

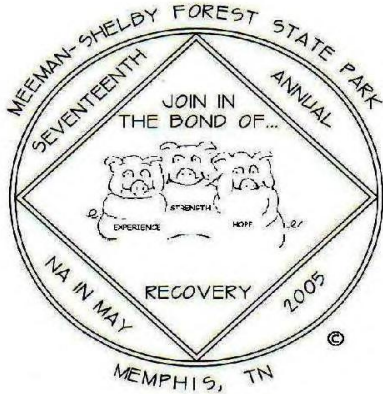
CleanTimes

July - September 2005

Serving the West Tennessee Area of Narcotics Anonymous

VRC XXIII - November 23-27, 2005 - Hilton Memphis

A GATHERING OF MIRACLES



It is a miracle to witness an individual addict get clean and stay clean, but it is a spiritual experience to see a group of 400 clean addicts gather together for fun, fellowship, and to carry the message of hope. That is exactly what happened this year at our annual NA in May Camp-Out and Bar-B-Q contest, although there were a few bumps along the road. I have yet to be on any service committee that did not meet with challenges, both from within the committee itself, as well as the fellowship, and this year was no different. The miracle of it was that in the end, and despite any hurdles, that we all managed, though the grace of a Higher Power, to carry the message of recovery. It was also a miracle that it didn't rain this year. This year's event was a wonderful experience.

Everything from working with the most awesome sub-committee that I have ever personally worked with, to watching the newest newcomer stand up and be welcomed by our fellowship. Hanging out and talking to addicts that I knew, as well as addicts from other places. Listening to addicts share their experience, strength and hope in the workshops, and watching as we all pulled together to help unite our fellowship. One of the best parts of the weekend was, of course, the food. No group of people can get together and eat like a group of addicts!

I would like to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate all of the members of this year's committee. Drew M. - Chair, Jeremy Y. - Treasurer, Tommy M. - Programming, Mark and Pam R. - Registration, Steve A. - Judges Coordinator, Raymond M. - Kitchen Coordinator, and Jamie E. - Arts & Graphics. I would like to extend a special thank you to Kendo and Mark R. for stepping in at the last minute and agreeing to be our Hug Patrol. I would also like to express gratitude to Harold F. for stepping in and taking care of the Kids Fishing Rodeo. Our thanks to Keith N. and Shannon T., Activities Chair, for being willing to help with entertaining the kids. Kudos to each and every one of you for a job well done. Of course, the committee will be at it again, planning next year's event

very soon, and I look forward to seeing what kind of miracles are in store for us all this next year. My thanks to the fellowship, the area, and the home groups for making this year's event possible and the most successful NA in May ever. I look forward to seeing you all next year!

Trisha R.

**Just
For
Today**

You never have to use again!

A sense of humor

*"We find that when we lose self-obsession,
we are able to understand what it means to be
happy, joyous, and free."*

Basic Text, p. 103

Meeting Etiquette

I am in a very powerful meeting. An addict is sharing how she recently experienced the most painful event in her entire recovery. She is sharing how her sponsor, friends, and program carried her through without a relapse. Many people, including myself are in tears. Then a cell phone rings. Loudly. The amazingly oblivious owner answers and starts talking during the meeting, in a commanding voice. He casually strolls out the meeting, the "star of the show."

Now I seriously doubt that the phone didn't have a vibrate option, or even better, an OFF button. Now, it was just another example of an attitude that is increasingly prevalent in my Area. I believe this attitude is part "street" - meaning the world should revolve around us. It is fed by the numerous (but not all) treatment centers that use the rooms as a dumping ground for the un-informed newcomer who has never been given a clue as how to act. Many addicts with significant clean time avoid certain meetings because they get so tired of hearing the "inexperience, weakness, and no solution."

Our area is unique. There are so many newcomers that it gets overwhelming. A young lady asks if I can sponsor her. I can't, but I suggest one of my sponsees who has finished her steps and has a wonderful program. The newcomer is excited until I tell her that my sponsee has a year clean. "Oh no, my therapist says my sponsor must have at least five years clean." Whatever happened to a working knowledge of the steps, willingness and availability? Since when do therapists and treatment center ethics dominate recovery? Meetings become therapy sessions where addicts whine about their problems for fifteen minutes, then get up and leave the meeting before anyone could possibly suggest a solution.

When I came into the rooms, without treatment or a therapist, but with a hardcore sponsor, ("whom, incidentally, had less than five year clean), I was told to stay from prayer to prayer without getting up, to pay attention to what was said, to thank the speaker if it was a speaker meeting, and don't talk to my neighbor. Sit down, shut up, and pay attention. Then after the meeting, I could show my gratitude by helping to clean up, putting away chairs and literature, if needed. Then I could socialize, or talk to the addict who was hurting. If I was the one who was hurting, I could discuss my feelings in detail then (I could share in the meeting, in a general way, about my distress: being sure that I mentioned how I would get in the solution!) It worked for me then, and it still works for me six years later.

Every place that allows us to have a meeting is doing us a favor. We have lost numerous meeting places because we could not follow certain rules such as putting our cigarettes in the designated canisters, avoiding profanity in hallways and common areas in churches and other civic buildings that non-addicts also use. We lost a meeting place in a hospital because addicts insisted on smoking in the restrooms rather than take a few steps outside of the proper area. What if a patient with a lung problem had to use the restroom after the smokers? One of the many aspects of recovery (as opposed to merely being clean) is that we become sensitive to the needs and desires of others.

Please remember, that the more meetings we have, the greater the chance that we will keep meeting the true needs of all addicts who want what we have to offer. I believe that a great deal of the problems stems from chairpersons who don't understand the second tradition. Not fully

understanding group conscience, or chairing a group that does not have guidelines for meeting etiquette, they will allow people to ramble on and on about a unrelated topic to recovery. I have heard chairs announce, "Anyone can share as long as they like about anything they like." There is no discussion on steps, fellowship, sponsorship, or Higher Power. There is no emphasis on the solution. If I point this out, I am told that I am mean, hardcore (like that's a bad thing!) or that I might cause the precious little darling to relapse. Nobody ever went back out because they weren't allowed to ramble on for twenty minutes or they were asked to turn their cell phone off. On quite a few occasions, it has been the last person who shared who was truly experiencing a crisis. It took the entire meeting for him or her to work up the courage to share. If two or three people dominate the sharing portion of the meeting, this hurting addict might not have a chance to share. Many meetings have a dozen or more addicts waiting to be called on at the end of the meeting. They didn't have a chance to share. Consideration is the key. I was told that everything I needed to say I could say in three to five minutes. This is especially true in a large meeting.

A few other inconsiderate actions I have noticed:

When the speaker finished speaking, this is not a clue to leave the meeting, get coffee, hang out and then come back, Sit and listen. The discipline is what we lack, and what we need the most. The rewards are tremendous.

Sharing about sexual activity. There are newcomers that have been horribly abused, both as children and adults, sexually. They are extremely threatened by certain references. Also, having sex with animals, children, or violent activities, are something best shared with your sponsor.

At meetings, don't have a discussion right outside the meeting room. We can hear you!

A "burning desire" is just that: something you must share or you risk the chance of relapse or other destructive behavior.

If you are picking up a medallion or year, 18 month or multiple year key tag, please keep your sharing on recovery. Frequently, someone who is never seen at meetings (except during their anniversary month) will get a medallion. Not working any program, they announce that they don't have a sponsor, don't sponsor anyone themselves, don't go to meetings, are absolutely miserable (but they do have a nice car and a new house) but golly whiz, they now have X amount of years! This message can kill a true addict who needs to work a program but thinks, "If so-and-so is clean and has a nice car, I can do it their way! If you have earned it by working a program, please let us know all about it!

The best way to learn about meeting etiquette: Get a sponsor, hang out with the winners (you know what they are: they stay the entire meeting and seem pretty darned happy). Join a home group; you'll soon hear about what happens at your meetings. Work some steps and start to see that this world doesn't revolve around you. And ask, "How can I be helpful to NA?" How can I give back? The answers will soon come. And this is where the miracle occurs: by giving up our old ways, we find ourselves growing up in new and unexpected ways!

Anonymous in Florida

MY PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF GOD'S WILL!

It was God's will for me to find and come to NA; the only will that I knew was mine. My perception of God's will is to be the best that I can be in all my thoughts and actions. He made it possible for me to have the courage to face dilemmas and trials in my life. God's will for me is to have humility, empathy, compassion, and love for other human beings. God's will is for me to learn how to conduct myself in a good orderly fashion at all times, even in times when my self-will doesn't want me to. In the process of recovery, to practice the spiritual principles is to incorporate them in my life. The more God-centered I become the less self-centered I am. God's will is, doing the right thing, for the right reasons.

When I came to NA, I was introduced to myself! I am now realizing and getting to know who I am. This is God's will for me. My Higher Power is an awesome one! He's loving, caring, more powerful than my disease, and me. God's will is for me to be less judging, more tolerant of others, more patient, not easy to anger, but quick to forgive. In order to do this, I have to live the program of NA. This is a God sent program to get us back to our nature, state where we belong. It's His will for me to work the steps with a sponsor; that has worked the steps, and has a sponsor himself. It's the will of God for me to have the courage to visit various groups within the Fellowship, to get different perspectives on life, and to leave my comfort zone. "I can't, but we can," is the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. God's will for me is to grow spiritually by working the (HOW) of the program. This takes a lot of practice, practice, practice and more practice to become spiritually fit. The Will of God permeates every single aspect of what I think, do and say. His will is to be the grid through which I sift each motivation, action, and circumstance of life. In other words, no matter what I am involved in, whether it concerns family, finances, relationships, health or faith, my continual thought should be on my Higher Power. What would You have me to do? What is the wise course of action?

I have to pray for wisdom of His will in order to be able to carry it out. My Higher Power does not play games with me by hiding His thoughts from me. His greatest desire for me is that I live out His plan for my life. Unless I know and follow His plan, I will miss the wondrous blessings He has in store for me. In order to discern what God desires for my life, it is helpful to understand that His will have two aspects. First, His determined will includes those things that are unchangeable. God's overruling sovereignty will see to it that nothing deters these occurrences. Fulfillment of prophecy and Divine promises are examples of His determined will. Second, His desired will involves everything He wants for me that, with my limited free will, I am able to turn down. Both aspects of God's will present His very best for me. The benefits of obeying God's will and the consequences of ignoring it are compelling reasons to search out God's desires for my life. God's in control; when I do His will I get the best He has to offer. God's will wants the best for me, and when I follow His will, I will get the best! The Basic Text says, "If it's not practical, it's not spiritual, and if it's not spiritual, it's not practical." No matter what, don't pick up and you will have a chance. It's the practical thing to do, and you know it's the spiritual thing to do! My Higher Power's will for me is to become the best wholesome human being that I can be. As long as I live the program of NA, life will get better! My Higher Power will take care of my spiritual needs, but I need to participate in my own life. I can't simply sit back and expect God to do everything. I am responsible for my own recovery! In the process of surrendering to God's will, it's a must to surrender to spiritual principles. So keep coming back! (STAY) The steps and traditions are the Will of God; when I truly learn and apply the spiritual principles to my life wonderful things happen. It is only through unity that we thrive in recovery, "I can't, but we can." It is only through understanding and application that the program works in my life, provided, that I am willing to do the work!

This is my personal perception of God's Will.
In loving service,
Kendo L.

CHILI COOKOFF 2005

It's Saturday, March 12th, 2005, and time for another Chili-Cookoff. Last night, I got out my super colossal giant crockpot and my chili recipes. I was determined to win this year's event after being embarrassed with a fourth place finish at the 2004 event. Unfortunately, that didn't happen, this year I dropped to a dismal 10th place out of 14 entries. Connie G., who won the 2004 event with her "So Sweet" chili came in second and was really trying hard to practice some spiritual principles. Brooks S. won the this year's event and was proclaimed the 2005 Chili Champion. His entry was his "Basic" steak chili which was delicious. Hum! Maybe next year I'll try a filet mignon chili!!! Anyway, we all had an excellent time fellowshiping and eating chili together. We raised some money for NA in May and had a good time. We had a raffle drawing for the special edition Basic Text, the NA Journal, and the CDs of the NA History Conference with Jay winning the first two and Carol S. winning the CDs. After the raffle drawings, Tim H. shared his experience, strength, and hope with his story which was awesome. So for the people like me who didn't get close to winning anything.....KEEP COMING BACK there is always next year.

Luv and hugz,
Tommy M.



Don't Forget!

Lunch with the Bunch

every 3rd Sunday at the Lunch Bunch
258 Merton
Everett Memorial United Methodist Church

Birthdays and Anniversaries

July

Trisha R. - 7/9 - 4 Years - Desire
Jamey A. - 7/10 - 1 Year - Farfromusen
Richard B. - 7/10 - 2 Years - Positive Image
Lydia M. - 7/11 - 2 Years - Cordova Hope
Jumall A. - 7/14 - 14 Years - Positive Image
Annie J. - 7/24 - 10 Years - Cordova Hope
Iris - 7/24 - 2 Years - The Attic
Aaron C. - 7/25 - 6 Years - Lunch Bunch
Kevin S. - 7/26 - 1 Year - Cordova Hope
Sherry H. - 7/28 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch

August

Steve B. - 8/1 - 9 Years - The Attic
Paul C. - 8/2 - 1 Year - The Attic
Davis G. - 8/3 - 4 Years - Positive Image
Ed H. - 8/4 - 3 Years - Lunch Bunch
Carol A. - 8/18 - 3 Years - Lunch Bunch
Susan B. - 8/19 - 7 Years - Lunch Bunch
Cindy L. - 8/19 - 5 Years - Cordova Hope
Andrea K. - 8/20 - 1 Year - Positive Image
Charles W. - 8/26 - 3 Years - Positive Image
Raymond M. - 8/27 - 2 Years - Desire
Tammy M. - 8/28 - 1 Year - Lunch Bunch
Becky C. - 8/31 - 1 Year - The Attic

September

James W. - 9/1 - 1 Year - Cordova Hope
Jeremy Y. - 9/4 - 9 Years - The Attic
Jamie E. - 9/9 - 18 Years - Positive Image
Jenny S. - 9/11 - 2 Years - The Attic
Lenoria D. - 9/12 - 16 Years - Positive Image
Dwight J. - 9/14 - 4 Years - Positive Image
James L. - 9/16 - 2 Years - Positive Image
Nick L. - 9/18 - 18 Years - Lunch Bunch
Michael C. - 9/20 - 1 Year - Cordova Hope
Valerie T. - 9/21 - 2 Years - Lunch Bunch
Janet D. - 9/21 - 2 Years - Nothing To Fear
Marybeth W. - 9/29 - 4 Years - Positive Image

Editors Note: I apologize if your birthday has been omitted. Please get with your GSR of your Home Group and have them contact me, Connie G. at kateyesldy40@aol.com for the next issue. Please note these are actual clean dates and birthdays may be celebrated on a different day. Listen for announcements in meetings for exact date of celebration.

NEW MEETING ADDED!

Cordova Hope

TUESDAYS
12:00 NOON

Hope Presbyterian Church
8500 Walnut Grove Rd.
Room 303

NEW MEETING IN TOWN

Good Orderly Direction

THURSDAY EVENINGS
6:00 PM TO 7:30 PM

1385 Lamar
Barron Heights Transitional Center
for Men (mainly veterans)

We need your support!

NEW MEETING OUT OF TOWN

Lexington Survivors Group
of Narcotics Anonymous

THURSDAYS
7:00 PM

St. Andrews Catholic Church
Hwy 22 North
Lexington, Tennessee

Closed Meeting

If you have a group you would like showcased in the Cleantimes Newsletter, or have an article, cartoon, poetry, or whatever sharing experience, strength and hope, please contact me, Connie G., at kateyesldy40@aol.com.