

The Gulf Coast Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Newsletter | April 2020



Thoughts on Recovery

Newcomers and COVID-19

The current pandemic has placed strain on The Gulf Coast Area and Narcotics Anonymous at large. Meeting places are closed throughout the country, jobs have been lost, people are sick, and many addicts are isolated in a way they've never experienced before. In these trying times, it's easy to forget that the newcomer is the most important person in the room. Below are the thoughts of local area addicts with under a year clean – they are musings good and bad and in-between. It is important for the area to hear our most important members in any way possible, especially now. Due to the nature of some of these comments, these addicts will remain completely anonymous.

"I don't care how bad this gets, I'm not going to use. Being lonely isn't a reason to use. Being sad isn't a reason to use."

"I never realized how important meetings were until I wasn't able to go to them. I miss the hugs."

"I call my mom every day now. She can't get sick."

"Someone I came into the rooms with relapsed when their homegroup couldn't meet. It only took a day. If I wasn't in a halfway house, I don't know where I'd be right now."

"I used to complain about how boring meetings were and how I didn't want to show up fifteen minutes early. Now it's like, what else am I supposed to do with my time?"

"Where are all these phone calls I'm supposed to be getting? Where's the fellowship? I'm barely hanging on and no one is reaching out to me."

"Being alone means I don't have an excuse to not do my stepwork anymore! I guess that's a positive?"

"Will meetings be the same after all this? I don't know if I want people touching me even when this is over."

"My sponsor has been busy with his family and his job. I got a bunch of numbers from when I first came to a meeting and I've been able to call them. I hope I can keep doing that once this is all over."

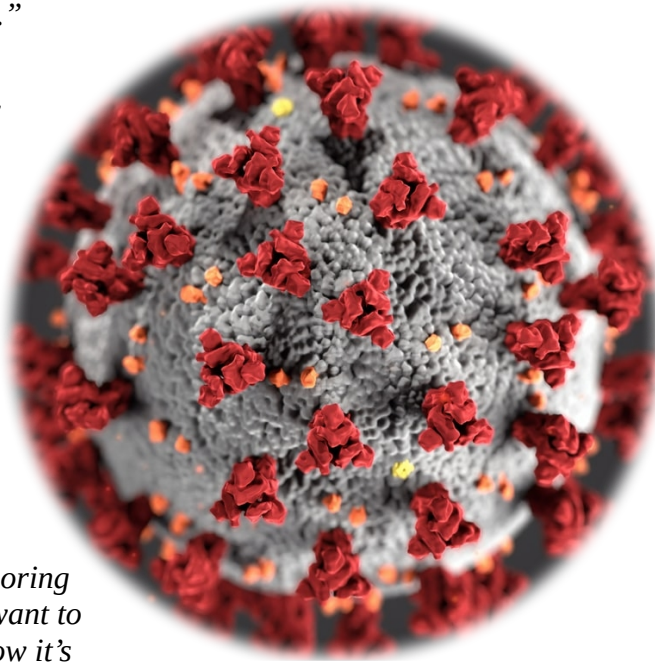
"It's so nice that the people here started doing those online meetings so quickly after this all started popping off! If I didn't get to see my friends faces, I don't think I'd have the courage to stay clean!"

"All I want is normal to be normal again."

"Bro, I need a hobby, dude. All I did was meetings and IOP. I need to figure out some me stuff."

"My higher power isn't testing my recovery right now. My higher power is what I can turn to when I feel stressed. My higher power isn't the cause of my problems. My higher power is the help I need."

If you are worried about a newcomer, now is the time to reach out in a safe, responsible fashion. Call. Text. Go digital via social media. Keep your eyes open during online meetings. Always remember, the newcomer is the most important person in any meeting. We can only keep what we have by giving it away.



Experience, Strength, and Hope

Two Perspectives on the Current COVID-19 Situation

While the newcomer is the most important person in any meeting, our members with a bit of cleantime can be an invaluable source of inspiration during difficult times. Below are some thoughts from two members of The Gulf Coast Area on how the pandemic is affecting their recovery and how they are coping.



“For the last eight years of my life, I have regularly attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings. I’ve had a homegroup, held commitments, and went to business meetings. Body, mind, and spirit - I was there. I’ve showed up, because my life depends on it. I’ve moved 1,500 miles away in recovery, I’ve had people die, I’ve lost my job, I’ve been broke, I’ve cried, I’ve danced, I’ve accomplished goals, and I’ve always had somewhere to go in the midst of it all. On my good days, on my bad days, on my alright days, I’ve gone, showed up in all conditions. Today is the longest I’ve ever been without being able to attend a meeting (in person). I can feel it - I can, I’d be lying if I said I did not. But my life continues to depend on Narcotics Anonymous. So, regardless of how loud the disease gets, I need this program, and thank God I know that, thank God I’ve showed up for now nearly nine years and my recovery is louder. A lot of people are going to go out. A lot of people are going to use. And some will die. But all I can do today is be part of the solution and part of my recovery. I go to virtual meetings, talk to other recovering addicts, do stepwork, and do not use no matter what. One day at a time. This whole thing happened really fast and escalated really quickly, but I have tools and a worldwide fellowship to help me. Thanks N.A.”

- Charlene P.



“The isolation has forced me to lean on other aspects of my recovery. I’m trying to reach out more to people in my network, read more N.A. literature, and spend more time in self-care. That includes time throughout my day spent in prayer and meditation, as well as caring for myself physically. The rest is just trying to live in faith and not fear as the situation continues.”

- Jeff S.

Online meetings, phone calls, text messages, and social media messaging are important tools of recovery during the COVID-19 crisis. Without these, we would not be able to hear from our sponsors, speak to our sponsees, bond with our peers, or talk to other addicts when the going gets rough. While it might be tempting to spend all day pursuing quiet, singular activities, we must not forget that the fellowship exists beyond the walls of the churches, clubhouses, and hospitals we used to meet in. Reach out.

Two Events Hosted by The Gulf Coast Area

It might be a while before local addicts can get together again and have fun clean. In the weeks prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, The Gulf Coast Area hosted two major events: The Annual H&I Chili Cook Off and The Fifth Annual West Coast Unity Day.



With the current restrictions in place, and with no real end in sight, it is important for addicts to know what we can look forward to once social distancing leaves The Gulf Coast Area.



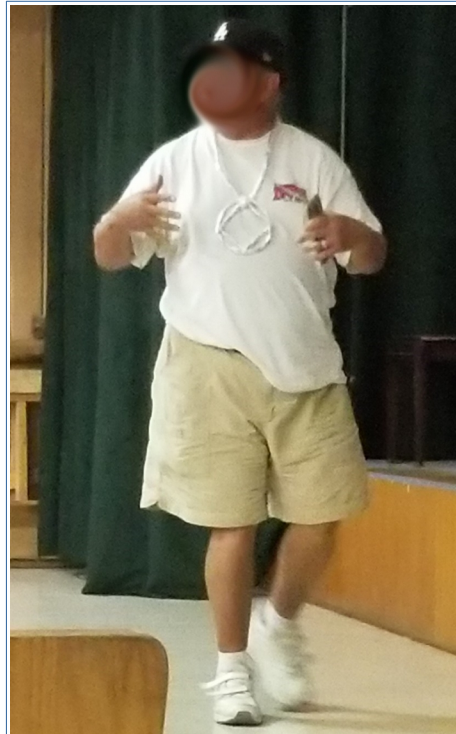
The Annual H&I Chili Cookoff

February 2020



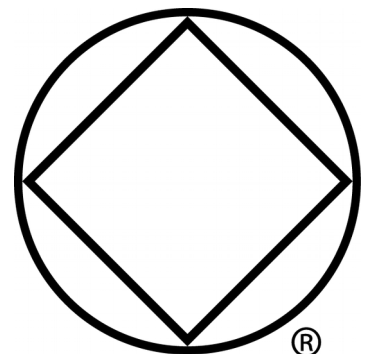
Back in February of 2020, area addicts got together for an evening of chili and education. The Gulf Coast Area H&I subcommittee held its annual chili cook-off and learning day to both entertain and teach area members with the willingness to serve and support.

The cookoff itself went off without a hitch, with various recipes on display from all walks of life – super spicy, vegan, and more. Last year’s winner, Phil J., took the trophy home yet again with his signature blend.



Those in attendance were also treated to a “Meeting from Hell” - a fake meeting designed to show addicts in recovery how NOT to conduct themselves when bringing their message to hospitals and institutions. Addicts with a flair for performance took the stage and showed off exaggerated versions of the disinterested chairperson, the overly flirty share, a very non-spiritual, overly-religious interpretation of recovery, and more. The meeting was even “interrupted” by an overly enthusiastic addict with wannabe rap skills.

The Gulf Coast Area H&I subcommittee also partnered with the local P.R. to share how and why service is so essential to an area’s overall recovery.



The Fifth Annual West Coast Unity Day

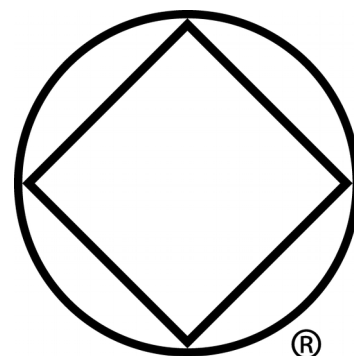
March 2020



In March, just before COVID-19 hit The Gulf Coast Area in full, addicts from various areas all over the west coast of Florida got together at Lakes Park. There was a huge raffle with tons of unique and rare N.A. items up for grabs, as well as a full BBQ buffet provided by a local restaurateur and member of the program. Addicts were even able to square off against one another in a friendly game of cornhole. The event even drew in members from Wisconsin, who were actually able to get their hands on the Unity Day Banner to take home and display in their area. Additionally, the meeting wrapped up with a speaker meeting for the approximately 100 addicts in attendance, spreading a strong message of experience, strength, and hope.



Unbeknownst to everyone at Unity Day, this may well be the last event that The Gulf Coast Area hosts where addicts can get together and interact in person for some time. Fortunately it was a success, promoting unity beyond just the local area, reminding us all that recovery and fellow addicts are everywhere.



Events and Celebrations

And a Note from the Newsletter Chair

Normally, there would be a section in the newsletter dedicated to upcoming events and anniversaries. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, events have been put on hold and celebrations have gone completely digital. While it might be some time before our local event schedule returns to normal, please reach out to area members regarding upcoming celebrations. As it stands, digital meetings have provided an excellent format for members to celebrate their cleantime, with many local addicts tuning in and, as a surprise benefit, friends of the celebrant from other areas being able to see their fellows getting their keytags where they might not have been able to before! So, again, please reach out to the fellowship if you have an upcoming celebration.

* * *

To the Gulf Coast Area,

As we deal with isolation, The Gulf Coast Area Newsletter needs your help more than ever. Please consider being of service with writing, art, graphic design, and whatever else you can think of – feel free to reach out to me at the number or email below with ideas, thoughts, and potential contributions. Also, please see the next page for a flier to print and hang (with permission) at the location where your homegroup used to meet. Additionally, you can send the information to addicts in need.

*Thank you for letting me serve,
Nick H.
239-339-3512
newsletter@nagulfcoastfla.org*

LOOKING FOR THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING?

Due to recent **health concerns (COVID-19)**,
many local meetings have been **temporarily** shut down.

Check the **Gulf Coast Area of Narcotics Anonymous website**

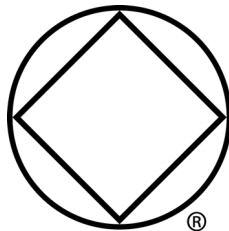
nagulfcoastfla.org

to learn how to attend digital meetings using the **ZOOM app**.

The website will be updated when meetings are reinstated.

If you need **help**, please call

866-389-1344



This facility is **not** affiliated with Narcotics Anonymous.