WE UNITE OURSELVES. THE NOTION OF SERVING "THE COMMUNITY" OR "THE COMMUNITY

AROUND US" or "COMMUNITIES" or "OUR COMMUNITIES",
 "THE COMMUNITY" or "THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE," etc. IS
 A POLITICAL / IDEOLOGICAL QUESTION FROM
 WHICH WE, ACCORDING TO OUR TRADITIONS
 SHOULD ABSTAIN, BECAUSE OF ITS DIVISIVE,
 ELITIST AND POWER-BROKING CONSEQUENCES.

COMMENTS MADE BY NA 'SPOKESMAN' (RE BUDDHIST METHOD OF TREATING ADDICTION) IN LONDON 1990, BEAR THIS OUT.

(5) WE SERVE NA AND CARRY THE NA MESSAGE TO
 THE ADDICT WHO STILL SUFFERS. WE CO-OPERATE
 WITH ANYONE AS LONG AS IT HELPS US TO
 CARRY THE NA WAY, BUT WE DO NOT CARRY
 THEIR WAY. As such then we in NA are a
 community, BUT ARE NOT PART of ANY COMMUNITY
 OUTSIDE. WE REGARD THIS AS A SPIRITUAL REALITY.

FOR EXAMPLE we meet IN AN INSTITUTION THAT
 IS PART OF THE PROPERTY OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.
 BUT WE, THE NA COMMUNITY, CONCEIVE OF OURSELVES AS
 SEPARATE FROM THAT COMMUNITY, IN TERMS of PHILOSOPHY,
 WAY, ORGANISATION, AND AIM. OUR AIMS ARE
 NOT THE SAME AS "OTHER ORGANISATIONS." OUR AIM.

IS THE NA WAY AND NO-ONE ELSE, NOT EVEN THOSE
 WHO HELP US, ACTUALLY EMBODIES THAT WAY. THERE
 IS A DANGER, INHERENT IN YOUR ARTICLE, THAT
 NA MIGHT BE SEEN TO BE PART OF A
 SOCIAL CRUSADE AGAINST DRUGS. THIS DANGER
 MORAL

V

(7) IS FRAUGHT WITH POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE FOR NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF A CONFORMIST NATURE.

(8) Some Q's re "GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS" - "GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS"

(a) WHAT if 'our community' is BIGOTED, YET OFFER US A PLACE TO MEET. SHOULD WE PEND OUR PHILOSOPHY TO GET A MEETING GOING? COULDN'T THAT CONSTITUTE GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS.

(b) WHAT if AN NA MEMBER IS ENGAGED IN A PROTEST CONCERNING ABUSE AGAINST A TREATMENT CENTRE, WHICH IS FRIENDLY TO NA, COULDN'T GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS MEAN NA SHOULD TAKE A POSITION RE PROTEST BY ITS MEMBERS AGAINST DRUG INSTITUTIONS;

(c) If TWO of 'our communities' are in CONFLICT BUT one is FRIENDLIER TO NA THAN THE OTHER, DO WE IDENTIFY MORE WITH THE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY, THUS RUNNING THE RISKS OF PARTISANSHIP AND RISKING THE HOSTILITY OF THE OTHER. (IN THE CONTEXT of the N. of IRELAND AND ITS INTER-COMMUNITY STRIFE, YOUR ARTICLE COULD BE CONSTRUED AS DRAWING NA INTO the CONFLICT, BY obliging NA TO DEFINE ITS INVOLVEMENT WITH BOTH COMMUNITIES AND THUS WITH THE IDEOLOGIES of BOTH COMMUNITIES, WHEREAS THE SIMPLE TRADITION-BASED SPIRIT FREES NA FROM THESE

... AND IT TALKS US TO CARRY THE NA MESSAGE TO ADDICTS ONLY.

~~THE ONLY THING WE'LL GET FROM COMMITTEES MAKING STUDIES OF "OUR COMMUNITY" ETC WILL BE THE KIND OF CLICHE - RIDDEN CONTENTIOUS, CHILDISHLY NAIVE PROFOUNDNESS ON COMPLEX PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL REALITIES WHICH NA COMMITTEES ARE NOTED FOR, AND WHICH ULTIMATELY WEAKEN RATHER THAN STRENGTHEN THE NA WAY.~~

(9) Your ARTICLE DID NOTHING TO FACILITATE US IN CARRYING THE NA WAY. THE VERY WORST PART WAS THAT YOU SEEM TO DERIVE GREATER LIFE FROM ORGANISATIONS OTHER THAN NA. YOU DON'T SHOW MUCH CONCERN FOR AN ACTIVE NA CARRYING ITS OWN MESSAGE. YOUR OVERALL CONCERN SEEMS TO BE TO REDUCE NA TO ^{BECOME} A SMOOTH, FLEXIBLE, APPEASING SERVANTS OF ANY ORGANISATION (Professional or otherwise) THAT CAN RUB TWO BITS OF LOGIC TOGETHER.

AS THE ONLY PROBLEM WE HAVE CARRYING THE NA WAY AT THE MOMENT IS THE BADLY-WRITTEN, PROPAGANDIST RUBBISH ~~LIKE~~ LIKE THIS ARTICLE, EMANATING FROM THE WSO & T'S, WE THINK THOSE RESPONSIBLE SHOULD RESIGN.

~~THE ONLY THING WE'LL GET FROM COMMITTEES MAKING STUDIES OF "OUR COMMUNITY" ETC WILL BE THE KIND OF CLICHE - RIDDEN CONTENTIOUS, CHILDISHLY NAIVE PROFOUNDNESS ON COMPLEX PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL REALITIES WHICH NA COMMITTEES ARE NOTED FOR, AND WHICH ULTIMATELY WEAKEN RATHER THAN STRENGTHEN THE NA WAY.~~

(10) - THE ONLY THING WE'LL GET FROM COMMITTEES MAKING STUDIES OF "OUR COMMUNITY" ETC WILL BE THE KIND OF CLICHE - RIDDEN CONTENTIOUS, CHILDISHLY NAIVE PROFOUNDNESS ON COMPLEX PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL REALITIES WHICH NA COMMITTEES ARE NOTED FOR, AND WHICH ULTIMATELY WEAKEN RATHER THAN STRENGTHEN THE NA WAY.

(11) You TALK ABOUT NEUTRALITY ON OUTSIDE ISSUES. FINE. BUT THEN YOU ENCOURAGE US TO GO TO 'OTHER ORGANISATIONS' - who; it should be remembered, do not practice anonymity, serenity, or the Higher Lower concept of NA. You talk about ^{avoiding} controversy but then you encourage us to go to 'other organisations' and study ways other than, and controversially different from, if not hostile to, the NA way.

You tell us we have "a lot to learn" from "other organisations". Do you mean the religious and secular control ideologies who organise institutions around here? We hope not. Do you mean the pseudo-psychology of those who exploit our programme for money, property and prestige. We should think not. We joined NA and found a new freedom. For some of us that freedom became political. We do not stay in NA to be told by a weak-minded and spiritually-atrophied committee, (who speak in the same grey, authoritarian, schoolteacher tone that we ought to go and study beneath the giant egos. NA for us is separate so that individual addicts can be truly free; for us that means a true and active neutrality re all ideologies save NA ideology, and certainly not the bogus neutrality which associates NA ~~is~~ with "other organisations" and in favour of "other organisations". To us, you are a disgrace. You may be ADDICTS in NA (or are you?) but we seen to think that we have little philosophy in common.

(12) 5 of our meetings here, including the forum meeting

Have declared that NA here is separate from what you call "community." Some of us begin to think that NA is becoming nothing more than a lackey - centre for the 'other organisations', and as a result that we should set up a rival Fellowship with a philosophy of freedom.

(13) If your article was intellectually dishonest. It did not spell ^{out} what was meant by terms like "other organisations" "community" etc. and what you promoted in one part of your article e.g. involvement with 'other organisations' you obscure in another part e.g. "Having no opinion on outside issues." You want, it seems to us nothing more than this: positive involvement with other organisations but absolutely no criticism. For us, that means that NA comes to be a philosophy and becomes a slave to "other organisations." If we like you say, identify with "other organisations," we take on an opinion on outside issues. We want neutrality but not neutrality - in - favour of anything outside NA.

(14) We carry the NA way to addicts. It is we who do the essential 'carrying'. We need to emphasise this, - for it is this which gives us life while you offer us the moral opium of a ~~deadly~~ ^{DEADLY} deference to BUREAUCRATIC AND ESTABLISHMENT CONTROL IDEOLOGIES AND ALSO "THEIR"

CORRUPTED REVISIONS of 12-STEP IDEOLOGY. Our way is SEPARATE FROM THEIR WAY, AND IN THAT for us, lies the GUARANTEE of our freedom.

Yours sincerely
Richard D.

ADD:

8,

BALLINLUGH RD.,

CORK,

IRELAND.

FROM: RICHARD A.

O'

NA MEMBER, CORK,

WITH SUBSTANTIAL

APPROVAL AND SUPPORT FROM:

JOHN T. N.A. MEMBER

flat w/ NA member

Anthony Edmondson, executive director of Narcotics Anonymous, before the start of the national convention.



Rebecca Meyer, assistant executive director of Narcotics Anonymous, hugs an attendee at the Convention Center on Wednesday.

POSTED: SEPTEMBER 01, 2013

The addicts are coming! The addicts are coming!

More than 17,000. In fact, they're already here!

Narcotics Anonymous celebrates its 60th anniversary this weekend in Philadelphia.

As prescription drug abuse reaches epidemic levels, especially among young people, the recovering addicts began arriving Thursday to celebrate their sobriety and show the public that drug habits can be kicked and former users can go on to lead productive and happy lives.

"I've talked to a lot of people in convention services over the years who are a little nervous about all the drug addicts coming to town," said Rebecca Meyer, assistant executive director of Narcotics Anonymous. "But we're the well-behaved ones. There's no alcohol, no drugs, no violence - and the coffee sales will zoom."

The organization, widely praised by area drug prevention and treatment experts, is patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous and similarly based on a 12-step recovery program.

NA says it hosts 60,000 meetings a week in 129 countries, and meetings will be held hourly around the clock through Sunday at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown.

Not only will recovering addicts globally be attending, but many in treatment locally and still battling addiction will attend as well. At least 40 area veterans, clean for one to two years, will be there.

"The purpose of the convention is to share those stories of going from depth and horror of addiction to unbelievable diversity of life that we have," Meyer said. "There's some kind of paradigm shift when we hear somebody tell their story. 'If they can do it, I can do it.'"

Many emotional moments are expected.

On Saturday evening, there will be a countdown among at least 10,000 addicts in the hall. The count will begin when those who have been clean for at least 50 years are asked to stand. Everyone will clap. Eventually, those who haven't used drugs for a year, a month and even a week will be asked to stand, to increasingly loud cheers of support from others in the hall.

Those sober for a week or less are asked to come to the stage and are given a copy of NA's basic text, including the 12 steps, the founding principles, and stories from recovering addicts around the world.

"We believe we can't keep what we have unless we give it away," said Jane Nickels, a NA spokeswoman. "Recovering people have to show the new people how to live this." Sunday features the Unity Day Call. More than 60 gatherings of NA members in such places as Australia, Bhutan, Brazil, France, India, Iran and Iceland will call in to the convention hall. In addition, groups from 98 prisons around the United States will call in, with many giving a shout-out, such as, "Hi from San Quentin."

All the groups hooked in remotely, about 15,000, can hear the speeches and activity on the convention floor.

"Everyone has a sense of being connected to our worldwide fellowship," said Nickels. "There's not a dry eye in the house."

"I think the world of NA," added Gary Tennis, a former Philadelphia prosecutor and now secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, who sat on one panel Friday.

"I feel like the best people I've ever met in the world are in recovery. They have extraordinary integrity. Take tremendous personal responsibility for themselves. They give back. I refer to them as walking prevention programs."

Panelists, however, said they are deeply concerned about soaring use of prescription drugs, especially among young people.

"Between North Carolina and New York, there is a national prescription drug epidemic," said Mike Harle, chief executive of Norristown-based Gaudenzia, the largest treatment provider in Pennsylvania.

"And I think it is embarrassing," he added. "I'm really distraught that we are creating a whole new generation of narcotic addicts and we're doing it with legal prescriptions. As a culture, we should be ashamed of it. We have made these drugs so available to so many people with really negative consequences."

Deni Carise, deputy chief clinical officer for CRC Health Group, the nation's largest treatment provider, said, "My biggest concern is the number of high schoolers and young adults that are getting involved in prescription opiates and then transfer very quickly over to heroin. This is true in the Northeast corridor."

Ken Dickinson, Gaudenzia's marketing director, and a former addict and pharmacist, said, "As of 2011, the number one accidental death in America is no longer auto, it is opiate overdose."

Dickinson also said many overdoses come from mixing heroin with an incredibly potent and powerful opiate, Fentanyl.

"As of June 30 in Pennsylvania," he said, "we had 50 deaths from the drug Fentanyl, and in most of those deaths, the person was using heroin."

He said the Fentanyl is "50 to 100 times the potency of heroin," and gives an extra kick to heroin, which isn't as powerful as the prescription drugs that addicts were taking. "The Fentanyl is what's causing the overdose," he said.

Experts said the range of treatments - medications, counseling, residential programs, and NA meetings - has never been better, yet with such potent and available prescription drugs, addiction is only rising.

Carise said that more than 22 million Americans are addicted to drugs or alcohol today, about the same number who are in recovery.

With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, access to drug treatment programs should increase.

"The good thing about Obamacare is treatment was written into the law, coverage must be provided for substance abuse," said Harle. "But the law doesn't say what that coverage is, what should be provided." He said that's being worked out now.

Those at the convention may not drink or do drugs anymore, but they enjoy their music. Entertainment includes seven performances, including The Family Stone and Styx.

The public can attend, but individuals must buy a registration for \$99. The convention program can be seen at www.na.org/wcna.