

# The Triangle

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## Area 40 Newsletter

## From Your Area Corrections Chair

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Hello, I am Mary S. your Area 40 Corrections Chair. I have been asked to share with you my experience in Corrections. When I was elected as Corrections Chair, I really wanted to stand for another position. As things go in our fellowship, my Higher Power had something else in store for me.

First of all, I qualify to serve because I am an alcoholic and I had the required sobriety along with some past experience in my own district. I also have been involved in service since I sobered up. My first position as a newcomer was GSR of my home group and I soon acquired a district position as newsletter editor. Back in that day, technology wasn't like it is today. I had not learned to

type and had no experience with a computer. I smile because I later went on to receive a degree in Technology that furthered my career. You just never know where service will take you.

As Corrections Chair I am responsible for our Pink Can fund which takes contributions from any group or district. Funds sent to me are put into an account and are used to buy literature for jails and prisons. I order the literature and have GSO mail it to the facility. We currently have \$3,399 in the fund. We started the year with \$1,795, have had \$4,970 in contributions, and have spent \$3,366. Literature has been sent to WATch (East and West), Montana State Prison, both Lewis

and Clark and Yellowstone County Detention Centers, and the Hamilton Jail.

I am also a liaison with jails and prisons if needed. Montana State prison is an example. I am also available to help with the temporary contact program, helping members find contacts when they get out. As Corrections Chair, I attended the orientation to take meetings to Deer Lodge and have attended meetings there. Individual districts rotate each Saturday and attend 3 separate meetings there and that means each week they need 2 members to attend at 3 locations. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday, a speaker will share their story. There will be an orientation January 23

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### From Your Editor

This issue is packed with inspiration about carrying the message in Corrections facilities. What can I say? Thank you to everyone who helped make this issue possible, for sharing your experience.

The next issue will focus on Literature and the Grapevine. I would love to have your stories about service in these areas, or about how a piece of AA literature or the Grapevine changed your life! Please submit articles by December 21.

Thank you to the 9 groups and 1 individual who renewed their subscriptions this month! And Happy Holidays!

## Service in Corrections Enriched My Life

Service in corrections has enriched my life!

When I started going to jail meetings back in 2002, I had no idea how much it was going to change my life. My motivation to do it was very self-centered. The lady that I was dating was going to an orientation, so I went along just so I could

look good to her. I was terrified when I went to my first jail meeting and had no idea what to expect. As I continued to go one or two times a month, I started to get over my fear and I started "really listening" to the stories of the men in those meetings. I used to go in with a fellow named Gene, who went two times

a week faithfully. I used to think that he was a little weird for wanting to go so often and that he didn't have a life, and that's why he was there so much.

I couldn't have been more wrong. I started to develop some very strong relationships with the guys in

*(Continued on page 11)*

## District 61 Workshops

This April saw District 61's third successful Annual Treatment and Corrections Workshop. Despite the name, the workshop draws on talents of the PI, CPC, Workshops, Treatment and Corrections Committees, which start meeting, as what has come to be called the Mega Committee, to plan for an April workshop. Throughout the winter, the committee invites, cajoles, reminds and suggests to treatment and corrections personnel that they should spend a Saturday in Helena as AA's guests for lunch and a workshop. For the last two years, the Bureau of Occupational and Professional Licensing has awarded three continuing professional training hours to licensed professional therapists, licensed addictions therapists and other treatment professionals for attending the workshop. At the same time, the Mega Committee invites law enforcement officers, probation and parole officers, prison and prerelease staff and officers, Judges, Justices of

the Peace and both County Attorneys and Public Defenders to attend the workshop.

The agenda for the day includes two panels, one of recovering members of AA, ideally those whose sobriety story includes incarceration, treatment or both. A second panel is made up of professionals, who have included sheriffs, district judges, jail administrators, addictions counselors, justices of the peace, county attorneys, deputy county attorneys, and line city and county law enforcement officers.

Indeed, we are not people who would ordinarily mingle. But it is truly amazing to see law enforcement officers observe people they have repeatedly arrested looking clean and bright and full of the sunlight of the spirit; a District Judge's expression when fifteen people she sent to the WATCH program stand up, straight, tall, decently dressed, clean shaven, employed and happy to be sober. These

annual workshops have created a sense of alliance between our fellowship and the law enforcement, treatment and corrections professionals who, as much as some of us hated them at the time, were the friends who got us on the road to happy destiny. "Those people" are a lot like us. In fact, one year to our surprise we found that four of the five professional panelists admitted to being members of our fellowship,

Finally, the hard work that has been done by the five committees and dozens of volunteers to put together this workshop, including cooking, serving and cleaning up after a delicious and well presented luncheon has been a further step in a service career for some, a brilliant beginning for others, and a source of enthusiasm and passionate concern for the fellowship that makes membership in AA in and around the Helena area exciting and transforming.

Tom D., District 61 DCM

## I Can't 'Out Give' God's Grace

Recently I've been given the privilege of taking a meeting into a lock-down portion of a pre-release for women in Billings. The rewards have been tremendous for me. As usual, I can't 'out-give' God's grace and I learn that every time I am involved in service of any kind.

I began to be involved in corrections work when I was new and believed, without question, what the old-timers told me. They said, "This is what we do" and I didn't think to question that. I'm grateful for that naïveté. I wish more people these days had the same gullibility that I had then. It has paid off in spades and my sobriety has been richer for it, I believe.

The meeting is an open meeting and, wisely, one of our members suggested

putting the 5<sup>th</sup> Tradition into our format so the singleness of purpose is emphasized from the start. The facility asked that we had strong emphasis on the first 3 steps and we have done that, but we also read and study all the way through the 12<sup>th</sup> step. We have found that many of these women want an answer. They want something they can believe in and when we read and discuss the suggested guidelines in the Big Book for ALL the steps, I have watched that hope begin to bud and bloom. There is an amazing trust that has built up in this group of women.

There are a number of women who have been participating in this. As volunteers, we go in for a month at a time, so there's a great feeling of con-

tinuity with this meeting. With that continuity, a connection has formed that opens an opportunity for honest sharing and direct focus on the steps as they apply to our lives. They want to learn how to have it.

The message with depth and weight is being given there and it is powerful. The women in this facility see it and hear it. And one more time, just as Bill needed Dr. Bob, I find that I also need these and many other women to keep my faith alive and vital.

I'm so grateful for this opportunity to serve! Donna H.

## I Just Said No

I just said, “no.” I said, “absolutely not” to my sponsor’s suggestions for peace and serenity in times of rough going. After all, I had done the steps! As the years in sobriety added up so did the abundance and with that comes more problems. The fear can be all consuming with a small business in this economy or even in a good economy. That, coupled with my mother’s failing health and my inability to keep her alive, drove me to the emergency room one day with the signs of a heart attack. I lay on the

gurney crying because I knew my head, not my circumstances, got me there. As soon as I identified the problem as me, and not my life, I finally said yes to my sponsor’s 10 years of suggestions...service work.

I always said, “I don’t have time” and “that has nothing to do with my problems”. I thought she was just jealous because I didn’t have kids and I had so much freedom! Finally the pain outweighed the inconvenience. I signed up to go into the county jail. I signed up for a district position. I signed up to take meetings into the treatment center. I noticed our district was taking meetings into the

men’s prison and not the women’s prison, so I started the ball rolling and I take a meeting up to the women’s prison in Billings every month. I know you know the end of this story if you are reading this publication. Nothing changed in my life but all of a sudden I was wearing life like a loose garment. My circumstances are no longer my life.

Life’s challenges are no longer a matter of life and death but a mere annoyance. This is my favorite part of AA’s design for living...that subtle shift in perception after constructive, unselfish actions for others. Amen.

June K.

## Perfect Place for Me

I’m Teresa K., alcoholic. I have never been inside a correctional facility where I didn’t get out within an hour or so. Nevertheless, it turns out jails and prisons are a perfect place for me to carry AA’s message. I absolutely have alcoholism, but thanks to the Power in the universe and my fellow travelers, I am not at its mercy today. In fact, it has become my greatest asset. Having the extreme good fortune of being sober, I have an equal responsibility to try to pass that gift on to others, to let other alcoholics know how that came to pass. For an alcoholic like me, contented sobriety is not an accident.

When I moved to Helena in 1991, the home group I joined was very active in Corrections. I just followed along behind them and have been taking meetings inside one institution or another ever since. I am currently part of the crew of women who take a weekly AA meeting to the Riverside Youth Correctional Facility at Boulder. Riverside is a prison for female felons, ages twelve to eighteen. Given what I was doing at that age, I should have landed in such a place, more than once. I didn’t avoid it because I

was clever – the world was just very different during the 1970’s.

The girls’ attendance at meetings is voluntary. They can’t have a meeting without at least two of us, so they are always grateful we come. Some weeks there are as many as seven of them. They run the meeting, participate openly in the discussion, ask great questions about sobriety and AA, about how and why we stay sober. They believe what all of us have believed while contemplating stopping drinking – I’ll never have fun ever again. Many of them will return to homes in which active alcoholism is alive and well. Coupled with peer pressure, it’s a reasonable estimate not one of them will stay sober when they get out. Some eventually make it back to Riverside. It can be discouraging.

When I start thinking new people must stay sober in exchange for my time and effort, I’m in trouble. There can be no strings attached to the service I do here. I attend the Riverside meeting to help me stay sober. I feel better every time I leave there. I get a good shot of what I was like, and a blast of gratitude that I’m not on that same path today. I know the seed of hope and recovery gets planted during those meetings - I can tell by their

nodding heads. We are their evidence that AA works. We have no control over whether they stay sober when they get out. But I am confident they know where to go if and when they’re ready to try another way. I have done my part in trying to carry the message of AA to them.

If you are reluctant to volunteer to bring meetings into an institution based on your life’s circumstances, set that aside and give it a try. If you’re like me, it will be one of the coolest things you get to do in AA. To recognize I’m no different than the alcoholic who is behind bars – I just never got caught.

### **Wanted: Sober Women for Riverside Youth Correctional Facility in Boulder**

**Who:** Sober women who have at least one year of continuous sobriety.

**What:** Volunteer to take an AA meeting in to Riverside once a month.

**When:** Meetings take place Saturday Mornings, 11:00am to 12:00 noon.

**Where:** Riverside Youth Correctional Facility in Boulder, Montana.

**How:** For more information and for a copy of the Riverside application, contact Teresa K. in Helena, at (406) 465-2315.

## Thank God I Didn't Miss It

I'm Trudi D. and I am an alcoholic from Billings, MT – District 11. I am currently serving as the Montana Women's Prison coordinator for AA in the facility. The meeting is on Tuesday nights from 7:00 to 7:55. I have had many opportunities to be of service in Alcoholics Anonymous, but few have filled me with more gratitude than carrying the message into the correctional facilities. It has been a

privilege to participate with these women and watch them grow and change as they begin to apply the AA principles of recovery in their lives. As has often been my experience in Alcoholics Anonymous, I have received far more than I have given at the prison. I thought I was there to facilitate a meeting, but being able to share with and listen to these women reminds me to be grateful for my sobriety and the life I have been given. They have taught me that joy is a gift

from God and it is possible to experience that joy and even serenity under difficult conditions. The Big Book says "To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss." This has proved to be the reality of my service carrying the message into the Montana Women's Prison. Thank God I didn't miss this opportunity.

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## Excerpts from "A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate"

My name is Lori F., your Area 40 Literature Committee Chair and alcoholic. I must admit that I have not been involved in carrying the message to "guests" of correctional facilities in any way other than contributions to the pink can. I picked up a copy of "A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate" (available from GSO for \$2.25) without knowing what to expect. Here, using excerpts from the stories in the booklet, is what I found:

### What it used to be like:

*"I kept looking for ways to keep from changing."*

*"[Drinking] took the rough edge off of reality."*

*"I tried to fill the hole in my soul. I used many things, including alcohol."*

*"I did not care about anyone else but myself"*

*"I felt all kinds of fear. Fear of change. Fear of the unknown. Fear of failure. . . . I felt out of control and worthless."*

*"I had been trying to run from the disease. And the disease had followed me."*

*"I was death waiting to happen."*

### What happened:

*[After hearing an outside speaker] "For the first time in my life, I understood my real problem. I felt a sense of hope."*

*"I found moral support from the visiting speakers."*

*"She told a story that was a lot like mine. . . . And she shared the miracle of her life today. I felt another seed of hope planted."*

*"I grew close to the outside sponsors that brought us meetings. I heard things that I believed. I wanted what the [A.A.] members had."*

*"People carried the message of A.A. into the prison system. They saved my life. . . ."*

*"I heard people come in from outside and speak. . . I could tell they were being honest. . . I decided that I wanted what they had."*

### What it's like now:

*"That odd hurt in my chest is gone."*

*"A.A. taught me how to forgive myself."*

*"Today I know a new life with the God of my understanding."*

*"I hope to share my experience in prison with others. Maybe I can help someone avoid the mistakes I made."*

*I have gone from hopeless to hopeful."*

*"I know what being grateful means."*

*"I am growing in ways I needed to grow. When I leave this place, I will be strong enough to survive."*

There are many still suffering alcoholics who are incarcerated. This booklet showed me how very important outside speakers/sponsors can be in a prisoner's first steps toward AA. It also taught me, once again, that identification doesn't come from having had exactly the same experiences, but from "[t]he feeling of having shared in a common peril." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 17)

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## Thanks to the Yellowstone County Jail

Hello. My name is Jeff M. In April 2004, I was in the Yellowstone County Jail. A week after I was in jail, I went to my first AA meeting. A week later I got a sponsor. I had some tough things happen. I lost both of my parents. Without AA and a sponsor I

would not have made it. I want to thank the Yellowstone County Jail for allowing AA to have meetings there; I also want to thank Dave B.

I have been sober since April 23, 2004 and for that I am so grateful. My life today is really good. I go to meetings

daily and my sponsor Bob F. has worked with me and taught me how to live life on life's terms. AA has given me more than I could ever ask for. I am truly a gratefully recovering alcoholic. Thank you and God bless. Jeff M.

## Calendar of Events

- HELENA—Treatment Workshop—December 5—Charmonix  
 SAVAGE—District 23 New Years Eve Party—December 31—Scott W.  
 DEERLODGE—Montana State Prison—January 23, 2010—Mary S.  
 DEADLINE FOR AGENDA ITEMS—Spring Assembly—February 1, 2010  
 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF 2012 WCRAASC BID INFO—February 1, 2010  
 DUBUQUE IOWA—West Central Region Service Conference—March 5 - 7, 2010—Carole B.  
 HELENA—Northern Rockies Pockets of Enthusiasm—March 19-20, 2010—Kevin S.  
 LEWISTOWN—Spring Assembly—April 10-11, 2010—Terry S.  
 SAN ANTONIO, TX—A.A.'s 75th Birthday Party "A Vision for You"—Deadline for pre-registration—May 14, 2010—www.aa.org  
 BILLINGS—Spring Roundup—May 14-16, 2010—Connie O.; Johnny B.  
 SAN ANTONIO, TX—A.A.'s 75th Birthday Party "A Vision for You"—July 1-4, 2010—www.aa.org  
 LEWISTOWN—Fall Assembly—September 18-19, 2010—Terry S.  
 BUTTE—Fall Roundup—October 1-3, 2010—Rick P.  
 RAPID CITY, SD—Special West Central Region Forum—November 12-14, 2010  
 NOTHERN MINNESOTA—West Central Region Service Conference—March 4-6, 2011  
 GREAT FALLS/MILES CITY—Local Forum—Spring 2011 (pending request outcome)  
 LEWISTOWN—Spring Assembly—April 9-10, 2011  
 IOWA—West Central Regional Forum—September 10-11, 2011  
 LEWISTOWN—Fall Assembly—September 17-18, 2011  
 HELENA—National AA Archives Workshop—September 2011—Gerry R.  
 TO BE ANNOUNCED—West Central Region Service Conference—March 2-4, 2012

If you would like your event listed here, please email the editor at [triangle@aa-montana.org](mailto:triangle@aa-montana.org) or send it to PO Box 542, Bozeman, MT 59771

### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION UPDATE

The local host committee will hold a Volunteer Kickoff event January 9, 2010. After the kickoff, members will be able to sign up to volunteer online. Check it out at [www.aa75.org](http://www.aa75.org).

## How I Got Here

So there I was, on the reception and orientation (r & o) unit of the Utah State Prison (USP) trying to figure out my next move. How had I gotten there, what was I going to do, should I play hard core? I had no idea. I had already been through the Montana State Prison for drunk driving and now I was here in the USP for using cocaine. My cell mate went to the doctor and I was alone for the first time since arriving there. I don't know what happened, but I found myself on my knees asking God for help.

My cell door opened and it was my turn for the one hour out to shower and walk in circles or get a book. There were only two books: the Book

of Mormon and the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Guess which one I chose. I started reading that Big Book with all the hunger of a starving man. It seemed strange to me at the time, but when I finished the book, the officers told me to roll up. I was in the van when the guard told me he had never taken an inmate straight to the conquest program from R & O before.

I was in an alcohol and drug treatment unit. It was a new program there and they only had one AA meeting a week. I attended every week for five weeks and the "AA Coordinator" overdosed on heroin. The unit Sergeant told me congratulations you are the new AA coordinator. I asked if I could run it the way I learned in my first attempt at sobriety, he said yes.

So I got to work. When I left the prison we had an AA meeting every day of the week, plus meetings for other 12 step programs.

When I was released, I heeded the advice of all the AA members that came into the prison: MAKE SURE TO HIT A MEETING WITHIN THE FIRST 24 HOURS OF GETTING OUT! I did. That was three years ago and I am still sober. I am still active; I have had an extreme spiritual awakening. So the next time you see a PINK CAN, think of all the inmates that need the literature that is provided to hopeless convicts that need a new way to live! IT'S UP TO YOU! Let the moths out of your wallets and give a buck or two.

Thanks for listening, Ray Mc.

## The Circle

It began in 1974. I was thrown in jail for stealing \$9.00 in pop bottles. In those days \$9.00 would buy 2 cases of Burgie beer and two packs of cigarettes. This should have been a warning sign. For the next 27 years, very few years went by when I didn't get thrown in jail at least once. Always misdemeanors, always alcohol related. It became a way of life, the price I had to pay for my so called "exciting" lifestyle. I never went to a jail AA meeting. I didn't believe alcohol was a problem and if it was I was sure I could quit on my own. I couldn't.

In 2002, I landed in the WATch program at Warm Springs for felony D.U.I offenders. It was my 4<sup>th</sup> treat-

ment program and I was sure I could find a way to drink when I got out. I had 51/2 years of probation hanging over my head. Something happened at WATch and I was struck with the strange thought that "Maybe I don't have to drink when I get out of here". I'd like to call it a spiritual awakening, but it was more like complete surrender. The war was over and I had lost.

I got out and jumped into AA with both feet. AA gave me my life back. I went to MCDC and WATch AA meetings. At 3 years sober I was asked to go back to WATch and tell my story to the inmates. I was terrified. It ended up being pretty easy. I had been where every one of them was and come out the other side without drinking. It felt good. I try to go back

whenever I am asked.

In December 2008, I finally completed my probation and applied to attend AA meetings in the Gallatin County Detention Center. I didn't really think they would let me go in because of my past. In the spring of 2009 I was approved and attended my very first jail AA meeting. I guess I was about 25 years late, but I got there. It was amazing! Here were people just like I was years ago except they were at an AA meeting. Maybe some of them won't have to keep going back.

I feel like I've come full circle and I encourage any other AA folks out there to try their local jail or treatment center meetings. There is an indescribably good feeling you have when leaving these meetings. I think that's all I have to share. Ted T.

## Bridging the Gap at WATch East

In March of 2006 the Treatment Chair for Area 40, Lee G., and I started having conversations about the Bridging the Gap Program (BTG) for WATch East in Glendive. Lee was concerned because nobody was willing to start the program there or to follow through with making the contacts. After discussions in person and through email I volunteered to help get it started. At that time I thought it would just take a few months, maybe six, to get things rolling and then somebody from that end of the Area would take over. It took considerably longer.

After a lot of correspondence with WATch East and getting background checks on all the volunteers, we had our first BTG meeting at WATch East on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Glendive. In attendance were myself and some men and women from North Dakota who had volunteered. I would really like to thank the volunteers from North Dakota one more time because they would chair the meetings when I

couldn't be there. For them it was an 85 mile drive, one way, and for me it was 215 miles. We held these meetings the second Friday of each month.

The meetings were well received and over the next few years we modified them to better carry the message. We started having the "Family Members", as the guests there are referred to, view the movies by themselves and save any questions for when we arrived. This allowed us to also fit in an "Introduction to AA" for them. This just spelled out what they could expect to find when they attended AA on the outside. They really liked this and asked lots of questions. We developed a great relationship with everyone there.

We then proposed something like the small Roundup at Montana State Prison, with speakers and more interaction with the "Family Members". It was a great success and over the next years we had two more. I believe they are still open to these.

The most difficult thing I experienced in the 3 years I did this was getting AA members on the outside to contact the folks before they got out of WATch East. We were fortunate to be able to have their names released to us three months before they got out so we could get started. I soon found out that regular mail was just too slow. I switched to email or phone to get the job done. Toward the last I had developed a solid list of volunteers to contact around the state. They did a splendid job. To just hand somebody a name on a piece of paper at the District Meeting or to send a letter was just not getting it done. This is a task that, in most cases, requires constant follow up.

This was a rewarding endeavor and it is needed badly. I wish Mary all the best in continuing this but she will need help. I know she also needs to be funded some how for the literature expense. This job needs to be rotated every two years just like all the rest but finding volunteers who actually show up is difficult.

Bob H.

## Pulled Into Living

On October 12, 2006 I was arrested for my fourth offense of driving under the influence of alcohol.

My name is Paul N. and that became the start of a journey to a sober way of living. Despair and hopelessness were already a very big part of my life and when the jail cell closed behind me I knew I was really in for it.

I knew my life was going to change, but did not understand it would be for the better. I had a lot of time on my hands to think about my circumstances. What did I need to do to change? I had been in and out of AA, never managing a year of sobriety. I knew I had never given the program an honest effort. Self sponsorship and passive meeting attendance were my program. Jail had finally given me the wake-up call to try a different approach.

Getting out of the cramped jail pod for an hour to attend a meeting was a wel-

come idea. I attended a meeting in jail every week and heard stories of outsiders who were spreading the message. I began to listen to their stories and they became attractive to me. It was pretty easy to be attracted knowing those members of AA who brought the meeting inside to us were leaving the jail-house and going home. They knew how to remain free.

At sentencing I was given the opportunity to attend the state WATch program for felony DUI offenders. I was ready for something different. The program was a very intense time to work on my thinking and to attend AA meetings which were held every day. On Friday outside AA members attended our meetings. I was thankful to hear how their lives were turned around by AA. Hope was restored for me and I began to believe that AA was the answer to my alcoholism. I just needed to work the program. A gentleman who attended the WATch meeting every month peaked my interest. He seemed to be living a happy life. I knew I was going

to ask him to sponsor me when I was released from the program.

After 6 months I moved to the Helena area and went to an AA meeting a day later. My attitude was different this time and I knew I could not do it alone. I asked the gentleman I saw in treatment to be my sponsor. He obliged and I am working the steps of the program. I recently celebrated my third year of sobriety. I keep an institution commitment and return to the WATch program to give my WATch brothers the hope and help I received from the members of AA.

AA has given me a lot. I feel free from the ravages of alcoholism. My experience in jail and treatment persuaded me to live differently. Outside members of AA made the program attractive and gave me hope. I am thankful for Step 12 of this wonderful program and all members who have carried the message to me. I have been dragged along at times, but I have been pulled into living the best life I have known.

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## Would I Be Able to Carry Our Message?

At our meeting Tuesday night I looked around the room, watching the men as they listened to the "guest" speaker. A lump formed in my throat as my eyes started to burn, just slightly. I thought of the first meeting we had some 6 years before. I remembered how scared I was as I walked up the stairs into the prison. Being accused of having an overactive imagination as a kid, it hadn't disappeared entirely. I was wondering what the likelihood of a riot, or at the least, a hostage situation was. So, I asked God to remove my fear, and direct my attention to what he would have me be. When I got to the reception area, I met the other "outside" AA members. A few minutes later we were given our ID badges and were escorted to the "inside". And my life changed forever.

I knew that I'd be the speaker at our first meeting. I had done quite a few speaker meetings and talked at a couple roundups, but this was different. I was painfully aware that, during 13 years of drinking, I'd never spent a night in jail.

Would I have any credibility with these hard men, would they have any time at all for a "citizen", would I be able to carry our message to these men?

When we got to the meeting room, we were greeted by about 25 guys who offered handshakes and delicious coffee. The meeting was called to order by a man in his 70's, who'd spent most of his adult life "down". After the prayer, I recalled a conversation I'd had with my mentor Don a few hours before. AA found Don in a prison in Colorado in '68. He told me that if I went into that prison to talk to inmates, convicts, felons or offenders, I'd just as well stay home, that I had no experience with any of that, those fellows would smell it on me and I'd lose them in minutes. BUT, "if you go there and talk to alcoholics, God will use your life for His work." I prayed that God's message flow through me, that the experiences I've had that would be most useful to these men, be brought out.

Scared, I said "My name's Rick and I am alcoholic"....."Hi Rick!" Came back at

me, and to God and myself I said "here we go". As I told my story no one walked out, or talked. They laughed at my jokes and when I spoke of how our amends process changed my relationship with my dad, I saw more than one wipe an eye. Before I knew it, time was up. We were going home, and I felt a little sad to leave those guys there. But, I didn't really want to stay with them either!

We go there in blizzards, when it's hotter than a fox in a forest fire, (no air conditioning), on Christmas Eve. But at least one of us is there every week. And they keep us coming back. They let us see how our experience can benefit them, they listen to us share our experience, and sometimes our pain. Those guys shared their stories about failed marriages with me, as I went through a divorce; they shook my hand and slapped my back as I announced the births of every one of my 5 grandkids. We are not "guests" there; we are a part of them and them of us. Some of them are our brothers and sometimes we hug,

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Would I? continued from page 7)*

where hugging ain't cool. We have found "a fellowship", based on a common illness and a common solution. I love those guys and I think some of them know it.

Thanksgiving morning, as I cooked a ham, the phone rang. It was Jim. He got paroled out 3 or 4 years ago and moved to San Diego. He calls me 5 or 6 times a year, but always on Thanksgiving and Christmas, always thanking me. I try to correct him, telling him I need to thank him. But it's always useless. This year I just thanked him for being

my friend. When we hung up, I looked at the floor and cried a little, filled with honor to have gotten to see God's power enter into this guy in a PRISON, and his life is changed. He has changed in such a way, that I can't imagine him doing the crime that put him in prison.

Thank you AA for giving me a reason to get away from my TV and share my life with guys just like me.

Of course, not all stories end up like Jim's. Some end in heartbreak and tragedy. But we are not deterred. We know, "that our lives depend upon our constant thought of others and how we can help meet their needs." So we get in

the car and go TO these guys, carry a message TO them, and the fruits of our labor are that we can know that we've tried, really tried to be empowered agents of God in an ungodly place.

As I looked around that room Tuesday, I realized that I haven't been scared, in there, for a long, long time. In fact, not since that first meeting years ago. Another promise come true, I can go to the "most sordid spot on earth", and keep unharmed.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve these Fellows of AA and our future Fellows.

Rick C., Area 24 Delegate

## People Who Normally Would Not Mix

My name is Curt K. and I'm an alcoholic. Something like fourteen years ago, the Freedom Group of Alcoholics Anonymous put on an AA Mini-Conference at Montana State Prison. It was an incredible event for many reasons. There were over a hundred people at the conference; about half were members of AA from the outside. The other half were inmates at the prison. I had only gone along that Saturday because my sponsor at the time had been taking meetings into the prison for years and he suggested I go. But once inside, I was awed by the thriving, active AA group that was at work there.

That the Freedom Group was made up entirely of prison inmates was impressive enough. But the group was also an inspiration in many other ways. The Freedom Group was a fully functioning AA group, registered with the General Service Office, served by a steering committee of trusted servants elected from among the group members, participating in the Seventh Tradition, and, as it were, putting on a rousing AA conference of speakers, workshops, fellowship and food. The group was thriving as well as any of the most successful groups I had attended on the outside. I wasn't expecting this. I was expecting a few dejected alcoholics desperate for a message of hope from the outside. In-

stead, I ended up the one receiving the message of hope that was so tangible in the lives and spirit of the men who made up the Freedom Group.

The first Prison Mini-Conference inspired me to take a path in AA that I would not naturally have tread. That line in the second paragraph of Chapter Two of the Big Book applies exactly: "We are people who normally would not mix." I'm one of those alcoholics who never even spent a day in jail, let alone prison. I had used my lack of legal trouble as one of the long list of reasons I couldn't be an alcoholic. So why was I suddenly drawn to twelfth step work in corrections facilities?

I owe my now long history of corrections work to the members of the Freedom Group and their example. They put on a conference that day (and twenty more on a semi-annual basis afterwards) that carried a powerful message to their fellow inmates, to the prison administration, to the AA community at large, and certainly to me. Because of my experience that day, I have been to an AA meeting at Montana State Prison nearly every month for the past fourteen years. Over the years, I have taken meetings into Lewis and Clark County Detention Center, the Helena Pre-Release, and the WATCH Program at Warm Springs. And the result has been an amazing

sense of usefulness, purpose, and belonging in AA.

I still run into members of the Freedom Group who put on that first conference, several of whom are now on the outside living happy, sober lives. I have seen great examples of recovery and a spiritual way of life – and I have seen some disheartening returns to drinking. But no more or less than I have seen in the other AA meetings I go to on the outside.

For those AA members who have yet to venture into a corrections facility to carry the message, I strongly encourage you to try it. There are facilities of all types across the state. Twelfth step service transforms us in a fantastic way and there are hundreds of alcoholics waiting to hear your experience, strength, and hope – and to share theirs with you.

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Send Area contributions to:

AREA 40, Inc.

PO BOX 21577

BILLINGS MT 59104

Send GSO contributions to:

GSO

PO BOX 459

GRAND CENTRAL STATION

NEW YORK NY 10163



## Area Officers and Committee Chairs 2009-10

POSITION	NAME	EMAIL	MEMBERS
Delegate	Carole B.	<a href="mailto:delegate@aa-montana.org">delegate@aa-montana.org</a>	
AreaCh/Alt D	Terry S.	<a href="mailto:chair@aa-montana.org">chair@aa-montana.org</a>	
Secretary	April A.	<a href="mailto:secretary@aa-montana.org">secretary@aa-montana.org</a>	
Treasurer	Linda Black	<a href="mailto:treasurer@aa-montana.org">treasurer@aa-montana.org</a>	Del, Alt, DCM 72, DR 11
Archives	Tim H.	<a href="mailto:archives@aa-montana.org">archives@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-11, 71 DRs-23, 91
CPC	Virginia R.	<a href="mailto:cpc@aa-montana.org">cpc@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-21, 51 DRs-42, 81
Corrections	Mary S.	<a href="mailto:corrections@aa-montana.org">corrections@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-41,42 DRs-31, 72
Grapevine	Richard K.	<a href="mailto:grapevine@aa-montana.org">grapevine@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-81, 91 DRs-61, 71
Literature	Lori F.	<a href="mailto:literature@aa-montana.org">literature@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-12, 31 DRs-91, 93
Public Info.	Tim M.	<a href="mailto:pi@aa-montana.org">pi@aa-montana.org</a>	DCMs-23, 93 DRs-12, 51
Treatment	Paula H.	<a href="mailto:treatment@aa-montana.org">treatment@aa-montana.org</a>	DCM-61 DRs-21, 41, 71
Triangle Ed.	Sharon S.	<a href="mailto:triangle@aa-montana.org">triangle@aa-montana.org</a>	
Advisor	Andrew W.	<a href="mailto:advisor@aa-montana.org">advisor@aa-montana.org</a>	
Archivist	Gerry R.	<a href="mailto:archivist@aa-montana.org">archivist@aa-montana.org</a>	
Webmaster	Alex M.	<a href="mailto:webmaster@aa-montana.org">webmaster@aa-montana.org</a>	

### Wanted:

#### Opening—Trustees' Committee on Corrections

The trustees' Committee on Corrections of the General Service Board has an opening for a nontrustee appointed committee member. Some of the qualities most desirable for this nontrustee opening are:

- Expertise in Correctional Facilities work.
- Available time to attend the meetings of the trustees' committee to which appointed and general sharing session. Attendance at the Saturday night dinner and A.A. meeting during Board weekends is optional.
- At least five years of continuous sobriety.
- The ability to work within the committee structure.

- Activity in A.A. service.

A resumé form is available from the delegate or other Area officers, committee chairs and DCM's. Applications should be returned to the General Service Office by December 15, 2009.

#### Stories for Special Needs Pamphlet

Experience, Strength and Hope from AA Members with Special Needs.

Submit stories by December 15, 2009 to:  
Special Needs Coordinator  
General Service Office  
PO BOX 459  
New York NY 10163

Consider the following: length of 2-3 pages or 500-800 words, double spaced with name and address attached on a separate piece of paper, experience with any barrier (s) overcome to receive the AA message, any literature, tools or efforts of AA members that helped you receive the AA message.

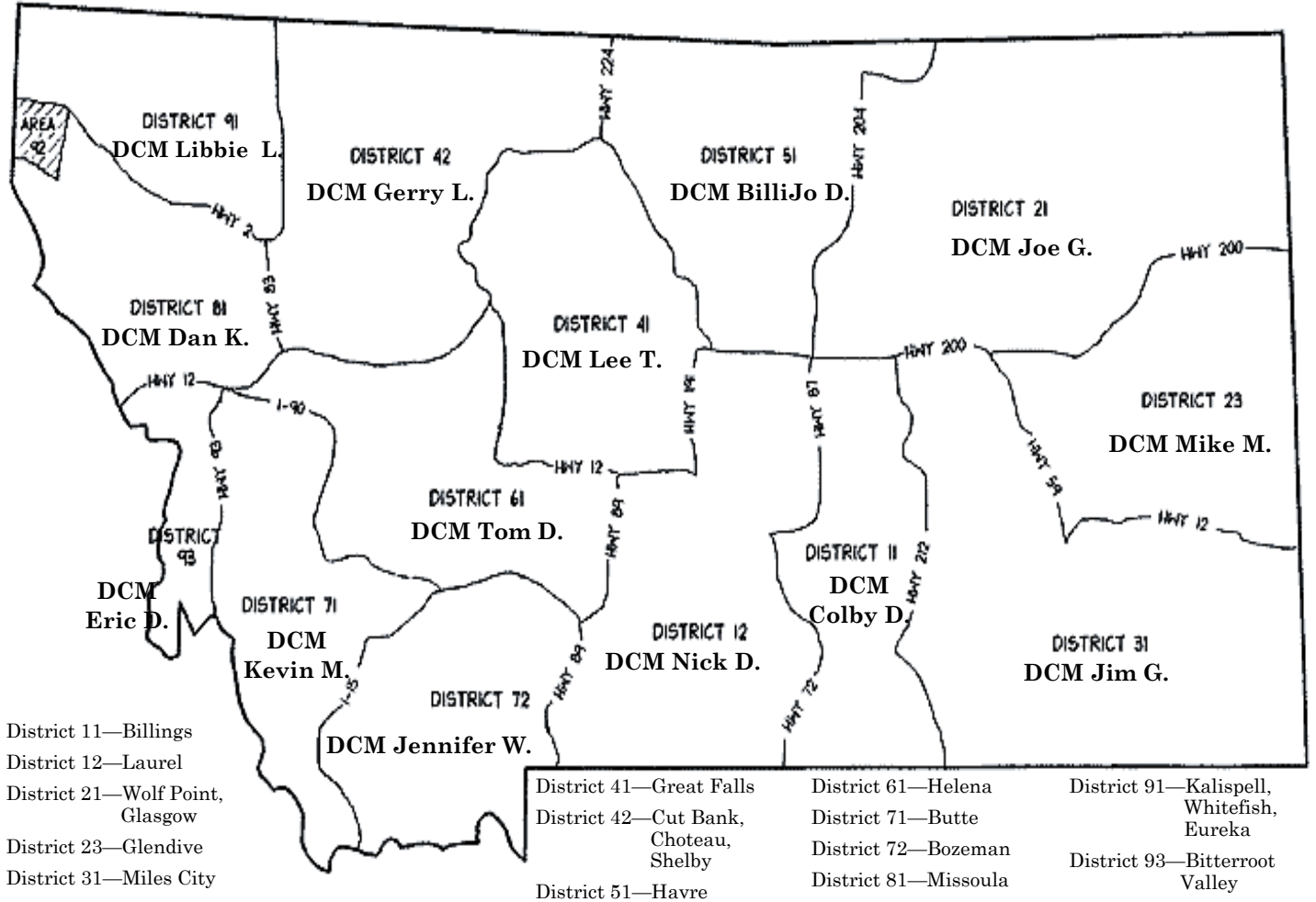
Contact the Area 40 Delegate, Carole B., at [delegate@aa-montana.org](mailto:delegate@aa-montana.org) for more information.

#### Host City for 2012 WCRAASC

Increase enthusiasm and enhance unity in your district. Gather support from other groups and prepare a bid for the West Central Region AA Service Conference to be held in Montana March 2-4, 2012.

Bids should be submitted to Terry S., Area Chair, by February 1, 2010. Convince the selection committee that your city would be the best for AA as a whole by including information such as airport (flights, connections, schedules, ground transportation), convention facilities (meeting room capacity, supplemental meeting rooms available, accommodations) and restaurants.

See the planning guide at [www.aa-montana.org](http://www.aa-montana.org) or contact Mary S., Corrections Committee Chair, or Terry S., Area Chair, for more information.



### DCM's 2009-10

DCM 11	Colby D.	<a href="mailto:dcm11@aa-montana.org">dcm11@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 12	Nick D.	<a href="mailto:dcm12@aa-montana.org">dcm12@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 21	Joe G.	<a href="mailto:dcm21@aa-montana.org">dcm21@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 23	Mike Myers	<a href="mailto:dcm23@aa-montana.org">dcm23@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 31	Jim G.	<a href="mailto:dcm31@aa-montana.org">dcm31@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 41	Lee T.	<a href="mailto:dcm41@aa-montana.org">dcm41@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 42	Gerry L.	<a href="mailto:dcm42@aa-montana.org">dcm42@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 51	BilliJo Doll	<a href="mailto:dcm51@aa-montana.org">dcm51@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 61	Tom D.	<a href="mailto:dcm61@aa-montana.org">dcm61@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 71	Kevin M.	<a href="mailto:dcm71@aa-montana.org">dcm71@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 72	Jennifer W.	<a href="mailto:dcm72@aa-montana.org">dcm72@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 81	Dan K.	<a href="mailto:dcm81@aa-montana.org">dcm81@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 91	Libbie L.	<a href="mailto:dcm91@aa-montana.org">dcm91@aa-montana.org</a>
DCM 93	Eric D.	<a href="mailto:dcm93@aa-montana.org">dcm93@aa-montana.org</a>

*(Chair continued from page 1)*

for AA members interested in going to meetings at Montana State Prison. Please contact me for the application form, which must be submitted by January 5.

Of course, there are many other facilities throughout the state including county jails and women's, private, youth and treatment/correctional facilities such as WATch East and WATch West.

Currently our committee, which includes 2 district representatives and a DCM, has been working on a Local Forum. The Area voted to have this event. We are now at the requesting stage and waiting to hear if GSO can attend. At our Spring Assembly we will know if we can proceed.

We have planned the Local Forum for one day in Great Falls, a jump in the car, and one day in Miles City. Why 2 cities? It provides an opportunity for more people to attend and to meet the 2 representatives from GSO. Work shops and discussions will go on through out the day. Attendees will walk away enthused, meet new members and have a better idea of what our fellowship does, locally and globally. What a way to feel a part of a bigger whole. I always leave grateful for sobriety as well as encouraged to keep our fellowship alive. I look forward to getting involved in the spring of 2011 either in Great Falls or Miles City, or both!

Finally, during the Spring Assembly the Corrections committee will be discussing and choosing a site for the 2012 West Central Region Service Conference. Any district wanting to place a bid can find more specific information on our website, aa-montana.org. Bids are to be sent to our Area Chair, Terry S., by February 1, 2010.

Anyone who thinks they might be a good fit for Corrections Chair at the Area level is encouraged to visit with me. I was told to talk to my sponsor, my family and rely on my Higher

Power. I can say that service at the Area level is a wonderful learning experience and a chance to stay sober one more day. What a gift!

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*(Life continued from page 1)*

there, and started to realize that the only difference between them and me was that they got caught for felonies, and I had just been lucky. I started to really look forward to going to the meetings and was sad when my favorites were moved to other facilities. My fear had disappeared completely, and I secretly wished I could stay after the meeting was over and just rap with them for awhile. They had become my friends.

In 2004, the District 81 Corrections Chair, Matt, moved to Lewistown. My friend Gary suggested that I take the position since I was already going in on a regular basis. I went to our district business meeting and was voted in. I decided to do the best job I could. It was a challenge at first, and I had some discouraging moments, but it forced me to "really" get out of myself and just suit up, show up and do whatever it takes. I was in that position from 2004-2006, and it was an experience that has been invaluable. There is nothing like the feeling of meeting someone in jail meetings, and then running into them at an Area Assembly as a Committee Chair or a GSR. It makes it all worthwhile! Because of my positive experience as Corrections Chair, I said yes when I was nominated for Alternate DCM, and am now the current District 81 DCM. I see service work as an incredible opportunity to grow and change, and once again, it gets me out of me.

I still have a strong passion for going to meetings at the Missoula Assessment and Sanction Center (MASC), and the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. It has changed my life and I trust it will continue to do so. I'm surprised that it so difficult to encourage people to take up this

cause. Our current Corrections Chair's biggest challenge is to find enough volunteers to insure that the inmates get as many meetings as they can. If we don't show up, they don't get a meeting! We've been going in to the Juvenile Detention Center in Missoula since 2006 and it seems to be helping some of the kids too. I don't think you can start too early; it might be just the right time for some of them.

A few years back at my work, I met Terry Peets from Lincoln, who used to be the Warden at Pelican Bay, the toughest maximum security facility in the country. He told me about someone he met some years ago, who used to be the Warden at MSP in Deer Lodge, Jim Estelle. It turns out that he served as a Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee on the AA General Service Board 1977-1986, and was elected Chairman of the Board 1993 to 1997. Terry told me that they felt that only two groups of volunteers had any effect in prison: the spiritual groups and AA. This is a quote from an interview with Mr. Estelle from August of 2007: "AA saved my job. I spent all of my adult life in corrections. I continually witnessed AA doing things for alcoholics in the jails and prisons that I, or other people in corrections work, could not do. And they achieved results at no cost to the state. Government can't compare with the help that AA gives."

Personally, I think all we are doing is keeping ourselves sober and trying to help them do the same thing, single-mindedness of purpose, the stripped down origin of AA. I attend five meetings a month behind the walls and they are some of the best meetings I attend. Please come and join us, you'll be glad you did!

Yours in love and service, Dan K.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Welcome New Group

[Pink Cloud Group](#) meets Monday at 7:30 pm at Christus Collegium, 714 S 8<sup>th</sup> Bozeman, open, contact Brenda at 600-0607

The Triangle  
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