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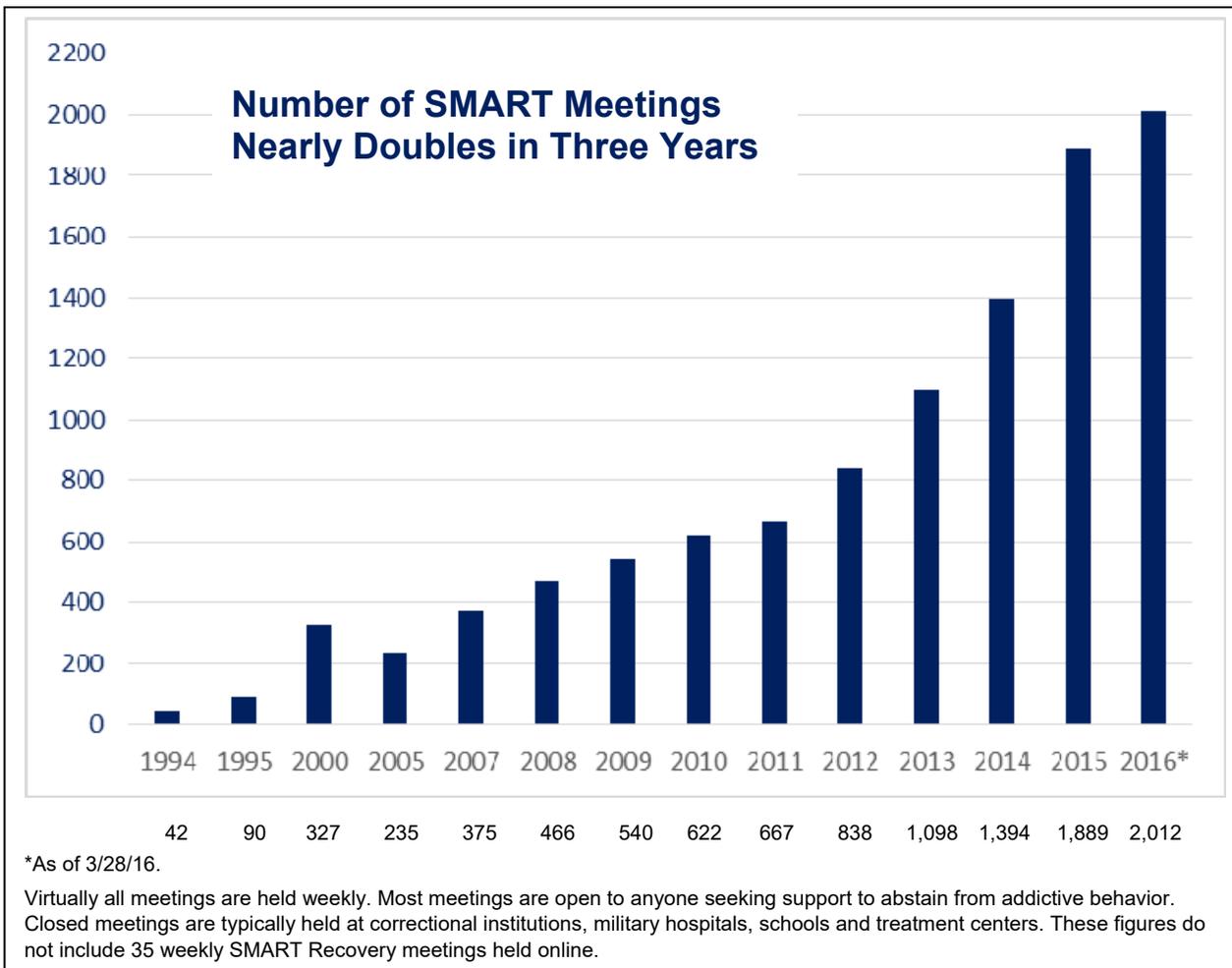
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## **SMART Recovery<sup>®</sup> Meetings Cross 2,000 Mark, Including 1,000 in U.S. 500 Launched in 2015 as More People Seek Self-Empowerment to Overcome Addictions**

Mentor, OH – 28 March 2016 – The number of SMART Recovery addiction support group meetings crossed two milestones early this year: 2,000 overall and 1,000 in the U.S. In fact, nearly 500 were launched in 2015 alone, after about 300 were started the previous year. And the fast growth rate continues with nearly 100 having already been started in the first two months of 2016.

Fueling this growth is the large number of people completing the training program required to facilitate or host SMART meetings – 1,095 in 2015 alone. “Numerous volunteers are starting meetings in their communities to broaden free support group choices. They are attracted by the program’s use of science-based tools and positive and practical measures to help people overcome addictions,” said SMART Recovery Executive Director Shari Allwood.



### **SMART Meetings Proliferate From Maine to California**

This would explain how the number of meetings grew from one to nine in the state of Maine last year and more than doubled in California to nearly 100. Meetings are proliferating in the nation’s heartland with 23 new ones in Illinois, bringing the state total to 38; nearly half were started in Chicago alone, which now hosts 21 weekly meetings.

(more)

In 2015, the number in Indiana went from a single meeting to nearly 35. Many of these were launched by addiction treatment centers for their clients, reflecting another reason for the growth. “Addiction recovery experts worldwide are discovering that SMART Recovery effectively complements the cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) they are using to treat clients,” Allwood said. “The program is also aligned with the most effective treatment measures recommended by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For example, SMART Recovery is self-directed, individualized, empowering and holistic. It emphasizes peer support and personal responsibility.”

A large number of the people undergoing the program training are professionals in the addiction treatment field, including psychiatric social workers, licensed counselors and psychologists. “They want to add SMART Recovery to their practice in treating clients,” she said.

Still, SMART remains an organization directed by people who have recovered and volunteer to help others just starting to seek help to overcome addictions to substances or harmful behaviors. Jason Bishop, a new Poughkeepsie, NY, facilitator who started the 1,000<sup>th</sup> U.S. meeting on January 25, 2016, exemplifies how the program works:

When I found SMART Recovery, it was a lifesaving program. I attended two meetings each week. I’d drive 90 minutes each way every Wednesday to attend the 6 p.m. meeting in East Greenbush. This is where I first really understood the SMART program and tools. I’d also take a two-hour train ride every Saturday to a meeting in Manhattan. I was spending seven hours a week getting to and from SMART meetings. And I was happy to do so as my recovery journey was benefitting so much from the program and tools. Once I felt confident in my own recovery, I noticed the pleasure I took in seeing new participants have a light-bulb moment.

I decided it was time for Poughkeepsie to have a meeting and completed the SMART Recovery Distance Training program. The training helped me view things from a different angle – that of listening to others and then help guide them to tools. It also furthered my knowledge of how to apply behavioral science and the tools to the particular needs and issues of participants.

I’m proud to have been the one to start the 1000<sup>th</sup> US meeting. As I anticipated, there is a demand for SMART meetings and the demand in Poughkeepsie is growing.

Katie McGovern is a volunteer facilitator in Brentwood, NY. One of three new meetings Katie is providing at the Charles K. Post Addiction Treatment Centre is the 2000<sup>th</sup> worldwide SMART Recovery meeting. Katie shares:

I had all but given up on recovery before I discovered SMART. I had tried other self-help programs over and over again and I just couldn't connect with them. Rehab wasn't an option so I thought I was hopeless. When I finally found out about SMART, I was reluctant to go to my first meeting in Syosset because I was so afraid that I'd be disappointed again and left with no options. But what I found was an amazing group of people and a program that really spoke to me. SMART not only helped me with my substance abuse problems, it also allowed me to take back control of my entire life. I knew I had to help other people find the program so I decided to take the training program and start my own meetings. I'm now helping the patients of Charles K. Post Recovery Center and hope to be facilitating an open meeting in the near future. I'm beyond thrilled to have started the 2,000<sup>th</sup> meeting worldwide and can't wait to see us grow in Brentwood and help more and more people.

### **SMART’s Global Reach Grows**

The program’s international reach continues to expand with meetings in countries as diverse as Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, India, Iran, Ireland, Kenya, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, the UK and Uzbekistan. Internationally, the United Kingdom hosts the most meetings with 547, followed by Australia at 150 and Canada at nearly 130. “In fact, people anywhere in the world can attend a meeting virtually 24/7 with 35 online meetings each week. All they need is a computer with an internet link and headset,” Allwood said.

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SMART Recovery® (Self-Management and Recovery Training) is a global, nonprofit organization that helps people overcome addictions through free mutual support group meetings in person and online. Each week, many thousands of people discuss recovery progress and challenges at More than 2,000 meetings in 15 countries, 35 online gatherings and 24/7 internet message board forums and chat rooms. Participants use SMART to assume responsibility for their own recovery and become empowered using its 4-Point Program®: building and maintaining motivation; coping with urges; managing thoughts, feelings and behaviors; and living a balanced life. Founded in 1994, the program uses science-based techniques that have proven to be effective in helping individuals abstain from addictions to substances and harmful behaviors.

## SMART Recovery® Backgrounder

**Founded in 1994** as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, SMART Recovery is a partnership between professionals and peers, people who have had addictions or family members with addictions. A majority of the Board members are peers. SMART is an abstinence-based program.

**Science-based**, the program uses the most current proven tools to overcome addictions, drawing from disciplines including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Motivational Enhancement Therapy.

**Self-empowerment and personal responsibility** form the program's foundation, reflected in the acronym SMART, which stands for Self-Management and Recovery Training.

**SMART does not encourage the use of labels**, such as alcoholic or addict, which can stigmatize and undermine recovery efforts. Related to this is the principle that people are not defined by their behavior. Someone with an addiction has a behavioral problem they can resolve. The problem is not who they are.

Upon this foundation is **SMART's 4-Point Program®**:

1. Building and maintaining motivation.
2. Coping with urges.
3. Managing thoughts, feelings and behaviors
4. Leading a balanced life.

These 4-Points do not prescribe specific measures to take, instead, they provide a framework that people can use to create a course of action tailored to their personal interests and needs.

**Trained facilitators lead SMART Recovery meetings**, which are free although participants are encouraged to make small donations to help cover costs.

**SMART meetings are highly interactive**, giving all participants an opportunity to talk about the progress of their recovery efforts and obstacles they encounter. Others can then suggest solutions that worked for them. We refer to this as cross-talk.

**Meetings are action-oriented**, positive and focus on the present and future. One distinction often heard at meetings: "People don't just learn about the program ... they *do* SMART Recovery."

### Examples of SMART Recovery Tools

**Cost Benefit Analysis** – This exercise motivates people to stop an addictive behavior by weighing the short-term benefits of, for example, abusing pain pills (feeling good, relaxed and happy for a short time) against the long-term harmful costs (ruined relationships, lost jobs, wasted money, ill health).

[www.smartrecovery.org/resources/library/Tools\\_and\\_Homework/Facilitators\\_Handout/CBA.pdf](http://www.smartrecovery.org/resources/library/Tools_and_Homework/Facilitators_Handout/CBA.pdf)

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**ABC** – Conceived by cognitive therapy pioneer Albert Ellis, this tool helps people identify the true and underlying beliefs (B), typically exaggerated or irrational, that lead harmful consequences (C) such as excessive drinking. The exercise begins by identifying the activating event (A) such as an experience that provokes anxiety, and then the consequence. On the surface, it appears that the A caused the C, while the underlying cause was the belief that only drinking or other addictive behavior could relieve the anxiety. The exercise progresses with disputing (D) the irrational belief (people addicted to alcohol cannot truly gain relief by drinking), and on to the effective belief (E) that anxiety can be relieved without drinking.

[www.smartrecovery.org/resources/library/Tools\\_and\\_Homework/Quick\\_Reference/abc\\_crashcourse.htm](http://www.smartrecovery.org/resources/library/Tools_and_Homework/Quick_Reference/abc_crashcourse.htm)

**Urge Log** – In the early stages of recovering from an addiction, people benefit by identifying all the events, sights, smells and settings that trigger urges and cravings to use. Keeping a daily log of these triggers helps people avoid using as they learn that urges are temporary and grow less intense the longer they abstain.

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