



# • The Meetup Issue •



Getting to Know Your Fellow LifeRingers

## **First Thing's First: Elections 2016 - We Have New BOD Chair and Members!**

Our annual Elections, conducted over the summer, have resulted in a newly reconfigured Board of Directors, including a new Board Chair and new members, and we're pleased to introduce all of them to you here.

### **Meet Njon Weinroth, New BOD Chair**

*Here's our interview with Njon, a longtime Bay Area LifeRinger who originally joined the BOD in 2014 and has served as Board Chair once before from 2014-2015. He also convenes 2 San Francisco meetings and is the founder of 4 meetings. He is also available for Bay Area speaking engagements.*

**LifeRing:** Njon, how long have you been in recovery (or recovered, depending on how you look at it), and how did you find LifeRing Secular Recovery?

**Njon Weinroth:** I was in a prolonged (and unsuccessful) 12-step style "recovery" for several years during and after high school. I've been back for the past 7.5 years.

I came across LifeRing via a referral from a counselor at my treatment facility. I was shocked to learn of the existence of other programs and jumped at the chance to try something different from the anticipated surrender to dogma and discomfort I had resigned myself to.

**LR:** What do you like best about LSR? What about it works for you?

**NW:** From my first meeting, what really got me excited about recovery with the support of LifeRing, was being treated like an adult. I do not respond well to being talked down to and I have issues with the concept of "surrender". My LifeRing family immediately made me feel both welcomed and valued. They let me vent and directly addressed my concerns with similar life experiences of theirs. It's definitely empowering to be encouraged to help others by sharing.

**LR:** Is it all or part of your personal recovery program? If not, what else do you do to maintain your recovery?

**NW:** In my first year of recovery, I attended a Freethinkers AA meeting in addition to a number of LifeRing meetings. Now, I just attend one LifeRing meeting weekly. I still find great value in attending and verbalizing things that I've been pondering throughout the week. It's extraordinarily helpful to me to say what I'm feeling aloud and to a receptive group.

I love it that our program is designed to help us reintegrate into the society of our choice instead of segregating us into a closed, "recovery community" as a lifestyle. I have chosen a few other volunteer initiatives that support my recovery but my daily interactions with those not in recovery are my biggest sources of motivation. I think of peer support meetings as training wheels for my outside interactions. They help me practice speaking from a fearless and honest place.

**LR: When did you decide that you wanted to dedicate a part of your life to volunteering for the organization?**

**NW:** I saw the need to grow the organization locally and started 3 meetings in my first year of recovery. I was then asked to serve as regional representative and then was appointed to the board at my 2-year anniversary. Serving as a voice for LifeRing in an oftentimes adversarial atmosphere has been a challenge but has forced me to up my game in my communications with addiction professionals and has also afforded me the opportunity to learn much more than I had expected about new innovations in the field as well as a newfound appreciation for some of the institutional knowledge that exists.

**LR: This is your second time at the BOD Chair helm - what do you enjoy about being a part of the governing body?**

**NW:** I love building administrative and support systems to help organizations scale and grow in sustainable and responsible ways. It's what I do in my professional life so I could not be more pleased to be able to provide guidance in this area for LifeRing. I have been accused of being against growth based upon my focus on operations and administration. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. I have witnessed first-hand what comes of rapid growth without the requisite infrastructure in place to manage the subsequent expansion. It usually results in collapse and in most cases, this collapse is fatal to the organization. I am definitely a proponent of growth, but not growth for growth's sake. I strongly believe that ours should continue to be the organic process we have succeeded with up to now. I would even suggest that this organic

growth will only be accelerated by having our ducks lined up on the administrative, operations, and compliance sides. Suffice it to say I'm really excited to see how things are moving forward now and can't wait to see what's in store for us next!

We have a really great group of volunteer board members and are taking strides to be more globally-focused in everything we do. I am proud to be collaborating with the board members, officers and committee members.

**LR: What are your hopes and plans for LifeRing over the next year? How do you feel about the greater recovery community, and LSR's place in it?**

**NW:** Visibility has been a really impactful theme that we've been encountering with increasing regularity. As LifeRing members, we are each seen as examples of our organization and its culture. There are numerous opportunities for us to be more visible to the general public and to the recovery industry. My hope for this year is to increase our brand recognition, both for LifeRing and for the concept of Secular Recovery.

In my experience, once recovery professionals hear of us and take a minute to listen to what it is that we do, there is generally an "aha moment" when the concept starts to make sense. Most people that have anything to do with substance addiction and recovery know someone that could benefit from using our philosophy.

**LR: Finally, is there anything you would like LifeRing members "out there" to know about you?**

**NW:** About me? Well, thanks to my sobriety, I've regained my love for cinema, food, fitness and literature. I've just started a blog on [Medium](#) where I discuss mostly addiction-related subjects. I'm branching out however with some other topics that I feel strongly about, in the moment.

It has been my extreme pleasure to have met LifeRing members from all over the world. I think what sets us apart is our ability to work toward self-empowerment via mutual support and positive reinforcement. Marty Nicolaus really encapsulated our culture in the title "Recovery by

Choice". This is the inspiration that I model my recovery after. Thanks to the membership!



Thanks to Njon and all of our BOD Members, past and present, for volunteering your time and effort towards helping LifeRing grow and thrive!



### And Since You're Already Here...Meet New BOD Members George Gidora, Harold Marquez, and Rob Mullally!

George Gidora lives in Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada. He has been involved with LifeRing since 2005 and started the first LifeRing meeting in Vancouver, BC. He currently convenes a closed meeting at the Pacifica Treatment Centre, and he is also the Vice President of LifeRing Canada.

George and his fellow LifeRingers participated in this year's Recovery Walk in B.C., and told us all about it! See details in our Recovery Month Events section below.



Harold Marquez lives in Sacramento, CA, and also serves as LifeRing's Sacramento Area Representative, and has started a couple of meetings in the Sacramento Area. He currently convenes a meeting for homeless veterans at the Veterans Resource Center in Sacramento.



Rob Mullally resides in San Diego, CA and has been instrumental in helping LifeRing grow there to now 6 weekly meetings.

Please visit [our website here](#) for more information about the amendments approved during the elections, as well.



## LifeRing's Recovery Month Events



September is National Recovery Month in the U.S, but LifeRingers on both sides of the Atlantic participated in recovery events in September.



Photos Courtesy of LifeRing Canada

### Here's George Gidora On Recovery Day, B.C.:

"The fourth annual Recovery Day Festival was held in New Westminister B.C. organized by the Recovery Day Society of B.C. Earlier this year the City Council of New Westminister had passed an official declaration of September 11 as 'Recovery Day' in the city. This cleared the way for the Society to organize a one-day street festival attracting over 4,000 people.

LifeRing Canada – Vancouver pitched in with an information table and display along with 30 or more other organizations, treatment facilities and supportive organizations. There was a line-up of excellent entertainment on the main stage headlined by a superb performance by Bif Naked and her band. There was a public 'sharing circle' and an open air speaker's corner where a variety of people spoke on current issues facing addiction recovery from a personal and professional perspective.

This festival is one of a number of Recovery Day celebrations held across Canada in the major cities. Most will be held closer to the actual September 30 date recognized across the country.

We met hundreds of people in recovery and for many it was the first time they had heard of LifeRing as an alternative approach to peer support recovery. Lots of material was handed out and a lot of discussions were held about alternative roads to recovery. We sold a number of books and handed out hundreds of leaflets. Particularly popular was a 'LifeRing' pendant and/or ring made by one our convenors, Rick. Handcrafted from stainless steel and parachute cord, we sold them for \$10.00\* with ½ going to LifeRing. Another of our members made orange and white beaded bracelets which were also sold.

It was a wonderful and inspiring day."

\*Pendants are still available! If you'd like to purchase one, e-mail us at [bcampbell@lifering.org](mailto:bcampbell@lifering.org) and we'll get you in touch with Rick!

#### Walk4 10k for Refuge in London, England



LIFERING LONDON'S LEE C. TOOK TO THE STREETS OF HIS BEAUTIFUL CITY IN WALK4 10K FOR REFUGE, A UK CHARITY, IN LONDON ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2016

Photos Courtesy of [LifeRing London's Facebook page](#).

#### Break The Cycle of Addiction Recovery Mile

Lisa Swing-Corney and her LifeRing Akron team walked in the first annual Break the Cycle of Addiction Recovery Mile in Akron on September 30th. Pics of the event are available on [LifeRing Akron's Twitter feed](#).

For more information, and to donate to Lisa's team, please visit their [team event page at firstgiving.com](#).

Did you or your LifeRing group participate in any Recovery Month events? Tell us about it! We love seeing and sharing your stories, so please e-mail Bobbi at [bcampbell@lifering.org](mailto:bcampbell@lifering.org) and let her know.



#### New Meetings News

We're pleased to tell you that several new meetings\* have been started over the summer, and we hope there's one on the list close to you! Here are all the details:

- Wednesdays at 7:30pm at Unity Center 8999 Activity Road in Mira Mesa, San Diego, CA
- Mondays at 7:00pm at St Timothy's Episcopal Church, 10125 Azuaga Street in Rancho Penasquitos, San Diego, CA
- Tuesdays at 6:00 PM in Wilton, CT. Please visit [LifeRing Connecticut's website](#) for more information.
- Wednesdays at 7:00 PM in Richmond, CA. Please see [our blog post about it here](#) for more information.
- Wednesdays at 6:15 PM in Grand Rapids, MI. Please [see our blog post about it here](#) for more information.
- Thursdays at 7:00 PM (beginning Nov. 3rd) in Burnaby, BC, Canada. Please see [LifeRing Canada's website](#) for more information.
- Fridays at 8:00 PM in Surrey, BC, Canada. Please see [LifeRing Canada's website](#) for more information.
- Per Denis P./LifeRing Canada, "We have several new meetings in the Vancouver /Lower Mainland area, both closed and open. Exciting times as we grow!" Please

see [LifeRing Canada's Website](#) for more information.

\*As of this edition's published date.

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Is there a new meeting going on out there somewhere we haven't listed here? Please, let us know! Send an e-mail to [service@lifering.org](mailto:service@lifering.org) so we can make sure we get the information out to everyone far and wide!



## Meetups, LifeRing Style

Interested in going to or starting a LifeRing meeting but don't have one anywhere near you, don't know any other like-minded individuals, and don't want to go it alone?

We understand! And the least we can do is try to help you facilitate potential LifeRing "meet ups", where you let us know you're out there, and if someone else in your general vicinity also makes themselves known, kaboom! You've got yourself the makings of a meeting!

We'll even advertise on our Facebook page and blog in hopes others in your area will see it! So please, send us an e-mail at [bcampbell@lifering.org](mailto:bcampbell@lifering.org) and we'll do what we can to help you connect your Sober Selves!



## Meet a LifeRing Sobriest

"Sobriest" is a term LifeRing e-mail list members coined years ago to describe someone who's dedicated to their Sobriety Priority (DDOUNMW – Don't Drink or Use No Matter What!).

LifeRing has always encouraged people to empower their Sober Selves by using our support systems along with developing a PRP (Personal Recovery Program) that works for them. Lots of LifeRingers have done just that, and we'd like you to meet some of them!

So, here's our interview with sobriest Dennis Meeks

### Meet Sobriest Dennis Meeks:

**LifeRing:** Hi Dennis, and thanks for doing this! How long have you been in recovery (or recovered, depending on how you look at it)?

**Dennis Meeks:** My sobriety date is June 29th 2013, with one 9-day relapse in January or February of 2015. I had 23 years with no alcohol at one point, but opioids have always been a weakness and I started using them regularly after a surgery sometime in the late 1990s. That opened the door to alcohol again after the prescriptions became impossible to get. My days were planned around that drug, when to take them, how many to take, how many I had left, how to get more, etc. Finally, like a wet carp slapping me across the face, it occurred to me I could buy alcohol without a prescription. I jumped in with both feet, after a half-hearted attempt at controlled drinking. "Controlled drinking", now there is an oxymoron for the ages. I don't know what normal drinking is. I always drank to get drunk, that is the point, right?

**LR:** When/How did you find out about LifeRing Secular Recovery? Have you used it exclusively as, or as part of, your personal recovery plan?

**DM:** I found LifeRing by dumb luck. I had to do something, I was on the crazy-go-round of relapse, each drunk worse than the last. This went on for almost 3 years, if memory serves. I

was killing myself, an idea, which at the time, did not seem like such a bad thing to do. I was being completely selfish, as I am wont to do when in the throes of a binge. AA was the only recovery model in Memphis, so I started perusing the internet. I think I Googled "secular alcohol recovery" or something similar and stumbled across LR. Not real sure of the accuracy of the chronology here, but his led to ordering the book, "Empowering Your Sober Self", which I read for the first time while still drinking.

Quitting always seemed easier when I was drinking and it was a distant goal, something to hope for. Discovered hope is not a strategy. Actually quitting is hard. I got in touch with Craig, I don't remember the details exactly, he found me an ePal in Tim R. and I got sober for a few months. Both were generous with their time and very patient. Then back on the booze, I don't know why. Then when both my wife and daughter stopped talking to me and my job was in jeopardy, I quit for good (minus the nearly terminal 9-day bender early last year, which, coincidentally, also followed surgery and started in earnest once the drugs ran out). I have been sober since.

The support I have received here at LR, all online, has been paramount in my recovery. My self-confidence was almost non-existent, and I found I had relevance here. I could identify with people at LSR Safe, they supported me and I them. Positive quid pro quo, non-judgmental, secular support. It may not be a panacea, but it has helped me climb out and stay out of the black hole of active addiction.

**LR:** What part of LifeRing works best for you, or what do you like best about it and why?

**DM:** As I mentioned, all my interface with LR has been online. There are no f2f meetings here. So, I have been a member of LSR Safe since the beginning and recently also of Sober Living. At first I was disappointed that there were no f2f meetings, but actually this has worked out well. I don't like groups, I am shy and a bit clumsy at small talk, so the fact that I don't have to show up somewhere and go through the motions has turned out quite nice.

The people I have met online are as supportive as

any I have ever known, seriously. I have done my time in AA, and I always left a meeting wanting a drink more than before I walked in the door. I don't say that to chastise AA or its members, as I am the first to admit it has helped many, some of the folks right here have benefited from AA. It just wasn't a match for me.

So, what do I like best about LR? It's secular philosophy and its support system. Why? Because it works for me. Also, and I would be remiss not to mention, that I have, in my mind anyway, developed some friendships off list. A serendipitous result that I did not fully expect.

**LR:** What's your life in recovery like/how do you maintain your sobriety these days?

**DM:** Life is good most days. I no longer have cravings or spend my days thinking about the next drink or drug. That said, it's life and life is always full of ups and downs. Some days suck. No one, no matter how much sobriety or money or love or self-assurance one has, can be spared the whims and vagaries of living in this world. I believe this is my life to live, but I don't try to fool myself either; there are things that will happen over which I have no control. So be it. I won't drink or drug over it. Wasted enough time doing that. Today I try to live in FLM (full live mode), as [my friend] Richard appropriately calls it. I remain an active participant at LR online, I have a wife and daughter whom I love, and I even like me these days. I maintain my sobriety by working, running and being as active as I can, taking care of my responsibilities and trying to squeeze all the goodness from this life that I can. I am sober, but I am still human and I make lots of mistakes. But so what...being wrong is not the worst thing one can be. Not trying, maybe.

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*Are you a Sobriest, too? We'd love to hear your story – e-mail the Editor at [bcampbell@lifering.org](mailto:bcampbell@lifering.org) if you'd like to share it.*

*FYI: LSR Safe and Sober Living are both LifeRing e-mail groups. If you're interested in learning more, please see [the Online Meetings section of our website](#).*



## Social Media Update: The Haps

There's a new Facebook page up and running that some of our international 'Ringers will especially appreciate, LifeRing Europe, which most helpfully lists all the meetings taking place all around the continent on a daily basis.

Check it out and "Like" it at [LifeRing Europe/Facebook](#).



## A Call to Action: Helping Fellow Addicts in Need

Here's BOD member and LifeRing Jack-of-all-Trader Craig Whalley on what's what:

"The LifeRing Service Center in Oakland, CA, has been receiving a steadily increasing number of inquiries from inmates at correctional facilities in various states. Usually, the writers ask for informational materials, which we're happy to provide. But increasingly, the inmate asks for a pen-pal (forgive the pun), or jumps at the chance if the idea is offered.

LifeRing has an ePal program which links newcomers who ask for it with one of our volunteers to provide one-to-one e-mail support, information, and friendship. Writing an inmate using snail-mail has some significant differences from the ePal program and we're working on procedures. We're looking for volunteers both to act as a pen-pal and to help organize the program.

Two long-time LifeRing members should be mentioned in this context: Tim R. has been engaged in writing to inmates for many years now, and Jackie P. has worked tirelessly to reach out to inmates at Albion Women's Correction Facility in New York State. We know it makes a difference for the inmates (a huge percentage of all inmates are addicts) and it can help LifeRing as well by broadening our outreach to a part of the population we haven't previously targeted.

If you wish to help with the LifeRing Pen-Pal Program, either as a volunteer or an organizer, send a note to Craig at [cswhalley@lifering.org](mailto:cswhalley@lifering.org)."



## A Call to Action, Part Deux: Helping LifeRing!



The holidays are just around the corner, and you know what that means! Endless requests for holiday-slash-end-of-the-year donations from all of your favorite charities and other non-profit organizations, who rely on your money to continue operating, will inundate you via mail, e-mail, ringing doorbells, flyers stuck under the windshield wipers of your car, Salvation Army jinglers, singing children, and sad-eyed puppies. You name it, you'll see it – and they're all worthy causes.

What is a person to do?

Did you know that LifeRing is also a non-profit organization which also relies, in no small part, on donations to continue operating?

Well, we are! And did you know there's a really *easy* way for you to donate a just few extra cents here and a fraction of a few cents there to us? Via Amazon?

That's right, Amazon!

In all seriousness, though. You do know that Amazon will let you donate a fraction of the proceeds from your purchases of everything on their site, all the time, at no cost to you, via a special web page called Amazon Smile, right?

Indeed, you can have money donated to any of your favorite charitable organization without hardly even noticing (kinda like when you have your 401k contribution automatically deducted

from your paycheck every month), and we're hoping you'll choose LifeRing as your Amazon Smile organization of choice.

Please see the [Amazon Smile page](#) to learn more about it, and to make it *even easier*, please see [the following information about plug-ins](#) you can put on your web browser or setting on your device which will automatically take you directly to Amazon Smile whenever you need to shop!



### Addressing Mistakes in Our Last Issue!

Last but not least, we want to thank everyone who took the time to let us know where/when you found incorrect information in our last issue - we really do appreciate it!

In the future, we'll send out corrections appended to the original edition. For now, here is the correct, up-to-date information we've received.

#### Face-to-Face Meetings Info.

We incorrectly listed Massachusetts as having a meeting; there isn't one at this time.

We left out that there are new meetings in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, and West Virginia. Additionally, Michigan has meetings in 3 different cities, and Pennsylvania and Washington each have meetings in two different cities.

For more information about all of our Face-to-Face Meetings, please visit [the Meetings tab on our website](#).

#### Regional Representatives

We incorrectly named Lisa Swing-Corney as our Northeast U.S. Regional Representative, when in fact it is Cindy Kemp. Lisa is our Central U.S. Regional Representative.

For more information about all of our Regional Representatives, please visit the Convenors section of the [For Members tab on our website](#).

#### Michigan Meetings Expansion

We stated that Tom M., recovery advocate via Multiple Pathways of Recovery and LifeRing meeting convenor in Petoskey, MI, had been solely responsible for our possible expansion throughout the state. However, Kevin at Recovery Allies of Michigan is the person responsible for obtaining grants which might help get several new meetings going throughout the state.

We regret the errors.



### And Finally...What Are We Missing?

After reading this edition...

Is something incorrect?

Is there anything we left out?

Do you have any thoughts, information, stories or ideas about what you'd like to see in future issues?

For the love of Pete, please let us know!  
E-mail the Editor at:  
[bcampbell@lifering.org](mailto:bcampbell@lifering.org)



You can find a Printer-friendly copy of this Newsletter [here on our website](#).

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