

Why The Pink Cans?

by Northern California Hospital & Institution Committee

[Editor's Note: Our local H&I committee is, due to historical reasons, not a committee of our Intergroup as are most H&I committees throughout the U.S. We have been asked to publish this report and do so in the spirit of cooperation within the fellowship.]

The Hospital & Institution Committee of Northern California is an organized committee of Alcoholics Anonymous with the commitment of carrying the message of A.A. to those who are confined in prisons, hospitals, and other institutions. Northern California H&I provides almost 42,000 meetings a year, servicing 22 major state and federal institutions and hundreds of local jails, hospitals, rehabs and other community facilities. Those who are confined have no money to buy the A.A. literature brought in by the H&I volunteers, so the Pink Can, with your pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars, covers the cost.

In the fiscal year ending November 2011, Nor Cal H&I spent \$369,821.00 for books and literature from A.A. World Services; \$40,186.40 for the A.A. *Grapevine* in both English and Spanish; \$9,128.16 to purchase Meeting Directories from the local Central Offices; and \$23,383.05 to ship these items throughout Northern California. These necessary categories comprise over 93% of the total Nor Cal 2011 expenses and amounts to the cost of just one Big Book, one Twelve and Twelve and a small handful of pamphlets and schedules per meeting.

The Northern California Hospital & Institution Committee has for many

years been one of the largest purchasers of literature from the A.A. General Service Office in New York, contributing greatly to World Service income. No H&I members are paid for service, nor are they reimbursed for expenses incurred carrying the message into these institutions, regardless of the distance. It is not unusual for an H&I volunteer to drive well over 200 miles for a weekly or monthly institution meeting. These travel expenses are a personal contribution of the individual.

One of the fears expressed early on in the implementation of the Pink Cans was that they would subtract from the support of the meetings. This is entirely contrary to the intention of the Committee, and should not happen if the A.A. group secretaries announce (before the baskets are passed) the importance of supporting the 7th Tradition first (thereby supporting the service entities it contributes to) and the purpose of the Pink Can. The Nor Cal H&I Committee requests that the Pink Cans be passed separately from and after the baskets to avoid subtracting from support of the 7th Tradition, and encourages all members to remove the cans from the baskets if they are being passed together.

In 1942, the highly respected Warden Clinton Duffy invited some local A.A. members to bring the first A.A. meeting into San Quentin Prison; by June of 1946, A.A. was invited into Folsom Prison and the organization we now know as H&I was born. Because of the increasing interest of A.A. members outside the San Francisco area to participate in prison work, the committee resolved to become an autonomous

committee of NCCAA, thus forming the Northern California Hospital & Institution Committee.

Nor Cal H&I has been carrying the A.A. message of recovery to confined alcoholics for over 70 years, and is one of the oldest service committees of A.A. We maintain strong and mutually beneficial relations with the Corrections and Treatment Committees of the A.A. General Service Board in New York, and are humbly grateful for the generous contributions, both financial and in service, of the A.A. members who make our mission possible.

For additional information, please write to the Northern California Hospital & Institution Committee, P.O. Box 192490, San Francisco, CA 94119-2490 or visit our website at www.handinorcal.org.

