



FEBRUARY 2005
Volume 15, Number 2

A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

Willingness

by Kathy B.

I am approaching my one-year mark, when I get to stand up and take a one-year chip. And I'm gonna get asked the question, "How did you do it?" And each previous time I've stepped up to receive a chip, I've wanted to share something deep and eternal, and each time I feel I fell short.

This time I don't feel the need to be 'profound' because to make an impression is no longer a concern of mine. My answer is honest and simple – I became willing. I surrendered. I stopped trying to 'do it my way', to quote Ol' Blue Eyes. I started with Step One "We admitted we were powerless over marijuana, that our lives had become unmanageable" – I read the first chapter of the book *Life With Hope*, and I re-wrote that chapter with me in mind.

Word for word this is what I wrote a year ago:

I had to look honestly at my relationship with marijuana and its affects on my life. I justified my using and rationalized that I could control it.

"I'm not hurting anyone but myself."

"Pot is not addictive."

"I don't have a substance abuse problem."

"I'm not as bad as those other people."

"Compared to those others I'm doing fine."

"My life is not unmanageable."

"Smoking doesn't effect my work."

"I'm not feeling well, I don't think I'll make it..."

"I've done nothing to be ashamed of."

"I've had a productive day. I can 'reward' myself."

"I don't know why I smell like smoke, honey."

"How did my finances get so screwed up?"

Then I learned that I could not control my using. I was living the illusion of control. I was living the fantasy of functionality. I held on to the fallacy of control. I hung on to the delusion that someday I could use marijuana in a moderate and controlled way. No longer does using pave the way to friendship. I became withdrawn and isolated (from my non-using friends and family). I was too frightened, detached and lethargic to reach out for friendship, intimacy and love. My need to get and stay high determined how I spent my time, and with whom. My emotional life became flat and frantic. I was uncomfortable with my emotions and sometimes frightened of them. I realized I was beaten many times but couldn't (wouldn't) stop.

Until I admitted my powerlessness, denial kept me from realizing how unmanageable my life had become. I rarely realized my potential (just drifting along). I had settled for being merely functional.

I have tried many things over the year to change reality, to no avail. In MA I stopped practicing denial and became willing to face my addiction.

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Problems of abundance or

abundance of problems by Jeff M.

The other night my son-in-law, who knows I'm in recovery, made a joke about this man who had an abundance of problems. The man had lost his job and wife, was in debt and about to lose his home. The joke was that he should get a drug problem because that would make all the other problems go away. It was funny because when I was using I would not have cared if I had those problems as long as I would have had my drugs, I. E. the problems would have gone away because he wouldn't care about them. Or as it occurred to me later that when someone is in early recovery the only problem, regardless of what else is happening in their life, is trying to stay sober. So either way this means problems would be easier if he had a drug problem.

My next thought was, now that I have a little time to reflect on my early sobriety, in a way it was easier then. When I was newly sober I had one problem, one very very large problem but only one and there was a simple, but not easy, solution, don't use or drink. Now through the grace of my Higher Power the obsession to use and drink has been lifted, so that part of the problem is gone. However I am still an addict in my thinking and acting. I am still an oversensitive person with an over-inflated ego and an inferiority complex. I still have my own character defects and I still tend to be selfish wanting the world to go the way I think it should. Fortunately I have a program, a sponsor and sponsees that I have daily contact with to help lessen my ego and selfish ways. Not to mention a loving wife who is also an addict and helps me to stay, or at least helps me get closer to my center.

However, as a saying at work puts it so poetically, "When you are up to your ass in alligators it is hard to remember you came to drain the swamp." In other words it is hard to keep focused on the big picture when a lot of little things are nipping at you. Not that most alligators that I have seen have ever been small. And it is true, at least for me. I do find it hard to be grateful for the money to pay the bills when the money to pay the bills is spent before I get it. I find it hard to be grateful for my brothers when they have sued me for what they feel is my mishandling of the Family Trust, even though they are the ones who suggested that I take it on. I find it hard to be grateful for my job when they tell me I am in the lowest cluster because of my poor performance yet I am the Lead Inspector in one of the larger areas of the Refinery with one of the highest Reliability ratings

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



The Roving Reporter

For February the Roving Reporter question was "What are some of your New Year's resolutions?"

Here is what some members said:

"Lose weight." — Brad M.

"Attend more than two meetings a year and get past step 3." — Peter S.

"To gain clarity in my personal and professional life with the help of the 12 Steps (and some outside help) AND to continue my meetings and commitments in MA.....And to make it to the big 15 in November (one day at a time!)" — Terri R.

For March, the Roving Reporter asks, "What did you hope to gain by attending the 2005 convention? What did you actually gain by attending the convention? What surprised you most at the convention?"

Please look for members of A New Leaf's staff roving around the convention looking to get feedback from you.



M.A.W.S. REMINDER



Hello fellow members. Hopefully you are aware the deadline to submit 2005 conference agenda items has passed and the Conference Agenda Committee is diligent at work in creating the agenda to distribute throughout the districts of M.A. so a true group conscience can be attained. This is the first draft and items now sent to MAWS will be added to the agenda in future drafts, but the agenda committee cannot guarantee those submissions will be added in time for the districts to gain a group conscience on those issues. The agenda committee urges the districts to submit any new items as soon as they get them to give each M.A. member a chance to voice their opinion on these critical issues. Hopefully each district has elected new delegates, and if not, will do so soon and we look forward to doing MAWS's business in May in Burbank, hosted by District 10.

CELEBRATE 2005 M.A. CONVENTION

District 7 – Torrance, CA @ The Marriott

February 18th-20th (Fri-Sun)



*IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER
AND RESERVE HOTEL ROOMS!!!*

**** District 7 needs your early paid committment ****

Please visit WWW.MA2005.COM

*For all information regarding the upcoming convention.
(registration, fundraisers, location information, workshops,
raffle, entertainment and more!!)*

Willingness continued from page 1

The entire foundation of this program depends on an honest admission of my powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of my life. I admitted my lack of power and my inability to control my life. I began to acknowledge how mentally, emotionally and spiritually bankrupt I had become. I became honest with myself.

Recovery does not happen all at once – it is a process, not an event. When I admitted that I WAS a marijuana addict, that I am truly powerless over marijuana, and that my life has truly become unmanageable, then I began to realize how futile it was to keep trying to manage the unmanageable. My complete surrender and a new way of life are essential to my recovery.

Until I wrote that out, until I accepted that I was a marijuana addict, I didn't have a chance in hell of staying sober. I had tried three times in as many months, with some jail time hanging over my head, and still I wouldn't stop. Once I wrote out my first step, once I accepted my marijuana addiction, many miraculous things happened, some quickly, and others more slowly.

I learned to pray. I learned to ask for help. I learned to think of others. When I was having a moment where I thought weed was a possible solution to my suffering, I asked my Higher Power to take over for me instead. I went to 12-Step meetings, especially if I didn't want to go to one. (I always leave a meeting with some nugget I can use.) I worked the next three steps by asking others how they had done it their steps and then doing that. I conquered a major fear, eventually, by asking for a sponsor, after eight months of sobriety. Then I practiced calling my sponsor when life got hard. I have learned to become teachable. Now I have an open mind, I listen to suggestions and I practice those suggestions to see if they fit me. I also recognize now that when someone makes a suggestion to me, a different way to do something, I don't immediately blow off the suggestion, as I did in the past. I mull it over now (after my initial rejection - old habits die hard), and eventually I try it on for size. I wear it a while, to see if I like it, then I either hang on to it or I let it go. This year that has been the biggest change for me, to recognize that my way is not the only way, and it's not always the best way.

Other, slower but still miraculous, changes include the improvement in my money management skills, the length of my fingernails, the calm that I am beginning to experience on the freeway as I drive home each night. Even my relationships are improving – with my children, my spouse, my family and my friends. Some of my relationships have faded away and I don't really miss them. The way other people perceive me is different now too.

I am not perfect – I know I never will be, but then that's what 'progress, not perfection' is all about. I still get angry and I still have rough days that I want to take out on others. The difference today is that I see my life for what it is and I practice living in the moment and I don't usually spread my misery on others. I work the steps, my new tools for living, instead.

I never thought I would want to stop smoking pot, and once I wanted to stop I never thought I could - taking a one-year chip was just crazy talk – once. My one-year chip and I will continue to live life on life's terms, staying sober and living recovery, just for today, one day at a time.

Problems of abundance or abundance of problems

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I have trouble feeling grateful when I see other people being promoted who seem to do less work. I have trouble feeling grateful when I seem to give and give to my daughter and ex-wife with no thanks in return. I have trouble feeling grateful when things don't go the way I want, or expect them too. I have trouble feeling grateful when I spend way too much time worrying and thinking about all my troubles.

It is usually about that time when my Higher Power seems to remind one of my sponsee's to call me. When I am working with others, when I get out of my head I stop being ungrateful, or having trouble being grateful and get into the solution. There is most likely no real solution for my problems with my brothers, daughter or ex-wife but I can stop giving them the power over me by praying for them; by accepting them for who and what they are and moving on. I can do a lot for myself, my wife and my sponsee's by accepting that this is what my Higher Power wants for me and move on. I can accept that this is exactly where and what I am supposed to be doing today, right now; not tomorrow, not next week, not forever, just for today.

If I can once again regain the focus that I had in my early sobriety on taking it one day, one hour, one minute, at a time I will successfully complete this day with minimal anger and resentments. I will successfully complete this day being grateful for all of the things I do have, a warm house, a car, a loving wife, my health, my job and above all else my sobriety.

MA WORLDWIDE

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

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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 11

Rick V 2/8/03 2 years
Dave C 2/22/02 3 years
Paul G 2/26/00 5 years
Trisa 2/1/96 9 years
Jeff F 2/1/99 6 years

District 12

Sarah M. 1/13/04 **1 year!**
Ira F. 1/15/87 18 years
Jim H. 1/27/03 2 years
Chris F. 2/01/88 17 years
Michael G. 2/5/03 2 years
Michael D. 2/13/03 2 years
Anna M. 2/27/03 2 years

District 4

Mary S-D. 1/01/98 6 years
Bryan D. 1/12/98 6 years
Thor H. 12/06/00 4 years
Darryl W. 12/14/03 **1 year!**

District 6

Ben B. 1/4/98 7 years
Dave K. 1/15/98 16 years
Judy S. 1/16/95 10 years
Loren N. 1/14/90 15 years
Reanna 1/21/02 3 years
Demetrius B. 2/01/03 2 years
George B. 2/06/88 17 years
Sean D. 2/01/90 15 years
Steve G. 2/08/92 13 years
Terry M. 2/24/88 17 years

District 5

Hal N. 2/26/91 14 Years
Papa Joe 2/1/93 12 Years
Victoria C. 2/5/95 10 Years
Christine (S.D.) 2/1/98 7 Years
Peter S. 2/17/99 6 Years
Wendy D. 2/22/99 6 Years
Béa 2/04/00 5 Years
David S. 2/6/02 3 Years
Frances 2/24/02 3 Years

District 1

Pam L. 2/04/03 2 years
Lori B. 1/11/02 3 years
Ron H. 1/03/96 9 years

District 10

Mike B. 12/21/01 3 years
William S. 1/5/04 **1 year!**
Conrad G. 1/8/01 4 years
Pauly R. 1/24/03 2 years
Evan C. 10/13/03 **1 year!**

District 3

Carrie A. 2/21/03 2 years
Chris E. 2/10/01 4 years

Cambridge, MA

Dean 2/14/04 **1 year!**
John M. 12/14/95 10 years

Celebrating 309 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!

PLEASE LOOK FOR ABE NORML IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE OF A NEW LEAF AS HE CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY DOWN THE LONG WINDING PATH TO RECOVERY.