

DCCMA VOICE



From The Outgoing Board

As the outgoing Chair for the desert cities CMA board. It has been my great honor and more than that a great learning opportunity, serving the CMA community. I have learned that I was just the facilitator and that the community that shows up for service is the community that stays clean and sober.

I started as our local GSR, with little to no idea about what my tasks or Job description was. I went to the first meeting at PACMA and it was very organic and they came from a place that many would not know what they were tasked to do there.

Because of the high turnover in GSR's they started a half hour in service before each meeting with hand outs that clearly defined what we were there for and simple forms to follow for notes to take back to my group. I left there feeling completely empowered and wanting to do more.

I got to see how important it was to do the business of our CMA community. The moment you start collecting money the government has very clear ideas about what has to happen with it. Our business is to support the meetings and hold them up with our best efforts and because we have so many "New to CMA" and new to service in our community it is part of or constant endeavor to communicate what service is all about. The gift is that it keeps us sober and connected.

The work is consensus, which is simple when you follow the principals and traditions. All of which get clearer and clearer as we continue the work. The Traditions are to the group, what the steps are to the individual and play themselves out at the group level. I noticed that when we played by the principals things worked and when we did not drama ensued... as you well can imagine.

I got to be the first Chair in our District and will always feel very grateful that the community saw me fit to hold the trusted position. I got to work with some of the greatest guys and gals in our community.

I got to be there at the first World Conference of CMA as a whole and that was fantastic. Lots of works was done and lots more work to be done. We are just feeling out way through this but Service saved me, I know it. If you don't have a service commitment you are cheating yourself. You need to get one and watch the change in yourself. Also you need to put a dollar in the basket every time and when you can't make it up sometime soon. We spent a lot more on getting high so a dollar or two is worth every life we save. It is what keeps the rooms open and that is our business. Ivan W, outgoing Chair

Congratulations to the Newly Elected Officers

Chair: Tony A
Co-Chair: Christopher M
Treasurer: Matt S
Secretary: Christine E
Events: Richard N
Information and Outreach: Greg G
Hospitals and Institutions: Nicholas S
Registration: Gary W

My name is Tony A and I'm a Crystal Meth Addict. It has been my privilege to serve as the Treasurer of DCCMA for the past two years. When I look back, I flash back to the small meetings at Fashion Plaza every Saturday night. We passed out many newcomer chips at that Saturday night but only a few 1 or 2 year chips. I think back to hold meetings at my home because we only had a few members and we had lost our meeting space. I see what we have accomplished here today and I am in awe of the strength of the Fellowship.

I've been on the Steering Committee for our local round up for many years as well as serving on non profit boards. It has been a tremendous learning experience being a part of this Board. This was an opportunity to have a fresh start with DCCMA. I felt constrained by the past history of some of the service Boards I've been involved in. If a change was desired or required, it was like swimming against the tide of the past. I believe our Board has stayed true to the best of our ability to the 12 Traditions and Concepts. We have tried to be transparent in all our actions constantly reminding ourselves that the power of DCCMA lies in the autonomy of our individual meetings. We are there to advise and guide.

Personally, serving on any service board is always a challenge for me. "Love and tolerance of others is our code" is driven home time and time again. It is always an opportunity for me to grow and to learn from others. Many times an idea that I just brushed off has turned out to be the best decision. To me, God is present in a group conscience and I have learned to respect those decisions even if I disagree with them.

I look forward to the next two years as Chair of DCCMA. I hope we continue to build on the previous Board's legacy. Yours in sobriety, Tony A., outgoing treasurer

I served as Structure and Finance Committee Chair during the District's first two years. I helped incorporate the District, draft its bylaws, and obtain non-profit status for it. Service helped me connect to the fellowship in Palm Springs, to get out of my head, and to build self-esteem (through right action). It also gave me the opportunity to practice putting principles before personalities. In addition, I was able to attend Pacific Area and World service meetings, which exposed me to some of the founding members of our fellowship, regionally and nationally, from whom I was able to learn the importance of one addict reaching out to another to build community. But service can also be a distraction, in a bad way (directing my attention away from my own spiritual condition, and toward the condition of others, or of the organization as a whole); so it was very important for me to be of service under the close guidance of a sponsor. It was by working with my sponsor that I was able to see that service could not substitute for step work, or for building meaningful 1:1 relationships with other addicts, or for learning how to rely on a Higher Power as the basis of my self-worth, rather than upon my personal accomplishments or my standing in a particular group. Morris R, outgoing Structure & Finance

Service is defined in our literature as being part of the 12th Step. It is implied in that Step that service be to the fellowship, and that is all well and good. But I have questioned many a time whether that is enough for any recovering addict.

There are "service junkies" (like me) who have the time and willingness to participate at committee level in this fellowship and others. I would hope that we have the capabilities to act as trusted servants and keep the good of the fellowship tantamount in our decision-making process. Is there a bit ego in this type of service work? I'd have to say yes.

What I want to posit here is whether service works does, or should, stop at the edges of the fellowship's borders? I am going to step up on my soapbox, clip on my paper wings, and speak my mind. I answer that question with a resounding NO! Not for this addict—it is not enough. In my rampant addiction I did society at large great damage: theft, driving under the influence, public displays of insanity. Thus, I still have a social debt to repay. I have been taught that we cannot always make a 9th Step amends directly. And even when we do, we are not be done with service to our community.

I'm a fan of the TV show *Extreme Makeovers Home Edition*. At first I was both cynical and skeptical with an attitude that it was all hype for the big corporate sponsors. And heck, if they get some kudos for what they do, that is the American Way. But all those people who show up week after week to help another person in need is, to me, inspiring and touching. I see at an interpersonal level people acting kindly and lovingly towards another without asking for anything in return: that is the true meaning of service. I often get a bit weepy seeing how one person can set aside their own needs and give to someone else whose need is even greater.

There is never any shortage in any community for volunteer service. With the Holidays fast upon us, there are toy and food drives; feeding

the needy programs, and other opportunities to help. On the quiet side of public service, let's start with the fact that we are not driving under the influence. That's a public service if there ever was one. When we're polite to the cashier or bank clerk, yet another. I'm saying we need to give a little of our time, a little of our funds and do something for someone else—especially if there's no reward and it is done anonymously. Over the past 3 years I have done such a project. Financial resources have unfortunately cut back my ability to do this as I did a few years ago; but it is the intent that counts, not the quantity.

It is up to the individual to find their own niche to be of service to the community. But like recovery, it service needs to be a day-in and day-out part of our lives. The need in the community is year-round. I know I get caught up in my own personal needs for food, shelter, and basic survival needs. But if I budget correctly and sacrifice a movie or dinner out, I can manage to maintain my special commitment. We all get caught up in the freedom that life without active addiction gives us. We get jobs, we get social lives, and all too quickly we find ourselves forgetting this vital part of recovery: service.

On the other side of the service step is participation at the fellowship level. I've noted recently that active participation has dropped. It has become a serious matter in recovery: fewer and fewer people are participating at the service structure level. I believe that this kind of indifference is dangerous to the heart and soul of the fellowship. We become complacent: I don't have to, let someone else show up. And if everyone were to cop that attitude, no one would show up. I have noted a laxity toward keeping meeting commitments of late, people not showing up to fulfill their responsibility at meeting level (or sending an alternate). I have been guilty of this...I've also had my butt kicked and been told if I take a commitment, I show up whether I want to or not. Yes, I have certainly have been accused of not being reliable at times to my commitments. I recognized recently that I **get to change my mind**. I get to change my mind as often as necessary to restructure my commitment to my recovery. To make changes and grow in my recovery. I get to change my opinions in the hopes that new thoughts will improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power and strengthen my commitment to the program. Christopher M

Put a Dollar Put a Do\$\$ar in the Basket

At a CMA meeting recently there were over 30 in attendance; the 7th Tradition was half that amount. The basket was passed a second time and the weekly requirement to keep that meeting afloat was met. This problem is indigenous to meetings valley-wide, at all programs and fellowships. I came into recovery with the attitude that you needed to take care of me. You pay for the rent, the coffee, literature—it ain't my problem. This attitude amongst the fellowship is still prevalent today and is exemplified by low 7th Tradition collections. And that short-fall puts the meetings of CMA (and all other A's) in jeopardy. CMA's primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. I wondered what a paper trail of our \$1 in the basket looked like and this is what I found.

Our 7th Tradition dollar has deflated 795%. In other words, an item purchased for \$1 in 1950 would cost \$8.95 today, an inflation rate of 795%. We are still putting in the same dollar that we put in 15 years ago in CMA, 50 years ago in NA and 75 years ago in AA. As the dollar has deflated, costs have escalated. Most meetings have not experienced rent increase in years. Most meetings, regardless of program, are facing the hard, cold fact that attendance is down, collections are down, expenses are up and some are running in the red. Some meetings have closed because of this; others have had to cut back on purchasing coffee so they can make the rent and buy chips. Of equal importance, we need to fund-flow money to CMA district.

Our primary purpose at the meeting level is to provide a meeting space, provide chips and literature to carry the message and help CMA at the district level to do the same thing. At the district level we have a large inventory of chips, which we paid for, and which we sell at cost to the meetings. At the district level we pay for the printing of meeting schedules, CMA-approved IP's, meeting rent for bimonthly meetings, phone line, website, and other tools necessary to carry the message.

When meetings cannot afford to fund-flow to the district we experience a problem—we don't have funds to carry out our primary purpose...to carry the message to the CMA addict who still suffers.

At the meeting level, several have agreed to stop purchasing coffee and supplies and make that available on a donation basis. This will allow them to meet the increase rent expense which has been levied on most of the local meetings. And, in all fairness, the landlord is entitled to an increase to help offset their increased expenses.

The 7th Tradition applies to the group AND the individual. It tells us that we are self-supporting as a group and as an individual. We don't freeload! We don't take outside contributions so that no entity outside of CMA can levy influence over us. But from within, we need to own up to our responsibility and pay our way...be self-supporting. We cannot take a childish attitude that we are owed these meeting rooms and can't afford an increase. There are times when one or all of us is broke and can't put in our dollar. And we usually try to double up on our donation when we are solvent. But when we come to meetings with a \$5 cup of coffee and then stiff the basket—simply put we are being selfish and irresponsible. Think about it this way: if the rent wasn't paid and you were desperate for recovery and your first meeting ever and there was no meeting, where would you be today? We need to keep meetings running and we need to support our district so they can continue to carry the message. The truth is, we all need to increase our 7th Tradition contribution at each meeting. It might put a little squeeze on our entertainment budget, but we owe a huge debt of gratitude to CMA for providing a safe place where we can go to stay clean.

Just something to think about....

Service, Essential to Recovery

Through the course of my recovery, I've witnessed many examples of fellow addicts in service, both inside and outside of the rooms. There are those who will tell you that the only way for an addict to maintain recovery is in strict service to other addicts. I've also known addicts and alcoholics with decades of recovery and strong personal programs who decline any program service other than basic help at meetings. One such friend, with almost 40 years of recovery and a strong message, confided that not a single sponsee during his first 12 years of recovery stayed clean while his volunteer handy-work making teddy bears for a children's ward (anonymously) filled him with joy, purpose, and a sense of commitment to others.

We've all known the folks, some new and some with substantial clean time, who seem to be bundles of energy. Their service inside the rooms is invaluable to us all. They keep the coffee brewing and the wheels of program turning. Some in this group have a quiet quality that allows them to provide that service in the most subdued way – never needing notoriety. Others will let you know at every turn how service will keep you clean and how much they personally contribute.

Other folks in recovery find the program to be very internally focused. While they appreciate the service provided by others inside the rooms, they feel that program allows them to be more involved with life in general, and that involvement provides opportunities for service to the broader community.

Funny thing is, it does not seem to matter whether the service is inside of program or out. It also does not seem to matter the amount of "show" involved - as long as we keep sight of the purpose of service: being outside of ourselves

WHAT IS A COMMITMENT?

We often take on service commitments in an effort to support individual meetings and Crystal Meth Anonymous as a whole. In doing so, we have benefitted personally. Especially as newcomers, we were often encouraged by our sponsors to take commitments at meetings.

Being "of service" is the core of our First Tradition: "Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends upon CMA unity."

Showing up early to help set up chairs or make coffee helped us to meet other members as the rooms filled up. We learned responsibility by having others depend on us. Following through on our commitments improved our sense of self-worth, while supporting the fellowship.

By accepting a commitment, we made a contract with the group to show up—on time—and perform the duty to the best of our ability. If we couldn't meet our obligation, we found a replacement and notified the meeting's Secretary or Chair. Acceptance of responsibility helped us to stay sober.

For many of us, being of service was a new experience—very different from the self-centeredness that so often ran our lives when we were using. (Reprinted with permission from the Crystal Meth Anonymous IP "What is a Service Commitment?")

What a great question! *I remember what it was like to isolate, eventually to fear being in public. There was a time in my addiction that the thought of going to the grocery store caused panic attacks. I don't forget how many doctors or business appointments I would cancel or reschedule for fear of seeing people or driving. My own family didn't hear from me or see me for years. My own Brother was dead a year before I even found out. My sister's husband had died and I didn't even know. My relationships, my history with people stopped. To many I had known, it seemed that I had fallen off the face of the Earth, never to be heard of or from again.*

Today a great part of my recovery depends on my willingness to involve, not isolate. To be of service inside and outside the rooms. I now understand that to involve means to evolve. To grow into society and be of service to my fellow human beings is one of the greatest gifts the Twelve Step Program. I see a huge world that I no longer look upon through the eyes of a fearful alien, but am indeed a part of. To say, "yes" to a request that has nothing to do with "the fellowship", has everything to do with my growth, it is the barometer of where I stand in the bigger picture of my recovery. Yes, my involvement and service beyond the confines and safety of the rooms reminds me that I am now a part of, and not a part from this thing called life. And with gratitude as a foundation, I experience my external involvement and service as a springboard for new and more excellent relationships. My service outside becomes a valuable tool for my growth inside. Love and Blessings, Rick C.

WHAT IS A SERVICE COMMITMENT?

CHIPS...CLEANUP...LITERATURE...PHONE NUMBERS...GREETER...CONFEEER/REFRESHMENTS

Crystal Meth Anonymous

MY BELIEF

Of course outside service is important to recovery. The 12th step states: "and to practice these principles in all our affairs". Our symbol makes it clear that service is one of the most important cornerstones of recovery. Now go forth and bring honesty, willingness and openness to all. Joe MP.S. Is there a better way to maintain our public relations policy of attraction rather than promotion?

I personally believe that both outside and inside service work is critical to my recovery. It is my understanding that when we recover, we learn to function productively within society at large. With that in mind, I take on service commitments both within CMA and in outside social organizations so that I can begin to function with non addicts, or the majority of the general population. In not doing so, I would begin to isolate myself again, creating an artificial perspective of what society truly is. I need those skills imperatively to begin, maintain and ensure my recovery. The question, however, for some, might be, when to go outside, vs. should one go outside for service commitment. John F

Crystal Meth Anonymous

CHIPS...CLEANUP...LITERATURE...PHONE NUMBERS...GREETER...CONFEE/REFRESHMENTS

WHAT IS A SERVICE COMMITMENT?

Why I Still Go To Meetings

More Meetings More Miracles! Fewer Meetings Fewer Miracles! No Meetings No Miracles! This is one of the things I remember hearing early on and something about that rang true for me. Do you remember when you used to wake up in your bed and have no idea how you got there? Did you ever run to your car to make sure there was no blood or bones on or underneath it's carriage? I sure do. The only thing that ever made sense to me in those times was that God had me on autopilot. It has become that way for me in recovery—no matter what is going on in my life good, bad, or indifferent I always find myself in a meeting. Sometimes I still get that feeling that God has once again stepped in and put me on autopilot. But this time I am directed to a meeting: "Same concept, either way I am SAFE AT HOME!"

I am so grateful that for my entire recovery I have been disciplined enough to begin each day with a meeting. For the most part I have averaged 10 meetings a week for my seven years of recovery. I must have heard Trish yell out, "Show up for drill," a thousand times and for that elder statesmen I am truly grateful.

I am reminded of the story of the man who at 30 decided to get sober and he stayed sober for 25 years. After retirement he had that thought that so many of us have, "After all this time, I am sure I can be like other people and have maybe just one!" He was off and running and dead within four years. I don't want that to be me. I love myself enough to do the work it takes to stay clean and have a better life. Going to meetings isn't always easy. There is a reason the old-timers say that our disease is cunning, baffling, powerful and PATIENT. It is because it is all of those. Our disease will find the one person we can't stand the most and put them at every meeting we are in. The first thing we feel is, "I don't think I can be in a meeting with that bitch." "I FEEL UNSAFE!" Sound familiar? Our disease wants us to stay away and it will use anyone or anything to keep us out, then loaded and then DEAD. When I find myself in this situation, and I often do, I simply go where the LOVE is; I find someone in the room I know cares for me and I stay close to them the entire meeting even if it means changing chairs. This may sound small, but it is the little things our disease will put in our path that makes us stumble, not the big things.

I am not sure what would happen if I stopped going to meetings and I am not willing to try and find out. It has worked for almost seven years now, so I think I'll try it again tomorrow. Yours in love and service, Joshua



HONESTY: HONESTY:

"Step One" Explored within the Context of A.A.'s 12x12

"...we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from us."

-Taken from A.A.'s 12x12

Acceptance precedes willingness. I heard about "the" devastating weakness and the suffering that followed in "other people's" lives in the meetings I went to. I recollected the painful experiences I had went through. But, I remained on the outside looking in. I was the chronic by-stander, the spectator, observing recovery happening around me—and was unwilling to JOIN. I was unwilling to take action, because I didn't REALLY believe that it applied to me. I thought, "I'm not that bad, I'm different, I'm special, if they only knew what I knew, I can think my way out of this, I AM POWERFUL not powerless, I feel sorry for these people—I still have a plan..." I did not ACCEPT that I too suffered from the same illness, and that I too was absolutely **hopeless**—until July 25th, 2007. Then, I accepted my devastating weakness and all its consequences, and became willing. All that rang through in my head in the beginning was "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." I knew that up until that point I had NOT thoroughly followed the path.

I finally got honest enough with myself to admit that up until then I had only been doing the things I wanted to do, or that I agreed with; but that all other suggestions did not apply to me. In this desperate state, nothing could be further from the truth than the statement that says "take what you need, and leave the rest," because I was absolutely incapable of determining what I needed or didn't need by myself, and continued to get loaded repeatedly due to thinking that I knew what was best for me. I was petrified of "going back," and realized that if I didn't give this everything I had—do EVERYTHING that was asked of me; "thoroughly follow the path" to the best of my ability, then I wouldn't make it. In sheer desperation I realized that I wanted to live!

All that was left was to grab "hold of A.A. principles with all the fervor with which the drowning seize life preservers," because it was the only choice I had. I fully realized that I had totally lost the power to choose whether or not I was going to get loaded again. Taking action from that point—I began to get well... Faith without works is surely dead, and so are the rest of the steps—if I do not accept Step One without reservation. Member of CMA

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MY LIFE IN THE PAST YEAR OF MY RECOVERY!!

When I look back on 1 year ago today, I was just only 60 days newly clean after coming back from a relapse. At the time I thought that everything in my world was completely crashing down around me. I was so scared, even at 60 days, even after having been a part of the rooms for 6.5 months prior!!!! Within that first 60 days of my recover something in me had clicked and I started making changes in my life that I could see. The first time around I did go to meetings and I did have commitments. But I didn't work the Steps with my sponsor the way I really needed to get to the CORE of who RYAN was!!! To be honest I BS'd my way through the Steps, not giving a true answer, but instead giving an answer that would get me by!

This time around yes I was ashamed at first that I had to claim that newcomer seat AGAIN, but it was then that I realized that the friends I had made before weren't judging me at all. They were just glad to see me back and it was then that I realized that I AM going to do it right this time and that I am PROUD to claim that newcomer seat! For the first two weeks in my recovery I did some *shopping around* for a new sponsor, —a sponsor that had something that I wanted. I found it in one person who has over 4 years in recovery. This person is die-hard NA! I truly admire him for that. He is a person who I meshed with very well. He is a person that when we started working the Steps took me through the Step Working Guide, reading it word for word, page by page. If I wasn't understanding what a question meant, we stopped and it was explained to me in greater detail or by an example from his recovery!

In other areas over the past year where my life has changed is that I am more accountable for my actions. If I am wrong I not only say I am wrong, but I also have the balls to admit that I was wrong and make my amends! I am currently at the beginning of Step Four with my sponsor and it has been one hell of a ride so far. I am definitely hanging on for more to come!

Somewhere, sometime in this recovery, something clicked and I have absolutely no desire to go back out there and use again. The desire to use has been lifted. Yes, I do have friends that drink but it is not a trigger for me at all. The friends and ex's that I once had in my life hold no purpose in it anymore. They are gone for good. In doing that, I have developed new friendships with more people than I'd ever imagined or dreamed I'd have. There are those in my inner circle of friends who are there for a reason: to call me out when I am wrong and to be there for me when I am down! In loving service, Ryan R.



Meeting List

Monday 7:30 PM PS Stop the Insanity
1555 E Alejo Rd, Palm Springs, Classroom

Tuesday 5:30 PM No Frills Book Study
1555 E Alejo Rd, Palm Springs, Atrium

Wednesday 7:30 PM Big Book Study
1020 Ramon Rd, Rm 101, Palm Springs

Thursday 7:30 PM Speaker Meeting
1020 Ramon Rd, Rm 101, Palm Springs

Friday 7:30 PM Thank God Its Friday
1555 E Alejo Rd, Palm Springs, Classroom

Saturday 10:00 AM Morning Solutions
1555 E Alejo Rd, Palm Springs, Classroom

**Saturday 7:00 PM Fight the Good
Fight**
Mission Inn Ave @ Lemon St, Riverside

Sunday 7:00 PM Sunday Round Robin
1555 E Alejo Rd, Palm Springs, Classroom

is there a link between crystal meth and HIV?

Yes. One of the biggest health risk from using crystal meth is the increased chance of HIV infection through unprotected and uninhibited sex while under the influence. Crystal meth increases the sex drive and enhances the sexual experience, and also increases euphoria and reduces inhibitions. The liberating feeling that comes with crystal meth use means that safer sex is often discarded while higher risk sexual activity increases greatly.

Are there any other health risks associated with crystal meth?

Yes. Along with an increased chance of HIV infection, there is also a risk of getting other sexually transmitted diseases (syphilis, gonorrhea, hepatitis A and B, herpes, Chlamydia, and intestinal parasites such as Cryptosporidium) through unprotected sex while under the influence.

In addition, some other blood-borne infectious diseases can be transmitted by using crystal meth, depending on how it is consumed. When smoking, pipes can get hot and cause damage and bleeding to someone's lips. If one shares a pipe, there is a chance that a small amount of blood from an infected person can remain on the pipe, and get onto someone else's lips. The blood can get in contact with a small cut or sore on the lips, providing an opportunity for the transmission of hepatitis C. Similarly, the lining inside the nose can bleed onto a straw used for snorting. There is a chance that a small amount of blood from an infected person can remain on the straw. If one shares a straw to snort meth, that blood can find its way into the nose of another person and transmit hepatitis C. Hepatitis C. Unlike the HIV virus, the Hepatitis C virus survives well in dried blood exposed to air, therefore increasing the risk of transmission when sharing drug paraphernalia. Hepatitis C causes damage to the liver and is very difficult to treat. It is a major cause of cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure and liver cancer.

Sharing needles is a high risk activity for spreading blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C. This can be prevented by not sharing syringes and using a new, clean needle and syringe every time. Supplies for injecting drugs can be obtained from a local needle exchange program.

Who uses crystal meth?

Crystal meth is popular with street youth, and in gay clubs and circuit parties, although its use is spreading into mainstream culture and clubs. It is becoming the drug of choice for teens.

Crystal meth's ability to keep users awake and feeling good for long periods of time have made it a popular drug in the dance club scene and in circuit parties. Cocktails of club drugs are popular. Crystal meth is often mixed with other drugs such as ecstasy. Club drugs consumers may even be inadvertently taking crystal meth as ecstasy-like pills have been found to contain crystal meth.

Because of its potent effect on stamina and sex drive, the drug has become popular with gay and bisexual men who attend dance clubs and sex parties. Rituals of multipartner barebacking have been developed around crystal meth. Crystal meth is often used with ketamine (known as Special K), a drug which loosens the sphincter, and with Viagra to overcome what is known as "crystal dick", or impotence that often accompanies the use of crystal meth.

For a few decades now, men who have sex with men have been inundated with messages of safer sex, and there appears to be "condom fatigue" within that community. In addition, today's gay and bisexual men in the 20s and 30s have not witnessed their friends and acquaintances' frequent deaths from AIDS-related illnesses as in AIDS' early days, and may not feel that it is a serious threat. These factors combined with deeper issues of built-up shame, insecurity, loneliness and alienation render them particularly vulnerable to drugs such as crystal meth.

Men who are HIV positive are drawn to crystal meth as it helps them overcome fatigue, a low libido and depression, and gives them a sense of feeling desirable. For people who are HIV positive, using crystal meth may decrease adherence to HIV medications. Interruptions in medication can provide an opportunity for the virus to become resistant to medication. The virus then becomes "treatment-resistant", and the spread of such a potent virus can lead to serious public health consequences. As crystal meth also results in loss of appetite, users often skip meals. This can lead to vitamin depletion and weight loss. Sleep is also affected. All of these factors can contribute to a faster progression of HIV disease. Reprinted from Canadian AIDS Society



The annual CMA World Conference will be held in New York City from March 4th – 7th, 2010. Registration is \$75.00 and there are hotel rooms available for \$139.00 per night at The Gem Hotel (price good until Jan. 20th, 2010). Go to www.crystalmeth.org for more information.

The past twelve months in my recovery have been an extraordinary time. The very fact that I have managed to stay clean and sober this long is indeed a miracle. I used drugs and alcohol like an addict for more than twenty years and I was hopeless, helpless and full of anger, resentment and fear. I had no plan for living life on life's terms that worked and I was too proud to admit that crystal had defeated me and that I needed help.

The help I needed came in the form of an intervention from my parole officer and the nice folks at the prop 36 program in Banning, California. After being forced to enter residential treatment for 60 days I began to have a spiritual experience that altered the course of my life.

I could now list a bunch of material goodies I have acquired this past year in recovery but those are not the true gifts I have received.

I have been blessed with a wonderful sponsee who recently made it to his first year in sobriety. Working with another addict and teaching him about the twelve steps has changed my life. It has given me the gift of freedom from self. I'm not thinking about myself nearly as often as I used to. I have learned to be reliable and dependable and I have taken the role of sponsor very seriously. I meet each week with this man and give my time freely, expecting nothing in return. That is the gift of selflessness.

Starting this new non-profit company and building three long term residential treatment facilities is the most important thing I have involved myself with in my entire life. I would never have imagined myself getting clean and staying clean for any length of time. Building these centers is so far from anything I was doing before I entered the program I can't tell you how surprised I was when the opportunity presented itself. My initial reaction was to say no and I came up with a laundry list of reasons why I was not qualified for the task. Fortunately I was able to leave the local treatment center I had been working at the past couple years and be a part of something much bigger and more exciting than I could have possibly dreamed of. I realize my sobriety and involvement in this project are not about me so much as it is my higher power being able to utilize me for a greater good.

I have been blessed with a wonderful partner this past year who has taught me patience and understanding. This is the gift of love. I have not been successful in any relationships in the past due in large to my disease and behavior. The fourth step and the tenth step along with the ninth step have allowed me to see my part in things and make amends under the guidance of my sponsor. Sponsorship is a huge responsibility and vital to an addicts recovery. If you don't have

a sponsor I strongly suggest finding one. I could never have worked the steps without the guidance and wisdom of a sponsor and my job is to teach my own sponsee the twelve steps and traditions so he can pass that knowledge along to his own sponsee's in the future.

I was sitting in a 10X16 foot cell right during this time of the year, around the holidays four years ago up at Folsom State prison. I had hit the lowest bottom of my using. Today I live in a 1900 square foot home of my own. I have a decent vehicle to drive that I make on time monthly payments for. I have a driver license and insurance. I have become a productive member of society again. A month ago I was landing in Lisbon, Portugal to spend a month romping around Europe with my partner. That is the gift of freedom. I get tears in my eyes thinking of how close I came to utterly destroying my life. Today I smile and look up to my higher power and say thank you that I have been given a second chance in life. Every day that I stay clean is a miracle. I have learned very little so far but one thing I have wrapped my head around is this truly is a one day at a time program. Tell yourself I can choose not to pick up just for today. For me that is the gift of choice. I have choices today that are limitless so long as I stay clean and remain teachable. Most importantly it is my connection to a higher power that I maintain on a daily basis which insures my sobriety. If you are new, keep coming back. That's what they told me and it has worked miracles in my life today. Nicholas S.

State of Grace

Life's journey is a wondrous thing. Once I got sober and I was solid in my sobriety, life became in session. I began to do things that were beyond my wildest expectations. Things I thought I would have never done. I joined life in its parade of events. All the trials and tribulations that had once led me to my addiction were no longer tugging at my soul. I was able to handle things which used to baffle me. Through the 12 Steps, working with my sponsor, and working with others, I began to realize that whatever life threw at me I could deal with dignity. The flurry of things that came to me at the speed of light were almost unbearable at times, but I did not pick up a drug or drink.

There was a time just recently when I thought I would wither and melt away because of the events that came to pass. I was busy, sometimes I thought too busy. Things just kept coming at me. I heard that God did not give anything to me that I could not handle. I held on to that with a tight grip and pushed forward, accomplishing major milestones and achievements. Then the tasks became easier as I applied these principles to every area of my life. The set of tools laid at my feet began to work on their own. The program became me and I became the program. I started to wear my sobriety like a loose garment, not one of restrictions. I simple took the next indicated steps that were necessary to move through life and it got easier. I let God do for me what I could not do for myself and the pace of life began to flow.

But it becomes all too real when adversity has past and the days slow down. When life's activities move at a slower pace it is not I who has kept me here; it is not by my means that my sanity has stayed. It is the hand of a higher source that holds me close to its center and keeps me safe from harm. I stay within the realm of the living, yet I mourn for the dead. I do not ask why I am here anymore. I do not wonder what is in store for me. I place my will and my life into the arms of a power greater than myself. I allow it to move me where it needs me the most. I pray that I be an instrument of peace and love. It is not I that does the work. It is God that keeps me in a "State of Grace". Anonymous

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