

# Addiction fighter nets big conference

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## GUELPH

Jason Kelly has a lot of reasons to be happy these days.

Just over a year ago, the addiction counsellor brought a rapidly expanding international network of self-help groups to Guelph.

He's now getting calls from people wanting to start LifeRing Secular Recovery groups in London, Oakville, Hamilton and elsewhere.

"We've been so well received," Kelly said recently. "It feels like the city was waiting for this."

And now, the network's California-based board of directors has chosen Guelph as the location for the 2005 LifeRing Congress.

"They haven't done one outside the

U.S. yet. It's going to be a big thing," Kelly said. "It's an exciting opportunity to have some famous experts in the area of addiction come to Guelph."

From April 29 to May 1, people from all over North America will take part in LifeRing's fifth annual conference, to be held at the University of Guelph.

"There's a vibrant and growing LifeRing community up there in Guelph," said Martin Nicolaus, the co-founder and chief executive officer of LifeRing. "And from everything we know about Guelph, it's an attractive place to hold meetings."

LifeRing was established about six years ago in California. There are now more than 100 groups across the U.S. as well as nine in Canada.

"There seems to be new groups coming up all the time," Nicolaus said. "And a lot of our people only meet each

other online, so this conference is a chance to meet face to face."

The conference will feature speakers Charlotte Kasl, a psychotherapist and author of *Many Roads, One Journey*, and Ronald Warner, a professor at the University of Toronto who will talk about "solution-focused therapy."

"My understanding is that it's a model of treatment that encourages the client to focus on the future and on the solution to the problem, as opposed to the past and the problem itself," Nicolaus said. "Charlotte Kasl's very well known. She's very exciting to listen to and she gets people quite motivated."

"She will probably be talking about the many different roads to recovery. There are a lot of different ways to get clean and sober and she will encourage people to be bold ... and do what works

well for them."

It's that message that prompted Nicolaus to establish LifeRing Secular Recovery in the first place.

"There was a need that many people had expressed for an additional path to recovery. Existing organizations worked well enough for some people but there were enough people who wanted a new choice. "We loved recovery, we loved sobriety and we wanted to create a new path to it."

LifeRing meetings are held Mondays at 8 p.m. at St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich St., and Thursdays at 7 p.m. at Chalmers United Church, 50 Quebec St. "We've really managed to get LifeRing off to a terrific start," Kelly said. "We're now looking forward to the next year."

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