



## **Pink Cans: Small Change Brings Big Results\***

A large number of inmates in correctional facilities in the U.S. and Canada are in prison because of alcohol, and the flip side is that many of these alcoholics have found the Fellowship in prison. But the quest for sobriety doesn't come easily behind the walls. Most incarcerated alcoholics have just one meeting a week available to them, and many others are on waiting lists and can get to none at all. That reality underlines the need to send literature into prisons to carry the message in print through the Big Book, other A.A. books and pamphlets, and the A.A. Grapevine.

How to raise enough money to keep a supply of literature flowing? Corrections committees throughout the service structure make raising money for literature a priority, and one idea that has become popular in some areas is having a pink can prominently displayed on group literature tables as a way of collecting money for literature for prisons.

The concept originated (as far as we know) in the Northern California Area in 1957. The area Hospital and Institutions committee (H&I) was rapidly expanding its work in prisons, and the need for literature was increasing by leaps and bounds, to the point where it could no longer be met by individual contributions. Someone came up with the idea of passing around a can at group meetings, explaining that the pennies, dimes, and quarters dropped in the can were intended for alcoholics in prisons and hospitals. How to make the cans stand out? Paint them pink. The idea caught on, and eventually groups throughout North America began displaying pink cans on their literature tables. In Northern California, the original one-quart paint cans have been replaced by plastic containers with screw-on, slotted tops. In the beginning, some members were afraid that donations to the pink cans would decrease group contributions, and mindful of that possibility, the committee has always emphasized the importance of providing clear information. They send each group a flyer explaining what the cans are for, print information in local A.A. newsletters, and always suggest that the secretary emphasize the importance of contributions to group expenses first.

Some areas have come up with variations on the basic concept. Northern New Jersey, for example, implemented the idea of having jail boxes, and the area

corrections committee sends each group a letter of introduction describing the need and purpose.

In the Southern Minnesota area, one of the many that have embraced the pink can plan, an article in the area newsletter summed it up: “The pink can is not intended to detract from your group’s normal Tradition Seven contributions. We look to collect spare change from as many groups as possible. If your group already sponsors a facility with literature, your participation in the pink cans insures that literature is reaching all facilities, not just one or two. Does your group have a pink can? What a positive way to turn pocket change into the promises of the A.A. message.”

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Our common experience has shown us that regular, accurate reporting back to our groups and members who donate to the Pink Cans is essential to the implementation and growth of this program. Often, just a listing of how many books, pamphlets, etc. of literature that are purchased and distributed within local correctional facilities is sufficient. We have found that donations to the Pink Cans will continue as long as our members who donate are made aware of how their money is being spent.

In summary:

1. There is a significant, ongoing need for A.A. published literature in Georgia’s correctional facilities.
2. The Pink Cans are used extensively in A.A. throughout the United States and Canada to help meet this specific need on a local basis.
3. In no way should the Pink Cans interfere with or detract from Seventh Tradition contributions from our A.A. groups and members.
4. Accurate and timely reporting back to our A.A groups and members is essential to implementation & growth of the Pink Cans program in Area 16 (Georgia).

Please feel free to contact your local Corrections Committee or the Area 16 Corrections Committee ([corrections@aaageorgia.org](mailto:corrections@aaageorgia.org)) if you have any questions or concerns.