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A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

The Courage to Change the Things I Can by Chysanthemum

I literally spent half of my life, 17 years, on drugs. Though I have done many different drugs over the years, pot was my constant. The first time I really got off on it was one of the most enjoyable moments I'd ever had. The last time I got stoned I had reached a new bottom. I am so grateful to have 21 months of being clean.

My pot smoking began with a desire to belong. I had so much abuse going on at home that I was far too socially inept to make or maintain friendships, so for most of my years between the ages of 10 and 18 I didn't have a friend in the world, even in my home. The loneliness was crushing. What's more, I could only conclude that there was something really wrong with me, to be rejected so completely.

So by the end of my high school career I actually managed to get myself invited into someone's home before a light show. They fired up the bowl, and when it was passed to me, I did what they did. We did it again afterwards. I didn't really get much of an effect, but I knew where I could get more. The next time, I really got off.

By 1993 I had been married and divorced, got a master's degree in mathematics, and I was living outside in the Santa Cruz Mountains. I had built my own wickiup out of redwood branches. By 1995 I had moved into a house with 10 others, all of whom used something. By 1996 I was on disability. I had this divine insight that maybe I really did have a problem with pot. I'd seen MA on the schedule at the Loudon Nelson Center in downtown Santa Cruz many times, so I showed up.

I spent the next 9 months showing up to that meeting, and even got a 30-day chip at the end of it. I was not teachable, though. I didn't get a sponsor, I didn't work step one, I didn't even really stop using for more than a few days at a time until the end. After my last meeting in that era, the bowl came to me, I toked, and that was the end of my awareness of that knowledge that I needed help.

Then my house was condemned and demolished, and I had nowhere to go. I left for San Francisco, and squatted an abandoned restroom in an office building. I'd managed to score keys to the elevator, and got away with it for almost a year before getting caught. At this point I had started getting software engineering jobs. I never lasted more than 9 months.

When I landed the great job I have now, I didn't want to screw up at work any more. I came back to MA and started seeing a psychologist. I had learned the hard way that the knowledge that I need help is not something I can take for granted. This time I got a sponsor and have been working the program to the best of my ability. I was ready to accept that maybe others there at the meetings have something to teach me.

Since I've been back in recovery, I've seen my life turn around from something I could barely keep up with or tolerate to a truly joyful experience. My first year was about learning how to live like an adult, earning professional respect, paying my bills, finding an appropriate housing situation, and learning how to have and maintain friendships. I've had my job for two years now.

My second year has been about deepening my program, making amends, doing service, and learning more about who I am and what I desire out of my life. Even through most of my recovery I knew I was holding something back. I would not surrender to my higher power after a certain point. What would I do if I let myself, I wondered, and why is it so scary? I was still not reaching my potential in either happiness or self-knowledge. I was still hiding from something.

The veil was pierced with the on-line ABCNews video about Gwen Araujo's murder. Here was a transgendered girl who really lived before she died. I knew I wasn't, and I knew what I wanted. After freaking out for about a month, I started taking steps to transition from male to female. I came out at work, with my family, and everyone else about three months ago, and I haven't looked back. Thanks to this program, I can accept myself as a male-to-female transsexual.

It is unbelievable how much life can change in recovery. I used to live in fear. Now I have guts. I was willing to risk losing my job, my friends, and my family, because I was willing to trust in my higher power's will for me, and because I was willing to trust that somehow she would provide for me. That connection with my higher power is the greatest gift in recovery, because I no longer ever have to be alone.

Today I find that my higher power has planted me in the best geographic location in the world to make this transition, and a workplace where my boss only asked me if there was anything they could do to support me in this. I told everyone there to use female pronouns, as I have been asking everyone. My legal name and gender change is in process, and I've begun the medical process as well. I'm going through adolescence again, though this time with my own unconditional love.

I learned last week how much I've gained. I nearly had a fatal car accident on Highway 17, a winding road through the mountains separating San Jose from Santa Cruz. I spun out of control, spinning completely two times, my car smashing into the barriers as I spun. Four other cars somehow avoided me. If I hadn't backed out of the road the moment I stopped, I would have had a head-on collision with an approaching minivan.

While I was spinning, I thought my life was over. The one thought I had was that I was grateful to have been truly happy in this lifetime. All my life I'd had a fear that I would die in disappointment with myself, or really regret what I hadn't done. My gender transition turned out to be something I had to do before I could die in peace. I am humbled by the profound gifts of recovery, and I'm grateful to be alive and to have met so many nice people at the convention the next day.

I am living my wildest dream today. I want to say that if there is something about yourself that you can't accept, and it's not harmful to others, then by working the program you can find a way to accept it, if not love it with all your heart. I hope to be living proof that you never have to use over your own wildest dreams again.



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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We send approximately 681 copies of *A New Leaf* each month to subscribers in 31 states

GOODBYE, MARY JANE

BY CHUCK F.

Well, Sweet Mary Jane, it's been a long waltz – 35 years. I remember those first 10 years I got a lot of pleasure and enjoyment when I danced with you. But as time moved along you seemed to have forgotten the steps and we weren't dancing anymore. We were just hanging on and shuffling our feet around. After a while you weren't even moving your feet anymore.

The harder I tried to get closer to you, and maybe get that good feeling back again, the more I realized that it was gone for good. It ain't no fun dancing with a partner that just stands there. Hell, I couldn't even remember what I was there for. So, just like my old buddy Mr. Booze, you had become more trouble than your worth. Come to think of it you weren't worth nothing at all.

I left Mr. Booze by the wasteside 9 years ago; now I'm leavin' you the same way. You two ought to get together. You've got a lot in common.

So long Mary Jane, if I never see you again that's just fine with me.

Sincerely, Chuck F.

The Roving Reporter

The Roving Reporter asks, "When life gets uncomfortable for you, what action do you take?" And MA answers:



I use the quick reference of HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) to see if there's any immediate fixes that can be made, then I reach into my spiritual tool bag and do things like pray, call my sponsor or talk to another recovering addict, write about what's making me uncomfortable, and get to a meeting at the next possible opportunity.

Lisa T., District 5

When life gets uncomfortable, my unhealthy habit is to focus on all of my problems. I try to stop that pattern with several tools I've learned in the program. Some of those tools are: Thinking of stuff for which I am grateful. Finding some way to be of service to others. Figuring out what I can do about my current situation – and doing it. If I can't change what's bothering me I need to look for other stuff in my life that needs to be done and do it. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable because I want to control the outcome of something that's happening in my life and what I need to do is let go of the results, know that God is in control and let the pain or discomfort pass with time. What I think about has a direct impact on my feelings. Sometimes I just have to make up my mind to think about stuff that will help me feel better.

Terry H., District 5

It's amazing how often I forget to pray, but that's what works best for me. When I remember to say the serenity prayer, and ask higher power to help me walk through it, I feel so much better. I remember I'm not alone in any situation.

Bonnie, District 6

For the December issue, the Roving Reporter asks, "Why would somebody want to go all the way to Portland, Oregon for the MA Convention?"

LIFE WITH HOPE PRICE INCREASE -- Effective January 1, 2004, *A New Leaf Publications* will raise the price of MA's basic text, *Life With Hope*, from \$8 to \$9. To order your copy, visit marijuana-anonymous.org/Pages/pub.html.

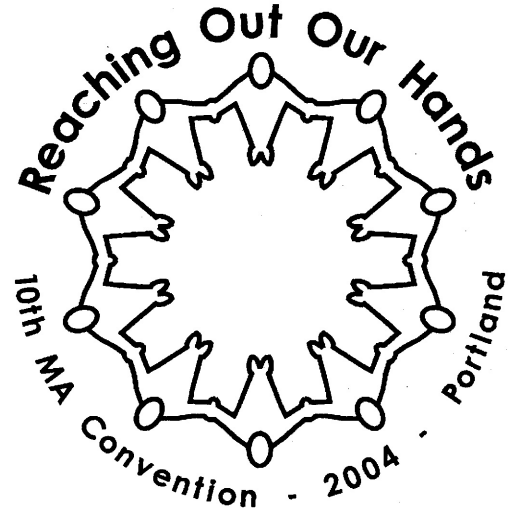
CONTRIBUTE TO A NEW LEAF

Without your words, there's no newsletter, and without the newsletter, many people wouldn't have access to the message. Please contribute!

We need your experience, strength and hope in the pages of *A New Leaf*. Our "stash is nearly empty," and we're feeling anxious and worried! Please send us your story (in 1,000 words or less), a poem (we have none at all!), or a share on Step or Tradition 12 for the December issue. Send it to us at anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org by November 20.



10th Annual MA Convention Portland, Oregon Feb. 13-15, 2004



District 11 is excited to be hosting the 10th Annual MA Convention in Portland, Oregon, along the Columbia River on February 13, 14 and 15, 2004. Come for Unity, Fellowship and Recovery. Join the MA Community in celebrating our continued growth. Come Reach Out Your Hands to your fellow potheads. See old friends and make new ones. Wouldn't it be great if everyone who's ever attended an MA Convention decided to come together for the 10th Annual? We'll have the usual Convention activities: workshops, speakers, meetings, banquet buffet and a dance.

Hotel Information:

Reserve Early at the **Doubletree Columbia River** by Jan. 29, 2004 and mention MA for a special room rate of just \$82.00. Call 503-283-2111 or visit <http://www.doubletree.com>. There's a free shuttle to and from the Portland Airport to take advantage of!

Contact Information:

To get the latest information and to find out how you can participate in the convention please visit www.ma2004.org, write to info@ma2004.org or call 503-221-7007.

"Reaching Out Our Hands" – Registration Form	
Name(s):	Early Registration: (before Dec. 31, 2003) _____ x \$40.00
	Regular Registration: (after Jan. 1, 2004) _____ x \$50.00
	Saturday Night Buffet Banquet _____ x \$30.00
	Indicate Saturday night meal preference: <input type="checkbox"/> Meat/Poultry/Fish <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian
Phone:	Raffle Tickets - \$1.00 each _____ x \$1.00
District:	Total* (mail by Feb. 1, 2004) _____

*Make checks payable to **"MA Convention 2004"** and mail with registration form to:

MA Convention 2004
P.O. Box 2012
Portland, OR 97208-2012

MA WORLDWIDE

For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>
email: office@marijuana-anonymous.org

MA World Service Offices
PO Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404
800-766-6779

San Francisco (Dist. 1)
PO Box 460024, San Francisco, CA
94146-0025
415.522.7373

East Bay (District 2)
PO Box 8354, Berkeley, CA 94707
510.287.8873

South Bay (District 3)
P.O. Box # 551
Saratoga, Ca. 95071-0551
408.450.0796

Western Washington (District 4)
POB # 17323, Seattle, WA 98107-1023
206.548.9034

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(Includes San Diego)
PMB #215, 358 S. Main, Orange, CA 92868-3834
714.999.9409
619.685.2808

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PO Box 2433, Van Nuys, CA 91404
818.759.9194

LA County So. (District 7)
PO Box 3012, Culver City, CA 90231
323.964.2370

New York (District 8)
PO Box 1244, Cooper Station
New York, NY 10276
212.459.4423

Santa Cruz (District 9)
PO Box 3003, Santa Cruz, CA 95063
831.427.4088

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(Includes Inland Empire)
PO Box 94400, Pasadena, CA 91109
626.583.9582

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PO Box 2012, Portland, OR 97208-2012
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649.846.6822

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PO Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404
800-766-6779

M.A. DISTRICT NEWS

District 2:

Holiday Party at Mandana House CRC.
12/6, 8 p.m., after the Saturday evening
MA meeting. Bring a "white elephant"
and a potluck dish to share.

District 5:

Scrabble Tournament (Conference
Fundraiser), 9:45 p.m. 11/21 after the
regular Friday meeting. Mariposa
Women's Center, 812 Town & Country
Drive, Orange.

District 7:

A Woman's Day in MA, Saturday, 11/
15, 9 to 9. Luncheon, speakers, art
therapy, afternoon tea, belly dancing
lessons, raffle and entertainment. Sun-
rise Best Western Hotel, Redondo
Beach. \$25. Call Debra, 310-375-4613,
or email Debrauser@aol.com.

District 10:

Hike and Breakfast at Mt. Echo, Janu-
ary 1. Bring your own beverage and an
item to share. Meet at the top of Lake
Ave. in Altadena between 6:30 and 6:40
a.m., rain or shine. Contact Richard N.
at 626-285-0962

Convention Seeks Workshop Ideas, Leaders

Do you have an idea for a workshop at the 2004 MA Convention in
Portland? Would you like to lead a workshop? If so, please contact Craig
S in Portland at suveni@comcast.net. Thanks!

BIRTHDAYS

Are you celebrating a birthday in the next few months? Or have you celebrated
one in the last 30 days and not seen it in A New Leaf? If you live in a District
area of MA, let your Bureau Chief know about it. If not, tell us! For contact
information, see the box on page 2.

District 1

Bean L.	11/30/98	5 years
Bob D.	11/02/01	2 years
Doug W.	11/09/01	2 years

District 3

Diane F.	10/22/91	2 years
Janice M.	10/18/00	3 years
Judy F.	10/10/93	10 years
Doug F.	10/15/97	6 years
Mel G.	10/31/87	16 years
Richard H.	10/08/97	6 years
Ron M.	10/22/89	14 years
Steve Mc.	10/04/93	10 years
Thomas B.	10/04/02	1 year!
Doug M.	11/11/02	1 year!

District 5

Meredith	11/5/91	12 years
Ron "Gardener"	11/5/95	8 years
Rich C.	11/2/98	5 years
James V.	10/29/98	5 years

District 6

Courtney N.	10/20/01	2 years
Duane D.	10/30/01	2 years
Joanne M.	10/2/88	15 years
Richard F.	11/26/01	2 years
Terri R.	11/18/90	13 years

District 10

Richard N.	10/23/95	8 years
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District 12

Lew	11/23/02	1 year!
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Celebrating 151 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!