

A NEW LEAF

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A Proven Formula

By Joe D., District 8

Now in my fourth year of sobriety, I'm active as both a sponsor and a sponsee. It helps me stay sober and reminds me that I need to be connected to other people on a regular and ongoing basis.

During my first year I depended on my sponsor for a lot. But I had a couple of different sponsors during the ensuing two years and neither time did the relationship quite gel. Whatever the reasons, I'm glad that I'm back working with a sponsor again. I'm also glad for my program friends who, when I'd sheepishly remark that I'd not talked to my sponsor in months, would say "then you don't have sponsor," or "then you need to get a new one."

They say that the sponsor-sponsee relationship helps the sponsor at least as much as the sponsee. This has certainly been the case recently with me. About five months ago I began working with a newcomer who kept in close touch. I never told him to call me every day but he did—for all of his first 90 days! We continue to speak just about every other day.

So I was faced with a dilemma: How could I be working with this great guy and not be in regular contact with someone with more sober time than me. Didn't I deserve

support too? It took dealing with some deeply painful emotions to give me the final push to call a man I'd been considering for sometime. During that first call he listened to me and helped me. But he hedged when I asked him to be my sponsor,

The sponsor-sponsee relationship helps the sponsor at least as much as the sponsee.

saying that while he already had a lot of commitments, I was always welcome to call him. When I waited three weeks for a second call, he told me frankly that he needed to

hear from me much more often if this was to work. I was grateful for that directness then, and I'm grateful for the regular contact now.

When he first referred to himself as my sponsor, I got a really nice feeling of acceptance and attention.

I know that he likes me and cares for my well-being—because he tells me every time we speak. I need to hear that and I deserve it too.

And I hope that I am helping my sponsee as much. He's staying sober, making meetings and calling me his sponsor. It's a proven formula that I highly recommend. ☉

MAWS Financial Report

By Todd E., MAWS Treasurer

First off, I'd like to thank the people in the fellowship, especially the Trustees, the MA World Services (MAWS) accountant, and the MAWS Office Manager, whose support has made the difficult transition into the Treasurer's position much easier. I'd also like to thank our ex-Treasurer, who did a really wonderful job. May he find his way safely back into our rooms.

Secondly, I'd like to thank the

entire fellowship of MA for their incredible generosity in the face of some serious financial difficulties (as chronicled by the December 1977 article in *A New Leaf*). Since this past November, we have taken in \$3,053.28 in donations from individuals, meetings, and districts. In that same time, our expenses have totaled \$1,165.84, with payments going to our long-distance carrier, our voice mail company,

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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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A Gift Across the Wires

By Clara, Georgia

I am a recovering pothead. If not for the MA program online, I could not introduce myself as "recovering" because when I found MA online there were no MA meetings in the my home state of Georgia. I didn't try pot until I was 26 because I was scared of it—scared because it was an illegal drug—but mostly scared because I might enjoy it. This fear helped me to just say no many times before I finally said yes. The first time I tried it was on my wedding night. I won't go into details here except to say that my worst fear reigned true—I liked it (the pot...the honeymoon was great too, but I am talking about the pot here). Anyway, my disease was unleashed that night. I wanted to smoke it as often as possible, and I did.

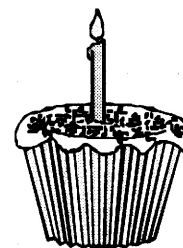
So, seven and a half months after I got married my husband committed suicide and my world was yanked out from under me. I had lost my best friend and my soulmate. I didn't want to deal with the grief or the issues around suicide that do not come with other kinds of death. So I dove into all the pot I could get my hands on and used it to numb these emotions.

For the next nine years I continued to use pot regularly. It became an obsession. I woke up thinking about when in my day I could sneak a little toke or two, went through my day looking forward to that moment when I could toke away, and ended my day with toking my way to sleep. I was terrified that if I allowed the feelings to surface, I would lose it.

Then something happened. I began isolating in my house, only venturing out when I absolutely had to. I quit answering my phone—the lifeline of my business—and my addiction went to an even higher level. I was stoned more hours than not. What a great life, I thought. Then the pot quit working. My best friend, marijuana, let me down.

So I began drinking heavily with the pot. Somewhere in all of this insanity, I had a moment (and I do mean moment) of clarity. I got scared. I could see that I was headed down the same path of alcoholism that my

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



District 4

Reid	Feb 10	1 yrl
Erik J.	Feb 21	1 yrl

District 6

Sean D.	Feb 1	8 yrs
Laurie E.	Feb 5	1 yrl
George B.	Feb 6	10 yrs
Janelle A.	Feb 7	3 yrs
Steve G.	Feb 8	6 yrs
Dan Z.	Feb 14	5 yrs
Kathryn R.	Feb 14	5 yrs
Margaret F.	Feb 24	7 yrs
Terry M.	Feb 24	10 yrs

District 7

Dave S.	Jan xx	3 yrs
Randy D.	Jan 4	1 yrl
Tim O.	Jan 9	2 yrs

Lano O.	Jan 19	2 yrs
Alexis U.	Jan 20	1 yrl
Rosendo	Jan 23	2 yrs
Marion S.	Feb 1	5 yrs
Doug	Feb 4	21 yrs
Brian S.	Feb 5	1 yrl
Jodi B.	Feb 6	1 yrl

District 8

Joe D.	Dec 31	3 yrs
Dave B.	Feb 6	3 yrs
Ell Dee	Feb 11	2 yrs
David H.	Feb 14	4 yrs
Gary B.	Feb 26	4 yrs
Robert D.	Feb 28	4 yrs

Top Ten Reasons to Work All 12 Steps

By Praline M., District 2

1. Because you're desperate.
2. Because you want to feel better.
3. Because you feel guilty? You can make amends.
4. Because if you don't, you'll keep fighting the same old battles over and over.
5. Because you're sick and tired of being sick and tired.
6. Because you're ready to say "hi!" to Higher Power.
7. Because you can't wait to meditate and elevate.
8. Because you get to write about your resentments.
9. Because the weight of the world falls on your shoulders? You can learn how to take an action, and then turn it over.
10. Because one step makes you larger, another makes you small, and the ones that drugs give you, don't do anything at all!

A Gift Across the Wires

Continued from page 2

father had been on. I didn't want that.

I was miserable. I wanted the insanity to stop, but I could not imagine life without marijuana. I felt so alone. Then I went online and found the Marijuana Anonymous Web site (<http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>).

Could it be that there really is such a program? I had jokingly said to my using buddies that I needed a 12 Step program for my pot use. Be careful what you joke about, huh?

I emailed MA for help. A reply from a wonderful woman with eight years of recovery came back to me. She said she would be my online sponsor and told me about the online meetings. She asked me if I was willing to do whatever it took to get clean. She was honest, yet warm, and said it wouldn't be easy, but it was a simple program. She mailed me lots of literature from MA and prepared me for detox.

That was hell! I was craving pot like I can't even put into words. I was irritable (nice way of saying insane), could not sleep, had the sweats all the time, had the shakes, and had unbelievable cravings. I wanted pot, yet I wanted to be free from its bondage.

I probably wore out my online sponsor those first few months. I

was in daily, sometimes hourly contact with her. She reminded me just to stay in today, stay in this minute, don't use for this hour, and so on. She helped me through the detox with her loving, supportive yet tough-love hand.

Eventually, the detox symptoms subsided, but obsessive thoughts continued. She told me that those would go away too. Not forever, but I would get some relief and then they would come back only long enough to remind me that I have a disease. She was right. There came a day when I did not think about smoking. What a gift! My first glimpse of peace and serenity.

Meanwhile, during all of this contact with my online sponsor, I went to the online meeting. I felt like I had truly found my home with these people. I could relate to them. They knew me even though most of them lived on the other side of the country from me.

Then one Sunday night my sponsor called on me to share. Yikes!!! I did, and the feelings poured out of me that I had run from for so many years. I was embraced by the group. They shared some tools to help me begin to heal from my grief. It didn't matter to them that it had been nine years since my husband died. I used

the tools shared with me, talked at meetings, talked to my sponsor, read program literature, took my grief to therapy, and began trudging through all of the feelings.

First I dealt with what I call the Politically Correct feelings of grief—sadness, loneliness, abandonment, intense sorrow of what was lost. Then it came time for the Politically Incorrect feelings, as I saw it, of anger and resentment. Again MA online was there to embrace me. I survived all of the emotions—correct and incorrect alike—and have found a new peace and a new happiness. I do not regret the past. I cannot change it. I can change how my husband's death affects my life. I can learn how to move on. And I can be clean and sober and happy, joyous, and free.

If it had not been for MA online, I would never have learned all of these things. And now there is the first MA meeting in my state, in my town, thanks to my sponsor suggesting that I start one. It is small right now, just two of us potheads—but that is all that is necessary to have a meeting. For weeks, it was just me and the committee in my head. Now I have the opportunity to share this message of recovery. For that I am grateful and thank my HP each day for online MA. ☺

MAWS Financial Report

Continued from page 1

California state fund insurance, bank service charges, and a chip reimbursement. That leaves our current balance at \$3,883.94, which does not include what I think will be a modest profit from Convention '98. I would ask that if you have specific financial questions regarding the above, you address them to your district's treasurer or your meeting's Group Service Representative (GSR).

Finally, I would like to issue a challenge to MA: to find ways to keep MAWS financially solid. MA is still a small fellowship, so I'm really not talking about huge amounts of money. Perhaps when the basket is passed at your next meeting, you can pitch in an extra dollar or two. That money goes to support your meeting, which in turn supports your local district, which in turn contributes to MAWS—your GSR should be able to tell you exactly how much and how often your district contributes to MAWS. Also keep in mind that individuals can make tax-deductible donations directly to MAWS, since it is a non-profit organization. Some districts even ask their meetings to observe a "Gratitude Month," during which time the money raised from passing a second basket goes directly to MAWS. All of these ideas and more will help MAWS—and therefore MA as a whole—remain fully capable of spreading the miraculous message of recovery. As it says on page 88 of *Life With Hope*, "We all have to pull together, and by doing so we learn that we are truly part of something greater than ourselves." ☉

Quote of the Month

How were we going to believe that God could care for us? How could we learn to live without self-will and obsession? We were taught that a little willingness goes a long way towards building faith. Most of us resisted.... We then found that simply making this decision opened us up to a spiritual connection and was an act of faith, in and of itself.

—Life With Hope, Step Three [page 12-13]

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First Things First