



LifeRing Secular Recovery

A network of positive support groups for living free of alcohol and other drugs

Summer 2015

Newsletter

Hope for the future – On LifeRing's 2015 Annual Meeting

By Bobbi C.

So, here's the deal. Even though I've been involved with LifeRing since the very beginning of my sobriety in the fall of 2007, this is the first year I've attended its Annual Meeting and Congress. Not because I haven't wanted to go, but because, well, hanging out in enclosed spaces with a bunch of people I don't know has never been my forté.

So why go this year, then, as opposed to, say, never?

Some of it has to do with becoming LifeRing's "blog mistress", some of it this year's venue in beautiful Salt Lake City, Utah - not only does LifeRing have a fantastic presence there, but I also have family I hadn't seen in far too long there - and some of it the need for an extended road trip with my hubby and fellow sobriest Rich from our home in California through some of the Southwest's gorgeous canyonlands on our way to and from SLC.

But I digress. This is my take and report on the conference, and here's the real deal, Holyfield: Recovery in America is changing, my friends, and all for the better as far as I'm concerned.

Friday afternoon consisted of checking out the Meeting venue and greeting some of our fellow attendees. Mahala Kephart, LifeRing Board Member and one of the main reasons we have the presence in Salt Lake that we do, was this year's event planner and coordinator extraordinaire, and from the moment she greeted us as we walked in the door of the Marriott Library on the University of Utah's lovely campus, I knew it was going to be a great weekend.

The bulk of the meeting was held in the Gould Auditorium inside the Library, an open, airy, well-lit and yet still intimate-feeling space. The Friday afternoon Meet and Greet was a casual, low-key affair that actually made it a pleasure to meet some of our fellow attendees, many of whom like us had also traveled from afar, such as LifeRing Colorado's delightful Kathleen Gargan.

On Saturday morning we arrived in time to hear Kevin McCauley, M.D. from the Institute for Addiction Study speak about his personal experience as an addict as well as

his professional experience in becoming a part of the addiction treatment solution. It was heartening to hear a physician say that more needs to be and can be done to give addicts the best chances possible to get and stay clean, whether it be through using medication like naltrexone to quell drug receptors in the brain or by giving patients a choice in which recovery group to attend, such as LifeRing!

To say Dr. McCauley's talk was refreshing would be an understatement, particularly when what I'm used to hearing from pretty much every practitioner involved in the medical community is something akin to what Dr. Drew Pinsky - accepted as the medical "expert" in the field of addiction medicine - has to say about the necessity of the 12 Steps in recovery, without which "...recovery is not possible."

Next was a fascinating and informative talk given by Peter Gaumont, SAMHSA Recovery Branch Chief, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, about building and giving voice to an inclusive and engaged recovery community, including those involved in the "alternative" recovery movement such as LifeRing. He spoke about the significant changes needed to our current drug control policies, such as offering addicts treatment as opposed to mandating prison sentences.

Gaumont also spoke about newly acquired information, such as studies which showed the need for using different language when talking about addicts and addiction. A study they've recently done showed that when people are described as having a "substance use disorder" as opposed to being described as "substance abusers" or "drug addicts", the public's perception of them - and how they should be treated - was significantly altered. People with a disorder are deserving of and should be given various and sundry treatment. Substance abusers, however, should be thrown in the slammer for as long as it takes to get it through their thick skulls that they should just...say...no.

Très intéressant, no? He also touched on the fact that the U.S.'s new Drug Czar, Michael Botticelli, is himself a person in recovery as opposed to, say, your garden-variety governmental policy wonk.

The final speaker of the morning was our own Martin

Nicolaus, J.D., co-founder of LifeRing and author of its principal texts "Empowering Your Sober Self" and the subject of his talk, the "Recovery by Choice" workbook. His demonstration of the dichotomy between the "Addicted self" versus the "Sober self", and the role the workbook can play in helping one empower their Sober self was enlightening, entertaining, and informative. The talk was a privilege to listen to from the man himself!

Wild Geese, Quiet Mind – Mindfulness and Yoga in Recovery

By Mahala Kephart

For me, one of the surprises of the 2015 Annual Meeting was the session on *Mindfulness and Yoga in Recovery*, led by Lisa Mountain, PhD of Aspen Grove Counseling in Salt Lake City. I found myself really appreciating the focus on breathing (I was a flutist in a former life) and the kind of calm that enveloped me during the course of her guided meditation and exploration of body movement. What also surprised me was how mentally energetic (not frenetic, I hasten to add — energetic in the sense of alert) I felt afterward — a sentiment that was voiced by many I spoke with afterward.

LifeRing Utah now has two weekly recovery yoga sessions, led by one of our members, in addition to our roster of face-to-face meetings; we will report on those sessions in a future newsletter.

Meanwhile, here is the poem Lisa read to us during the meditation portion of her presentation. The poem was a lovely choice on its own, particularly well-suited to the audience and the day.

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile, the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver

from *Dream Work* (1986)

National Recovery Month - September

September is National Recovery month throughout the entire USA. State and local agencies are hosting recovery events in your area. There are tabling opportunities and chances to meet and greet throughout the month.

Please check with your local agencies to see if LifeRing may be represented at these events. If there is a Recovery Walk, put on your LifeRing T-shirt and walk.

If you need help finding local events, please contact me at byron@lifering.org.

-Byron Kerr, board chair

LifeRing online

LifeRing offers meetings in the United States, Canada, and other selected countries of the world. Go to our website <http://lifering.org/find-a-meeting> for a complete listing. If you cannot find a meeting close to you, LifeRing has a vibrant online community with online meetings, email lists, Ning, the Delphi Forum, and e-Pals – a service for one-to-one communication by email or personal letter. Go to our website www.lifering.org and explore your recovery options.

New Edition of “How Was Your Week” now available

The new edition of "How Was Your Week" is hot off the press. Amazon has it both as a printed edition and as a Kindle eBook. The new edition is the product of much hard work by Martin Nicolaus, the author. It has a good deal of new and revised content along with a new look and feel and price -- \$15 for the printed edition and \$9.99 for the eBook.

The growing demand for an abstinent recovery pathway free of the twelve-step model drives the growth of LifeRing support groups. This is a comprehensive handbook for people who are considering starting LifeRing in their community. It's also a useful reference for people already leading LifeRing meetings. *How Was Your Week* is based on thousands of hours of experience in face-to-face and online LifeRing meetings and includes the voices of dozens of experienced LifeRing group leaders (convenors).

This updated and expanded version of the first (2003) edition adds two more chapters, many more suggestions and hints, and a first-chapter summary for the reader in a hurry.

You can see the new cover and the Amazon page for the book at: [How Was Your Week: Bringing People Together in Recovery the LifeRing Way: Martin Nicolaus: 9780965942973: Amazon.com: Books](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0009780965942973)

Stories of Secular Recovery - Deadline for Submissions is drawing near: September 8

Hello All LifeRing Writers!

The deadline for your story of secular recovery is September 8, 2015. We have a small collection of wonderful stories to be published in LifeRing Press' new book, Stories of Secular Recovery, but we want your story too! We know that many of you are certainly putting the final touch on your story as we speak, so don't miss your chance to put your story in print!

LifeRing Press still wants your recovery story!

For those of you who work best under pressure, now is the time to get started...

Guidelines for stories here: <http://lifering.org/wp-content/uploads/ImportantDocs/Call-for-Submissions-and-Guidelines.pdf>

Recovery stories provide evidence that freedom from addiction is possible. In early 2016, LifeRing Secular Recovery plans to publish a collection of recovery stories that have been shaped by secular tools, practices, and concepts. If you are in recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, and your recovery is supported in a secular way, LifeRing Press wants to hear from you.

We hope our volume will represent many kinds of personal experiences and viewpoints with stories authored by a wide variety of individuals who are in recovery from alcohol or any other addictive drug. We seek stories from all members of the secular recovery community -- a community we know is filled with interesting people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances. We hope our volume will represent both a variety of secular recovery experiences and the diversity of the secular recovery community. And we hope our volume will provide both evidence and inspiration that it is, indeed, possible to achieve and maintain sobriety using secular tools, practices, and concepts.

While the traditional structure of conflict (the struggle between our addicted and sober selves), crisis and turning point (what made us decide to seek freedom from addiction), and resolution (living in recovery) fits most recovery stories, we also seek stories with innovative structures. In short, we want real stories of real recoveries, and encourage you to share your story, warts and all, with authenticity, passion, and a sense that your story has the possibility to change lives.

- What was it that finally made you decide to get clean and sober?
- Can you describe the kind of decision-making process you went through?
- What tools, practices, and concepts helped you achieve sobriety?
- Do you still use those same tools, or have they evolved or changed over time?
- What gives meaning to your life in recovery?

Whether you achieved sobriety on your own or through your participation in secular recovery organizations like LifeRing, SMART Recovery, AA Agnostica, or Women for Sobriety, your story of secular recovery is important. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please read our submission guidelines carefully, and feel free to contact us with any questions. Tel: 1.800.811.4142

To submit your work electronically, please email it to: service@lifering.com.

If you must submit your work by postal service, please mail it to:

LifeRing Service Center,
1440 Broadway, Suite 400, Oakland, CA 94612.

If you have questions about the volume, the submission guidelines, or submitting a story for publication, please email Kathleen at liferingcolorado@gmail.com.

Submission deadline: September 8, 2015.

-Kathleen Gargan

Dual Recovery Meeting

If you are experiencing mental health issues along with sobriety, then please join us in the Dual Recovery Chat Room on Thursdays at 6:00 pm PCT. We discuss a wide variety of topics such as: coping skills, relationships, and ways to deal with every day life. Tim S. is the convenor. He took over from Heather W. Hope to see you there!

Three new LifeRing meetings in U.K.

LifeRing is very pleased to announce the addition of two new meetings in the Greater London, UK borough of Bromley. Convenor Lee C. reports: "We have been trialling a meeting here in Bromley for the last couple of months and it has been very successful. Many of our attendees have been quick to realize the potential of the LifeRing ethos and it feels to many of us that the meeting has been going on a lot longer than it actually has, such is the bond that has been formed."

Here is the information for both meetings:
Saturdays at 5:00 pm, and Tuesdays at 8:00 pm at Bromley Drug and Alcohol Service, 35 London Road, Bromley, Greater London BR1 1DG

We are extremely pleased to announce the addition of yet another new meeting in the UK, in Dartford, Kent. A few months after Lee C. brought LifeRing to Bromley Drug and Alcohol service where he volunteers, he has now started a meeting in Dartford as well.

The meeting is Wednesdays at 1:00 pm at MCCH, Unit 2, Twisleton Ct, Priory Hill, Dartford, Kent DA1 2EN England

Contact for all 3 meetings: lifering.london.uk@gmail.com
We wish Lee and all meeting members our very best!

Giving Back

Late summer may not be a time when I think about philanthropic giving, but it is a time when I think about when I was first introduced to the idea of a secular alternative to traditional twelve-step programs (I was on a hike with friends in Boulder, Colorado).

August is a time when I reflect about how much my involvement with LifeRing has given me.

And so it's time when I think about giving back to LifeRing. I hope it's a time of year when you might, too.

Our active participation in meetings is one way we give life to LifeRing, of course. And for those of us who participate in local LifeRing governance, as regional representatives, as members of board committees, or as members of the board, we contribute additional time and effort to growing LifeRing.

But our financial contributions – gifts we make over the course of a year's time – also help to sustain and grow LifeRing in important ways. Gifts support the operation of the Service Center, website, and chat platforms; support new meeting development; and support development of new publications and outreach efforts.

Please consider making a personal gift to LifeRing in celebration of your own recovery ... in celebration of someone else's recovery ... in celebration of your friends and family ... or to honor the memory of someone special in your life. Or just because it seems like a good thing to do today.

Please visit <http://lifering.org/donate/> to make your gift on-line or to learn about the many ways in which you can support the important secular choice LifeRing brings to individuals in recovery.

Thank you!

- Mahala Kephart, board member

To make a monetary gift to LifeRing using a credit card, please visit our website www.lifering.org and click on the LifeRing Store. To make a gift by personal check, please mail it to: LifeRing Service Center, 1440 Broadway, Suite 400, Oakland, CA 94612-2023

Want to subscribe to the LifeRing Newsletter?

If you'd like to receive our newsletter by email, please send an email showing Subject: newsletter, with your name and email address to service@lifering.org.

Save the dates...
2016 LifeRing Annual Meeting
“Lasting Recovery”
June 3, 4, and 5 in San Diego, California



LifeRing Secular Recovery
1440 Broadway, Suite 400,
Oakland, CA 94612-2023
www.lifering.org
Questions? Call us toll-free at 800.811.4142
We are a non-profit corporation 501(c)(3)

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