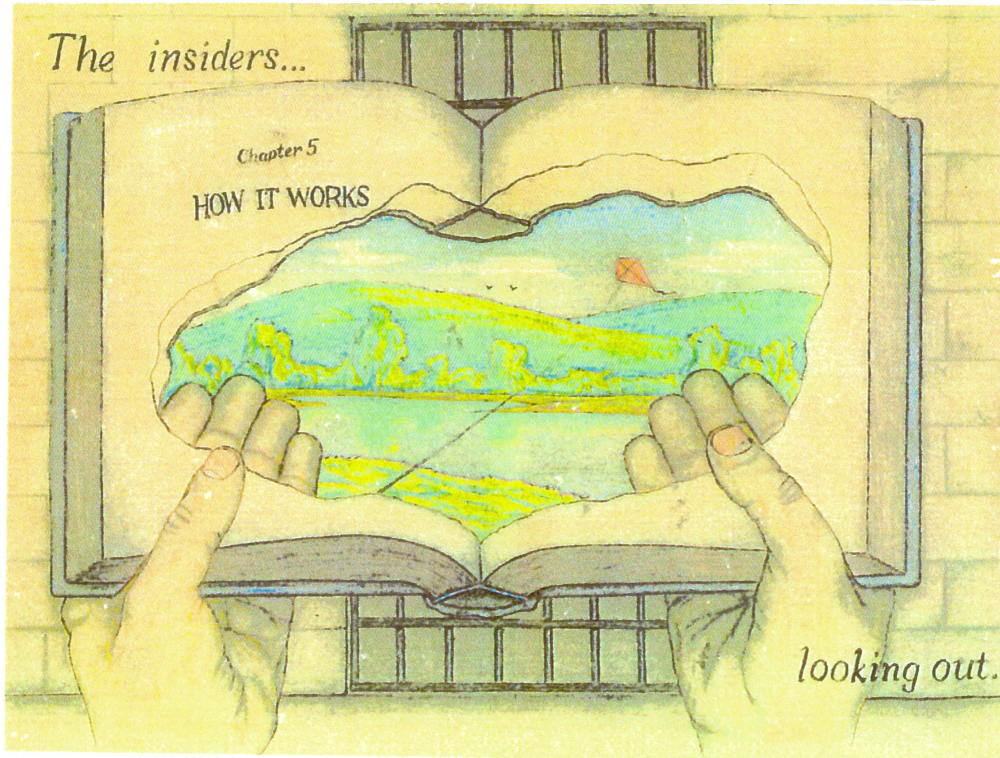


Harrisburg Area Intergroup Correction's Committee

2018 Newsletter Facility's Review



Covered Facilities are as Follows:

- **Dauphin County Men's and Women's Prison**
- **Dauphin County Men's and Women's Work Release Centers**
- **Perry County Prison**
- **The State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Camp Hill**

Happy end to 2018 and beginning of 2019 to all Harrisburg Area AA Members

Our 2018 Corrections Committee decided to create 3 goals to work on through 2018.

- The 1st goal was to keep an updated Corrections Committee Flyer. We made it available at Monthly Intergroup Mtgs when changes were made to the flyer.
- The 2nd goal was to go out to groups on the East and West Shore to review getting involved in corrections service work. We shared at the 6 groups and were also available at the PA State Convention.
- Our 3rd goal was to complete a Corrections Committee News Letter. Our committee had a meeting in the beginning of December. We decided to write shares from our committee member's experience, strength, and hope in corrections service in our local corrections facilities.

We would like to thank the Harrisburg Area Intergroup for the amazing support received by our committee. Our local Intergroup supplies all AA Literature to all of our facilities. Our annual Corrections Workshop is 100% finically supported by Intergroup as well.

Thanks to all the local AA groups who support the Harrisburg Area Intergroup. The AA core will always be the group and group consciences that approve support being sent into Intergroup.

AA is truly self-supporting from the member to basket, the group to Intergroup, and the group to AA General Services Offices.

We would like to thank all AA members volunteering in corrections service at the volunteer, lead volunteers, and chair levels. We are simply humble servants taking the AA message into our local corrections facilities.

The most direct way to get involved with corrections service is to email corrections@aa-harrisburg.org.

The spiritual experience hits the nail on the head. Contempt prior to investigation may be a feeling of AA members when it comes to corrections service. Hopefully you may investigate after reading our stories.

Thank you to AA members who took the time to share their stories.

I was terrified for days before I first walked into the Women's Work Release Center AA meeting. I had never been inside a prison before. I was afraid of what "those women" would think of me. But I had always been told that service keeps you sober. My experience with AA service is that giving back what was freely given to me takes the focus off of me, gets me out of my self-centered nature and cuts down my desire to be bigger, better, and greater than I am. Service in AA has kept me sane and sober and has brought me some of the greatest, most joyful moments in my life.

I walked into the Women's Work Release Center wanting to save them all. I thought I knew all the answers those women had been seeking their entire lives. What I found in that room, with those women, was me. They saved me, not the other way around. I'm not sure how many of those women stayed sober. But I did. I know that some left and died of this horrible disease. I imagine many likely never gave me another thought. I know now that I may have been the only representation of our AA Big Book and program of recovery that those women will ever experience. And I continue to try to represent our program well.

With these women I am able to practice the principles and traditions of the AA program. I am able to use what I've learned from working with these women in my daily life. I am grateful every day for the woman that asked me to do this service work with her. And I am grateful for every sober breath I take as I continue to give back to others. God's grace continues to bless me each and every day.

Thank you,
Cheryl S. – Dauphin County Women's Work Release Center

I was asked to volunteer to bring AA meetings into the Dauphin County Prison at the very worst time in my life, and this worst time was while I was already *in recovery*. At first, I refused. My initial refusal was met with constant reminders that I could be of service to others, and that doing so is the spirit of the AA program. When you want to stay sober, but don't really

want to do anything, DO SOMETHING ANYWAY! Service means getting involved by helping others, and that involvement means the end of isolation, *my* isolation.

Since taking on the service commitment at Dauphin County Prison, I have become more active in my home group, I've taken on several other service positions, and I've become a sponsor. I have seen men's sobriety dates change in prison. Alcohol and drugs are everywhere; this disease is everywhere. We must make sure that recovery is available everywhere too. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be mine.

Thank You
Nick B. – Dauphin County Men's Prison.

I learned early on in recovery, from my sponsor and others, that you **never** said no to AA service work. If you did say "no," you'd better have a damn good reason. It was made abundantly clear to me that service work was very important to my recovery.

There are not many people in Perry County AA. If you have any amount of recovery time and go to more than one meeting, you pretty much know everybody. A couple of sober guys I knew had been taking an AA meeting into Perry County Prison (PCP) for many years. One night they came to a meeting they did not usually attend and they approached me about taking over the PCP meeting commitment. Without a moment of hesitation, I said that I would.

I would be full of crap if I was to say that I didn't have any reservations about that. I went through all the thoughts, like "what do I even have to offer these men?" But after the first meeting, any reservations I had were gone. We were there to pass on the message of recovery, and to make it through another day, sober. One alcoholic helping another. That's AA.

Thank You
Stevie T. – Perry County Prison

"Not Yet."

That is the bottom line of my experience volunteering with the women in the Dauphin County Prison.

In active addiction I performed some of the same actions that ended those ladies being behind those bars, but I didn't get caught. I had (and still have) some of the same struggles, the same feelings, the same regrets. I just don't have the same consequences...not yet.

I'm a white woman raised in a place of privilege. Upper middle class, white collar family. I was raised in a conservative Christian school, taught "Just Say No" when it came to drugs, shown the horrible consequences of drinking and driving in MADD and DARE presentations growing up, but here I am, battling the same demons as the woman confined in those cells. So, when I was presented with the opportunity to be of service for a year, I hesitated. I'm not like them, I didn't lose a job or a house or a marriage. I haven't been homeless...not yet.

Then I went to a meeting in DCP, and I heard the shares. I saw my past pains, my past hopelessness but also my accomplishments and triumphs reflected in the eyes of the toughest tattooed woman in the room. My ego and my feeling of "Terminal Uniqueness" took a hit. It was a tough realization in humility. Hey, Surprise!! I'm not that special. My disease is no better or worse than each woman I serve by volunteering. It is exactly the wake-up I need on a regular basis.

The DCP Women's Prison Meeting commitment is suggested to be 1 year, ONE meeting a month. Just one. And that one meeting a month is an invaluable resource for my own recovery. My sponsor says "Service Keeps us Sober", and through this service commitment, I'm reminded that if I go back out, I could so very easily have consequences like theirs. And if I go out, if I get those consequences, maybe the next volunteer would look at me and think "Wow, I'm not like HER...yet".

No. Not today.

One day at a time, friends. Thank you for letting me be of service.

Kat A. – Dauphin County Women's Prison

"Wait for the guard to release the outer door locks". "Please touch your ID to the scanner box and place your right index finger on the scanner bed". "Place your keys and any other metal objects on the counter, take your jacket off and step through the metal detector" says the duty officer. "Hand me your jacket so that I can pat down to check for contra-band". "Thank you, I will phone the guard at the Ed building to tell them you are on the way."

Now we wait until the inner sally port door is opened. Once through we wait for the outer door to be remotely opened. Then to the exterior sally ports. Next, into the open quad area where we walk towards "education building". But wait there is yet and other "manway" remotely operated by the guard tower before we can get into that area. Finally, into the education building and our AA meeting room. "Huh!, what do you mean, not so fast?" said I to the desk officer, "Ohh, we need to present our visitors badges to be signed in."

This was my 1st introduction to the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Camp Hill. And this was after the 6 weeks of paperwork, background checks, a mug shot and biometric scans.

After all that, we entered the meeting room as 25+ inmates in near identical attire pile in behind us. The door is closed and the Alcoholics Anonymous meeting begins. But here's where the brand-new experience ends. From this point forward, I felt like I was on familiar, well-trod ground. If you close your eyes, you could be at any of a thousand venues where AA is helping addicts and alcoholics recover. As with any other AA group, there is a unique flavor to the meeting, spiced specifically to satisfy the taste buds of the participants.

Initially, the smells and sights are different and the inmates of a single gender. They are typically reserved and weary of the new guy, and generally have a different demeanor than might be found in an AA meeting. Some are tattooed, some are bespectacled, some make eye contact while others avoid anything that will make them stand out. However, after the prescribed opening and introduction of a topic, the weariness seems

to abate and the inmates start to open up. Some discuss the blessings of the AA program and others verbalize their fears and trepidations about entering the “real” world. 50 minutes later the shares are abruptly ended when the guard catches the chairperson’s eye and points to her watch. “Our meeting time is over” he announces, and promptly wraps up with, “will all that care to, join me in the serenity prayer?”. Instead of holding hands, we wrap our arms around each other’s shoulders in a giant friendly hug that is all inclusive.

This 1st experience at a “prison Meeting” was more than memorable, it was the crushing and destruction of a stereo-type built and propagated by people without this, very human, experience. My thoughts center on the old phrase, “It is there but for the grace of God go I”. Although my days of drunk driving and drunken rampages have been arrested (pun intended), it is only because I was never caught that I am able to walk out of that prison with my freedom fully intact. Correspondingly, it is because of AA that I am able to walk around amongst the “normals” free from the fear, guilt, and shame that once defined my existence.

I’m sure this experience is neither unique nor unusual, but it is most definitely indelibly etched in my memory as one of those moments that has defined my recovery. If you have even the smallest of interest in carrying the AA message to our brothers and sisters within their gated communities, seek me out; and I will start you down this “happy road of destiny”. Thank you.

Wes H. – SCI Camp Hill

In my first year of being a member of AA I was told by an old timer AA that I should go to the local area corrections workshop. It really made no sense to me since I had never been in jail. The old timer told me that is why I should go to the workshop. He explained members of AA who were in prison usually were unable to get back into the facilities to carry the AA message. So it left the task to the AA members whom were not in prison during their active alcoholism to take the AA message into the prison facilities.

Well, I signed up for SCI Camp Hill thinking my current financial mess would assure I would not be approved. Low and behold, two months after I sent my volunteer application into SCI Camp Hill, I was contacted to come to the prison and have my AA Volunteer Badge made. I went to the meetings for a few months, still not understanding what I was really doing there. My mind was comparing me *out of* the AA meeting, not *into* the AA meeting.

I just would remember a big guy named Curtis sharing in a prison meeting, and I thought that he was nuts (to a different degree than me.) To my surprise, as Curtis was sharing, I saw myself right in the middle of his share...right next to him. I was from his hometown too and I was really relating to the guy that I did not think it was possible for me to relate too. It completely changed my attitude. After that I became active in volunteering at SCI Camp Hill.

I wish that we had more people being pointed to where that old timer pointed me a good few years ago. That old timer passed on a year or so later. His direction me to a place I did not think I belonged, but I’ve discovered it was one of the best places that I have found to belong in AA.

Thanks for listening.

Chalie B. – SCI Camp Hill
