



LifeRing Secular Recovery

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

Summer 2013

Newsletter

LifeRing has a new Board

LifeRing Secular Recovery would like to thank our outgoing board members Kathleen Gargan and Troy Spears for all their services on our board during the past years.

And it is with pleasure to announce our new board members as of July 14, 2013:

Mahala Kephart, Jeff Koch, Joe Mott and Tim Reith.

Mahala brings enormous energy, talent, and experience to the Board. Although trained as a musician, she has spent much of her career in direct marketing, board relations, and volunteer management. She serves as Chair of the Fundraising Committee and is also a key contributor to Strategic Planning, Website Content, and LifeRing Press. This is Mahala's first term as a Board member.

Jeff, trained as a physicist, convenes multiple online meetings and was instrumental in bringing voice chat capabilities to the online community. He serves as Chair of the Bylaws Committee and played a key role in bringing absentee voting to LifeRing. Jeff also serves as the co-moderator of the Ning social network. This is Jeff's first term as a Board member.

Joe is trained in both medicine and law and brings those skills to the LifeRing Board. His interests include the law as it relates to addiction treatment, providing awareness of secular alternatives for addiction recovery, and reaching out to members of particularly vulnerable minority populations. This is Joe's second term as a Board member.

Tim is also trained as a physicist and continues to work in the scientific community. He serves as Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and is active in LifeRing's ePal program. He also convenes two face-to-face meetings in Tucson. Serving as Secretary, this is Tim's second term as a Board member.

We are very pleased to welcome our new members Mahala and Jeff to the Board, and we are particularly grateful to Byron Kerr for his tireless efforts as the Registrar for the present election.

-The LifeRing Board of Directors

LifeRing Election 2013

by Byron Kerr

Congratulations to all of us!

2013 marks a huge milestone for us in our little representative democracy we call LifeRing. At the 2012 LifeRing Congress, a By-Laws Committee was appointed by the Board of Directors to address the issue of absentee voting. The active committee consisted of Jeffrey Koch as chair, Joseph Mott, Rebecca Joyce, and Byron Kerr.

Committees are quite often a place where ideas go to die. This committee actually took the idea of absentee voting seriously and carefully crafted a very important proposed change to LifeRing. Goals and deadlines were set and accomplished. Members took their tasks seriously. The "Absentee Voting" proposal was presented to the LifeRing Board of Directors in early 2013 and subsequently approved after some requested modification.

The "Absentee Voting" proposal was then approved by the LifeRing Congress in Denver on June 2, 2013. The proposal took effect immediately meaning that the election for the seating of the 2013 Board members would be conducted absentee. Delegates were registered and notified of all voting procedures and election processes.

Some hiccups were experienced in the election process that must be addressed. A significant number of delegates experienced difficulty with the ballot itself. Questions regarding the vote processing methods remain.

The method of vote tallying that was used was a form of ranked choice voting called Instant Runoff voting. This method asks voters to rank all candidates in order of preference and then processes all of the rankings multiple times in order to derive a majoritarian winner in each round of tallying. The Board chose to adopt a majoritarian system and in an absentee environment the single ballot Instant Runoff system made sense.

The delegates' votes were accumulated from June 4, 2013 through July 8, 2013. There were a total of 59 ballots

returned. Votes were tallied by the ED and the registrar using OpenSTV, a program specifically designed to manage ranked choice elections. Verification of the OpenSTV results was provided by the board secretary using a spreadsheet and some hours of manually redistributing votes within the spreadsheet. Results were verified by three separate and independent counts.

The level of participation this year was very, very, very exciting! There was almost a 500% increase in participation this year over last.

Again, we all deserve to congratulate ourselves on this enormous accomplishment. The new system worked well.

The all new Lifering Social Calendar and email list

by John C.

The other day I hosted a coffee klatch that immediately followed a Lifering meeting in Oakland, and I was compelled by the attendance and the email response. It became immediately apparent that social interactions beyond the f2f meetings and chats were greatly desired, and also that it had been tried before with varying amounts of success. I have to give credit where credit is due – The Other Program is just teeming with picnics, BBQs, mixers, dances, and other gatherings that include not only their members, but their friends and families as well.

So what could be done together? Here's a short list right off the top of my head:

Coffee, Breakfast, Brunch, Lunch, Dinner
Bike rides, Walks, Hikes, Camping
Amusement parks, Cooking, Reading club, ...

As you can see, the list could just go on and on. A nice way to put this forward is that any social gatherings we have might be dovetailed onto existing f2f Lifering meetings, if we wish. This would have several advantages: first, in anticipation of the social event, more people might be attracted to go to the f2f first. Second, since many f2f meetings happen in CDRP or clinical settings, it would be a great way to offer our social gatherings as a fun option, especially to anyone who doesn't know Lifering very well. Third, since the very nature of addiction is to rest in isolation, giving people a where/when to go and do something would be a wonderful addition to the recovery community as a whole.

Me at the last Lifering meeting at the Kaiser CDRP in Oakland: "We're meeting for coffee right after this up at Peet's, if you'd like to join us!" I like how this sounds – not more coffee in the lobby, nor more coffee at another meeting...but coffee in the big "out there". And what did we talk about over coffee? What's your name? Where do you live? What do you do when you're not in meetings? What do you drink (as far as coffee)? How did you first come into recovery/sobriety? How did you first hear of Lifering? Any

challenges to your sobriety right now? Should we do this again? Are there other things that we could do together? I mean seriously – I got to meet Craig Whalley in person! I've seen Craig's name all over Lifering for some years, and this is the first time we met face-to-face.

I am reminded that huge endings start with small beginnings. There will be a regular Saturday coffee klatch, the details of which I will post. For now, I need some input for all of you. I have published this note separately to LSRsafe, LSRmain, and LSRsocial; LSRsocial is an email distribution list, created and maintained by me. Some people are on one email list but not the others. LSRsocial may become another LSR yahoo email group, and may not. What I'm looking for is the best way to involve everyone and keep everyone posted on every list possible. Keeping this going is the key. I'd like to produce some momentum, and I want anyone to be able to offer a gathering wherever and whenever they want. Hike in the Oakland hills with Annie? Movies on Sunday? Cook dinner at the Goathouse? Coffee on Lakeshore? It can all be explored. Obviously some gatherings will be more successful than others. But this needn't be just a California thing. Coffee Klatch in Denver? Heck yes!

Again, I have sent this to three LifeRing lists. If you are subscribed to LSRmain and/or LSRsafe, you have probably not been added separately to LSRsocial. If you'd like to be added to LSRsocial, please email me directly at: goathouse@comcast.net.

I am eager to hear any and all feedback/questions/suggestions/concerns, and I will respond to everything sent to me. Thanks for your time, and I look forward to seeing you soon!

The LifeRing Annual Meeting A personal Account

by Craig Whalley

What follows is a highly personal account of my participation in the 2013 LifeRing Annual Meeting. It is not intended to be in any way official, especially since my memory of events is not particularly reliable, even after only a few days. And by "highly personal" I mean just that – it's a description of my quirky inner response to events as much as of the events themselves. The intent of the piece – besides allowing me to enjoy writing it – is to give some of the flavor of the event for those interested.

The Annual Meeting was in Denver from May 31 – June 2, 2013. I'm a retired gentleman of leisure, so I went a day early, allowing me to make the journey at a civilized hour. Robert Stump, LifeRing's Executive Director, and I met on a BART train in Oakland and traveled to San Francisco Airport. We both qualify to be described as "nervous travelers" and aimed to arrive at the airport two hours early, never quite sure what the line at the security checkpoint will look like. As it happened, the line looked chaotic, but moved fairly rapidly and we were at the airline gate with over an hour to wait. An extra hour at the gate is, for the

nervous traveler, far preferable to an extra hour at home, worrying about something going wrong in the journey to the airplane.

Our wait, however, was prolonged by a flight delay caused by winds in Denver. Still, we had our computers and I had a book (*The Accursed* by Joyce Carol Oates, a thick sort of gothic tale featuring a vampire) and we were fairly content except for worrying about our pre-arranged ride from the airport to Denver proper. A few phone calls took care of that problem.

We boarded the plane about an hour late and then sat there for another half hour or so before leaving the gate. Robert and I were seated separately and a 20-something woman graduate student from Toronto had the seat next to me. She was incredibly friendly, charming and talkative, and seemed genuinely interested in LifeRing and my own recovery story, which she drew out of me. We were joined on our row of seats by an equally charming 30-something PhD medical researcher returning to Denver from Australia. Always when I've flown there has been either no conversation or only the most rudimentary exchanges and suddenly I was totally engaged with two attractive and voluble women. A very good portent for the weekend!

We arrived in Denver a couple of hours late and were met by Mahala Kephart, a LifeRing convenor (and candidate for the board) who drove to Denver from Salt Lake City and was pressed into taxi service because our planned pickup person, Kathleen Gargan, was convening a regular Denver LifeRing meeting that began shortly after we actually arrived. Mahala drove us all to that meeting, which was still going on, and we were able to participate a bit and meet up with some other SF Bay area LifeRingers who had arrived before us. From there, Robert and I hitched a ride to the luxurious Econolodge Motel where we had booked rooms. We registered, dropped our stuff off and went looking for some dinner, joined by Njon Weinroth, a LifeRing Board member who was in a different hotel but joined us for dinner.

The Econolodge is located in a sort of garden spot in Denver, if "garden spots" include "seedy." The sidewalks were well populated by a diverse group of young men and a few women. This was Denver, so they tended to be friendly beneath a somewhat menacing exterior. After several blocks, the three of us found a diner and had a meal and a nice talk about things. I spend most of my recovery time online and find myself reveling in actual human contact and conversation, even though it triggers my social anxieties. There never seems to be a lack of things to talk about or someone to talk to with great openness and familiarity, even if you met them only minutes before. Our common bond of addiction knits us together closely. Back in 2001, at my first LifeRing Annual Meeting, I was scared to death at the thought of entering a room where I knew nobody except a couple of fellow online people who I'd never met in person. But even I, Mr. Anxiety, was relatively at ease

while surrounded by strangers whose most intimate secret I knew, and who knew mine.

We returned to our palatial rooms at the Econolodge and I tried to read a bit before sleeping, but all the light bulbs seemed to be about 3 watts (note to self: bring light bulbs when staying at Econolodge). So I turned it off and went to sleep (until about 3 a.m. when sleep became elusive).

The next day was Friday when the Annual Meeting activities began. We were joined at the fabulous Econolodge by LifeRing board member Tim Reith, whose flight was even more delayed than ours. He, being slightly less of a cheapskate, had rented a car so the three of us stuck together most of the weekend. I tried to always sit in the back so I could marvel at how efficiently Robert and Tim managed to get us lost using their Smart Phone navigation techniques. I commented that a folding map might have been nice, but was hooted down, at least until we passed the same spot for the third or fourth time.

Friday was devoted to discussions aimed squarely at the organizational structure of LifeRing. It's boring stuff for a lot of people and I was very pleased that about 30 people turned out, including all but two of the current board members and a number of local convenors. It's even more boring to read about structural questions ("improving communication between Convenors," for example) than to talk about them, so I'll pass over most of it. But any number of valuable ideas were expressed and discussed, including my desire to create a volunteer structure to entice more people into helping LifeRing grow and prosper. We talked for hours, fully engaged and with only a couple of breaks. Afterward, Tim, Robert and I went off for another exquisite dining adventure at Tom's Diner ("Open 24 hours!") near our motel. And once again we were not assaulted on our return. Denver is indeed a safe city!

Saturday was the main event of the Annual Meeting, a series of speakers headlined by Gabor Mate, author of several books including *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. He spoke at an auditorium, a former church, with about 200 people in attendance. The event was co-sponsored by LifeRing and the Love & Trauma Center of Denver. His talk was inspiring and very well received by the audience. At the center of his approach to addiction is a belief, backed by research, that substances are not, in and of themselves, addictive and, more controversially, that addiction is not directly related to any genetic predisposition. Instead, he said (echoing Dr. B.J. Davis, of Sacramento, who spoke at previous LifeRing Annual Meetings, addiction arises in persons who suffer from the effects of trauma, broadly defined. Particularly a lack of adequate nurturing as infants and children (and even during pregnancy) but also because of "issues" that stem from later life experiences, such as poverty, war, abuse, etc.). These experiences create a mental discomfort (depression, anxiety, etc.) which drugs and/or alcohol, efficiently (if temporarily and destructively) soothe.

Over time, the use of substances cause change in the brain chemistry that leaves the user dependent on the substance

for ever-more-needed relief from the symptoms of distress, which grow worse because of the substance abuse. Those who feel “normal” to start with may enjoy a feeling of exhilaration or relaxation or disinhibition that is enjoyable, but after which they return to a comfortable level of emotional well-being, or at least a non-distressed state. Addicts, however, return to their less-than-comfortable state and want very much to escape it again.

All this is what I took from the talk – others may have heard something different and Dr. Mate might vehemently object to my interpretation of his remarks.

Certain things follow from his analysis. One is the lack of anyone to blame – distress is passed down from generation to generation not by genetics, he said, but by “teaching” children or adults to respond to life in a way that mirrors the care-giver’s (or traumatizer’s) responses. There’s no point in blaming parents, who themselves are reflecting the nurturing, or lack of nurturing, given by their parents or life experiences. But, he said, it means that recovery, to be really effective, needs to include more than freedom from substance abuse. Real freedom comes only when those underlying issues are dealt with as best they can be.

For LifeRing, I think, his view is aligned closely with our approach in that we try to provide a safe, positive and supportive environment in which people can work to reconstruct their lives. We aren’t therapists and we mostly focus on the substance abuse, but we do provide a nurturing experience for our members, who are listened to and understood in ways that might be very rare in their lives. That was/is certainly true for me.

I hope that the video made of the talk turns out and will be made available on our website.

After Dr. Mate came a presentation by the director of the Love & Trauma Center. I have a confession to make: I’m a loyal member of LifeRing and Chairman of the Board; I attend the Annual Meetings and revel in the experience. But I tend to often resist talks and lectures. This is not a reflection on the speakers, but rather my own predilections. So I volunteered to man the table in the lobby to deal with late-comers and pretty much missed the rest of the program – sticking my head in the door for brief snatches and then retreating to the lobby.

There was a lunch break during which we wandered off the college campus where the Saturday talks took place, looking for food. We found lots of bars and, feeling safety in LifeRing numbers, some of us ate at a place with “martini” in its name. No martinis were consumed.

After lunch there was a presentation by Candice Shelby, a Denver professor and LifeRing supporter of long-standing. She spoke at a previous Denver Annual Meeting and I was very impressed by her presentation. So there was no excuse for me to remain in the lobby. But I did. Sorry, Candice! Tiredness may have been a factor – I slept poorly every night of the Annual Meeting, despite the warm, enfolding arms of the Econolodge experience, including live entertainment that morning provided by a large street

dweller carrying a young child and ranting incoherently and loudly something vivid but which I couldn’t understand. This was in the motel’s spacious cubbyhole provided for the free “continental” breakfast of coffee and various heavily processed carbs. Police were summoned, but he fled, still bellowing, before they arrived.

I should mention that the Econolodge staff (one person) did come to our rescue Friday night when we discovered we needed some printing done too late for the nearby Office Depot. The knowledgeable staff (a girl with braces who looked about 14) did offer to print things on the motel printer, although she didn’t have the sort of access that would allow us to transfer the file in question to the motel computer. Robert, a whiz at these things, figured out how to email the file to the young lady’s own email address where she could access it on the motel computer and then print it out. I suspect she handled her Middle School homework the same way. But I digress ...

There were also presentations by representatives of LifeRing, SMART Recovery and Women for Sobriety, each of which offers a secular path to recovery. This was a breakthrough, of sorts, in an effort to bring about cooperation between the three groups. What they said, although very welcome, may have been less important than the fact that they were sharing the stage. Last year’s Annual Meeting in San Francisco featured a presentation by SMART and this was an extension of that, in some ways.

Saturday night featured the annual LifeRing Banquet at a very nice French restaurant. I’m not really a banquet kind of guy, but the warm conversation and fine food was most enjoyable.

Sunday saw the LifeRing Congress part of the weekend – an exercise in governance featuring a variety of delegates from LifeRing meetings plus members of the board and assorted other guests. We adopted an important bylaw amendment allowing for absentee voting for future bylaw amendments and board elections starting this year. Until now, delegates to the LifeRing Congress had to be physically present in order to vote. Now, that requirement is gone, a major step forward for democracy. Candidates for the board were nominated and had a chance to briefly talk, although the actual voting would occur using the new absentee process.

There was considerable talk at the Congress about ideas for changing the ‘rules’ regarding meetings not totally aimed at dealing with substance abuse of the usual sort. In particular, some are bothered by a new LifeRing meeting in an Oakland treatment facility centered on smoking cessation among are usual ‘clientele’ of addicts. Many are concerned that this blurs the purpose of LifeRing. Others feel it’s a natural and desirable subject for attention. The delegates held a variety of views and there was no consensus detectable, so the matter was tabled and will be dealt with further after some effort to reach a shared understanding.

The Sunday session was held outdoors since there was a mix-up over the use of the meeting room – a Buddhist

meditation group was also claiming the room. There were some big, burly Buddhists, so we moved out into the adjoining park and enjoyed the Denver sunshine. It was actually a much nicer environment in my opinion, plus those Buddhists looked pretty tough.

After the Congress, the board of directors held a meeting as mandated by the bylaws. However, it went quickly since its main purpose was to elect new officers but it didn't seem wise to do that before the election results were available.

The end of the Congress was also the end of the Annual Meeting for the year. Kathleen Gargan, our retiring board member, organized things and with the help from other Denver volunteers did much of the work to bring it off. It went very smoothly and Kathleen deserves much credit.

So I'm typing this on the plane back from Denver to San Francisco and then home to Berkeley. My enthusiasm for LifeRing is once again renewed. We will continue to move forward, bringing help to more and more of our fellow addicts. LifeRing played – and plays -- a crucial role in my own recovery and I've seen it do so for many others. I'm so very proud of it, and of us. My 'report' may or may not give you a useful impression of the LifeRing Annual Meeting of 2013, but at least you know how one person felt about it.

New Study on Peer-Support

A group of researchers from Canada, led by Dr. Frederick Grouzet (Associate professor of Psychology at the University of Victoria) in collaboration with Tyler Carey (Graduate Student), are currently conducting a survey on peer-support groups for problematic alcohol use, called "Sober Together." They are inviting people (who are currently attending or have formerly attended peer-support groups) to complete a very brief online survey. The responses to the survey are kept confidential and analyzed anonymously. This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. If you are interested in helping them to better understand the role of peer-support groups in recovery from problematic alcohol use, please use the following information:

URL: <http://www.uvic.ca/wellbeing/sobertogether/>

Invitation Code: SOBER2DAY

LifeRing has reviewed this survey and we encourage everyone who has had experience with peer-support groups to complete the survey.

Secular Recovery Programs to be approved by Massachusetts Medical Officials

A small but nice step forward for secular recovery: <http://www.americanhumanist.org/news/details/2013-06-secular-recovery-programs-to-be-approved-by-massachu>

Talk. They Hear You.

SAMHSA's Underage Drinking Prevention Program has launched

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) has just launched a comprehensive new program that addresses the prevalence and dangers of underage alcohol consumption. The program may be presented to children as young as nine years old. It includes public service announcement video clips, a PSA radio announcement, customizable posters, talking points, and web banners.

To learn more about this program, click on the links:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/>

<http://www.samhsa.gov/underagedrinking/subpagea.aspx>

Volunteers needed!

We are always looking for volunteers. You don't have to live in California or be retired to join our fun group of volunteers. Many of us work full time and live elsewhere in the US and contribute our services online. In particular, we're looking for help with building a preferred provider list; reviewing our brochures; online support; and light data base maintenance. This can be done from your home or at the LifeRing Service Center in Oakland. Please call 1-800-811-4142 or email service@Lifering.org.

LifeRing News

New meeting started in San Jose, CA

The inaugural meeting of LifeRing Secular Recovery in San Jose, CA occurred on Friday, June 7 at 7:30PM. The meeting is at 1550 Meridian which is just north of Hamilton near the Willow Glen neighborhood. It is easily accessible from I280 or HWY17/I880. The location is CGS Lutheran church. <http://goo.gl/maps/AHJuf>

Everyone is welcome to come and help to get this new meeting established.

Pacifica F2F One Year Later

Scott H., convener of our Pacifica meeting, is happy to report that the month of May marked one year since he started our f2f in Pacifica. "Having spent the first few weeks alone in the room," he says, "I can say we now have a solid group of regulars. We've had some highs and lows, but I look forward to the middle of each week for our meeting.

The staff at the Pacifica Resource Center have been a huge support. One night, I had to apologize for the noise we made. The staff member I spoke to said, the applause and laughter coming from that room is always a joy to hear.”

The meeting is Wednesdays 6:00pm at the Pacifica Resource Center, 1809 Palmetto Ave, Pacifica, CA 94044.

When it comes to Sobriety, a Choice of Support

The following article was published July 3rd in the Secular News Daily of the Secular Coalition for America.

<http://www.secularnewsdaily.com/2013/07/when-it-comes-to-sobriety-a-choice-of-support/>.

LifeRing Canada

Dave McConnell, Convenor Coordinator LifeRing Canada, submitted these news from Victoria, BC:

Victoria now has meetings 7 days a week. Our newest meeting at Our Place in Victoria has had average attendance of 8-16 people! Also, Victoria is adding another meeting to its roster. On July 16th our first daytime meeting will start at noon at the Fernwood Community Centre.

LifeRing in Victoria now has 11 meetings and is gaining popularity. Victoria convenors were taken out to an appreciation dinner in the spring at the Med Grill.

LifeRing in Victoria has a booth at Recovery Day to be held in Centennial Square which is a popular national event. Also coming up is a LifeRing Appreciation BBQ in August for convenors, board members and others who have donated their time and efforts to LifeRing Canada.

<http://LifeRingCanada.org>

<http://facebook.com/LifeRingCanada>

<http://twitter.com/LifeRingCanada>

LifeRing in Copenhagen

“Seems that we have a regular blog space which will help promote LSR in Denmark”, reports Convenor Pernille F. Click here for the blog (in Danish):

<http://www.misbrugsportalen.dk/vi-har-brug-flere-faellesskaber-vaelge-imellem>

Meeting with focus on quitting smoking

The LifeRing board of directors voted 7-0 with one abstention at the May board meeting to “welcome” a new meeting at the Oakland Kaiser CDRP with its focus on quitting smoking. The discussion of the motion took note of the fact that the meeting was being offered primarily to those who already form our natural constituency -- alcohol and drug addicts -- at a treatment facility. It was compared to online groups that deal with physical and mental health issues among “traditional” addicts, and with f2f meetings

aimed at just women addicts or at gay addicts (comparisons that all admitted were not perfect).

Discussion of the larger question of how to treat smoking within LifeRing was put off for now. Board Chair Craig Whalley notes, “it would be fair to say that there is little or no support on the board to treat nicotine exactly like other drugs or for requiring smoking members to quit in order to qualify as “abstinent,” but there is at least some support for an approach to nicotine that recognizes it as a dangerous and addictive substance that should be dealt with in a way that benefits our members. The gap between “it’s not our problem” and “we should do something” is wide and divisive and will not be bridged easily.”

The meeting is on Fridays at 6:30 pm at Kaiser CDRP, 969 Broadway, Oakland, CA. The convenor is a veteran of LifeRing meetings and is a former smoker. Contact her at astarrlibet@yahoo.com

LifeRing Forum: A Place for Sober Conversation

by *MaryLouise*

When I was about a year and a half sober, a blogging friend suggested I take a look at a forum of LifeRing members on Delphi. I’d read a little on LifeRing and liked what I’d seen so I went off and was given a warm and relaxed welcome.

What struck me right away was the sobriety journals kept by LifeRing members who were now several years sober but who popped in from time to time to let us know they’d reached another sobriety milestone and to encourage us to keep going. This is how I met Jaime, Alceon and Gal online and I too began a sobriety journal and then started to interact with others on the forum. None of us were that keen on giving advice and we disagreed amicably on many aspects of the ‘how tos’ of getting sober but we all shared a definite commitment to sobriety and conversation. It delighted me to find we could talk about anything -- books, politics, health issues, secularity, theories about alcoholism, neuroscience research, relationships, recipes, rebuilding motorbikes, dog training methods. The Delphi forum is labyrinthine (and that’s putting it kindly) but we followed conversations about anything and everything back and forth across threads. Susan and some others spent a while putting the most useful or inspiring tips and conversational exchanges into a section called ‘Peeking in’. We posted links to reviews of Gabor Mate’s work and discussed it at length. We talked through chapters of *Sober Choice*.

The LifeRing forum is a place where I have been able to ask questions or challenge folksy cliches. The informality and open-ended conversations freed me from much of the moralizing or prescriptive attitudes that often limit other recovery forums. This has become my eclectic home and a cornerstone that has anchored my sober living. The conversations go on and anyone is welcome to join in. <http://forums.delphiforums.com/lifering/start>

Film Review

The Anonymous People: Changing the Addiction Conversation from Problems to Solutions

A full-length documentary film by Greg Williams
by Mahala Kephart

SYNOPSIS excerpted from information provided by the producer

The Anonymous People is a film about the over 2.5 million Americans who live in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addictions. Because of deeply entrenched social stigma, the voices and faces of individuals in recovery have been kept silent and hidden for decades.

The resulting vacuum of information has been filled with sensational descriptions of people with addiction that perpetuate a lurid fascination with the dysfunctional side of what is a preventable and treatable health condition.

Told through the passionate voices and faces of citizens, leaders, volunteers, corporate executives, public figures, and celebrities, *The Anonymous People* is about moving both our public and private conversations about addiction toward recovery-based solutions.

The Anonymous People celebrates recovery and aims to engage the recovery community in a grass-roots social justice movement that will help to shift public opinion and public policy toward recovery-based systems of care for individuals working to overcome addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

BRIEF REVIEW

I had the opportunity to view *The Anonymous People* in a preview screening held as a fundraiser for Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA) in early May. For me, seeing the film with my husband turned out to be a watershed moment: he finally "got" why I am so passionate about LifeRing's strength-based approach to recovery. I'm not sure I can give a film any higher recommendation than

that. We could quibble about some of the content, but I think that would be misguided. The important thing is starting different kinds of discussions about recovery. And that, *The Anonymous People* does with a plumb.

The film is scheduled for general release in late 2013. Note to convenors: this might be a really interesting opportunity for a different kind of meeting and discussion! We'll keep you posted on the release date.

Thanksgiving

Yup, it's July, but it's not too early (or too late) to think about thanksgiving.

Not the U.S. holiday traditionally celebrated at the end of the harvest season, but the kind of thanksgiving I do every day when I log onto the internet and connect with my virtual LifeRing recovery community. Or the kind of thanksgiving I do when someone new attends a LifeRing meeting here in Salt Lake ... and returns the following week, and the next, and the next.

Along with my husband, who is perhaps yet more thankful about the existence of LifeRing than anyone else I know (which is no small thing), I make small, regular financial contributions to LifeRing. This year, I will be encouraging my family to make gifts to LifeRing at the holiday season.

I hope you will join us in making gifts to LifeRing throughout the year, as your financial circumstances allow. Helping LifeRing to grow and prosper also depends upon gifts of time and talent, no matter your financial circumstances. In short, giving thanks doesn't have to be a monetary transaction.

Jump in! To volunteer your time and talent, contact the LifeRing Service Center at service@lifering.org.

With thanks,
Mahala Kephart,
Chair, Lifering Resource Development
Committeeutah@gmail.com

To make a monetary gift 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 312, Oakland, CA 94612-2023



LifeRing Secular Recovery
1440 Broadway, Suite 312,
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)

Executive Director: Robert Stump

Board Members:

Craig Whalley, Chairman

Dru Boyd, Mahala Kephart, Jeff Koch,

Joseph Mott, Tim Reith, Steve Snyder,

Njon Weinroth, Carola Ziermann