



H.A.W.S. **MAINLINE**

Heroin Anonymous World Services
Monthly Bulletin

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This informational bulletin's purpose is to
increase communication between the groups of
Heroin Anonymous throughout the world.



FEBRUARY **2021** ISSUE



Photo by Ramiro Pianarosa

WHAT IS **A WORLD CONVENTION?**

World Convention Q&A

For anyone new to Heroin Anonymous, Susan M., a heroin addict from Arizona, has taken the time to answer some general questions about what a World Convention is. Susan was the Chair of the Arizona Area Convention, back when it first started. Currently she is the secretary of the HA World Convention committee. She was asked to answer these questions based on her years of experience.

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Q: Susan, please define what your service position is in relation to the World Convention.

A: I am currently on the steering committee as secretary. Previously I served as an advisor due to experience and position as Convention Chair on the HA World Conference Committee.

Q: In your own words, define what a world convention is?

A: A world convention is a fundraiser outreach to the entire fellowship and encourages unity from all over. The end goals are to reach people with all lengths of sobriety, but ultimately to reach the newcomer and those still struggling, as well as fundraising to continue carrying the message year around.

Q: What is the difference between a world convention and an area convention?

A: Area conventions are generally focused for local participants and fundraising for that specific area. World conventions fundraise for world services and typically outreach to the entire body of members worldwide.

Q: Why would heroin addicts and newcomers want to attend the World Convention?

A: Because it's a great way to meet people, have fun, and learn about life in recovery. My first convention is why I stuck around. It changed my life and my perspective.

Q: Based on your past experiences, what are some of the positive things you have seen a world convention do for the fellowship as a whole?

A: Get people excited for sobriety, networking, making lasting relationships with addicts from all over the world, and build unity.

Q: With a convention being a weekend long event and people traveling from all over the world, where do people usually stay?

A: Usually at the hotel where the convention is being hosted or with local members from the area.

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Q: Describe one highlight from the last World Convention in Portland in 2018.

A: My personal favorite was meeting people from all over the U.S. who participate in Heroin Anonymous. I made a lot of friends.

Q: What kind of activities can people participate in at a World Convention?

A: Workshops, meetings, tradition studies, games of "Mafia" and "Love thy Neighbor." It all depends on what the committee plans. There are a few staples but every convention has something unique.

Q: How much is it going to cost to attend the World Convention in 2021?

A: I don't have an answer for that... it's not an across the board answer. My first large convention I didn't have any money, and I still had an amazing time.

Q: What are some things you suggest people should bring with them to a World Convention?

A: Clothes, money for food and merchandise, an open mind. Newcomers should just show up, there is food provided in hospitality and scholarships for the event itself.

Q: What is the banquet dinner? What is the dress attire for the banquet dinner? And how much does the banquet dinner cost?

A: A sit down, paid dinner that typically has a speaker and some form of entertainment. The dress attire is traditionally semi formal/dressy. It typically costs \$50-75 but I don't have the exact answer.

Q: Why is the World Convention held every two years?

A: Because we are not a large enough fellowship to successfully plan and host an annual event. The end goal is to have a world convention annually.

We are inviting all heroin addicts around the United States to attend the 2021 Heroin Anonymous World Convention. This is the third ever HA World Convention. This year it will be held in Atlanta the weekend of

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August 27-29. The theme is "Cleaning Up the Dirty South." You can register at <http://heroinanonymous.org/convention>. Hotel reservations can be made at the Atlanta Airport Marriott. Registration is now open. Hope to see you there.

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I HAVE FINALLY COME TO Personal Story: Katlyn C. – Bend, OR

What is addiction exactly ? The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary's definition of addiction is - a compulsive, chronic, physiological or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behavior, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence : the state of being addicted.

This definition does not even scratch the surface of what the disease of addiction truly is. Not that there is any one way to chop it up. Personal experience can shed a brighter light on what it is-- so here is my painting of what addiction looked like for me. Years before I ever used heroin, I obsessed over it. I glorified it as the king of kings, propped it on a pedestal. Every time I ever heard someone speak about how heroin completely destroyed their life, all

I heard was that it was the ultimate high.

I knew deep down it would be the end of me, so I avoided it like the plague until the inevitable moment when my life as a heroin addict arrived.

Addiction for me was a cycle of violence. It was the devil inside me. It was bio-chemical warfare against myself. Addiction was mind control, and it was emotional control. It was instant gratification from the lack of morals. Addiction for me was using my heart as pin cushion for self hatred and my mind as a torture chamber. In this state, harming myself physically allowed me to feel normal. At the same time, addiction distorted my thinking and enabled me to enjoy the chaos and my inner demons. Addiction for me was nothing more than hell. It was nothing but malice and fear for the world and myself. I felt nothing but guilt,

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shame, embarrassment, and hopelessness. I honestly believed the world would be better if I were dead. I thought my children would be better off. I heard the world say I was worthless. My addiction was living every day desperate to die, but even in that desperation, I failed because I was afraid dying would still be hurting those I left behind. All of those thoughts and feelings left me even more impossibly desperate and worthless. Even though I full-heartedly wanted to stop, I continued to supply my bloodstream with poison.

It didn't start with addiction for me. My sickness was there well before I started injecting myself with hate, well before I habitually sought to fill the void, the black whole deep in my heart that grew from my childhood and perhaps my infancy. Many of us believe we were born with this spiritual malady. The truth is I don't know when the search to replenish love began. However, I do know that when the search started is when the disease was born. A seed of self-loathing was planted in my subconscious, rooted in my mind and soul, so perfectly camouflaged I was spiritually blinded. While trying to find my seat in life, I experienced childhood trauma, clinical depression, clinical anxiety, neglect, a ten-year physically and mentally violent relationship, deaths, and other events that broke me. Those circumstances led me to homelessness and unemployment, took away my kids,

my soul, my hope. It left me lifeless, broken, infected, beaten, defeated but most importantly desperate.

Desperation is what made me come to the understanding I was wrong. There was a reason I had been defeated. Choice was removed from my capabilities as a human. Power was stripped from my existence. I had never once sought a solution. I sought escape. My desperation was the door to seeking change and a solution. It was my white flag, the towel I threw in, the end of my rope. It brought me to my father's home where my three beautiful children were living. When I stepped out of the bathroom from a much-needed shower, my youngest daughter, who at the time was four, did not recognize me. The weight of guilt, shame, hurt was heavier than the shot that almost killed me hours earlier. There are no words for that feeling.

What is recovery - 1 : the act, process, or an instance of recovering especially : an economic upturn (as after a depression) 2 : the process of combating a disorder (such as alcoholism) or a real or perceived problem (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary).

Recovery for me is a constant proactive effort to heal and find a solution. Recovery for me is working a spiritual program of action so that I can be of service through my experiences. It has shown me purpose to my addiction and malady. However, I haven't gotten over how

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miraculous recovery has made my inner self feel today. Recovery is foreign but worth a million attempts of nailing it. Today, I wake up, and I feel okay. To most people, okay does not sound like much. To me, okay is priceless.

Okay is feeling safe. It is feeling rested and healthy. Okay is feeling and being okay with feeling. It is being okay not to put a needle in my arm first. Okay is knowing I am loved. Okay is holding an okay job, in an okay apartment, and being 1000 percent okay with that. Okay is

clean clothes, hot showers, and the unconditional love of my children. It's comfort food and cuddling. It's being okay with the love I can give myself. Okay is honestly accepting when things are not okay. Okay is genuine happiness and fun without impending doom. Okay is progress. Okay without heroin. Okay is courageous because being okay means that even if I still have fear, I have faith that it will be okay no matter what is to come, because I have finally come to.

- Katlyn C.

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A NEW LIFE

Personal Story: Robert S. – Portland, OR

I don't think my story is that different from anyone else's. As a kid growing up, I always felt out of place at home, different at school, and lost between the feelings of anger and a lack of understanding. Before my parents separated, my mom was in the grips of alcoholism, and my father was generally out of the house at work. This left my sister, two years older, as my primary caregiver. When we moved into my step-dad's house, this pattern continued. I remember sitting in

this school waiting for my mom to come. The nuns would look at me like this was abnormal, and I guess it was... but I didn't really see it that way. As time went by, I just remember wondering why I wasn't good enough, and that became the pattern that I carried moving forward.

When I was around seven, one of the neighbors had had enough. It wasn't unusual for my sisters or me to be waiting outside for someone to come home, wandering the neighborhood or

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knocking on doors. She called my father and let him know what was going on, that it wasn't new -- and my dad and my stepmom decided to start their efforts for custody. Despite the fact that my mom was not working, despite active alcoholism and addiction, she was set to win the court case.

She got a DUI prior to the case, and that essentially placed us in the care of our father. I remember being so angry. My mom had told us that my stepmother was evil, that my father was going to hell. I was afraid, alone, and once again, couldn't figure out what my purpose was in this new environment.

By third grade, I was getting in trouble for vandalism at school. By sixth, I held the record for most suspensions in one year. On the day before eighth grade, my dad got into a motorcycle accident that hospitalized him for over a month. By the end of that year, I was placed into an alternative high school due to my misbehavior.

In high school, I quickly found my people and started experimenting with drugs. Miraculously, I still managed to graduate. After high school, I joined the Navy, and I quickly developed a relationship with alcohol that was never satisfied. This led to multiple episodes of drinking on duty and always getting caught. When I got discharged (General - Under Honorable), I had experimented with off-script Fentanyl for an injury with my shoulder. When that ran out

and I got sick, I wanted nothing more than to find an escape. A woman I was with at the time provided me with a solution; a straw in her mouth, foil in her hand, she chased the dragon and blew the shotgun into my mouth. That feeling I had felt the first time I found opiates reemerged, and I had my strength back, enough to make it to work. I walked out the door and said hello to my new life. I thought I was maintaining well although life's obstacles were more frequent. I would eventually become jobless as my priorities shifted from making money to acquiring more of my escape. Truth became the only thing used in moderation.

Visits to trap-houses became more frequent. Over the next year, I would find myself working countless jobs. I would usually just finish training so I had enough money to replenish my supply and hopefully make enough profit before the money was gone again. A friend's mom was getting evicted. She had two days to get packed and moved out of her house and had yet to start. My friend offered to pay us for our help. Staying up, packing each plate in her set of china within tissue paper and loading her life's boxes into the truck. feet sore and weathered, shoulder in agony, I noticed her shotgun was gone. This is not the reality you ever want to see yourself in: a house full of tweakers and a shotgun with unknown whereabouts. Before long, we figured out who had it and confronted him. Fortunately, we disarmed him, no

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shots fired, no injuries, pure luck. Wouldn't it have been ironic to find myself after two deployments and life in the Middle East gunned down upon my return to the United States? I'd like to say this became my moment of realization, that I walked away from that lifestyle at that moment, but I didn't. The woman who introduced me to heroin overdosed later and died. I had been kicked out of any house left on the block. I was alone -- again -- with no escape from the pain that had always been present, but in this state, it was amplified.

I called my sister in the middle of the night from a roach motel after winning enough at the bar to get some shelter for the night. I told her that I was going to go to detox the next day -- and dammit, I tried! I arrived at 4:16pm and was told they stopped doing intakes at 4:00pm. I called her and begged her for help, but not until after I got one more bag for the night. By around 7pm, I was arriving at my sister's. She instantly demanded that I give her any drugs I had on my person, and of course, I lied. I went into the bathroom and broke off a little piece and returned to give it to her so she could get rid of it; that was the compromise.

My sister and I were talking on the back porch, and she told me something that shook me to my core. She said that when she saw me, there was nothing left of me that she could recognize. It wasn't until we spoke that she was able to hear what

was left of my heart. I broke down and made the decision to go into the bathroom to escape from that feeling, but when I got in there, I was hit with a moment of clarity. I didn't want to do this anymore. I wanted to be done. I broke down crying in front of the toilet, knowing that the former solution to escape from that pain was in my hand, but that I didn't want to keep living like this. I went back to my sister and told her I had lied. I asked for her help, and we flushed it down the toilet. That was the first time in my life that I had ever experienced the idea that I didn't have to use. It was the first time I ever had any sort of power. Knowing that the sickness was creeping in, my sister gave me a heavy dose of marijuana extract, and I fell asleep.

I checked into detox the next day and then transitioned into treatment. It was hard, but I knew I didn't have anywhere else to go and that I definitely didn't want to go through this again. I stuck it out and then moved into supportive housing with intensive outpatient environment, from there I got introduced to meetings and the 12 steps.

This is where my story truly begins. I am a recovering heroin addict -- coming from an existence of destitution and isolation. If I would have told you that the principles that I learned through service would be the same tools that would rekindle relationships with

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the rest of my family, that they would provide me the opportunity to marry the mother of my child and be present in both of their everyday lives, if I would have told you on day one that by now I would be attending school full time, working full time in the recovery field, and above all else, have a connection with a higher power -- I would've thought I was lying. I knew I just wanted the pain to stop, and I knew that my solution wasn't working anymore. I came into recovery willing to do whatever you said, because for the first time, in HA, I

felt like other people had been where I was, and had gotten to a place I wanted to be.

Today I am grateful for the unmerited and undeserved grace that I've received. Today I can say that I am a father, a brother, a son and a husband and have purpose -- but that all came after I was willing to admit that I was an addict.

- Robert

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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 haworldbulletin@gmail.com.

Thank you!
The Folks at The HAWS Mainline



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