

Minutes of the 2014 LifeRing Annual Meeting and Congress: Santa Rosa, California

May 30 – June 1

Day One: The Arlene Francis Center

[Secretary's Note: There is a blog posting on LifeRing.org written by Bobbi Hildebrand Campbell that supplements these Minutes – or perhaps the other way around ;)]

The meeting began at about 4 PM. After greetings and registration, an informal get-together and discussion was occurred, followed by a dinner break. The rest of the evening was dedicated to a Convenor Workshop that focused on growth and opportunities. About 25 people were in attendance. Some of the topics covered included a discussion of the Opening Statement, co-convening, and an expansion of our FAQs; we receive many questions, some of which are not directly addressed there. Mahala commented that she and Byron have updated the “It’s Your Right” Brochure and that it has been distributed by PDF. Further elaboration of this choice-related topic was given during John Heller’s presentation on Day 2.

Day Two: The Glaser Center

Following registration and greetings, Day Two consisted of several presentations by persons working in the fields of substance abuse recovery and treatments for such.

Opening:

Byron Kerr began the day with a very moving tribute to David DeNeef, recently deceased, who contributed significantly to the overall growth and vitality of LifeRing in the Sonoma County area.

Dee Dee Stout: Harm Reduction – Drug and Trauma Therapies

Dee Dee acknowledged that this topic is controversial for many LifeRing persons. It was emphasized, however, that these concepts apply to many things including, but not exclusive to, issues related to addiction treatment. Other issues might include more healthful diets, exercise, and stress.

Brad L: SMART Recovery Overview

Brad began his presentation with a review of SMART Recovery's Four-Point Program:

- 1: Building and Maintaining Motivation
- 2: Coping with Urges
- 3: Managing Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors
- 4: Living a Balanced Life

He described their Facilitators Training Program which consists of 30 hours of training with periodic updates.

A short discussion centered on the large number of closed meetings, as identified on SMART's "meetings" pages on their website, and the fact that this number is increasing. Privacy rules are the main driving force for this.

There was an acknowledgement of the common goals of LifeRing and SMART Recovery, and interest was expressed by Brad to promote more interaction between the two organizations. It was noted that SMART Recovery is open to all addictions. Brad also commented that "Moderation Management" has not worked well for them. LifeRing is open to participation of other secular recovery programs and the hope was expressed that this can be accomplished in the future.

--- Lunch Break ---

John Heller, JD: Choice of Recovery Programs

John described the "Hazle v. Crofoot" litigation in some detail for which he was the attorney for the plaintiff, Barry Hazle, Jr. As with several earlier litigations, the present one was also ruled in favor the plaintiff, continuing to establish one's constitutional right for choice between religious and secular treatment programs. The courage of Mr. Hazle, in insisting on the choice of a secular recovery program was emphasized, particularly when taken in the light of his 100-day imprisonment for this choice. Mr. Hazle was present in the audience during this part of the discussion and his courage was acknowledged by enthusiastic and sustained applause. The issue of his compensation was discussed. This litigation, although one of several confined to within the Ninth District Court, has influence in areas outside its jurisdiction, as least with respect to trends. "My beliefs have nothing to do with others' beliefs" was emphasized as a key concept in such litigations. The applicability of this ruling to non-criminal cases was briefly touched upon; clear answers are needed.

At the conclusion of John's presentation there was a discussion of the revised version of the "It's Your Right" Brochure recently prepared and distributed by Mahala in PDF form.

Lee and Thompson Hamilton: LifeRing and 12-Step Programs at Mountain Vista Farm, Glen Ellen, CA

Lee and Thompson focused on the complementary nature of LifeRing and 12-Step programs; they saw no reason why either needs to be taken in isolation. LifeRing now has an equal footing with 12-step treatment programs at Mountain Vista. Clients are given the choice of one or the other (or both). It's believed that Mountain Vista Farm may be the first addiction facility to offer LifeRing and 12-Step programs on a completely open and equal status. The exceptional positive recognition of LifeRing by Lee and Thompson was particularly notable and greatly appreciated by all present. Matching the treatment method to the clients' needs was emphasized.

Candice Shelby, PhD, Associate Professor of Philosophy, The University of Colorado, Denver: The Role of Genetic Encoding in Addiction

Dr. Shelby has become a "regular" at our Annual Meetings and once again, her attendance and presentation were greeted with much interest and enthusiasm.

Her thesis was that addiction is not a single thing, *per-se*, but rather consists of a family of complex dynamics that take many forms; considering addiction in terms of a "disease" that needs to be "cured" is an outdated viewpoint based upon 19th Century models of medicine. In recognition of this hypothesis, more complex treatment protocols will evolve.

She stressed the important role that "meanings" play in the addicted person's perception. She enumerated the several criteria that constitute the definition of addiction used by professionals in the field, and the fact that these criteria are all based on what the addicted person's use or activity is encoded to mean to her or him.

The complete text of Dr. Shelby's presentation is posted on the lifering.org website. Her related presentation given at last year's Annual Meeting is also posted there.

Wayne Thurston, PsyD, Olympia House: Treatments and Client Needs

Dr. Thurston emphasized the importance of matching treatment protocols to the particular needs of the person. Accordingly, Olympia House offers traditional 12-Step programs but recognizes the need for secular alternatives such as LifeRing and SMART Recovery; treatments are "evidence-based."

Several colleagues of Dr. Thurston also presented information based on their various fields of expertise. Included were discussions on the psychology of addiction and the

crucial role that brain chemistry plays in the determination of treatment protocol. For example, the contrasts between the effects serotonin and dopamine on the brain were discussed, leading to several interesting one-on-one discussions after the formal presentation.

Meenaskhi Subbaraman, PhD: Alcohol Research Group (ARG) Survey

Dr. Subbaraman presented the statistical results of a recent ARG survey. The survey consisted of participation of about 4000 participants. Although there were several hundred responses from LifeRing persons, no firm statistical results could be made relating such responses to the overall larger sample size.

Adjournment

The day concluded with the traditional LifeRing Annual Meeting Banquet at which several “LifeRing Pioneer Awards” were presented.

Day Three: The Arlene Francis Center

2013 LifeRing Congress: General Meeting

Board Candidates Nominations

Originally six persons expressed interest in running for four open seats on the Board this year. In alphabetical order they were:

- **Martin Baker**
- **Darrell Borland**
- **Dan Carrigan**
- **Byron Kerr**
- **Emily Marcus**
- **Njon Weinroth**

Subsequent to the nomination process, Darrell Borland and Martin Baker withdrew their names, leaving four candidates running for four seats. Since one of the four seats will be for a two-year term (completing the two remaining years of a present board member who chose to resign). The fourth-place finisher will be awarded the two-year term. After

brief introductory statements by the four remaining candidates, it was individually moved, seconded, and unanimously carried that each of them be nominated.

Voting will be conducted using the same majoritarian protocol as last year, including instant runoff. The place order of the four candidates will be determined by computer. The Board Secretary, will officially verify the results.

The distribution and reception of all ballots will follow the time schedule used last year.

Bylaw Changes

None

Directives to the Board

None

The General Congress concluded with individual reports from a number of Convenors with most geographical meeting locations in the Greater Bay Area, although reports from other locations such as Denver, Seattle, and Tucson were also informally presented.

General Meeting and Congress Adjournment