

The Triangle

AA & Correctional Facilities

Volume 13, Issue 5

July 2005

From Your Area Corrections Chair

Greetings,

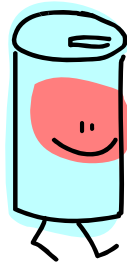
First of all, thank you to all the people who have participated in carrying the message to the correctional facilities of Montana. Everyone who has done this work has been patient, cheerful, and has carried a good message.

Workshops—June 11-12, I was invited up to Fort Peck to a District 21 campout to participate with the Area Treatment Chair in a workshop. I totally enjoyed myself and appreciated the hospitality of everyone at the campout. There is experience, strength, hope and commitment in District 21. On my way home I went to Shelby to attend the regular Sunday night meeting at the Crossroads Correctional Facility there. Again, I was moved by the commitment of the people who carry the message into that facility. There are good and dedicated people in District 42 too. I am available for workshops and would be honored to attend any that are being planned.

Mini Conference—The next Freedom Group Mini Conference will be Saturday October 15th at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. If you are interested in attending, I need your name, address, date of birth, and social security number by July 15th.

I will sign up all 27 people who attended the Spring Conference automatically. Also, I bring a speaker to WATCH in Warm Springs every third Thursday of the month. If you plan to be in the neighborhood on a third Thursday and would like to speak, let me know. Right now I have speakers lined up through August.

Sending Literature To Correctional Facilities—Area 40 has a Pink Can Fund. For those of you who don't know what that is, I will explain: Some groups collect money to buy literature for those incarcerated in prison or jail, usually by putting a labeled pink coffee can out on the table for voluntary contributions. Groups, being autonomous, can then use the money for literature for prisoners in a number of ways. They can buy and distribute the literature themselves (suggest soft cover only), they can donate the money to their district (which can then buy and distribute literature or forward the money to the Area 40 fund by



sending it to me), the groups can send the money directly to me, or any combination of the above. I buy literature on an as needed basis, so if you have a local facility in need of books or other literature and have no local funds, contact me and I will try to help you. So far this year I have sent literature to the Men's State Prison, the Women's State Prison, both WATCH programs (for multiple DUI offenders), and the Crossroads facility in Shelby. I believe this program is important because inmates in Montana do not have a way of buying the books themselves. Also, many inmates are locked up for a long period of time and having a Big Book and other AA reading material is critical in their program, especially since contact with other AA members is so limited. If you need a label for your Pink Can, let me know and I will mail you one.

Ways To Help—Carrying the message to inmates is the central work of the Corrections Facilities Committee. There are three ways to be of service without ever going inside a facility. One way is by

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providing literature as stated above. Another way is to sign up to be a temporary contact to help introduce AA to those who have just been released by bringing them to a meeting or two and introducing them to the other members. Or you can offer to be a temporary sponsor. You can sign up either through me or through your district Corrections Chair or DCM. The third way is to sign up for the Corrections Correspondence Service. (See the article on page 5.) When you sign up for this

Continued on Page 2

From Your Area 40 Corrections Chair Continued..

program through GSO you will be assigned an inmate to correspond with. This inmate will be from another part of the country and there are guidelines in place to establish personal boundaries. To sign up for this program, just let me know and I will mail you a sign up form that you can then send to GSO.

Meetings In Correctional Facilities—Last, but not least, arranging face-to-face AA meetings in correctional facilities is a huge part of the work of this committee. If you are interested in attending a meeting, you must find out when and where they are and how you can be “cleared” to enter the facility. Again, the best bet is to contact your district’s corrections chair, your DCM, your GSR, or me. You will then be given the information you need. If you are interested in approaching a facility about starting a meeting, the best

source of information besides the people just mentioned is the Correction Facilities Workbook or Kit available from the GSO Literature Department. The guidelines given there are excellent. Some people who attend meetings in institutions sponsor inmates. Different facilities have different rules regarding one-to-one contact, so be aware of those rules. Almost all sponsorship is done either by mail or by visits.

My Story—On a personal note, I got involved in this type of service work in 1995. I began attending weekly meetings at the county jail in Winnemucca, Nevada, where I was living at the time. I then also started going to weekly meetings at a state run minimum-security facility south of Winnemucca a couple of years later. In 2000 I moved back to Montana, and in 2001 started going to meetings at the State Prison in Deer Lodge. My sponsor,

who attended these meetings, didn’t have to twist my arm too hard. I sponsor one inmate from the State Prison. This year I started attending meetings on Tuesday nights at the Forensics Unit at the Warm Springs Hospital and I started my term as Area 40 Corrections Chair in January.

Growth Through Service—I have learned a lot from doing this service work. First of all, I have learned patience. The administration at these facilities has security as its number one priority. Often our desire to carry the message appears to conflict with that priority and the administration and staff often need much convincing of the need of AA inside the walls. And sometimes, existing meetings are cancelled or limited after a threat to security is perceived. Sometimes an inmate will lose the privilege of attending meetings. All

this can be pretty frustrating. But I love the meetings. One reason is because, unlike treatment meetings, attendance is voluntary. Inmates usually get no “good time” for meeting attendance or consequences for not attending meetings. Therefore many of the inmates who do attend are there because they want recovery and are enthusiastic about AA. Also, some of the inmates are so grateful for the chance at recovery, and some of them grow so much right before your eyes. And it’s neat to see, or hear of, them be released and staying sober on the outside. Finally, it’s so hard not to be grateful as I walk through the gate and drive to my home, free.

God Bless,
Gary O.

Corrections Fact: There are over 70,000 sober members of AA in prison around the world and over 2500 groups in correctional facilities.

Triangle Tidbits

- Thanks to all of you who submitted articles for this issue of the Triangle. The next Triangle issue will be dedicated to the Fall Assembly. If your group or district is putting forward an agenda item, please pass along any information which you feel the Area may need to make an informed decision.
- Agenda items are due to the Area Chair, Andrew W., by July 15.
- The next issue will come out in September. Deadline for submission of articles is August 21, 2005. Send them by email to Triangle@aa-montana.org.
- Also send in your “Overheard at Meetings” and “You might be an alcoholic if...”.

A Former Inmate Shares

Hello, my name is Tom and I am an alcoholic. Like many ex-cons, I grew up in a very dysfunctional family. My parents both drank and were gone from home a lot. My drinking began very early, at about the age of 6 or 7.

By the time I was 10 years of age, I was stealing beer from the fridge and booze from the cupboard. I fell instantly in love with the taste of beer and it became my primary drink of choice. By the time I was 14 years old, I was introduced to the drug world. This and the alcohol played a big part in my road of destruction.

I was drafted into the army where I found very good drugs, opium and the best weed. I saw death and destruction that I choose not to get into. It is better for me not to bring back that pain.

I was 21 years old when I got back home. I went to work for the same employer that I worked for when I was drafted. This man owned 52% of the holding stock in the Schlitz Brewery of Milwaukee and also owned 53% of the holding stock in Jim

Beam Bourbon Company. I worked there until I met my first wife. By this time I was 26 years old, got married and began what I hoped would be a better life. I went from ranching to railroading. My drinking and drug consumption only got worse as did my relationships with friends and family. This marriage failed and four children were left without a father.

Five months after my divorce, I was right back into another marriage, a big wreck right from the beginning. My drug use and drinking began to spiral way out of control. I began using harder drugs and whiskey became my only way of dealing with the life I was living. I was well on my way to destruction.

Finally at the age of 48, I was busted and was sent to prison with a 20-year sentence. Having drugs and alcohol taken away from me as it was in those first 25 days in jail were not good.

Two and a half years into my prison sentence, I was asked by a member of AA if I would like to go to an AA meeting. At first I was reluctant to

say yes, then I thought to myself this would be a good excuse to see some different scenery besides my home cell.

I soon discovered something I have never heard before in my life. I saw a chance for hope and a chance to find the real me. As I continued to go to these meetings, I started hearing those awful stories I lived.

Soon I was a grateful member of the Freedom Group of Montana State Prison. The scenery I was looking for was God's will for me to really see the world sober. Because I decided to stay, I soon discovered that I was an alcoholic. When I finally realized that I was an alcoholic, I couldn't wait to tell everybody. When I left that meeting and was going down the hallway back to my cell, I told everyone I saw that I am an alcoholic, inmates, guards, and counselors. I told everyone I saw.

I know that I have destroyed the lives of wives and six children and for that I am so very truly sorry. But because of one man who asked me to go to an AA meeting, I no longer have to

Corrections Fact:

The first prison AA meeting was established in San Quentin in 1941. Warden Clinton Duffy who started the group said "If AA helps one man, I want AA in San Quentin".

use and destroy the lives of those I love the most. Because the actions of one man, I live in peace and my joy is beyond words. I am alive and well and my serenity is given by the grace and love of God, my Higher Power.

I have been out of prison for three years now and there are no words to express the goodness that I enjoy in my new found life. One day at a time, from sunrise to sunset, the choice is mine and only mine not to drink.

God gave me the AA program and saved my life. You too can have this joy of life by making a choice that only you can make. It may save YOUR LIFE. May God bless each one of you who makes the right choice, life or death.

Members Share Their Experience in Corrections

I have been sober about 9 months. My experience going to the Montana State Prison was very profound. It had a huge effect on me in that my thoughts were that this could be me locked up. I have driven drunk many times. A twist of fate could have been that I could have harmed someone and be in this prison.

Preface the following in that I know that these men are not vic-

tims, but all of them are just like us. That realization made my heart pound. I had a personal conversation with a young man 24 years old who said he would be there 8 more years and had been there 3 years. I drove by there on the way to Missoula just last weekend and thought of him there.

Other than these personal thoughts, I thought the meeting was conducted very

professionally. Inmates were so considerate and such great hosts, feeding us lunch. I was very grateful for the experience and being able to talk with these men briefly. I was kind of wondering why woman were allowed to attend this meeting (all men's prison), but all went very well.

Thank you,
Vickie P.

Corrections Fact:
There are 14 alcoholic trustees (Class B) and 7 non-alcoholic trustees (Class A) on the General Service Board. Two of the Class A Trustees bring a wealth of experience from their professional work in the corrections field.

I have had the privilege of taking meetings into correctional facilities for the past 11 years. My first meeting was at Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. It remains some of the most fulfilling work I do in AA. This is from someone who was terrified to go into his first corrections meeting. I had never been to jail or had a DUI, let alone been to prison. What did I have to say; what did I have to tell these guys. What I found out is that the Freedom Group meetings are just like any other AA meeting. We share our

experience, strength and hope about recovery from the disease of alcoholism.

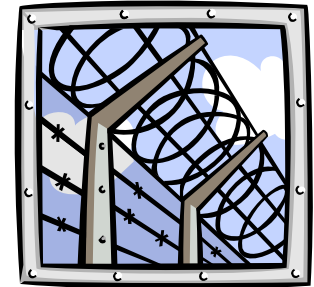
Even without any experience being incarcerated, I've had countless guys ask me to sponsor them; I've worked through the book with people by mail; I've listened to 5th steps through the glass and by phone; I've watched people get active in AA and upon release, develop productive lives and stay sober. The program works just like it does for anybody else in AA. But most importantly it works for me because it helps give my life purpose

and helps me live life comfortably, sober.

I've been able to attend all but one of the 17 Freedom Group mini-conferences and

Even without any experience being incarcerated, I've had countless guys ask me to sponsor them.

I'd encourage everyone to get their name on the list for that event. It is a great time and I always leave feeling both useful and content. Thanks to Alex, Spence and Dick who took me to my first



correctional facilities meetings and showed me how rewarding this part of 'carrying the message' can be. What a deal!

Lee

Corrections Correspondence—a special kind of A.A. Service

I know how important our Twelfth Step work is and I enjoy writing to men who are locked up. It is one of the tools that I use to keep me sober. I myself found A.A. in prison almost 20 years ago. And it hasn't been necessary for me to return to prison since I was released in 1979. —Outside Correspondent

We are in need of A.A. members on the 'outside' to correspond with A.A. members in correctional facilities.

It is suggested that men correspond with men and women with women. Most of the inmates who want an outside correspondent are men, so we are appealing to men on the outside.

If you would like to share your experience,

strength and hope with A.A.s who are confined, please mail the tear-off form to G.S.O.'s

Correctional Facilities Desk. The name of an inmate will be sent to you from your General

Service Office and you will make the initial contact through the mail.

Those who have participated in this service

have found sharing with inmates a very gratifying form of Twelfth Step

work. We are happy to know there are A.A. members like you willing to help make it possible for the A.A. message to be carried to those on the "inside."

Guidelines for Corrections Correspondence Service

Welcome to one of the most rewarding and rarely mentioned forms of Twelfth Step work. In addition to observing the rules in Correctional Facilities regarding mail and correspondence, the following are suggested guidelines drawn from shared experience to help you when writing to A.A. members on the "inside":

1. To begin, some correspondents prefer to use their group P. O. Box for receiving mail rather than their home address; some central/ intergroup offices offer their P.O. Box for this service. (We match correspondents from different states or provinces)
2. We introduce ourselves by qualifying briefly in our opening letter.
3. We try to let the inmate know that writing, like all forms of sharing, helps us as much as it helps her or him.
4. We let the inmate know that he or she is not alone.
5. We share sobriety and sobriety only.
6. We have found it best for all concerned if no emotional or romantic involvements develop.
7. If there is a desire to send a gift for a special occasion, we make it an A.A. book, A.A. literature, or Grapevine material. Before sending literature, see if the facility will allow it. Many Correctional Facilities will permit inmates to receive only literature sent directly from the publishers. Also, some facilities do not allow inmates to receive stamps or preaddressed, stamped envelopes.
8. In the spirit of the Twelfth Tradition, we respect the anonymity of our correspondents.
9. We encourage "inside" A.A. group activity and stress that first meeting *the day* the inmate leaves confine-

ment.

10. We encourage "inside" correspondents to notify G.S.O. prior to their release so that G.S.O. can set up a prerelease contact from their home community.

To help, send your name, address, and gender to Correctional Facilities Desk, General Service Office, PO Box 459, New York, NY 10163.

Thank you for your willingness to share in this most important work.

See the article on page 10 to learn how corrections correspondence has helped one member.

Area 40 Toll Free Number

GENERAL STRUCTURE: The 800 number would be managed under the Area 40 Public Information Chair. This person would be responsible for maintaining contact with existing hotline numbers in the state of Montana, and a calling list of AA members willing to take calls in the other four districts.

District 72 has implemented a toll free number and Billings is in the process.

- District 11 - Billings - 657-0776
- District 12 - Laurel - shares w/District 11
- District 21 - Wolf Point - no hotline
- District 23 - Glendive - no hotline
- District 31 - Miles City - no hotline
- District 41 - Great Falls - 452-1234
- District 42 - Shelby - 450-4191
- District 51 - Havre 262-3931
- District 61 - Helena 443-0438
- District 71 - Butte 491-0082
- District 72 - Bozeman 585-4079 or toll free 800-655-4069
- District 81 - Missoula 453-0011 Polson 888-6664
- District 91 - Kalispell 257-7185
- District 93 - Hamilton 523-5542

MECHANICS: The 800 number would be designated to Area 40 so that we would be able to change our service if need be and still retain the 800

number.

The 800 number would ring through to Airpage Answering Service, either the Billings or the Helena office. This office currently serves District 61 in Helena and District 11 in Billings. Airpage has access to the Area 40 Web Page maintained by the Area 40 Webmaster. Calls for meeting information would be handled via the Web Page. They also have the capability to email messages, at no cost, and to mail out meeting schedules if requested.

Prospective AA's wishing to speak to an alcoholic would be patched through to AA members on a calling list maintained by the Area 40 PI chair and provided to Airpage.

If the AA on the Calling list is not available, they would be able to use the Area 40 800 number to access Airpage, and be patched through to the alcoholic who still suffers, and not have to pay long distance charges. All charges for the call would be billed to the Area 40 account.

COST FOR 800 NUMBER:

Cost of the 800 number would be through Qwest on what's called a "market expansion line" and would be pointed towards Airpage. Costs would be \$23.62 per month for service, and 5 cents a minute, with a \$30 one-time set-up fee. With 25 minutes estimated for meeting information, and 50 minutes maximum for patches between

caller and answering service personnel, minute charges would be \$3.81, for a total of \$27.43 per month.

COST FOR ANSWERING SERVICE:

Cost for Airpage service is as follows, assuming 50 minutes of usage per month. There are other levels, costing less and more, if we wish to change the service at any time. First level was recommended. There is also a 10% discount if we pay a year in advance. The account representative stated they would not charge for setup. They are already trained in our type of service.

First Level Service: \$ 69.50 (After 50 minutes cost is 95 cents per minute up to 141 minutes)

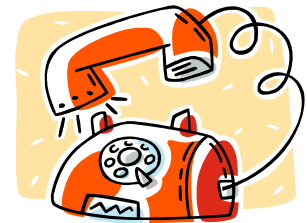
- 50 calls per month average
- 45 calls per month for meeting information @ 35 seconds each call (average)
- 5 calls per month requesting Sober AA @ 25 cents per minute for patch/16 cents per minute

(Amount of time per patch averages 5 - 10 minutes, but varies widely)

Cost for minutes charged for patches: \$9.25

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST PER MONTH:
 800 number \$27.43
 Answering service \$78.75

TOTAL - \$106.18
YEARLY: \$1,274.16



ISSUES IDENTIFIED FOR FURTHER WORK BEFORE FALL ASSEMBLY:

1. Joe H. From Belt will talk to some AA's in the rural areas to see if the service is wanted and needed.
2. Obtain information on costs of publishing the number in yellow pages around the state.
3. Talk to answering service people in Nebraska to get an idea of the maximum cost for service.
4. Make sure there aren't any long distance or other unknown charges involved.

The proposal will then be taken to the Fall Assembly by Connie R., Area 40 PI Chair. If you have questions, e-mail pi@aa-montana.org

Respectfully submitted:
 Laurie C.

**You might
 be an
 alcoholic
 if
 your job is
 interfering
 with your
 drinking**

Is Your Group Linked to A.A. As a Whole?

Most groups in the United States and Canada choose to be linked to A.A. as a whole by listing the group with the General Service Office (GSO), as well as with the Area Assembly, district and local central/intergroup office.

Groups listed with G.S.O. have either General Service Representatives (G.S.R.s), or “group contacts,” who act as channels for two-way information and shared experience. Once a group is listed with G.S.O., the group information is shared with the Area Assembly via the delegate. Group information may be first received by the Area, which then shares the information with G.S.O.

What’s the point? Each group linked to the local general service structure is automatically a part of the “group conscience” of A.A. in Canada and the U.S. through their G.S.R.’s participation in district meetings and Area Assembly. Each G.S.R. communicates his or her group’s “conscience” on important matters of policy considered by the district and Area Assembly. During the Annual General Service Conference, the Area’s groups are represented by their elected delegate. Groups in our listings are included in

the *confidential* domestic directories published annually, which provide contact information for traveling A.A. members.

New groups listed with the General Service Office are assigned an identifying service number (ID), receive a “Group Handbook” (through their G.S.R. or group contact), and are included in mailings sent to all listed A.A. groups. For instance, groups receive our bimonthly newsletter *Box 4-5-9* that keeps them informed on policies being considered by the Conference, changes to A.A. literature, and when and where their Regional Forum will be held (Forums are weekend gatherings where current experience is shared). Additionally, G.S.R.s or group contacts for listed groups receive registration details for each International Convention, held every five (5) years.

How? To participate in services provided by G.S.O. to A.A. groups, it is vital to furnish simple information to G.S.O. through the *Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form*. To notify G.S.O. when group information changes, i.e. the group contact or G.S.R. moves or resigns, and a new G.S.R. or contact is elected; or, when there is a change in the group’s

location or meeting day(s) and time, please use the *Alcoholics Anonymous Group Information Change Form*. Group changes should also be given to the Area Secretary, and to the District Committee Member (D.C.M.).

A New Group: When a new group forms, the members usually take time to decide on the name of the new group, elect trusted servants, plan the time and format of meeting(s), and obtain A.A. literature from the nearby central/intergroup office.

A new group may first ask to be listed with the local district and Area, or through direct contact with G.S.O. Either way works well. When G.S.O. receives an *Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form*, a copy is forwarded to the delegate of the Area where the group is located, so that the delegate may communicate the good news to the D.C.M. and Area registrar/secretary. Thirty (30) days after group information is sent to the delegate, the group is assigned an ID number for G.S.O.’s records, and a “Group Handbook” is mailed to the G.S.R. or group contact.

Your District: Regardless of how new group information is received, the

D.C.M. will make contact and welcome the group to “general service.”

Whether a group is “new” or has existed for years, the D.C.M. is the primary contact through the G.S.R. or group contact. Group representatives attend district meetings where they are kept up-to-date on A.A. activities and topics of interest. G.S.R.s attending district meetings are an excellent resource for addressing group problems and concerns. In matters affecting A.A. as a whole, a group’s “conscience” is communicated to the Area Assembly by their G.S.R.

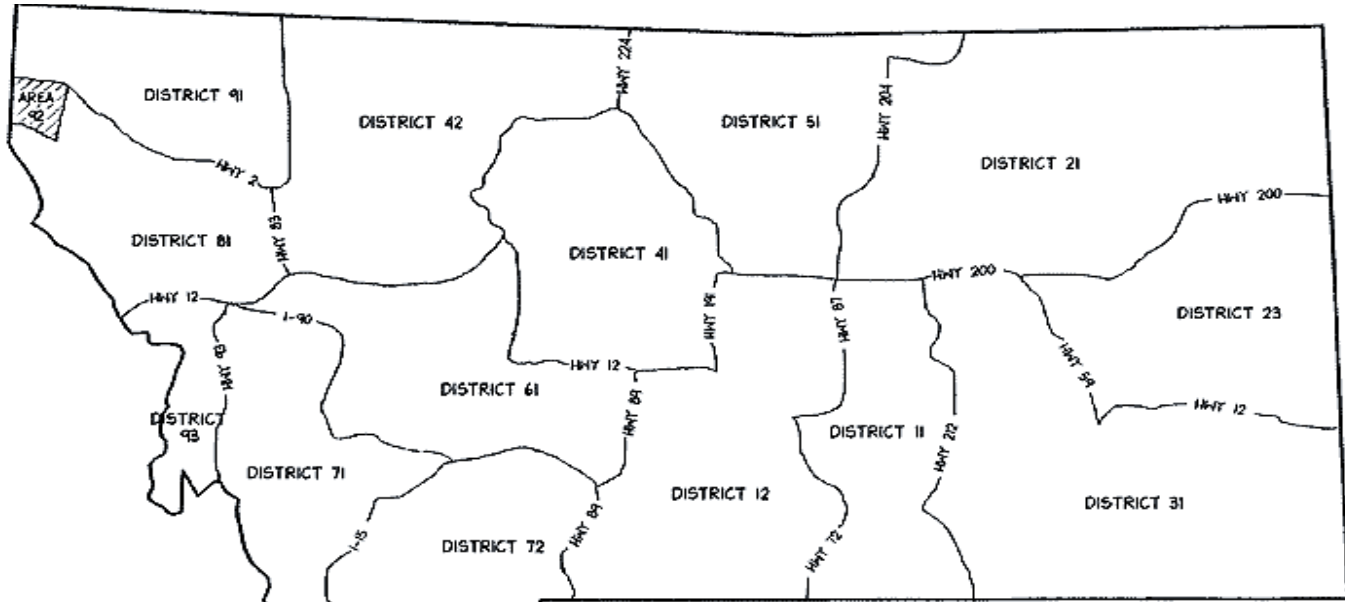
If you do not know how to contact your district’s D.C.M., email the Area 40 Secretary at secretary@aa-montana.org.

Overheard at Meetings:

“I told my sponsor that my problems were so unique that I’m

not even in the ‘Do You Think You’re Different?’ pamphlet”

Do you think you're different?



District 11—Billings
 District 12—Laurel
 District 21—Wolf Point/Glasgow
 District 23—Glendive

District 31—Miles City	District 71—Butte
District 41—Great Falls	District 72—Bozeman
District 42—Cut Bank/ Choteau/ Shelby	District 81—Missoula
District 51—Havre	District 91—Kalispell/ Whitefish/ Eureka
District 61—Helena	

A Member Shares Corrections Correspondence Experience

I began corresponding with women in correctional facilities several years ago because of my sponsor. She was doing it, I was desperate to get out of myself, so I began doing it.

The initial step is easy - fill in the form and mail it. Of course I'm an alcoholic, so I complicate everything. I completed the form, and there it sat while I thought about it. That step is definitely not a requirement, and I really recommend skipping it. However I didn't. Instead, I hung out with my head. It was full of helpful thoughts which ran along the lines of "oh no she's in prison she must be terrible what if she gets out and murders me in my sleep or what if she sends a hit man or...."



At some point sanity returned, and I realized that I had done things while drinking or frantically trying not to drink, that certainly made me a candidate for jails, prisons, asylums, etc. So I mailed the form.

Since then, I've been privileged to correspond with several women. They get me out of myself and help me remember who and what I am. I'm an alcoholic, and in a heartbeat I could be in prison or worse. All I have to do is stop showing up. So just for today, I'll keep writing. I encourage you to try it, too. It's been a big part of my recovery. Besides that, it's a lot of fun.

Pat K.

At the volunteer orientation for the Yellowstone County Correctional Facility,
 the facilitator stated that 95% of the inmates were there because of drugs and/or alcohol.

AA has a lot of work to do.

Calendar of Events

- **EUREKA—Campout-July 8-10**
- **BITTERROOT VALLEY—Picnic & Campout—July 15-17**
- **BUTTE—Delegate’s Day—July 15***
- **VALIER-Mini Roundup—July 29-31**
- **PINNACLE-Campout on the Mountain-Aug 5-7**
- **BIG TIMBER– Beartooth Mountain Conference– Aug 5-7– www.beartoothmountainconference.com**
- **GLENDIVE-Lower Yellowstone Soberfest-Aug 19-21***
- **MISSOULA– Fall Roundup– Sep 9-11**
- **LEWISTOWN—Area 40 Assembly-Sept 17-18— www.aamontana.org**
- **HELENA—It’s in the Book Group Birthday—Sept 24**
- **GREAT FALLS– Regional Forum– Sept 30, Oct 1-2**
- **KALISPELL—FALL REFRESHER– Oct 15-16**
- **KALISPELL-Women’s Retreat-Oct 28-30**
- **GREAT FALLS—12 Step Study—Nov 12**
- **BOZEMAN—HOW Group Speaker Event—Nov 12**

*Indicates the Delegate's report is part of this event.

If you would like your event listed here, please email the editor at Triangle@aa-montana.org



We absolutely
insist on
enjoying life!



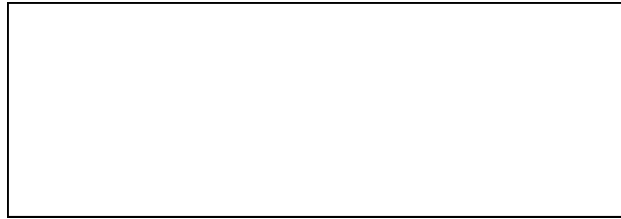
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Billings, MT 59101

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Subscription Information:

Groups are encouraged to be self-supporting for their Triangle subscription fee. Groups will receive the Triangle regardless of subscription status because of Past Actions of the Area Assembly.

Individuals: If your subscription has expired, this will be your last issue of the Triangle.

TRIANGLE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

If you would like a subscription for yourself, a friend or your group,
please return this form.

The cost of the Triangle is \$10 per year.

SEND TO: Area 40 Triangle, 4522 Shasta Lane, Billings, MT 59101

Make checks payable to Area 40.



Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____