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**10:00 a.m.– Noon
 Saturday
 March 21, 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

“Art and the Life Sciences”

Presentation by Lynn Fellman

Saturday, March 21

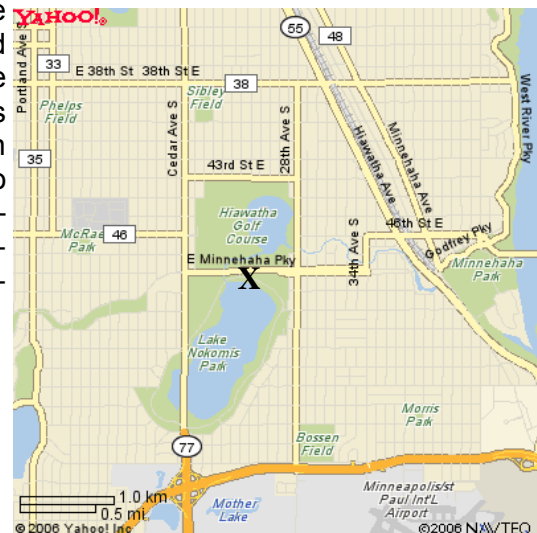
Lynn Fellman, local artist, student of the life sciences and interviewer extraordinaire, will discuss her work and insights at our March chapter meeting. Ms. Fellman has been an independent digital illustrator and designer for many years but is best known for her integration of her art with Hap Maps of individuals' ancestry resulting in what she has trademarked as DNA™ Portraits. (Hap Maps make use of genetic markers in our chromosomes to trace the patterns of human migration from our common origin in Africa.) She has recently received a commission from the University of Minnesota Medical School for a work to be titled “The HapMap Project” which will show the multicultural diversity of the student population. She has also been named creative associate with the new Center for Art and Science at the U's Center for Bioethics.



In her work and studies, Ms. Fellman has attended many conferences (where she has displayed her work) and interviewed many scientists.

Many of these interviews were broadcast live on Air America and are available on her website (www.FellmanStudio.com). She is a frequent guest and interviewer on “Atheist Talk,” the local atheist radio show on AM950 (at 9:00 a.m. Sundays). Ms. Fellman holds a BFA degree from the University of Minnesota. ■

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



C O R N E R

Humanism is moving into the new century. I've seen a lot of changes since I joined Humanists of Minnesota in the early '90s. At one time I was one of the youngest active members (and I am not that young!). We are seeing more and more young people join the group as we expand into cyberspace. I was involved in an interesting talk after a recent Minnesota Atheists meeting. There were several "generations" of atheists and humanists there. The older ones talked of being part of the generation after the ground-breaking founders of the movement, like Madeline Murray O'Hair. Those of us in what we call the "middle generation" noted that the issue of "what do we call ourselves" (because many of us grew up

in a time when the word atheist was used as a curse or an insult) is no longer an issue to the younger generation, who show no reluctance to use the word at all and who don't shirk at being out as non-believers. It shows that the work we have done is paying off.

This is the time of the year when the officers and at-large positions for the HofM Board of Directors are open for election. In the March meeting we nominate the candidates for the board. All four of the officer positions and two at-large positions are open. If you have been a member for at least one year, you are eligible to run for a position. The BOD is the body that keeps the group functioning and decides what we should be doing as a group. The Internet is bringing us new options for expanding our reach to people who have no idea what Humanism is or that there are alternatives to being in a church.

The board needs to be able to move the group forward and meet the changing needs of our members. What should we do to make our philosophy more known? Should we create more social options, like book clubs, movie nights, discussion groups or something else? As our population changes, we need to adapt the group to meet those needs. Should our group perform some of the same functions as a church? Should we look to find a permanent home? Do we have the membership to

(President, Continued on page 7)

Humanists of Minnesota Officers

President - Scott Lohman, (612) 521-4766, scottl2605@aol.com
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 Beverly Hanson: (763) 560-7334
 Matt LaBo: (651) 788-2258, matthewlabo@gmail.com
 Hiero Russell: (651) 646-3937, hrussel@attglobal.net
 Bob Schmitz: (651) 735-1468, allibobi@comcast.net
 Gwen Scribner: (952) 884-5755, rgscribner@earthlink.net

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.



Keep the Date!
*Annual HofM Banquet is set for
Saturday, April 25, 2009*

**Our featured speaker will be
2008 Harvard Humanist of Year:**

Dale McGowan

Registration forms will be sent out next month

**Remember to Tune in to Radio 950
at 9:00 a.m. Sundays**

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.

MA has recently renewed its contract for another six months, so tune in for more interesting freethought discussion and chatter.

"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.



February Chapter Meeting Summary

Evolutionary Theory

Summarized by Paul Heffron

Thirty one people attended the meeting on Saturday morning, February 21, at Nokomis, where about five inches of snow had fallen in the night and provided a beautiful natural setting. The meeting served as the Humanists of Minnesota's observance of the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of his *On the Origin of Species*.

We watched a DVD lecture on evolutionary theory by Professor Robert M. Hazen of George Madison University. Hazen talked about evolution as fact and theory. There is an enormous amount of factual support from many fields for the occurrence of evolution. Darwin had made extensive observations that established evolution as factual, and of course the evidence confirming that has been piling up ever since. Darwin wanted to find the mechanism that would explain the facts of evolution—that is to say, he sought a theory for the origin of species. He found that mechanism in his theory of natural selection.

Evolutionary theory has moved beyond Darwin, but it still rests on his idea of natural selection and has proved to be well supported and highly predictive. As Prof. Hazen said, Darwin's idea may be stated rather simply. Given that species overproduce, there is competition to survive, and given that variations in reproduction occur and are sometimes advantageous, some members will live longer. These advantaged members will have more offspring, which will generally bear that advantageous trait and therefore be naturally selected. Given enough time, species will modify and even evolve into new species. When Huxley learned of the new theory he remarked: how simple, why didn't I think of that? It may seem simple now, but it was a momentous discovery and brought a new understanding of how we and other species came about. This new understanding proved devastating for the traditional idea of the creator and the creation. It also became one of the touchstones of the new humanism that emerged after Darwin.

After viewing Hazen's talk, we broke into small groups and discussed his presentation and how we can gain greater acceptance of science and evolution. Ideas that emerged were too numerous to summarize here, but it was obvious that those in attendance had participated in lively discussions. ■

Richard Dawkins to Speak at U of M on March 4

Dr. Richard Dawkins, well known author and evolutionary biologist, will speak on "The Purpose of Purpose" at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 4, at Northrop Auditorium on the University of Minnesota campus.

Tickets are \$8 for students and \$15 general admission.



Box Office: (612) 624-2324 or cashumn.org

"We humans are obsessed with purpose. The question, 'What is it for?' comes naturally to a species surrounded by tools, utensils and machines. For such artifacts it is appropriate, but then we go too far. We apply the 'What is it for?' question to rocks, mountains, stars or the universe, where it has no place.

"How about living things? Since Darwin, we have understood that this, too, is an illusion. Nevertheless, it is such a powerful illusion that the language of purpose is almost irresistible." ■

Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, March 28, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Money as Debt" by George Paulos. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. \$7 for light lunch, \$4 for coffee/speaker. RSVP think-rsvp@markpaquete.com.

St. Paul Chapter. Sunday, March 8, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Energy Resource Planning" by John Oughton, adjunct faculty member at Century College. 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.

Maple Grove Critical Thinking Discussion Group. Saturday, March 14, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: "The Fair Tax" by Dennis Madden, State Director, MN 4 Fair Tax. Champps Americana, 13521 80th Circle No., Maple Grove. Breakfast \$16.60, coffee only \$5. RSVP landforsale@visi.com or call Laurie at (763) 420-4757.

For additional information, visit CriticalThinkingClub.org



First Amendment Watchdog Committee Is Looking for 'Watchdogs'

The Humanists of Minnesota and Minnesota Atheists have established the First Amendment Watchdog committee, which has been meeting monthly since May 2008. The committee's purpose is to focus on church-state separation violations in Minnesota. Early in its existence our committee addressed the matter of a large Christian banner hanging from the ceiling in the high school cafeteria in Kimball. It was observed by one of our members while attending a basketball game there in the evening. This matter was referred to ACLU-MN by the committee. Chuck Samuelson, Executive Director of ACLU-MN, immediately sent a letter to the superintendent of that school district, pointing out the potential violation of the law and recommending remedial action. This incident is an example of the role our committee can play in addressing such violations.

Other issues addressed by the committee include:

1. Questionable practices of charter schools in relation to church-state separation.
2. Tax-supported programs like Positive Alternatives (anti-choice counseling services for pregnant women).
3. Tax credits and deductions for Christian home schools.
4. Tuition write-offs for parochial school tuition.
5. Property-tax exemptions for church property.
6. Creationism in public high school science classes (an estimated 25 percent of our students are being taught creation science in public school biology classes as an alternative to evolution).

Due to our actions, the Freedom from Religion Foundation might be interested in Positive Alternatives.

The committee has decided to develop a network of watchdogs throughout the state. Any member of a Freethought group can volunteer. They would report violations observed in their area to the committee, which would offer consultation on how the issue might be addressed. Other resources such as ACLU-MN, FFRF and Americans United for Separation of Church and State would be utilized. If legislative issues arise that the committee believes should be addressed, the watchdog advocates may be asked to contact their respective legislators. Our goal is to establish a watchdog advocate in each of the 67 Senate districts. If there are more than one in a district we will connect you with each other. We have come to the realization that the Freethought community needs to organize to make their voice heard.

If you are interested in becoming a watchdog, con-

tact Bob Schmitz at allibobi@comcast.net (HofM) or info@mnatheists.org (MN Atheists) or (651) 735-1468. We will need your name, email address, phone number, Senate district number, state senator or state representative if known. If you do not know who represents you or what district you are in we can supply that information based on your address.

This is your chance to make a difference in how our state is governed!

Bob Schmitz
Chair



Mailbox

I was very impressed by Naomi Curland's letter about the treatment of animals in the January issue of the newsletter. I meant to respond but was away and distracted. So I was glad to see the fine response from Erica Klein in the February issue. The question is: what position have humanists taken on the treatment of animals? Since we don't have authorities who can state a position for all of us, we have to talk of trends and consensus statements or ongoing discussions among humanists and freethinkers.

Freethinkers, who came out of the 18th century Enlightenment and launched major movements in the 19th century, were primarily concerned with subjecting religious issues to independent, rational examination. Humanists, who came out of liberal religion early in the 20th century, were primarily concerned with moving from god-centered to human-centered religion (or philosophy later on). So, the orientation of both freethinkers and humanists was not primarily concerned with the ethical treatment of animals other than Homo sapiens. However, freethinkers and humanists were influenced by Darwin and modern science and realized that sentient animals could suffer like humans and should be treated humanely. Thus in Corliss Lamont's *Philosophy of Humanism* you find a call for the appreciation and humane treatment of animals. Statements of humanist principles often include a line like the one in Paul Kurtz's Affirmations of Humanism: "We want to...avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species."

It was not until a major freethinker and humanist philosopher named Peter Singer, and others, launch

(Letter, Continued on page 7)

A Rational and Poetic Death (It's How You Lived That Counts)

By Curt Leavitt

Perspective:

I'm writing this almost a year after the death of my son Rob, bringing together thoughts expressed at the funeral and from the passage of time.

My wife, Suzie, and I arrived at the funeral home early, at the same time as son Paul, his wife, Merav, and their twin seven-year old daughters, Sigal and Talya.

I was placing flowers on each side of the urn and a nice early photo of Rob, when I discovered the two girls standing beside me. "What are you doing, Grandpa?" I decided to tell the truth.

"Well ...uh ... the body of your uncle Rob after he died was placed in a special oven for people who have died and his ashes are in this urn. It's called cremation, and when people die, they are either cremated or their body is buried in a casket—where you also turn to earth or ashes, but more slowly."

"OK, Grandpa. Thank you." I watched them skip away.

Their mother, Merav, called us a couple of days later about the family conversation on the drive home. She had asked the girls, "What was the most meaningful part of the funeral to each of you?" Sigal piped up. "I liked the urn. I don't want to be buried. I want to be *'laminated'* like Uncle Rob." Talya chimed in matter-of-factly, "But it doesn't matter, Mom; you turn to ashes either way."

She's right. It doesn't matter how you're buried. It's how you lived that counts.

The Memorial:

The memorial gathering was for close family and friends. The first part of the service was mainly a "Humanist Memorial" with the father, the brothers and sisters reading a few words or telling a story about Rob. After the Humanist Memorial, a break in the service was followed by Christian prayer and expressions of faith for traditional religious family and friends who wished to stay on.

The "Remembrance" By His Father (excerpts from 2/05/08):

Several years ago, as his heart began to fail, Rob grew angry with the unfairness of approaching death and took out that anger on those around him. His actions resulted in a divorce that was not his wife, Pam's, fault.

After the divorce, for the sake of their children, they worked closely together to maximize the time Rob had with Brittany and Trenton. Most weeks he came over twice to cook supper, and he was a good cook. The weekend before his death he made plans with Pam to have them all go ice fishing, but his heart wouldn't let him put one foot in front of the other.

Others today will speak of his recent years and also his years as a younger man. I hope they won't leave out the mischievous years... I mean sometimes his life was an example of what not to do. But I'm going to speak about his first year of life in a German orphanage—that affected his entire life...

Suzie and I lived in Germany from 1961 to '63 where I taught the children of army personnel at a U.S. tank base near the Czech border. Germany was still in postwar poverty, their economy in shambles and orphanages understaffed. Many buildings were still pockmarked from shells.

Before we came back to the States, we adopted two Bavarian kids. Michael was lucky. We got him shortly after he was born so he spent no time in their terrible "children's homes."

Rob on the other hand (at one year of age when we got him) was badly undernourished. His legs were bent from rickets. The bone in his thumb was exposed from sucking to comfort himself. At that time, babies in those German "kinderheims" were seldom picked up. They were left in their cribs and bottles just propped in their mouths.

At age 10, our doctor found Rob had a serious heart murmur—very likely caused by the undernourishment in his first year. So much of our destiny is in the hands of fate. "Time and chance happen to us all"... but good fortune does not fall to us equally.

So, what can we learn from Rob's life? What can he teach us... besides that life isn't always fair? Especially in these last several years, he triumphed over adversity. His children know he loved them. He taught them to appreciate nature—what a valuable lesson. He taught us all courage in facing death.

But what is the main message? Humanists distinguish between beliefs of faith and judgment from sound evidence. We hold that no one has the right to judge others on ancient beliefs in the supernatural, but only on clear evidence of good or harm—as in science or a modern court of law. Likewise we judge the world around us, including death, on what we see. Our community of reason does not believe in a virtual life after death. We accept the evidence of the grave.

Our legacy and afterlife lies in our children, our

(Remembrance, Continued on page 7)

(Letter, Continued from page 5)

the animal liberation or rights movement in the 1970s that we concerned ourselves with the issue Naomi raises and engaged in the dialogue Erica encourages. At the May 1990 meeting of our humanist association I led a program and discussion on animal rights. We used Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* and his anthology *In Defense of Animals*. For an opposing view by a humanist philosopher we used *The Case for Animal Experimentation* by Michael Allen Fox. Since then I've notice occasional articles on the subject in humanist and freethought publications. The most recent was Robert M. Price, "The Human's Burden" in the Fourth Quarter 2007 issue of *Secular Nation*. Price argues against the concept of animal rights but for the duty of humans not to be cruel to animals, which would be degrading to our humanity.

I find myself in agreement with Naomi on the need to extend our humanist ethical concern and compassion to animals that can suffer and be willing to make some sacrifices and adjustments to alleviate farm animals that are subjected to a miserable existence. I agree with Price that this coheres with the core concept of human well being because we degrade ourselves when we are cruel.

It's been over 18 years since we had a program on this subject. Maybe it's time for another one.

Paul Heffron

(President, Continued from page 2)

support a building? These are things we must re-view as we move into the coming years.

The board is always looking for new people to bring us fresh approaches and dynamics. So if you are interested in helping taking Humanism to the next level, talk to one of the board members and let us know if you're interested in being part of the board. Now is the time to step forward! ▣

Condolences

Our deep condolences to Janet & Hiero Russell for the loss of their daughter, Teri, age 53, to sudden heart failure this past week.

Teri was cremated according to her wishes. An open house in her honor will be hosted by her parents Sunday, Feb. 28, from 1-4 p.m. at 1271 Roma Ave. in Roseville.

(Remembrance, Continued from page 6)

work, the values we pass on, and whatever we have done to make this a better world. That is the main message I hope to leave with you.

There are many versions of the following poem that also carry that message. It's generally attributed to Mary Frye, and probably addressed to a German Jewish friend in 1932. It is also possibly American Indian in origin or similar to one of their death verses. Here is my Humanist version.

Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there,
but in values that I taught and your good memories.
Memories that come with softly falling snow
and a thousand winds that blow.

Memories that come in fields of ripened grain
and gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in mornings hush, I'll be
the swift uplifting rush of birds in circled flight.

I'll be the starshine of the night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there,
but in my children and the work I've done,
and your good memories.

Curt Leavitt taught in the Minnesota State College system for 25 years and lives in Shoreview.

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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HUMANISTS OF MINNESOTA
PO Box 582997
Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997
Phone (651) 335-3800

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March 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.



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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: _____