

Twenty years ago, I had hit bottom — again. I say again because it was not my first attempt at getting sober, not because I had somehow pulled myself back up from the last one. All I had done after drying out for a minute was dig the hole deeper. I was on probation in three counties and finding myself in trouble once more — and this time it was big trouble. The kind that gets you prison time. I had lost so many family members and friends to alcoholism and addiction, both theirs and mine. I was heartbroken, isolated, and angry at the world. The future was scary and bleak. I was blessed with the gift of desperation.

Thanks to H&I, I recently got to go back and speak at the Oz, the treatment program where I spent the first four months of my recovery back in 2002-3 on a “Prop 36 bed.” They don’t have as many houses or beds as they used to, but the main house was decorated for the holidays like it was when I arrived twenty years ago, running out of options. I remembered how Secret Santas gave us umbrellas and made sure we knew we were welcome in the various 12-step fellowships. It was the place where I got my second copy of the third edition Big Book and met my first sponsor. Hearing women with less than 90 days share their experience, strength and hope was just where I needed to be on a Friday night.

As I prepare to rotate on from serving as your delegate to the General Service Conference, I look forward to continuing to participate in all of Alcoholics Anonymous. I certainly have a different perspective than I did twenty years ago. You have changed me. This service has changed me. But what has not changed is the spiritual magic in that simple act of one alcoholic talking to another. The future feels full of possibility. I am grateful for the life I have today, and this A.A. way of life. I will keep coming back.

Jennifer B.
Panel 71 Delegate
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