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10:00 a.m.– Noon
Saturday
April 18, 2009

Monthly
Chapter Meeting

Nokomis Recreation
Center
2401 E. Minnehaha Pkwy.
Minneapolis

HUMANISM:

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

Humanists of Minnesota Chapter Meeting

“What Is Humanism?”

A Video Presentation and Discussion

Saturday, April 18

It has been said on numerous occasions that Humanism is hard to define. In this video, three past presidents of Humanists of Minnesota—Paul Heffron, Hiero Russell and George Erickson—explain just what Humanism means to them. They are joined by two representatives of the American Humanist Association—the late Gordon Morris, who gives the AHA's definition, and Fred Edwards, who gives his definition.



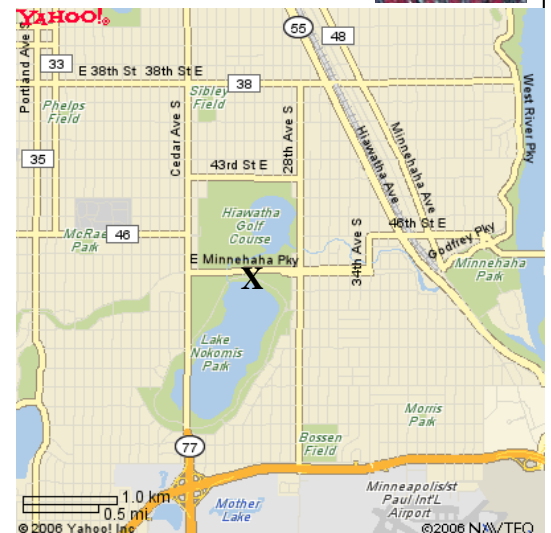
The logic of definitions is complex. Unless we are clear about the point and purpose of a definition, its context in use and inquiry, it may create more difficulties than it solves. You should come and decide for yourself whether the definitions given are clear or if they tend to confuse the picture that you have about Humanism. You will be given a chance in the discussion period to express just how you define Humanism.



Ron Scribner



Chapter meeting location: Here is a map to the Nokomis Recreation Center. Easiest access is north on 77 (Cedar Ave.) from Hwy. 62.



PRESIDENT'S

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The nice thing about being Humanist and a critical thinker is that we have guidelines to use when assessing things. A number of religious thinkers don't. They have boxes that they are locked into. Ponder this definition of "Biblical inerrancy": "We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as the theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of

nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts or the use of free citations (Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Art XIII)."

Now read that over a time or two to let it sink in. My take is that inerrancy is defined as "it's inerrant when we say it is and not when we don't." Just think if that definition were used by doctors when diagnosing patients or NASA when defining an orbit for spacecraft. Critical thinking and the ability to define things with clarity and precision are definite advantages when trying to figure out the world. Even human relationships can be classified with better definitions than that one.

When we look at definitions of Humanism and its philosophy, we can see that with time it's getting easier to define and understand. Sometimes it does help to define things by stating what it is not. Other times clarification is best achieved by precisely showing what you mean. Look at the medical profession and science: most of their professional journals and papers are difficult for lay people to understand. They have many words that have very precise meanings. This is where religion shows just how subjective it is. Just think about the word "spiritual." Chances are you've stopped using that word very often as there is no longer a meaning that works when talking to people of two different relig-

(President, Continued on page 7)

Humanists of Minnesota Officers

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Vice President - Nathan Curland, (952) 928-4933, natcurland@gmail.com

Treasurer - Ron Scribner, (952) 884-5755, rgscibner@earthlink.net

Secretary - Arthur Schunk, (952) 941-2996, AMSchunk@comcast.net

Members of the board of directors -

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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@humanistsofmn.org or visit our web site: www.humanistsofmn.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 Druten, (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.

3rd 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. (\$7 brunch, \$4 speaker only)

4th Sunday, 10:30 a.m., 4th Sunday Brunch!, 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.



Spring Highway Cleanup!

May 9

The May highway cleanup will be at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 9. We meet at the gas station located in the southeast corner at the intersection of Interstate 35W and Highway 23 (right turn from 35W northbound). This is the last exit on 35W going north before it joins 35E, and is about nine miles north of 35W and I-694. I will bring the trash bags and orange vests, so all you need is appropriate clothing and shoes and possibly sunscreen and insect repellent. We are usually finished by noon and most of us get together for lunch and good conversation at a nearby restaurant.

A big turnout means we finish sooner and have more chance to socialize, so I hope many of you will be able to join us this time. This is a great opportunity to show Humanists at work on behalf of the community. If you have questions, call me at (952) 927-4193 or email me at beardasley@belleplaine.k12.mn.us.

David Beardasley

"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.



Camp Quest Registration is Open!

By Jeanette Watland

As an atheist, I often feel secluded and out of place in society. I can only imagine how different a child feels when they realize they are the only non-believer in their classroom. When I found out about Camp Quest about one year ago I was filled with hope and excitement. Here is a place where adults and children alike can be themselves in a comfortable and welcoming environment. I had to check it out and doing so was one of the best choices I have ever made. The adult volunteers are wonderful people whom I really feel like I can relate to. The children and young adults I have encountered are absolutely amazing. All the kids I have had the pleasure to mentor at Camp Quest are funny, smart and intuitive. I couldn't think of a better place for growing freethinkers.

So what do we do at Camp Quest? We do all the fun stuff one would see at a conventional camp. There is swimming, canoeing, archery and field games. We have arts and crafts activities, such as longtime favorite candle making. Every year there is a field trip and a service project. We teach ethics, critical thinking and religious and cultural tolerance. However, sometimes I think the kids would be perfectly content if they could just spend a week with friends who understand them.

Camp Quest is growing in popularity. It started in 2004 with just 11 kids. This year we are hoping to accommodate at least 35 kids, and 15 volunteers. We hope to see returning campers, as well as new faces. I feel privileged to be a part of Camp Quest as it continues to grow. If you wish to support this great camp, you can do so in three ways.

The first is to send your children. We accommodate all children between the ages 8-15; however, children from humanist, freethinking, atheist, agnostic, or Unitarian homes would be most comfortable at camp. There is a Counselor in Training program for young adults ages of 16-17.

The second way to help is by volunteering. This year we will need more volunteers than ever, to keep up with our growing roster. As a volunteer, I feel like I have made lifelong friends. I look forward to coming back every year. In fact, I got more excited about camp than my own honeymoon. We encourage volunteers to stay the whole week at camp. Previous camping experience is helpful, but not required.

(Quest, Continued on page 6)



March Chapter Meeting

DNA Portraits

Summarized by Paul Heffron

Thirty-two people attended the March 21 meeting at Nokomis. Some were newcomers who had found out about the meeting on the Web at Meetup.com. We began as usual with lots of mixing and talking. The business meeting consisted of a report from the nominations committee of Jim Barri and me. After the meeting we went to lunch in two groups to different locations. I was with those who went to Carbone's, and we enjoyed lots of good conversation and lively discussions.

We had a rather unusual program, which combined the worlds of art and science. Lynn Fellman talked about her work doing DNA Portraits and provided many stunning exhibits. It's now possible through DNA analysis to trace your pre-history ancestry back to human beginnings in Africa. Lynn can take this information and put it into an artistic portrait and digital design showing your likeness and the path of your ancestry on a world map. You can see your place in the great migrations of humanity. You also see that you are part of a single humanity that has spread over the planet.

Lynn's presentation made me think of how modern science has given us two new perspectives of humans and their world. One comes from space exploration where we can see our world from out in space and realize our position in the immense universe and how we are huddled together on this one planet. The other comes from the science of evolution and DNA, which shows that we are one species, one big extended family, and biologically alike. The physical differences are superficial, and terrible things are apt to happen when people regard these differences as making for groups of alien people that can be dehumanized. The evolutionary DNA perspective helps us appreciate our common humanity and our real ancestry. ■

Secular Bible Study Group Starts Monthly Meetings

A secular group has formed to study the Bible. They generally meet once a month on Tuesday evenings.

For information and to register go to <http://www.meetup.com/Secular-Bible-Study>.

Candidates for the Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors

Officers

President:

Scott Lohman

Scott Lohman has been active with HofM since 1991 and is our current President. "I have been a Board member and Vice President over the years. I was part of the group that began the cable TV program and I continue to produce and host it (and also help the Minnesota Atheists with their radio program). I will continue to work on ways to grow our group and promote Humanism."



Vice President:

Nathan Curland

"I have been a member of HofM for the past eight years and editor of its newsletter for the past five. I came to Humanism through years of trying to understand what gives meaning to our lives and, eventually, rejecting the dogmatism that humans seem to thrive on. I believe the drive to add meaning to our lives, salted with a healthy skepticism, is the way to the solutions of the world and the educational mission of HofM is a key and noble contribution to that goal."



Treasurer:

Ron Scribner

'It has been my privilege to be a member of HofM for the last 11 years. At the start of my second

year I was asked to be a Board member and I took on the additional responsibility of chair of the Membership Committee. I served in both of those positions until 2002, when I was elected to be President of this organization. In 2007 I took over the position of Treasurer, the position that I am running for. I am actively looking for someone to succeed me in this position so if someone is interested, please contact me. It takes only a few hours a week and is very rewarding."



Secretary:

Matt Labo

"I have been an atheist for some years now but only recently really embraced the idea. Although I am relatively new to HofM I have found that it is a valuable organization for those of us who do not have a god belief and want a framework for working out what we do believe. Through HofM we can learn more about Humanism, put our beliefs to work, and build a community of like-minded people. To me this is a priceless opportunity that I want to keep viable for myself and others. Running for Secretary is one way that I can support HofM and make sure that it can continue to provide that space for reason and fraternity."



Directors at Large:

Juliet Branca

I grew up in Philadelphia and was raised as a Catholic. I left Catholic school and my religion at age 14 and never looked back. I majored in Art History at Temple University, became a Minnesotan in 1984 and raised 5 children in St Paul. I am currently an advocate for green roof technology and have been meeting with our city leaders.



I am excited at the possibility of being elected to the Board and look forward to serving in whatever way I can.

Bob Schmitz

I have now served one term as an at-large board member. The experience has given me a deeper understanding of Humanism and of the task ahead if we are to grow in number. During this past year I started the First Amendment Watchdog committee, which is a joint effort of the HofM and Minnesota Atheists. The Watchdogs are currently involved in tracking and reviewing potential action in relation to several church-state violations in Minnesota. Two members of the Watchdogs have been at the capitol to lobby on behalf of our interests. I hope to continue



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(Continued from page 5)

serving on the board and to maintain a cooperative effort with Minnesota Atheists around this common endeavor. In my journey as an atheist and humanist, I have come to believe that we must articulate and promote the secular conscience in the public arena. Thank you for the opportunity to serve this fine organization. I will continue to do what I can as a board member to advance Humanism and Atheism.



Mailbox

The following was submitted to Minneapolis Star Tribune by our Treasurer, Ron Scribner:

It was refreshing to hear the President of the United States acknowledge the existence of us unbelievers. We are a growing segment of this country's population and we have a right to let people know that we are true citizens of this great country; instead of questioning the patriotism of us non-believers as George H. W. Bush did. President Obama gave us that recognition of patriotism. I want to remind George H. W. Bush that I, a secular Humanist, went to fight in the Vietnam conflict when I was drafted while his son, the more recent president, did not. We unbelievers love this country as much as believers do and we put our lives on the line to prove it. That can not be said of George H. W. Bush's son!

Ronald Scribner
Bloomington, MN 55431-2019
Retired

Remember to Tune In to Radio 950 Sundays at 9:00 a.m.!

Humanists of Minnesota is a sponsor of "Atheists Talk," a one-hour program on KTNF radio AM 950 produced by Minnesota Atheists. We also produce a number of shows during the year hosted by our President, Scott Lohman.

Thanks to our generous members who supported the fund drive to maintain our sponsorship!

Humanist Ladies' Spring Tea

Sunday, May 24, 2-4 p.m. at Bev Hanson's house (5343 70th Circle N.) in Brooklyn Park.

Door prizes, treats and lots of conversation.
Bring your own favorite teacup and saucer. (Hats and gloves optional! :)

RSVP to Bev @ (763) 560-7334 no later than May 22.

(Quest, Continued from page 4)

Anyone with experience with kids can be put to good use.

Lastly, you can help support the camp through donations. It is always hard to ask for money, especially in times of economic hardship. However, if you are in a place to help Camp Quest financially, every dollar we receive is well spent. We use money from donations on things such as supplies, scholarships, field trips, renting the facility and keeping the cost of camp down for everyone. Anything we receive will be greatly appreciated.

Camp Quest is held near Mound and will run from July 26 to Aug 1. Thanks to generous donations, the cost per camper is only \$395. To find out more about Camp Quest, visit our website at Camp-Quest.org, or call Rick Rohrer at 952-903-0520. ■

Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, April 25, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "The Nitty Gritty of How Evolution Works," by Dr. Mark Decker, Professor of Biology, University of MN. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. \$7 for light lunch, \$4 for coffee/speaker. RSVP thinkrsvp@mark-paquete.com.

St. Paul Chapter. Sunday, April 12, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "What Darwin Didn't Know," by Dr. Mark Decker, Professor of Biology, University of MN. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP lhutt@comcast.net.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, March 9, 7:00 p.m. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

For additional information, visit CriticalThinkingClub.org.

News from the AHA

Fred Edwards Accepts New Position with the UCR

March 20, 2009

Fred Edwards, director of communications for the American Humanist Association, has taken a new position as leader of a new freethought organization. The United Coalition of Reason is being created for the purpose of developing coalitions of local Humanist, freethought, atheist, Humanistic Jewish, and Ethical Culture organizations across the country. These coalitions will be modeled on the successful Philadelphia Coalition of Reason.

In accepting this new job, Fred is leaving the employ of the AHA, an institution he's served for nearly 29 years in various capacities. However, to tap into his knowledge and experience, the AHA is contracting with Edwards as a consultant on retainer, and he will be involved in AHA outreach and strategy. He has also agreed to serve on the AHA's new Board of Advisors, will maintain his involvement with the *Humanist* magazine, and will volunteer his support for various tasks as he is best able in his available time.

For decades, beginning with his role as a local chapter leader in 1977, Edwards was a key engine behind humanism at the American Humanist Association. He went on to be executive director for 15 years and editor of the *Humanist* for 12. ■

National Center for Science Education attains Kilo-Steve mark!

With the addition of Steve #1000 on September 5, 2008, NCSE's Project Steve attained the kilosteve mark. A tongue-in-cheek parody of the long-standing creationist tradition of amassing lists of "scientists who doubt evolution" or "scientists who dissent from Darwinism," Project Steve mocks such lists by restricting its signatories to scientists whose first name is Steve.

Maple Grove Discussion Group

Saturday, April 11, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: "Farmers vs. the Environment: the Impact of Ethanol and Pesticides on Minnesota's Water Resources," by Paul Wotzka, former hydrologist at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Champps Americana, 13521 80th Circle No., Maple Grove. Breakfast \$16.60, coffee only \$5. RSVP landfor-sale@visi.com or call Laurie at 763-420-4757

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ions or even within sects of the same religion. Yet we know exactly what is meant by the word "vaccine." Here is a concept that most people can understand with a simple explanation. Try that with "spiritual" sometime.

This is a good concept to keep in mind when talking with people about being a Humanist. It's great that the American Humanist Association has the current concepts available on a big business card. It's much easier than having to use a book and multivolume commentaries to explain what is in the book. The basics of Humanism are quite easy. And there is a lot less of using the old "I know it when I see it" type of definitions. ■

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland

Editorial Committee - Hiero Russell, Gwen Scribner,
Arthur Schunk, Suzanne Perry

Photographer - Richard Trombly

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: natcurland@gmail.com 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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April 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:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street NW
Washington, DC 20009-7125
www.humanist.net

Council for Secular Humanism
PO Box 664
Amherst, NY 14226
www.secularhumanism.org

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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: _____