

President's Column

The Year of the Newsletter

As a result of a discussion at our annual training conference in September in Phoenix, I have declared 2001 "The Year of the Newsletter." The bottom line: with only a little effort you can promote subscriptions to this newsletter. In the remainder of this column I'll tell you why this is a good idea and how to do it. I'll end by predicting that you'll enjoy the process!

SMART Recovery[®] *News & Views* is now six years old. It provides reminders about how scientific knowledge about addictive behavior is being applied in SMART Recovery[®], tips on leading meetings and operating a local organization, updates on legal challenges to government mandated 12-step treatment, and news about progress the SMART Recovery[®] organization is making. It serves a diverse audience of meeting members, Coordinators, Professional Advisors, and increasingly, friends and opinion makers in the community.

SMART Recovery[®] is gaining recognition with increasing speed in the US. We have been listed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in its Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment (the only non-12-step group to be listed), and by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) in some of its physician guidelines. New recovery publications list or even describe SMART Recovery[®]. In the last year I have received an increased number of inquiries from professional groups that would like a presentation about SMART Recovery[®]. I doubt that most of these groups would even have considered such a presentation five years ago.

As people learn of SMART Recovery[®], they will be increasingly in a position to make use of that knowledge. Proposition 36, recently passed in California, requires treatment instead of prison for drug offenders, and offenders will be given a choice about the type of treatment they receive. Our on-line groups are available now, and with widespread broadband access attendance could grow dramatically.

What does increasing recognition for SMART Recovery[®], and increased access to meetings, have to do with promoting newsletter subscriptions? Although we cannot typically have a direct influence on how others view us, or whether individuals will be referred to or allowed to attend our meetings, we can directly control our own efforts to reach out to potential members and the community at large. Although we could just sit back and "wait for the phone to ring," promoting newsletter subscriptions is one of a few simple, relatively painless activities each of us can do that in the long run make a big difference for our organization.

Newsletters get circulated among friends and colleagues, get quoted, give rise to reprinted articles, and prompt inquiries. It may take the newsletter being seen by 100 people before it gets to the one person who really makes use of the information, but it is that person we are looking for. This is how we built the organization we already have, and it is how we will continue to grow. Like investing your money and having it work for you, the newsletter networks for you even when you are not there.

I suggest that the easiest way to promote newsletter subscriptions is to have an order form available at all times at meetings, and ask members each week if they have subscribed. When the newsletter arrives each quarter you can also preview an article or two in your opening or closing statement. If you know colleagues in the addiction field, suggest they subscribe.

By the way, the other simple things you can do are pass the hat at meetings (and send a portion to the Central Office), get SMART Recovery[®] listed in every place 12-step groups are listed (that way people can find us), and insist that when someone mentions support groups, SMART Recovery[®] also gets mentioned (or mention it yourself). We are building an avalanche of support and contributions, and even though it's small now, it will be enormous in time.

Now some people “don't like to sell things.” If you insist on this perspective, you'll miss out on the experience of knowing that you are doing something quite tangible to disseminate ideas that can make a life or death difference in the lives of those who hear them. By supporting this organization, you have helped make addiction recovery a reality for many individuals. Wouldn't you like to help even more? I predict you'll feel great every time you hear someone tell you that your suggestion to subscribe to this newsletter has been acted on!