



A NEW LEAF

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Life With Hope - Hosting Convention '96

by Todd E., District 7

It's amazing how one thought can change your life. My particular thought was, "Wouldn't it be cool if District Seven could host Convention '96?" It came about at Convention '95 in Santa Cruz, and sent me, Stephen S., Jonathan R. (the Coordinating Committee, which became known fondly as "the troika") and countless others on a year long odyssey of commitment, compromise, and camaraderie. From January to the end of May, we investigated several hotels (the second one being the Holiday Inn Bayview Plaza, ironically enough) and floated "trial balloons" to other districts expressing our interest, while God undoubtedly had a good chuckle over our enthusiastic naivete.

Due partly to our earnestness, and partly to the fact that no one else was insane enough to do it, District 7 was formally bequeathed the honor of hosting Convention '96 at the World Services Conference in the San Fernando Valley this past Memorial Day Weekend. The Convention Committee that met at the Conference established a nest egg, passed several motions that set up basic operating procedures, and created invaluable suggestions to aid us along the way.

The troika armed itself heavily with the Conference suggestions, materials graciously forwarded by BW, and our own plethora of ideas.

Certain that we couldn't do it alone, our first logical step was to have a planning meeting, from which subcommittees would be devised and

"What if we threw a Convention, and nobody came?"

subcommittee chairpersons would be elected. But what would those subcommittees be? And what would the format of the initial meeting be? As an ominous sign of things to come, we held a pre-planning meeting to sort out the details. In the room that night, as well as during the first organizational meeting shortly thereafter, there was a feeling of excitement and purpose. We were spiritual paratroopers, ready to leap into the unknown, trying to figure out how exactly to pull the rip-cord on the way down, each with our own idea

Reflections

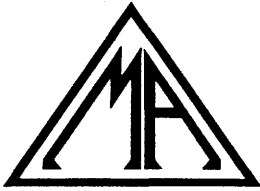
by Sean D., District 6

At this time every year, many of us take time out to reflect. This is the sixth time I've done so clean and sober. And looking back, I have found: some lifelong friends, a fellowship I call my family, and a Higher Power without whom I cannot live. I myself have changed; now I am of service to others and carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer. Over six years ago, I did not care about anything---life,

of what the upcoming destination would hold. The summer zipped along. The troika served as liaisons/facilitators for the work of the various subcommittees. Of course, I would not even be writing this were it not for the talents, energy, and contributions of subcommittee chairs, subcommittee members, and numerous other volunteers. I found that I was even able to work the steps while planning the Convention. I was of ever humble and grateful service, I took responsibility for my actions, I made amends when necessary, I did the footwork and let God take care of the results. All the while, the troika and the subcommittees unconsciously chanted a mantra from the film "Field of Dreams": "Plan a Convention, and they will come." *Continued on Page 4*

death, you, me---not a thing except getting enough dope in me not to feel. This is a true miracle of Marijuana Anonymous and the Twelve Step Program.

The year 1995 had its share of painful moments, wonderful times, and the closure that comes with making amends. Now I am looking forward to the challenges of 1996. I wish you well. R

A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

A NEW LEAF

The purpose of *A NEW LEAF* is to carry the message of recovery from marijuana addiction. It is through the written experiences of recovering addicts and their stories that we may find experience, strength, and hope.

Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity, and service. The articles contained in *A NEW LEAF* are the sole opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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"What did you think about Convention '96?"

Joyce M., 5 years 4 months:

I think it is a powerful testimony to "Life with Hope." The workshops I've attended had messages of people whose lives are healing with the development of their spiritual connection.

June L., 1 year

The honest and heartfelt sharing of ourselves with one another. The complete trust and faith that we were each there to love and support each other. The generosity of spirit!

Bonnie V., 2 3/4 years

Loved it! I had fun fun fun and hardly slept because there was so much to do and so many people to talk to. Gloria's talk on the first three steps was my favorite---I'm buying that tape for my friends. Lots of love and recovery everywhere.

Keith, 10 months

Principles before personalities needs to be practiced as well as spoken by meeting groups. The attendance at meetings was weak. We need childcare at the Convention, as well as more outreach. I did get some valuable input. I should focus more on the positive aspects which were few, rather than the negative ones which were many.

Diana V., 9 months

This Convention is one of the greatest experiences of my life---which, by the way, didn't *really* start until 9 months ago. I learned so much from the workshops I attended; the leaders were terrific. AND, I won the most coveted raffle prize: Gumby!!!

Nick S., 4 1/2 months

I thought it was fun and educational. I thought there was a definite spirit of openness and honesty. Thank God for MA!

Alex M., 1 year 1 month:

I had an incredible time---full of God, love, and laughter. It was truly a weekend of transcendence. I was rocketed into the 4th dimension. I can't wait until next year.

Lawren C., 3 years:

I didn't get to go to half of the workshops. Tapes are a great idea. The best thing about the Convention was seeing the number of recovering marijuana addicts there are out there and feeling the positive energy this union brings forth. I hope to carry this feeling with me for a long time. It was also cool to see old and new faces.

Carol S., 5 years 9 months:

What can you say of miracles? Once again I am that much closer to being the woman I've been waiting for! Thank you, God and MA.

The Roving Reporter

Avi, 5 years:

A Godshot to the participants and to the District.

Sharon P., 5 years 3 months:

Convention '96 was blessed with an abundance of love, fellowship, wisdom, recovery (and instructions therefore), and---maybe most important---proof that sobriety and an incredible amount of joy and fun CAN go hand-in-hand. A huge hug of gratitude to all who participated.

Mike LB, 9 years 4 days

I had a lot of fun---cried, laughed, and learned a lot about myself. Best of all, I got to be with all of you again!

Danny G., 3 days shy of 2 years

I loved it. I worked security and helped out and had a f*!#\$ing blast!!! I love MA.

Loren N., 6 years:

Truly a spiritual experience.

"What one thing or moment will you think of when you remember Convention '96?"

Vicki M., 3 years 5 months

Meeting new friends from different districts---reconnecting with old friends---getting really honest with all of you and myself.

Anonymous

The one thing that really sticks in my mind about this Convention is the amazing and huge amount of energy and love that has filled my heart. I've met so many beautiful people at this Convention, people that I know will be wonderful friends in the future.

Jack D., 1 year 5 months

The people! It was great to see newcomers as well as the members with more time. The smiling faces of all the people who attended. The great workshops and the people that shared. This was truly a spiritual event. Who will ever forget Dr. Gloria M., our Saturday night speaker? She was wonderful.

Nicole S., 4 years 4 months

Well, I know it involved Drums. It could have been the moment my roommates and I arrived in the room and had a mini Jam. Or perhaps when our group "Sensitive Chaos" drummed for everyone after the banquet. Like a spiritual experience, I felt truly connected to all---within and without the Circle. I was in a couple of workshops on Saturday and in them I learned that the "Spiritual Awakening" as a result of the 12th Step is far beyond any of the little inklings of "Spiritual Experiences" I've experienced since being sober. And those experienced were truly incredible, amazing, and life-changing. I have grown and recovered (am still recovering and will continue to) immensely by leaps and bounds due to these experiences. And now I'm told by reliable sources that these individual experiences pale in comparison to the Grand Spiritual AWAKENING as a result of the Steps. I am ready to embrace my life with hope.

Fly, 8 yrs 3 mos & Kim B., 91 days

On Saturday we were extremely moved by the motivation of the speaker Gloria M. Some things she said come to mind: We are not responsible for our insanity; We made a decision to become sober, we didn't decide to become addicts; We can't just slow down---we have to stop. She was amazing and spiritually moving. We are grateful to have heard her speak.

Loren N., 6 years

Rob's acknowledgement of Carol's service and contribution to "Life with Hope" as well as Carol's and everyone's reaction.

Dave K., 6 years 364 days

I must say, the love and unity I felt was very strong and very apparent to me shortly after I arrived at the Convention. What was practically orgasmic was when "Sensitive Chaos" drummed at the end of the Variety Show with many, many dancing and singing. Love is bonding. Thank you Marijuana Anonymous.

Anthony J., 9 months

My girlfriend and I in the elevator... The first night's meeting, feelings workshop, working the merchandising booth, the Saturday night dance.

Debra, 6 days

The workshop about emotional issues was enlightening. Furthermore, I have a new attitude and understanding of the Lord's Prayer.

Laurie Rae, 1 year 4 days

Fun Fun Fun! The striptease on the dance floor Saturday night---Hey Now!

Barbara B., 15 years

The unconditional love and acceptance among all the participants. I participate in other 12-Step recovery programs and found this to be the most genuinely loving group ever.

Lori Mc., 1 year

The drumming!

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Lynn E.	Jan 2	7 yrs		
Peter K.	Jan 3	1 yr!		
Sandy P.	Jan 3	2 yrs		
Don K.	Jan 10	6 yrs		
Cary	Jan 15	1 yr!		
Robin H.	Jan 16	1 yr!		
Walter H.	Jan 22	1 yr!		
June L.	Jan 29	1 yr!		
Papa Joe S.	Feb 1	3 yrs		
Eric M.	Feb 1	3 yrs		
Sean D.	Feb 1	6 yrs		
Angel S.	Feb 1	7 yrs		
Rick B.	Feb 1	7 yrs		
Dave B.	Feb 4	1 yr!		
Victoria C.	Feb 5	1 yr!		
George B.	Feb 6	8 yrs		
Hiking Mike K.	Feb 6	8 yrs		
Steve G.	Feb 8	4 yrs		
Bill D.	Feb 9	6 yrs		
Anne W.	Feb 12	7 yrs		
Billy B.	Feb 13	3 yrs		
Christine S.	Feb 13	6 yrs		
Kathryn R.	Feb 14	3 yrs		
Dan Z.	Feb 14	3 yrs		
Cindy K.	Feb 15	3 yrs		
Dave T.	Feb 16	3 yrs		
Mark B.	Feb 18	2 yrs		
Julie M.	Feb 18	5 yrs		
Margaret F.	Feb 24	5 yrs		
Terry M.	Feb 24	8 yrs		
Richard M.	Feb 25	3 yrs		
HALcoholic N.	Feb 26	5 yrs		
Randy P.	Feb 27	3 yrs		
Matty D.	Feb 29	8 yrs		

Convention '96

Continued from page 1

Fall arrived and the event started to become more concrete. The meetings, from troika to subcommittee to large group, increased in quantity and quality. There were debates, rumors, phone calls, and faxes. As organizers, we evolved from paratroopers to long-distance runners. The race had been long and hard but the finish line was just around the bend. Registration forms came in bunches, albeit much smaller bunches than we had hoped. Would we be able to reach our goals? Would we end up *costing* MA money? What about participation from the Northern Districts? As the race neared the final stage, our collective mantra shifted to one derived from a Sixties anti-war poster: "What if we gave a Convention and nobody came?"

A tired group met at the hotel the week prior for a walk-through and one last planning session. The final week was spent tying up final questions. How would we accommodate on-sight registrants for dinner? Was every workshop and meeting leader confirmed? Were the registration, merchandising, and hospitality shifts filled? From every detail, sprang ten more. Sleepless nights followed jam-packed days.

At last Friday night arrived. Although I didn't get to enjoy enough workshops or sleep, there was a feeling of God's power in the air that fueled me through the highs and lows of the entire weekend. George B. kicked everything off impressively, sharing his experience, strength and hope. Saturday began with a physical workout, moved into workshops on everything from sexual issues to all twelve steps to emotional issues in recovery, and crescendoed with a banquet (at which Dr. Gloria M. delivered a powerful share on the recovery process), a homespun variety show (do we have talent in this fellowship or WHAT?), and a frenzied, funk-ed-out dance. Sunday there were more workshops before we closed with a raffle, a sober countdown, and a look at MA history from a panel of folks who helped usher MA into

existence: Aziz, Dr. Bob M, Irit K., Kathy C., Carol Mc., BWL., Kevin V, and Steve E. By the end of the weekend, the walls were soaked with love, fellowship, laughter, and recovery and it was truly hard to say goodbye to my sober family.

The Big Book says, "For us, material well-being always followed spiritual progress. It never preceded." Because we concerned ourselves first with all things spiritual, Convention '96 was able to give the largest single event donation ever to World Services. Led by District 7, ALL Districts worked together to create a truly memorable experience.

Our theme, taken from the name of the new MA Twelve and Twelve, was one of countless "God-shots" in the planning of the Convention. I believe the event proved that in the midst of fear, doubt, or tribulation, in my relationship with my fellows, and as I "trudge the road of happy destiny," I am not alone. I indeed have a new and profound "Life With Hope." R~

Bulletin Board

TAPES AVAILABLE

If you missed Convention '96 (or Convention '95), they were taped! For info: contact ENCORE CASSETTES, call (800) 878-1308.

"ROLLING PARTY"

District 8 (New York) is hosting a "penny rolling" party on Feb. 18th. There's an open-mike talent show, vegetarian chili, as well as rolling saved-up pennies to raise money to send a delegate to the next MA Conference. Need info? Call (212) 459-4423, leave a message, and someone will call you back.

DISTRICT 10 SOBER HIKE

On Sunday, Feb. 25th, our newest district will sponsor a 5-mile "easy" hike. It starts at 9:30am and goes until early afternoon. Beginning at the parking lot at Chantry Flats (north from the 210 on Santa Anita Cyn Rd). Bring lunch and water. Info: Richard N. at (818) 285-0962.

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