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10:00 a.m.– Noon
Saturday
May 16, 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

“Affordable Health Care, Reproductive Health and Freedom”

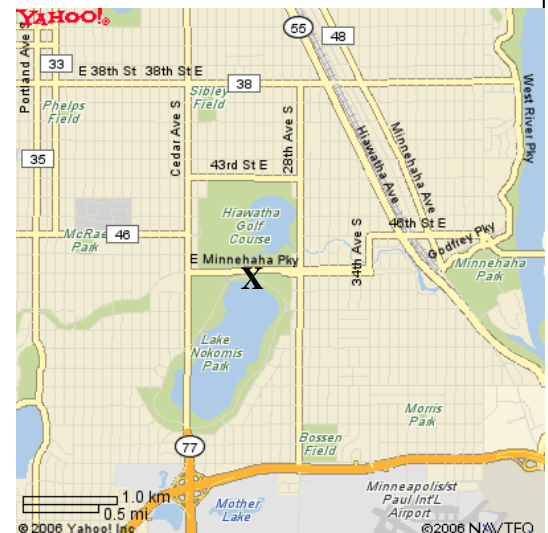
Timothy Stanley, Senior Director
Planned Parenthood

Saturday, May 16

For our May chapter meeting we will be joined by Timothy Stanley, Senior Director for Government Affairs for Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Executive Director of the Action Fund and its state political action committees.. He leads Planned Parenthood’s work to develop and implement organizing and political strategies that advance public policy supportive of affordable health care and reproductive health and freedom.

Prior to joining Planned Parenthood in 2006, Stanley provided strong leadership to NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota for more than eight years. He first joined NARAL in 1995 as a student organizing intern while completing graduate studies in public administration at Hamline University. During his tenure, Stanley improved the efficiency, reputation and political influence of the organization, and solidified and diversified its sources of funding. He has been the architect of many groundbreaking programs, including the statewide student organizing program and the first pro-choice field canvassing program in Minnesota in more than 15 years.

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

At our annual banquet in April our featured speaker, Dale McGowan, talked about steps we can take to help appeal to the 14-20 percent of Americans who check "no religion" in surveys. It's pretty basic stuff but is somewhat of an acquired skill for independent freethinkers such as ourselves. Dale said that most people are attending church not for the beliefs, but for social reasons, as a way to connect with a community. For years HofM has been concerned about disappearing, but that is no longer the case. Rather, we are looking for ways to expand and grow. Minnesota Atheists is exploring ways to expand their options and we need to look at doing some of the same things. So let me or other group officers and board

members know about social options you'd like to see the Humanists group offer. Should we do book clubs, movie nights, happy hours, discussion groups, community service projects? We can try many different options and drop those that don't work. However we need to know what your interests are.

In a related vein, it is exciting to see the growth in the number of people who say that they are not part of a religion. I frequently check on what the religious right says and some of their comments are pretty interesting. For example, Dr. R. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has a couple of posts on his blog talking about the atheists "coming out of the closet" and the country becoming "post Christian." Religious-right types are not quite used to dealing with open and happy humanists and atheists who are no longer seeing those words as insults. As more non-believers "come out," more of our neighbors will stop looking for satanic horns or other reasons to reject us, and therefore our views, and will come to accept us as just as "normal" as they are. At that point we shall really see more people coming to humanism.

Don't forget to come to the last chapter meeting of season (before the three-month summer hiatus) on May 16. Also try to come to the Freethought picnics this summer. These social events are great ways to get together and meet other freethinkers.

Humanists of Minnesota Officers

President - Scott Lohman, (612) 521-4766, scottl2605@aol.com

Vice President - Nathan Curland, (952) 928-4933, editor@humanistsofmn.org

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Secretary - Matt LaBo: (651) 788-2258, matthewlabo@gmail.com

Members of the board of directors -

Brad Bolin: (952) 201-0590, bradbolin@hotmail.com

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Beverly Hanson: (763) 560-7334

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, wjkahk@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)

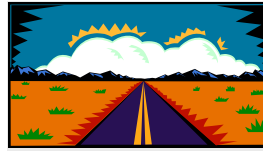
4th Sunday, 10:30 a.m., 4th Sunday Brunch!, Q Cumbers Restaurant, 7465 France Ave S., Edina.

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 dbeardsley@belleplaine.k12.mn.us.

David Beardsley

"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.



Opinion:

We, Too, Are Believers

by Beverly Hanson

As a freethinker, I subscribe to contemporary French philosopher Andre Comte-Sponville's view that there are only two beliefs.

Group A believes there is no god

Group B believes there is a god

Group A cannot prove they are right and that group B is wrong. Group B cannot prove they are right and that group A is wrong.

It seems simple enough to me that we should both strive to co-exist without vitriol or rancor from either side. Group A is not here to convert or be converted.

Where humans get into trouble is their creation of multitudes of "faiths" in which they try to convince/coerce others to believe. Only their specific view is correct (in their minds.) Often these people resort to violence in the name of their faith, or try to create laws governing us are based on their view.

I will defend everyone's right to their belief, but I will not accept their faith being pushed on me.

Humanists, Atheists, Freethinkers have just as strong a moral foundation as those who believe there is a god. I happen to think morality is part of our genetic code because it promotes the common good. Professor Jonathan Haidt (psychologist) of the University of Virginia is pursuing such research. On the April 5 Opinion Exchange (Star-Tribune), David Lebedoff's article spoke of George Orwell's atheism but emphasized people are moral because of a fear of hell. I couldn't disagree more. The article was speaking of our current economic collapse as a moral failing (if people really believe in hell they'd be good??).

Greed has always existed; it's just more practical and "glorified" today, it seems. I see no reason to blame lapses in morality on a lack of fear of "judgment day." The Gilded Age of the early 1900s was no different from today in spite of more people supposedly being more fearful of going to hell. Lebedoff concludes the article by stating that people make personal choices.

It seems to me the powerful and greedy few have always thought of their personal gains above all else. Their genetic code seems to lack the structure for morality.

The most recent *Discover* magazine has a book review (I'm on a wait list for it) for *Wild Justice* by Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce. They seem to have

(Opinion, Continued on page 6)



From the April Chapter Meeting

Explaining Humanism

by Paul Heffron

(Our April chapter meeting explored the topic "What is Humanism?" Twenty-seven people showed up on a lovely spring morning to watch a video featuring many American Humanist Association and HofM luminaries discuss their interpretations of the essence of Humanism. Many were newcomers who came specifically because of the topic. Much interesting discussion followed and this was continued by the small group that went to lunch afterwards. The following is short essay by HofM historian Paul Heffron on the topic.—Ed.)

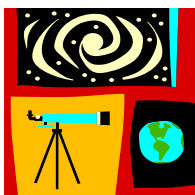
The word "humanism" at first referred to a type of learning introduced in the Renaissance. The word is still sometimes used that way. The word "humanities" derives from that usage, and scholars in the humanities are sometimes referred to as humanists.

But the word was used in a new way early in the last century to refer to what was regarded as a next step in American liberal religion, namely, dropping theism and supernaturalism. Humanism was regarded as a religion in a new sense of that word. Many Unitarians and others still regard it that way, but humanists associated with the AHA and the Council on Secular Humanism generally don't think they are doing religion and prefer to think of humanism as a philosophy of life or some other non-religious designation. The important thing is the human-based and nature-based system of views and values.

Humanism is sometimes meant to refer only to the values which are based on human well being, but we generally use the word in a broader sense to refer to our method (reliance on reason and evidence), our world view (naturalism) and our ethics or values (both personal and social).

Now that humanism has been around for almost a century, we can see it in a larger and very interesting context. We can see that the humanist movement of the 20th century was essentially much the same as the freethought movement of the 19th century (which grew out of the 18th century Enlightenment). We can see all of that as our heritage and see ourselves as both freethinkers and humanists. We can also see that these movements also took place in England

(Humanism, Continued on page 5)



Rock Stars of Science at Origins Symposium

By Lynn Fellman

Rusty-red rocks against an electric blue sky were an exact color match to the mix of brilliant intellect I knew to be in Phoenix on Monday. I had just flown into Sky Harbor Airport from Minneapolis, and any Minnesotan will tell you that we don't waste a day like that indoors. It was a sparkling spring morning alive with color and radiant sunshine. But I happily joined 3,000 other science fans, inside a dark auditorium for a full 12-hour day of physics, cosmology, biology and more.

You didn't hear about it? It was the much-anticipated and sold-out public event called the "Origins Symposium." The media may not report it because they don't get science. But regular, everyday people do, and are hungry for it. We came to hear the new and what we know will be stunning discoveries about how the world works. We filled up the concert hall on the campus at Arizona State University with anticipation.

Monday morning began with an amazing lineup of rock-star-status scientists who spoke for an hour, one after another, standing lecture style at a podium with PowerPoint-style visuals on a large screen. Sound boring? No—it was mesmerizing for five hours straight. Steven Pinker, Don Johanson, Brian Greene, Richard Dawkins, Craig Venter, and Lawrence Krauss presented their unique views on evolution, origins and their research with charismatic delivery. We laughed and cheered and bonded knowing we were witnessing an historic event. As the late afternoon panel of six—count 'em, six—Nobel laureates came on stage we stayed right where we were. Ira Flatow, the nationally known science journalist and host of radio program "Science Friday," expertly juggled the egos and zingers that the physicists on either side of string theory tossed at each other.

Listening to these brilliant minds was like hearing a symphony performed by the original composer. The world of ideas and the appreciation of beauty is an aesthetic the arts share with the sciences. This trans-disciplinary approach is one that Michael Crow, President of ASU, and Lawrence Krauss, physicist and director of the "Origins Initiative" are developing. Along with college courses, the Origins Initiative will also reach out to the public and journalists through workshops and future events.

Between presentations I noticed how many in the

audience were curious about the people around them. We found each other interesting and smart. We're creating a trend, riding a wave of discovery, taking part in a cultural transition after all. Many people told me how relieved they are to see our intellectual lives respected after the past eight years of oppression. So with spring and science in the air I felt a little giddy heading back to Minneapolis. I'll revisit my bookmarked pages at the Origins web site during the year, watching how the Initiative develops and hoping to catch next year's big event.

Lynn Fellman is an artist taking part in the wave of discoveries rolling in from the human genome, using population genetics in her fine art. She is an HofM member.

(Humanism, Continued from page 4)

and the Commonwealth countries and in Europe generally. Freethought and humanist organizations have been emerging all over the world and are united in international umbrella organizations.

We can also see that many freethinkers in the late 19th century referred to themselves as agnostics. In the 20th century they increasingly referred to themselves as atheists, and now we have many atheist organizations in America and throughout the world. It's my observation that some atheists use that word only to denote the absence of theism and generally use "freethought" and sometimes "humanist" to refer to their other views and values. Others use the word "atheist" to refer to their freethought views and humanistic values as well as their lack of theism. Sometimes atheism is construed so as to connote humanism, and sometimes humanism is construed so as to connote atheism. We have now reached a point where humanists and atheists are working together in coalitions. This is increasingly happening everywhere and at all levels. A startling example of this development is the departure of Fred Edwords from the AHA to work as the executive director the United Coalition of Reason formed for the specific purpose of building coalitions.

One last thing: Because of our standpoint as humanists and freethinkers, authority—in so far as we have any—is placed in our method of reason and evolving consensus, when it comes to defining humanism or taking positions. We don't have anyone with the authority to define and prescribe things for all of us. So, what I've written is merely one person's attempt to describe what has taken place and what we have generally adopted. As such, it's subject to debate and revision.

We like it that way.



Mailbox

(The following letter, from an HofM Board member, appeared in the St. Paul Pioneer Press.)

Don't Blame Secular Humanism

In his letter ("Faith in action," March, 27) Peter Rother blames the "secular humanist culture" and the lack of religion for today's ills.

As a secular humanist, I cannot help but notice that I am surrounded by churches (tax exempt), the cross and other displays of religion as I move about the community. It should be evident to the casual observer that religion has been given ample opportunity to bring about moral behavior, and has failed. In my 72 years, I have also witnessed the unending encroachment of religion into government, without noticeable advances in civility and wisdom.

Since abandoning religion, I have come to know many atheists, agnostics, skeptics and humanists. I can attest that they are among the most ethical and compassionate individuals I have encountered. Secular humanists do not object to religion, but they do believe in the rule of law and church-state separation and object to religious beliefs being imposed through law.

The secular conscience is based on reason and rational observation, rather than the authoritarian God described by Rother. The problem with the latter is that there are thousands of sects in the world, all with their own interpretation of God's immutable will.

Robert L Schmitz
Oakdale, MN

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evidence that non-human animals are also capable of moral behavior. I look forward to reading it to see if it bolsters my view that most of us are genetically engineered for morality because it promotes the survival of the species.

I do recommend the small, quick read *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality* by Comte-Sponville (which found me when I was in a book store crawl recently). It is for those who wish to learn more of the "two beliefs only" philosophy.

Humanist Ladies' Spring Tea

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

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.

Congratulations to our New HofM Board

President: Scott Lohman
Vice President: Nathan Curland
Secretary: Matt Lebo
Treasurer: Ron Scribner
At Large:

Brad Bolin
Juliet Branca
Bev Hanson
Bob Schmitz
Gwen Scribner

Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

West Metro Chapter. Saturday, May 23, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Why Darwin Still Matters, A Plea for the Relevance of the History of Science" by Dr. Mark Barrello, PhD, University of MN. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Ln. W., Minnetonka. \$7 for light lunch, \$4 for coffee/speaker. RSVP think-rsvp@mark-paquete.com.

St. Paul Chapter. Sunday, May 10, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Using the Internet as a Research Tool," by Robin Veal, research librarian at Capella University. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP lhutt@comcast.net.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, May 11, 7:00 p.m. "Why Darwin Still Matters, A Plea for the Relevance of the History of Science" by Dr. Mark Barrello, PhD, University of MN. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

For additional information, visit CriticalThinkingClub.org.

News from the AHA

The American Humanist Association (AHA), of which HofM is an affiliate, has had a very active year thus far with many new activities in different areas. Here is a listing of some key items:

- In announcing its annual conference, "Humanism Rising" (June 5-7, 2009 in Tempe, Arizona), the AHA named local outspoken UofM-Morris biologist and blogger PZ Myers as its 2009 Humanist of the Year, saying: "He is a tireless advocate for reason, science and critical thinking." Myers is best known for his popular award-winning blog, "Pharyngula." HofM is proud to have Dr. Myers as a member.
- The AHA announces that its members successfully met the "Million Dollar Challenge" by contributing the \$1 million that Lou Appignani offered to match dollar for dollar if the monies were received by the end of 2008. These donations will help the AHA develop more and better programs and initiatives.
- The AHA has taken the lead in the Darwin Day Celebration (DDC). The DDC began in 1995 when members of the Humanist community became enthusiastic about the possibilities of celebrating Darwin Day. In 2000, the DDC was incorporated as a nonprofit to promote an annual "International Celebration of Darwin, Science and Humanity." In 2007, the DDC board of directors wanted it to become a permanent celebration and discussed which national organization would be best situated to promote it into the foreseeable future. This responsibility was accepted by the AHA. In 2009, for Darwin's bicentennial birthday, there were over 700 events held around the world in more than 45 countries.

Maple Grove Discussion Group

Saturday, May 9, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: "Judicial Decision Making" by Judge Tom Wexler. 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



Day of Reason Celebration at the State Capitol

Thursday, May 7, 12:00-1:30 PM

Meet at the Rotunda of the Minnesota State Capitol in St Paul. Short presentations on the separation of church and state will be provided while religious people gather outside to celebrate their National Day of Prayer.

- In February the AHA's legislative team and its allies successfully lobbied the U.S. Senate to defeat an attempt by Senator Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) to add an amendment to the Economic Recovery package that would have struck constitutional protections that prohibit government money from being used for maintaining, renovating or building facilities that are used primarily for religious activities. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 43-54 and is the first time the Senate has had a direct vote on a church-state issue of this nature in several years.

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

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May 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

Name: _____

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City/State/Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

e-mail: _____

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

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

Second Member at same address: _____