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Review

***No Chapter Meetings during the summer***

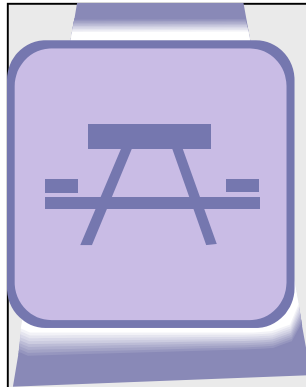
***Join us at the Free-thought Picnics***

***June 14  
July 19  
August 16***

**Noon to 3:00 p.m.**

***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  
Freethought Picnics!***

***Sunday, June 14  
Sunday, July 19  
Sunday, August 16***

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.)

**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!)



## ***Editorial:***

### ***When Atheism is not Humanism***

*By Nathan Curland*

There is (has been and will continue to be) much discussion within the Humanist community on whether a Humanist must be an atheist. Most Humanists would agree that it is difficult to be a freethinker and not come at least to agnosticism. But is an atheist, by definition, a Humanist?

On April 26, Sunday morning's "Atheist Talk" aired a radio show that reminded us in no uncertain terms that simply being an atheist does not make you a Humanist. It showed how atheism can easily be co-opted to push an ideology and how that ideology can be used to lie, create fear and rewrite history.

Sunsara Taylor certainly seems like an honest, caring person. After all, she is a leading figure in the antiwar movement, speaks passionately about poverty, and ably points out the corruption and greed that seems to have taken over our corporate system. And what freethinker wouldn't love her going toe to toe with the right-wing stars of the Fox Network (watch the interviews via the link on the Minnesota Atheists website if you haven't already).

But it is the very passion that she shows in those encounters that tip you off to her blind commitment to communism. Skepticism and critical thinking, the hallmarks of free thought, are out the window: Slums and the rush to the cities are blamed on globalization (never mind that these trends have existed for hundreds [thousands?] of years). Food shortages are not due to scarcity ... it's just a distribution problem (the world is not facing an overpopulation crisis??). And, of course, the capitalistic state is the bad guy. (Communist states are better? Could it be that it is the corruption of the state by those hungry for power that is problem regardless of the system?)

And like the most rabid religious ideologue, she has mastered all the diversionary skills including rewriting history. Mao's pushing people out of the cities into the country and killing millions in the process (didn't happen, of course) was a good thing! Reagan is the villain who started deregulation (never mind that it stemmed the runaway inflation that we were suffering at the time due to blooming deficits). Religious oppression equals economic oppression (nice sound bite!). She even denied the label of ideologue, claiming we are all ideologues (what about those of us who are skeptics?). Despite the best attempts of many of the listeners to call Sunsara accountable, she diverted every question, labeling the callers "misinformed."

In the end, Ms. Taylor was there to push the book

*(Editorial, Continued on page 7)*

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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](mailto:president@humanistsofmn.org) or visit our web site: [www.humanistsofmn.org](http://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)

**Sunday Brunch, 10:30 a.m.-noon**, Post-'Atheist Talk' Radio program. 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.



## Record Turnout for Spring Highway Cleanup

*We had a great turnout (16 folks!) for the toughest cleanup of the year. This let us finish with plenty of time to have (the traditional!) lunch at Matthew's Family Restaurant in Lino Lakes. Great time!*



## Thanks to our crew!

*(l.to.r) Nathan Curland, Brad Bolin, Lana Bolin, Noah Curland, Scott Lohman, Richard Trombly, Ron Scribner, Paul Heffron, David Beardsley (organizer), Matt Labo, Michelle Losey, Joanne Beardsley, Jeff Smith, Suellen Carroll, Juliet Branca, Jim Barri*

"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.

*Annual Banquet****Dale McGowan Gives Uplifting View  
of the Coming Humanism****by Nathan Curland*

Humanists of Minnesota held its annual banquet on April 25 with featured speaker Dale McGowan, nationally known author of *Parenting Beyond Belief* and his latest work, *Raising Freethinkers*.

The audience of 44 was not disappointed. Dale chose to discuss the new generation of Humanists and what needs to be done to help Humanism spread through the population. He started by noting that since 1990 the percent of the population that calls themselves nonbelievers has jumped from 8 percent of the population to 15 percent. By age, however, only 10 percent of the population over 60 classify themselves as nonbelievers whereas 27 percent of those under 35 do so. But if you attend any Humanist meeting throughout the country, the number of older members easily outnumbers the younger ones. Why?

McGowan noted that there is generational warfare going on in the freethought movement. One side is represented by Helmut Mehta, the “friendly atheist,” who advocates a non-confrontational approach to dealing with believers. This is a group that has grown up in an more open society where the stigma of atheism is slowly retreating due largely to the efforts of the Madalyn O’Hairs of the last century. This is in contrast to the older generation that believes in an “in-your-face” atheism and who had to fight for their right to be nonbelievers.

Dale argued that we must get beyond the “exhibitionism” of Humanism and enter more of a “courtship” phase. This means: a) get noticed, b) be attractive, and c) deliver the goods! We have reached the first stage of getting noticed, which he believes was ignited by the “four horsemen” led by Sam Harris. Until the groundswell they started, he could not get any attention from publishers for his *Parenting Beyond Belief*. Now, he says, the younger generation is not tainted by god-belief. He expects the ranks of nonbelievers to grow to 25 percent of the population within the next 10 years.

To address the second stage (be attractive), he noted that part of what he calls the “god-delusion” is that people go to church looking for God. Statistics show that this is generally not true. Only 27 percent

give that as their prime reason for going to church. The others are looking for community, nice people and a welcoming environment ... and the churches have evolved to feed that need.

Dale gave the analogy of Sally, the young non-believer who comes to a Humanist meeting because she is attracted to the philosophy and wants to meet like-minded folks and find a community to join. Instead she is ignored, shown to the coffee pot or the literature table. Or she meets Harry, the old veteran Humanist who believes in the scientific view, is out front with his atheism and derisive of the mildly religious or spiritual minded ... someone that Sally may have called herself just a week before. After a meeting or two, not finding the community she was looking for, she doesn’t come back.

To be attractive, Humanist groups need to recognize that people need acceptance, support and nurturing. A group needs a greeter (or greeters!); topics that challenge their humanity; perhaps a CD running, or poetry session. Meetings should be less about secularism and more about Humanism. The challenge is how to make organizations welcoming to both the new Humanist and older one.

Finally, McGowan couldn’t end without discussing how to encourage the younger generation, especially children, to embrace Humanism. He believes humans are innately humanistic. He gave a short definition of Humanism that resonates with anyone: “A Humanist is someone who believes we need to take care of each other whether there is a god or isn’t. The most important thing is take care of this life and this world.” We need to encourage kids to develop an “unconditional love of reality.” The universe is an astonishing place to be ... we have been unconscious for most of the age of the universe ... it is this short time we exist that is the ‘blip of amazement.’ We need to jolt kids (and ourselves) out of the complacency that we live in and understand what ‘normal’ really is.” ■



## More Pictures from the Annual Banquet!

By Nathan Curland



Scott Lohman (r.) presents the Humanists of Minnesota Humanist of the Year Award to August Berkshire



Scott Lohman and Cynthia Eglia with Dale McGowan at the book signing at the end of the evening



Members and Guests attend to the proceedings



Freethought Vocal Ensemble provides entertainment for attendees.

(l.to.r) Jodin Morey, Dale Handeen, Cathy Prody, Jerry Rauser

### Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

**West Metro Chapter.** Saturday, June 27, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Catastrophe Creates Opportunity" by Jack Carter, engineering manager and startup consultant. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. \$7 for light lunch, \$4 for coffee/speaker. RSVP [think-rsvp@mark-paquete.com](mailto:think-rsvp@mark-paquete.com).

**St. Paul Chapter.** Sunday, June 14, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Accuracy in Research: the Virtue of Skepticism" by Stew Thornley. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP [lhutt@comcast.net](mailto:lhutt@comcast.net).

**Stillwater Chapter.** Monday, June 8, 7:00 p.m. "BSA v. Dale – Revisited" by Brain Swerine. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.



## Mailbox

To the Editor:

Beverly Hanson writes in the (May) HofM Newsletter that there are only two positions:

- a. Belief that "God" exists
- b. Belief that "God" does not exist.

This makes no sense since it states terms without acknowledged meaning. What is this "God"?

Consider this choice:

- a. Do you believe that X exists?
- b. Do you believe that X does not exist?

The rational response to such questions is: What do you mean by "X"? Are those the only options? Is this a false dichotomy?

What about:

- c. Do you believe neither of the above?
- d. Do you believe both a and b since all propositions in a null set are equally true and false?
- e. Do you form conclusions from evidence instead of believing at all?

The questions are not made valid just by substituting "God" for X unless you accept that a meaning exists for "God," a stipulated meaning defined and agreed upon by all parties engaging in the discourse.

In the case of "God," no such universally agreed meaning exists. A hundred years ago it may have been possible to assume that everyone who used the word "God" agreed on a common meaning. That is no longer the case. Serious thinkers such as John Shelby Spong are developing new language for their faith.

It would be a foolish mistake indeed for us to concede to the fundamentalists the right to define "God" for us. Letting your adversary define your language for you is a guaranteed way to lose a debate.

Real theologians - not just ignorant fundamentalists - have long since moved beyond the simplistic and naive views of "God" that prevailed in the Victorian era. Freethinkers of today risk making themselves look ridiculous if they discuss "God" today in archaic language.

The foremost theologian of the latter 20th century,

Paul Tillich, equates theism with atheism. Both assume that a metaphysical issue exists that can be answered and is worth considering. There is no evidence that there is.

Wittgenstein says, in effect, when there's nothing to talk about, it makes no sense to talk about it. Carl Sagan says it best: "If there's no evidence for something, just forget about it."

The point of Humanism is that you don't need to care at all about speculative metaphysical allegations. Humanism, as the 1973 Manifesto points out, is an ethical process through which we can all move above and beyond the assertions and denials of the dogmas of part religions.

Francis Mortyn  
San Diego

### *Humanists of Minnesota Joins Twin Cities Coalition of Reason (TCCoR)*

At its May meeting, the HofM Board of Directors voted unanimously to join the Twin Cities Coalition of Reason. TCCoR was founded with the support (and encouragement) of the United Coalition of Reason, a national charitable organization created to raise the visibility of and promote cooperation between local groups in the larger community of reason. United CoR provides training to local leaders, free web hosting and funding for local publicity campaigns aimed at bringing traffic to the CoR website, where the local groups will be listed.

The publicity campaign is usually a billboard in a highly visible place in a city or metro area. Alternatively, it could be a bus/train ad campaign or even a newspaper campaign.

The United Coalition of Reason's communications director is Fred Edwards and its national coordinator is Jende Huang.

The local TCCoR coordinator is August Berkshire. Stay tuned for more! ■

### *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.*



*From the May Chapter Meeting*

## **Reproductive Health Care and Freedom**

*by Paul Heffron*

On a cool and sunny Saturday in May we had our regular monthly meeting at the Nokomis Community Center. There were 29 people in attendance with several newcomers.

The speaker was Timothy Stanley, Senior Director of Government Affairs for Planned Parenthood and Executive Director of the PP Action Fund and its political action committees. Stanley is an enthusiastic and engaging speaker. He interspersed his talk with a quiz, tossing PP T-shirts to those who gave correct answers (after raising their hands, of course! We will expect those people to wear these shirts to our summer picnics!).

Stanley's presentation was quite stimulating and informative and drew a lot of keen interest and questions. He dealt with some common misconceptions of what a PP clinic does and gave us a brief rundown on what it actually does do. For example, only five percent of the PP budget is for abortion-related services. Most of what they do involves preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and reducing the need for abortions. Services at PP clinics are made available to persons who can't afford the going rate, so government funding and private contributions to PP are critical. PP consists of two organizations. One provides services at clinics; the other is for political action to defend reproductive rights and promote science-based sex education.

As you would expect, Stanley was generally quite happy with the positive major changes in family planning and sex education under the Obama administration and the new Congress and rather unhappy with the way things have gone in Minnesota under the Pawlenty administration. Stanley regards Obama's decisions on family planning as based on sound science instead of political ideology. He said Obama

has repealed the global gag rule, which reduced family planning overseas, remained committed to a woman's right to choose, expanded access to affordable birth control, and promoted comprehensive, instead of abstinence-only, sex education. According to Stanley the enormous funds spend on "abstinence only" were not only wasteful but harmful. He said Obama's appointment of a new justice to the Supreme Court will be critical to PP-related issues.

Under Pawlenty, in his view, we've had the opposite approach in Minnesota. Those seeking an abortion are faced with requirements, like parental notification and court approval for adopted minors, that serve only to make getting an abortion more difficult. He noted that we need to reduce teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases in Minnesota, but we need new leadership like we're getting now at the federal level to make progress in our state. ■

*(Editorial Continued from page 2)*

of her mentor, Robert Arakian, president of the Revolutionary Communist Party USA. She reminded us that if we want to kill the American freethought movement, all we have to do is align ourselves with communism (or any other dogmatism). ■

### **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@humanistsofmin.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmin.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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### **Maple Grove Discussion Group**

*Saturday, June 13, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: "Undue Influence as used by Cults" by Douglas Agustin. Champps Americana, 13521 80th Circle No., Maple Grove. Breakfast \$16.60, coffee only \$5. RSVP [landforsale@visi.com](mailto:landforsale@visi.com) or call Laurie at 763-420-4757.*

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June 2009

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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:

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- (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask

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

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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: \_\_\_\_\_