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No Chapter Meetings during the summer

Join us at the Free-thought Picnics

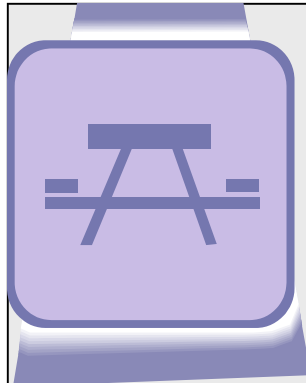
August 16

Noon to 3:00 p.m.

Columbia Park

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations and faith.



This summer, join us at the Free-thought Picnics!

Final Picnic is Sunday, August 16

(hosted by MN Atheists)

Lots of friendly people.
 A play area for the kids.
 Lively discussions for the adults.
 Bring games, instruments etc.

Bring some picnic food to share. The shelter area has electricity, sink and electric hot plate. (Don't forget to bring your own beverage, plate and utensils. BYO stuff!)

COLUMBIA PARK is located in northeast Minneapolis.

- ▶ Take Central Ave NE (MN Hwy. 65) to Columbia Pkwy. (Between 36th Ave. and 37th Ave.)
- ▶ Turn west onto Columbia Pkwy.
- ▶ Proceed along Columbia Pkwy. (0.35 miles).
- ▶ After you go under the railroad bridge, you will see the park on your left.
- ▶ Take the first left onto the service road (you will see a sign for "800 Columbia Blvd."). Proceed to the second parking lot on your left (0.2 miles). (You should see us by the shelter on the hill!)

PRESIDENT'S

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2009 is looking like a bit of a milestone year for the free thought movement. In late 2008 the American Humanist Association made waves with their "Be good for goodness sake" bus campaign in Washington DC. Prior to that, the AHA wasn't even on anyone's radar screen. With the books of the "four horsemen" i.e. Dawkins, Bennett, Hitchens and Harris, selling well, the free thought movement is getting more attention.

Camp Quest 2009, which was the last week in July here in Minnesota, had another successful year. I also want to thank those of you who contributed to our fundraising drive for Camp Quest ... our support is an important component to their success. (See

Page 7—Ed.) However my main reason for writing about this subject is that Camp Quest is apparently controversial as well. Dr. Albert Mohler, of the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote on his blog: "At a deeper level, the existence of this camp in Great Britain and its sister camps in the United States indicates something of the intellectual insecurity of contemporary atheism and agnosticism. The effort to create a religion-free zone for summer camp makes for an interesting news story in the media, but it is not likely to draw the masses." So somehow, just having summer camps indicates that we freethinkers are insecure in our "beliefs" and not doing what everyone else is doing with summer camp, which is teaching our young the important concepts of our philosophy.

I remember going to Vacation Bible camp, as well as Boy Scout camp and different summer events for 4H. Of the three, VBC was the least enjoyable of them, as I was very happy to "age off" them. As one of the Camp Quest speakers, I find it to be a very important endeavor for our community. Up to this point, we as an organized movement, did not have much in terms of ways to educate the young on the knowledge, skills and history of our community. Camp Quest is a step forward. The program has grown from its inception. Last year, they had to turn away attendees for space, this year the camp facility they rent has expanded the cabin space to allow

(President, *Continued on page 4*)

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Humanists of Minnesota is a nonprofit educational corporation and has been granted a 501(c)(3) tax exemption as an educational, scientific and charitable organization. Donations to Humanists of Minnesota are tax deductible. HofM is a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) and an affiliate of the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH). Address inquiries to the Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997, or call (651) 335-3800.

E-mail us at president@humanistsofminn.org or visit our web site: www.humanistsofminn.org

Announcements

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Richard Dick Memorial Happy Hours, Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. Call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918.

1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:00 p.m., Freethought Toastmasters Club, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul. Call George Kane, (651) 488-8225.

1st Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-noon, Lake Superior Freethinkers monthly meeting. Radisson Hotel Duluth, Viking Room. For information contact Bill van Druen, (218) 724-4176).

2nd Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, Critical Thinking Club St. Paul, Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94. Contact George Kane, lhutt@comcast.net. (\$10 brunch, \$3 coffee/speaker only)

2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Happy Hour South, Davanni's, 66th St. & Penn Ave. S., Richfield. Call Bob/Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

2nd Thursday, evening, Rochester Area Freethinkers. Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Bill Kass, wjkhak@charter.net or (507) 259-4237.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., Freethought Lunch, Dragon House, 3950 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-4273.

4th Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, West Metro Critical Thinking Club, Ridge Point Apts. Bldg. meeting room, Minnetonka. Contact Mark Paquette at think-rsvp@markpaquette.com. (contributions accepted)

Sunday Brunch, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Q Cumbers Restaurant, 7465 France Ave S., Edina.

OTHER EVENTS

2nd Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Board of Directors meeting. Open to all members. Contact Scott Lohman.

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH) general meeting. 3rd floor Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Contact cash@cashumn.org.

"Humanist Perspectives," a weekly program produced by the Council for Secular Humanism, airs at **8:30 p.m. Wednesdays** on MTN Channel 16.



Scott Lohman interviews Eva Curland for Cable Show: "Humanism, Anthropology and Drama" (soon to appear as a podcast!)

Is your Membership Up to Date?

If you are receiving a paper copy of this newsletter, check your address label for the expiration date on your subscription. Please renew when due, using the form on the back!

"Humanist Views," the TV interview program produced by Humanists of Minnesota, could be showing on your local cable channel! "Humanist Views" is currently showing in:

Minneapolis Channel 17 9:30 p.m. Fridays

Arden Hills	}	Channel 98
Falcon Heights		7:00 p.m. Sundays
Lauderdale		3:00 a.m. Mondays
Little Canada		11:00 a.m. Mondays
Mounds View		
New Brighton		
North Oaks		
Roseville		

St Louis Park Channel 16 TWTh 12:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 4:00 p.m.

If you would like to help distribute "Humanist Views" to your local public access cable channel, contact Scott Lohman.



Notes from The First Amendment Watchdogs 6/30/09

by Bob Schmitz

1. MNA and H of MN: We discussed our relationship to these organizations and respecting the constraints of their 501(c)(3) status. Rather than describing the Watchdogs as an affiliate group August recommended that we refer to the Watchdogs as an advisory group, which was agreed upon by all present. It was also recommended that we continue to announce our meetings in AWE. Use of the Meetup announcement may or may not be continued.

2. Atheist Alliance International: August reported on his recent tour for AAI. He experienced vibrant Atheist and Humanist groups in a range of communities. His report was encouraging.

3. AU or Secular Coalition Affiliation: The Secular Coalition indicates that they are not ready to establish a Minnesota Chapter. Americans United however is open to considering new chapters and they do have an application on their website. We will be investigating that process and what would be required of the Watchdogs. We would need to agree to their guidelines and appoint or elect officers. They would ask us to identify our primary concerns regarding separation issues in this area and provide support in addressing those concerns. Any like-minded religious persons in this area could become a member. In fact, if we apply for AU chapter status we would most likely be connected to their existing membership in Minnesota. This could be an exciting opportunity for a group of Atheists to collaborate with our allies in the religious community.

Part of the next meeting will be devoted to discussing and planning for this application process. You can go on the Americans Unite website and look over their application. If the Watchdogs proceed with this idea we will need volunteers to act as our interim officers until a formal election could take place.

4. Lobbying: Marc Scavo presented a strong plea to provide some information and training for MNA and H of M members on lobbying legislators and officials in relation to church-state separation. How do you go about it? What issues should be addressed and how do you frame concerns? What existing organi-

zations are effective and can be engaged in the process? George Kane will consult the MNA board and Bob Schmitz the H of M board about using one of their monthly membership meetings for this purpose. In fact the MNA board has already stated that this could be on their agenda for the Oct. members meeting. The Watchdogs will need to discuss their readiness for this project.

5. "First Freedom First": Bob Schmitz critiqued this book by the Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy (Inter-Faith Alliance) and Rev. Dr. Barry Lynn (Americans United). This is an excellent source for the history of church-state separation and where we are at in that struggle. It is recommended that this book be discussed at the book Meetups.

6. Teen Challenge: This Christian faith-based group receives federal dollars to provide their drug education program in some MN public schools. Their goal is to recruit patients for their teen drug treatment program which blatantly proselytizes, claiming that recovery can only be accomplished through Jesus. AU is asking the U.S. Attorney General to investigate this program along with 8 others faith-based programs that we fund. If you come across any more information please let us know.

NEXT MEETING: 8/11/09 Pippens in Roseville (Co. C2 and Snelling) 6PM

(President, Continued from page 2)

more campers and again they've had to turn away people. Instead of being what the religious call a "religion-free space" we're creating a place to teach about rationality, critical thinking, the history of free thought, while also doing all the fun things of a camp.

As usual the critics are missing the point: we're not trying to keep the religion out, and we're providing education and fun. And as we all know, knowledge picked while having fun tends to stick better than that delivered by rote. (Besides, they let me come out and talk about "Star Trek" and use it to illustrate important themes ... his year we talked about death.) It's an interesting time as the free thought movement shows that we are not the "baby eating, free loving, anarchists" we get stereotyped as. This is the importance of being "out" as a Humanist; they will find out that we are as human as they are. ■

Pictures from the July Freethought Picnic Sponsored by Humanists of Minnesota

By Nathan Curland

The July picnic was the most successful yet. We had nearly 100 folks turn out to share food, fun and each other. We had many first-timers show up from all over the state (would you believe from Northfield?)

Aside from the food, many participants took part in activities such as basketball and badminton. The later was so popular that we had folks stick around until well after the official close of picnic. (Thanks to Nia for supplying the equipment!)

As an unexpected addition, a non-profit organization, Girls with Media, heard about the picnic and showed up to videotape a roundtable with members from the various freethought organizations for a film they are making on different faith (and non-faith) affiliations in Minnesota. (The organization works with high school girls who are interested in cinematography.)



Members and Guests eat, talk and mingle!



Badminton proves to be a big hit! (Watch that birdie!)



Jean Riddering, Cathy Prody and Jerry Rauser (reluctantly) pose for the camera!

Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, August 22, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Atmospheric Physics: An Introduction with Emphasis on Radiation Budget," by Mark Hugo, Chemical/Metallurgical/Mechanical Engineer. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. Contributions appreciated. RSVP think-rsvp@mark-paquete.com.

St. Paul Chapter. Sunday, August 9, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "The Utility of God," by Greg Peterson, freelance religious journalist. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP lhutt@comcast.net.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, August 10, 7:00 p.m. "Muscle Bikes, Wall Street, and Pink Champagne.....a commentary on today's American culture," by Jake Hulstrand. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

For additional information, visit CriticalThinkingClub.org.

Young Local Humanist gets 'Honorable Mention' in FFR Foundation Essay Contest

Dylan Skerbitz, grandson of Humanists of Minnesota member, Suellen Carroll, received an "Honorable Mention" in the Freedom from Religion Foundation's annual Essay contest for his piece, "Science Under Fire."

Dylan was informed of his accomplishment by Annie Laurie Gaynor, co-president of FFRF. An excerpt from the essay will appear in the August issue of *Freethought Today*, the FFRF newsletter. Besides the recognition, there is a cash award associated with the honor.

Congratulations to Dylan and his proud grandma!



Mailbox

(The following is a letter to the editor by former chair and editor, George Erickson, that appeared in the Mesabi Daily News—Ed.)

The Tuesday, May 19, issue of the Mesabi Daily News was "remarkable" in two very different ways. The first was surprising, but the other, outrageous.

In the first, George Will, in an amazing burst of rare and unbiased candor, admitted that "Greed grows when Republicans hold the presidency. They did so throughout the 1980s, [the Reagan/G H W Bush years] and no less an authority on probity than American journalism named it the Decade of Greed. Furthermore, everyone knows that we are in our current economic pickle because greed, which slept through the Clinton administration, was awakened by the Bush administration's tax cuts and deregulation.... Republicans will capture the presidency now and then, igniting greed revivals."

Was that a pig that just flew by?

If so, it's far superior to the outrageous, apparently home-brewed (unsigned) cartoon that "graced" the same page — a cartoon that depicted a person being water boarded in one frame and a beheading in the other.

Are we supposedly superior because we terrorize people with water boarding, which can be endlessly repeated and can and has caused death? Isn't it telling that the people of this nation, with a majority who claim to follow the Prince of Peace, are not at the forefront of protests against this practice and that only a few of us are pressuring Congress to investigate and prosecute, if warranted, those who authorized these crimes.

How low we have sunk.

George Erickson www.tundracub.com

TC Coalition for Reason:

Fred Edwords Gives Workshop on Effective Public Relations

by Juliet Branca

Twitter, blogs, YouTube: According to Fred Edwords, communications director for United Coalition for Reason and former executive director of the American Humanist Association, these are just a few of the emerging media that humanists can use to publicize their activities and attract new members. On July 18th Edwords spoke about effective public relations to an audience of humanists, atheists, and other secularists. Drawing on his years of experience as a leader of humanist organizations, he offered numerous tips for using both traditional and new communications media. His three-hour presentation was supported by handouts that contained detailed public relations advice.

Whether using television, radio, newspapers or blogs to communicate, some fundamental principles apply. For instance: Use the medium best suited to your target audience; use positive language; be concise and stick to the point; be bold and a bit controversial, if possible, to attract an audience's attention; and, most importantly, maintain a sense of humor.

Among many not-so-obvious insights, Edwords pointed out that the media you are dealing with—whether they be TV stations, newspapers, or blogs—have audiences they want to attract and retain. Consequently, your messages should be ones that will appeal to their audiences, so as to motivate these media to give your organization the coverage you desire. So think about the target audience of the medium you are using and design your message to appeal to that audience.

Edwords cheerfully answered questions from the attendees and left them all eager to take advantage of the many opportunities for spreading our secularist message. ■

Maple Grove Discussion Group

Saturday, August 8, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: "Understanding the Middle East: A Hope for Peace," by Steve Lear, founder of the Nechama-Jewish Disaster Response and owner of Affiance Financial, LLC.

. Champps Americana, 13521 80th Circle No., Maple Grove. Breakfast \$16.50, coffee only \$5. Register at landfor-sale@visi.com or call Laurie at 763-420-4757.



Note from Camp Quest

Dear Friends,

This is to thank you for your very generous contributions during your campaign on our behalf totaling \$1232.60 (so far – I'm told there might be more coming!). In anticipation of this gift, we have already awarded a scholarship to a needy camper who otherwise could not participate in this program. The remainder will be used to offset costs and reduce the rates we charge campers. Keeping our fees low allows us to reach many more children than if we charged them the full cost of camp. Helping young people develop strong leadership and critical thinking skills in this manner will serve us well as they mature and take on adult responsibilities in our community.

Of course, this cash donation is only a portion of the support you give us. You have been tireless in promoting Camp Quest to your members, supplying volunteers to lead our programs, and helping in countless of other ways. Humanists of Minnesota is truly a valuable partner in our endeavor, and you deserve a share of the credit for our success.

I am excited to report that we have once again filled our camp to capacity for 2009. Our host camp has built new, larger cabins, so we are able to serve up to 40 young people this summer. This is possible because of the support we've gotten from you and others in the free thought community.

Once again, thanks for your contribution. It means a lot to me personally, and it will truly make a difference in the lives of the children who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the benefits of participating in our fine program. I'm looking forward to continuing to work together with you and everyone in the free thought community as we build this important program.

Warmest regards,

Rick Rohrer
Chair, Board of Directors
Camp Quest Minnesota

News from the AHA:

Gore Vidal is New AHA Honorary President

Gore Vidal, the preeminent novelist, essayist, and playwright, has accepted the honorary presidency of the American Humanist Association.

Roy Speckhardt, executive director for the American Humanist Association, in announcing the filling of the position noted that "Vidal is a sharply intelligent advocate for individual liberty, separation of church and state, and reason and rationality. He has a reverence for earthly inquiry—as opposed to doctrine or dogma— that embodies the mission of the AHA."

Vidal has had a long literary and intellectual career and has never shied away from controversy. A life-long advocate for progressive values, he is an outspoken critic of the radical religious right's influence over public policy and in recent years has spoken out against civil liberty abuses perpetuated by the Bush Administration.

Vidal succeeds the late Kurt Vonnegut as AHA honorary president. Vonnegut held the post from 1992, when he took the reins from Isaac Asimov, until his death in 2007. ■

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland

Editorial Committee - Brad Bolin, Gwen Scribner, Matt Labo, Suzanne Perry

Photographer - Richard Trombly

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: editor@humanistsofminn.org with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 22nd of the prior month.

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August 2009

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate. Our membership categories are:

- (B) Budget, \$20.00
- (R) Regular, \$35.00
- (S) Sustaining, \$50.00
- (P) Patron, \$100.00 or more
- (G) Gift Newsletter, \$20.00 (not counted as membership)
- (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask

*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.



Visit our website at:
www.humanistsofmn.org

For national or international membership write to:

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Washington, DC 20009-7125
www.humanist.net

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Amherst, NY 14226
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(for special announcements, blogs etc. Keeps you in touch!)

I would like my newsletter sent via email () (in color!)

Second Member at same address: _____