



# THE MAINLINE

JULY 2019

*Greetings,*

*We write you as representatives of Heroin Anonymous World Services (HAWs). This informational bulletin's purpose is to increase communication between the groups of Heroin Anonymous throughout the world.*

## KICKBALL + FACE PIES + A DANCE-OFF = \$1700

HA World Convention Update (August 28-30, 2020 in Atlanta, GA)

### **Are you wondering what Atlanta has been up to in preparation for the 2020 convention?**

During the sweltering month of June, the Atlanta area hosted its second regional unity event. Joining forces with the Alabama area and Tennessee area HA communities, Atlanta was able to not only raise money for the 2020 World Convention but was also able to join in fellowship with over 100 people from the region.

As part of the festivities, the participants enjoyed a kickball tournament, dance-off, a tasty cook-out, and listening to local bands whose members are in recovery. Although Atlanta dominated the kickball field, the real winner was the local sheriff's deputy whose moves in the dance-off could be considered criminal; they were that good! In support of the World Convention two local members received pies in the face raising \$1700! To finish out the event, Chris C., from Alabama, shared his experience, strength and hope reminding us recovery truly does work!

There are many more fun-filled events coming this fall to fundraise for the convention! If your area is looking for ways to get involved in fundraising for the convention, please email our convention planning committee. This convention is for the entire HA community as a whole, so we would love involvement from all areas around the country.

The convention committee would love your support and service. The goal is to throw a convention that is a true reflection of HA nationwide. To make this possible, the host committee needs your input on speaker submissions, panel and workshop ideas, and artwork. Deadline is September 2019 for submission.

Please send submissions or questions to: [convention@georgiahha.org](mailto:convention@georgiahha.org)

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## FREEDOM FROM DARK

Meeting Spotlight: "Freedom from Dark" Group – Bend, OR

My name is Melissa, and I am a heroin addict. My bottom, as an IV heroin user, consisted of homelessness, multiple incarcerations, and criminal behavior as a means of survival. Internally, I was hopeless, full of shame, and devoid of self-respect, often wishing my next fix would be the end of me and my miserable life. I slammed heroin for five years, which took me to a very dark and lonely place. Before I graduated to using needles, I smoked heroin daily for five years.

However, I did not become a heroin addict overnight.

My story started with alcohol. When I was 15 years old, I got drunk for the first time, and within a year, I became a daily drinker. It was a struggle to get through each day, and alcohol was my solution. It removed all my fears: fears of not being liked or accepted, fear of failure, fear of people, fear of reality; I was literally paralyzed with fear. Living in constant fear was extremely exhausting, and drinking before school and throughout the day was what I did to escape the pressure I felt from reality. My drinking quickly became excessive, and I started to experience several consequences.

My first arrest was at age 16; I was charged with burglary and conspiracy for stealing alcohol from a convenient store. Later came several Minor in Possessions (MIP) from several different counties up the California

coast and car accidents from drinking and driving. Inside I was completely lost; I lacked any motivation unless it involved partying. It was only when I was "the life of the party" that I felt any real value as a human being.

Copious amounts of alcohol soon took a toll on my health. I became bloated. My skin started to turn yellow, and I started vomiting blood frequently. My mental health also declined, leaving a series of psychiatrists puzzled as to why different medications were not effective in treating my severe depression and suicidal ideation.

My parents intervened, allowing me to move back into their home, so they could supervise my drinking. I was constantly monitored for liquor and no longer had access to their liquor cabinet. Almost immediately, I searched for another solution, since alcohol was no longer working for me and had created a lot of wreckage in my life. It was then that I found black tar heroin. Instead of going out to parties, I opted to stay in my room and smoke heroin off of tin foil. I no longer cared for, thought about, or desired alcohol. Heroin was my new solution. My career as a heroin addict was spent trying to kick it and get clean, overdosing, being sick, and failing miserably at attempting to manage and control my usage.

My last days using were spent in the bathroom of a hotel room my parents had

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been paying for trying for hours to find a vein, so I could get high. My probation officer had stopped by several times, so I pretended I was not inside, knowing if he found me, I would be going back to jail.

Having been court-ordered to rehab, I was so tired of the lifestyle I had been living, and I decided to be honest about my drug use. I was beaten into a state of willingness, and for the first time, I actually heard and listened to the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. Skeptical but curious about “freedom from the obsession” I heard others talk about, I decided I wanted to work the steps. I asked a woman from AA to sponsor me. I told her I was not an alcoholic, that I had not even drunk for ten years, but I wanted to recover from my heroin addiction using the A.A. Big Book. The woman explained to me that she was an alcoholic and had no experience with heroin addiction. She explained that she was terrified of needles and never liked the effect of drugs, therefore she was not qualified to help me with my heroin addiction. The only way she was willing to sponsor me is if I was also an alcoholic.

This woman took the time to qualify me using the directions in the Big Book. We began reading and discussing my experience with alcohol. Shortly after, when I realized that I was a real alcoholic, she agreed to sponsor me. We began working the steps immediately. She required me to get a homegroup and go through the AA Traditions. After learning about the traditions, I struggled with sharing in meetings because I wanted to respect A.A.’s primary purpose and at the same time be honest. I was not okay with simply substituting the word alcohol for heroin

because that would be a lie. I hit a bottom with my drinking, and I was an alcoholic--but the bottom I hit with heroin took me to greater depths.

I was experiencing the significance of identification.

When I had a working knowledge of the 12 steps and 12 traditions, my sponsor told me about Heroin Anonymous. She explained that H.A. adopted the A.A. program, yet its primary purpose is to carry the message to the still-suffering heroin addict. At the meetings, members identify themselves as heroin addicts. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of the 12 steps, and now living daily in steps 10, 11, and 12, I knew that my real purpose was to be of maximum service to God and those about me.

Living in the small town of Bend, Oregon, I knew that people were dying every day from the heroin epidemic, yet there were no Heroin Anonymous meetings. This was an avenue where I could help the struggling heroin addict! Even heroin addicts who were not alcoholics. A person who was solely a heroin addict could not effectively recover in Alcoholics Anonymous, so they had no place to go. As a result, with the help of my sponsor and members from Heroin Anonymous World Services throughout the United States, Heroin Anonymous opened its doors in Bend in May of 2018.

My experience as a member of the “Freedom from Dark” Heroin Anonymous group has taught me a lot. Because there is only one H.A. meeting in Bend, one day a week, heroin addicts are pretending to be alcoholics and members of A.A. Some who

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aren't alcoholics are even finding A.A. members to sponsor them, take them through the steps of A.A. and work a first step on alcohol. This might work for some time, but my fear is that these people will begin to experience a lack of identification and begin to feel "different", leading them to relapse on heroin and risking their lives.

In my opinion, those members of A.A. who are sponsoring non-alcoholics are ultimately doing these heroin addicts a disservice that could potentially cost someone their life. It is the responsibility of the people who have a working knowledge of the steps and traditions to direct newcomer heroin addicts to the fellowship that is qualified to help. Relief from the obsession of heroin addiction comes from working the steps of Heroin Anonymous. In 1958, Bill W. said, "I see no

way of making non-alcoholic addicts into A.A. members." He also said, "Compared with the addict and his woes, we alcoholics are pikers."

A heroin addict who attends H.A. will hear the message from other heroin addicts who have recovered, who understand what it means when someone says "sick," and who identify with wearing long sleeves in the summertime. Newcomers will be able to have hope knowing that their predecessors have recovered from that same state of hopelessness they are presently feeling.

*Thank you for asking me to share my journey. Again, my name is Melissa, and thanks to HA, I am a grateful heroin addict. DOS 6/29/2017*

## THE BRIGHT SPOT OF OUR LIVES

Personal Story: Bend, OR – Carrie B.

My name is Carrie B., and I am **not** a heroin addict. I am an alcoholic and a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. My sobriety date is March 25th, 2010. I have a sponsor and belong to a home group. I have had the privilege of sponsoring a lot of women in AA. I also sponsor Melissa, an alcoholic who is also a heroin addict. I've been asked to write about my experience sponsoring Melissa. Being part of her journey has truly been one of the greatest gifts, and also an amazing growth opportunity for me in my own recovery. She is truly an inspiration, and her story is a miracle. I won't tell her story as

she does a beautiful job telling it herself -- but I will share how I've been able to support her.

Melissa came to me after having been on death's door. Quite literally. Her heroin addiction was killing her. She was suffering from hepatitis, scars and scabs all over her legs and arms, and had been overdosing on heroin, playing Russian roulette with her life for years by that time. She was going to die. Heroin was her master. She desperately wanted to go through the Big Book and was willing to go to any lengths to recover. As someone who believes wholeheartedly in the AA Traditions and understands the

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importance of identification and the necessity for singleness of purpose, I explained that I would first have to help her to qualify as an alcoholic before I agreed to work with her. She told me, however, that she was not alcoholic and that it had been 10 years since she'd drank. I agreed to meet with her anyways, to see if I could pull some alcoholism out of her.

I have been taught in AA to always "qualify the prospect". In this case, the prospect was also a heroin addict, and if she were to pick up, it wouldn't be alcohol. I knew that I was treading in dangerous territory and that I had to make damn sure that she was a real alcoholic before I took her on. We met up and sat down on two different occasions to do this. Because heroin had completely taken over by this time in her life, she hadn't given much thought whatsoever to her past drinking problem she once had years ago. As we talked, more started coming to light, and as it turns out, she had been hospitalized for her drinking as a late stage alcoholic once upon a time long ago. This was before she found heroin. We spent time on the details of her drinking history, "The Doctor's Opinion," page 21, and page 44. By the end of those two sessions I was convinced that she was a real alcoholic and that I could work with her, all the while confiding in both my sponsor as well as my service sponsor. I agreed to take her through the 12 steps around alcohol as outlined in the Big Book. I explained to her that after she recovers and has had her spiritual awakening, she would be best equipped to help other heroin addicts because of the particulars of her story. I would encourage her and support her

wherever she would be of maximum service to God and those about her.

We started going through the book, and she started taking the steps with a hunger and a willingness that I had not seen in a long time. By the time she was six months sober, she was more than halfway through her ninth step, and actively working steps 10, 11, and 12. She had definitely come back to life! She then began the process of starting her HA group.

We contacted HA World Services, whose members were very helpful. I did help her a little bit with the organization behind the scenes, but she really did most of the footwork herself. Melissa now has 2 years sober. She is beautiful! Her scars are healing well both inside and out. She has held a job for almost two years, and she is a productive and active member of society. The Heroin Anonymous group she started here in Bend, Oregon is now over a year old and is going strong. She and five others from her home group attended the international HA convention in Portland last year. She's very active, and at only two years sober, Melissa works one of the strongest programs of anyone I've ever sponsored.

Because I am very active in the AA fellowship, my ego and selfishness can sometimes take over, and I'm tempted to encourage her to just stay in AA, as she has such a passion for recovery and is an amazing asset wherever she serves. I have to remind myself though that the entire point of the steps and the real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of MAXIMUM service, and that she has her own journey and her own purpose. When I remember this, I can see

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where God is definitely working in her and through her, and she is right where he wants her.

It's 2019, and the heroin epidemic is out of control. Many people are dying of heroin overdoses; some of whom are not alcoholic. The simple fact is that Melissa is able to help people that I do not qualify to help.

This woman has inspired me in so many ways and has helped me to grow in my own

usefulness and understanding. She is definitely a bright spot in my life! It has been one of my greatest honors watching this woman come back to life and begin to help others do the same through the fellowship of Heroin Anonymous.

I would like to say thank you to HA, as it is where Melissa has found her home, and her purpose.

*Yours in Love and Service, Carrie B.*

## WEBMASTER CHAIR POSITION OPEN

### HA World Services Board Update

Dear Fellowship of Heroin Anonymous,

The Chair position on the HA World Services Board Webmaster Subcommittee will soon be vacant. If you are interested in filling this position, please make sure you fulfill the following requirements:

- This position requires at least two continuous years of sobriety.
- As is the case with any member of the HAWS board, an understanding of the 12 traditions and how they may be applied is important.
- Attendance is required at a monthly HAWS board meeting. If you are not within driving distance of Phoenix, AZ, the Webmaster is required to video chat into the meeting.

The Chair of Webmaster Subcommittee is not necessarily a technical position. Although the Webmaster should have a grasp on the general structure of a website and associated online platforms to make changes, they will be expected to *lead* a committee of individuals to maintain the HAWS website, rather than maintain it themselves.

Thus, this is a position for an organized and reliable individual with somewhat less focus on the technical aspects of a website. These skills would certainly be useful, however.

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Although the time commitment varies, the Webmaster Chair spends an average of 5 hours per week fulfilling this commitment and is expected to be available for various correspondence, especially by email, and respond within a reasonable time frame.

If you are interested in running for this position, please email [hawssecretary@gmail.com](mailto:hawssecretary@gmail.com) expressing your interest **no later than August 9th, 2019**.

*If you would like your meeting featured in our meeting spotlight or have any other content you would like to submit, please feel free to contact us at the email listed.*

*Thank you!*

*- Heroin Anonymous World Services Board*

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