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Lunch with Humanists!

**10:00 a.m.– Noon  
 Saturday  
 January 21st, 2012**

**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***

***“Exploring Issues of Race, Poverty & Social Justice”***

***by Prof. Nekima Levy-Pounds, University of St. Thomas***

***Saturday, January 21st***

Humanists of Minnesota is pleased to welcome Nekima Levy-Pounds to our January Chapter meeting. In this talk, Professor Levy-Pounds will offer insights on the racial disparities that impact communities of color in Minnesota, some of the underlying causes of the disparities and recommendations for change. Come prepared to gain a fresh awareness of the problems that exist and new ideas for being part of the solutions.



Nekima Levy-Pounds is an Associate Professor of Law at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and the founder and director of the Community Justice Project, an award-winning civil rights legal clinic. Levy-Pounds teaches and trains law students to use the law as a tool to advance the cause of justice in society, especially on behalf of the poor and working poor. Levy-Pounds is a frequent commentator in the media on civil rights issues, a lecturer, public speaker, and scholar-activist in local, national, and international forums. Levy-Pounds focuses on issues at the intersection of race, poverty, and the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, as well as in challenging laws and policies that produce disparate outcomes for poor communities of

(ChapterMeeting, Continued on page 5)

*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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2012 looks to be an interesting political year. There is, of course, a presidential election, as well as elections for a slew of other offices. I expect that issues related to choosing candidates and position platforms will take up a lot of energy and time for many people. Here in Minnesota we have to vote on an amendment on whether discrimination should be added to our state constitution. I've probably shown my hand already by phrasing it in that way, however it's pretty much what the proposed amendment is going to do.

At the end of the 2011 legislative session the Minnesota Legislature pushed through an amendment to the state's constitution that would confine marriage to just between a man and woman. The marriage amendment is quite simple in its language. It reads as follows: "Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota." Even though it is simple in concept it will mean that GLBT relationships are NOT to be considered the equivalent of marriage in the eyes of the

law. It will not allow relationships that have been in existence as long as any heterosexual marriage to have the same legal standing as that of the heterosexual marriage. The supporters of the amendment say that civil unions or some other term can have the same legal standing. Outfront Minnesota, a local GLBT support organization, has reviewed Minnesota law and found over 500 instances where there are legal differences between what rights married couples have and those of same sex couples. At this point civil unions or their equivalent do not provide same-sex couples with the same legal rights as marriage does, even as it burden's them with a lot of extra paperwork.

The reason that the amendment is being pushed is at least two-fold. One, is that DOMAs (Defense of Marriage Acts) are being found unconstitutional all over the country and Minnesota's is being challenged in the courts. Two, it's harder to remove an amendment from the constitution. And possibly a third reason is that some parts of the political spectrum want controversial social issues to get their people out and voting. In every other state that this amendment or something similar has been on a state's ballot, it has passed.

For me, the Humanist approach is that the amendment is wrong. You are welcome to your own beliefs about homosexuality; mine are that it is a perfectly normal part of human sexuality. Stopping one group of people from forming legal relationships is NOT going to solve the problems with marriage ( i.e. decreasing numbers, high divorce rate). The proper way to work for a better society is for full equality for all minority groups. Let's make Minnesota the first state to defeat an anti-GLBT marriage amendment.



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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 ETC.

**Sundays 10:30 a.m.—Noon**, *Blasphemers' Brunch*, Qcumbers, 7465 France Avenue South, Edina, MN 55435

**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.

**Mondays, 5:00-6:30 p.m.**, *Atheists for Human Rights Happy Hour*, 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. Contact George Kane, nup@minn.net or (651) 488-8225.

**2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m.**, *Freethought Dinner Social*, Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave S., Bloomington. Call Bob/Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

**3rd Monday, 7:00 p.m.**, *Central Minnesota Friends Free of Theism*, Public Library, St. Cloud. Contact info@freeoftheism.org

**1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.—1:00p.m.**, *Freethought Lunch*, Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Call Bob/Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

**2nd Thursday, evening**, *Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT)*, Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Bill Kass, wjkhahk@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) 781-1420.

## OTHER EVENTS

**2nd Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.**, *Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors meeting*. Open to all members. Contact Scott Lohman at scottl2605@aol.com.

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

"Humanist Views," our weekly Cable program, airs at **8:30 p.m. Wednesdays** on MTN Channel 16.



## Save the Planet, Go Green!

Are you still getting your newsletter via snail mail (about half our membership still do)? Not only will you save us the cost of printing and postage but you will get the newsletter in living color (instead of B/W)! And you will feel better about not wasting those trees!

Just drop us a note at [editor@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmn.org) and tell us you want to Go Green!



## Is It Time to Renew Your Membership?

50% of HofMn memberships were due at the end of the year. Are you one of them? Please check the date on your newsletter label and renew your membership by the mm/yy shown! Thank you for saving us the cost of a reminder! (If you get your newsletter via e-mail, look for the e-mail renewal reminder!)

## Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

**St. Paul Chapter.** Sunday, January 8th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Labor Unions" by Chase Brandau. Kelly Inn, Hwy. I-94, St. Paul. Breakfast \$10, lecture only \$3. RSVP [criticalthinkingclub@gmail.com](mailto:criticalthinkingclub@gmail.com)

**West Metro Chapter.** Saturday, January 28th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Us vs. Them" by George Paulos. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Lane W., Minnetonka.

**Stillwater Chapter.** Monday, January 9th, 7:00 p.m.: "Voter Photo ID: Fraud Catcher or Vote Snatcher?" by Kathy Bonnifield, Citizens for Election Integrity of Minnesota. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

For additional information, visit:  
[www.meetup.com/Critical-Thinking-Club/calendar](http://www.meetup.com/Critical-Thinking-Club/calendar)

*Pictures from the Freethought Follies and Solstice Celebration  
Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>!*





*Humanism in Action*

## *Guardian ad Litem*

*By Norma Adams*

*(Norma Adams is a member of Humanists of Minnesota.)*

Becoming a Guardian ad Litem for Juvenile Court in Hennepin County was one of the best decisions I made after retiring. I thought this type of volunteering was a way to do something productive with my time. However, it has turned out to be so much more.

Here is the official explanation for what a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is: A GAL is a trained volunteer that advocates for abused and neglected children to ensure that their needs do not go unheard. Different from a legal guardian, Guardians ad Litem has no control over the person or property of the child and does not provide a home for the child. The Guardian ad Litem does not function as the child's attorney and does not provide direct services to the child.

The term "ad litem" means "for the suit" or "for the court case". It is an old concept—in the Anglo Saxon times, at common law, the king appointed a guardian ad litem to speak on behalf of the child or incompetent person. Today judges appoint community volunteers who have been trained as a GAL to advocate for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in a safe, permanent home.

When the court is making decisions that will affect the child's future, the child needs and deserves a spokesperson, an objective adult who can provide independent information about the best interests of the child. While other parties in the case are concerned about the child, the GAL is the only party whose sole concern is the best interest of the child and he or she is assigned as an advocate for the child for the duration of the court process.

When I accept a case, I visit with the child or children and then continue to stay in touch with them until the case is dismissed from the court. Many times my first contact with the child is at a shelter where they have been placed by the court. Later, they may be placed in a foster home or treatment center. Eventually they may be reunited with the family if the issues that caused the neglect or abuse have been addressed. If that didn't happen, then the court will proceed to terminate parental rights and the child will be placed for adoption. During this time—usually about 18 months— I am the consistent person in the child's life.

Along the way, I also make contact with the other people who are involved with the child such as social workers, therapists, biological parents, foster parents, teachers and others. I gather information and combine it with common sense as the basis for my reports about the best interests of the child. I give reports to the judge in court but also have a voice in various planning sessions with professionals.

I have gained so much from my experiences with these kids. To see their faces light up when they see me at court, listen to their stories of adventures in a new school, hear their sometimes unspoken fears and hopes for the future and to know that I am playing even a small part in helping them to find a safe, permanent home is very humbling. I am in awe of the resilience of the human spirit in these kids and am privileged to be a witness to it. It is not always easy and more than once I've literally kicked a wall in frustration (my walls are concrete). But then I walk it off and get back to the job at hand.

Here is the commercial: We need more Guardians ad Litem. There are about 3000 abused or neglected children who come before the court in Ramsey and Hennepin County every year. Most of these are children of color who are poor. They are caught up in a complicated court process and deserve to have an advocate who can speak up for their best interest. If you want to know more about becoming a GAL, contact the Guardian ad Litem program in the Fourth Judicial District in Hennepin County or Second Judicial District in Ramsey County. They will provide the training (about 40 hours), support and supervision. ■

*(Chapter Meeting, Continued from page 1)*

color. Levy-Pounds was recently appointed as chairperson of the Minnesota State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and was awarded the 2011 Shanara Gilbert Award by the American Association of Law Schools. Levy-Pounds also serves on the Board of Directors of the Minneapolis Foundation and Brotherhood, Inc. ■

### *Maple Grove Discussion Group*

*Saturday, January 14th, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.:*

*"Overcoming Fear for Quantum Leaps of Change," by Jane Barrash, the Continuum Center. Champps Americana, 13521 80th Circle No., Maple Grove. Breakfast \$16.50; coffee only \$5. Register at [landforsale@visi.com](mailto:landforsale@visi.com) or call Laurie at (763) 420-4757.*



## December Chapter Meeting

### “The Reason for the Season”

Summarized by *Nathan Curland  
& Paul Heffron*

There were 36 persons in attendance at the Saturday, December 17 meeting at Nokomis Community Center to hear J.B. Andersen talk about the ‘Reason for the Season’. During the announcements Paul did a tribute to Christopher Hitchens who had just died the day before.

The excellent PowerPoint presentation by educator J. B. Andersen, of the University of Minnesota’s Osher Lifetime Learning Center, encompassed the great periods of human existence which he divided into Nomadic, Agricultural and New Age. He discussed how early humans were Nomads which are fundamentally small leaderless communal groups where everyone knew how to do the various tasks. The culture was static with little change over long periods of time, were formed around kinship groups (kin, clan, tribe), were mother-cult oriented involving pantheism/magic and fundamentally non-violent against other humans.

The shift to an Agricultural society, with the subsequent formation of villages and the arts of husbandry and farming, brought with it an increased need/desire for ownership (land, tools etc.) This, in turn, led to a patriarchal society from the need to know who your children really were so that they could participate in and inherit property. Warfare became a highly organized and integral part of civilization. Religion arose from the ability of those who observed the timing of the seasons to determine for the community when was the right time to plant, harvest etc. The priestly class thereby created calendars, festival days and observances which they then controlled.

Then relatively recently the agricultural civilization started a transition toward what Andersen calls a New Age civilization. He theorized that we are still in this transition period and that it remains to be seen what shape the forces of modernism will give to this post-agricultural civilization. This transition period is marked by massive rapid changes, social problems, polarization, young teaching the old, idiosyncratic art, changes in religious outlook (participation vs. meaning) etc. There is a search for universal common ground as the older beliefs and ways lose their hold. What do we preserve and what do we discard?

After his presentation Andersen handed out a list of

discussion topics. We broke into small groups for this purpose. In one discussion, we talked about how there appear to be universal features forming of this new age such as a focus on science and human rights.

We had 20 people come to Carbone’s for lunch after the meeting (which is a record for this venue.) ▣



### ‘Lunch with Humanists’ Continues!

By *Mark Thoson*

We have been very pleased with the increased response from our membership to the Lunch options we have been providing after some of our Chapter Meetings. The new seating arrangement, and the extra time for socializing seem to have improved the

(Lunch, Continued on page 7)

(Lunch, Continued from page 6)

feeling of community for our group. The board greatly appreciates your participation. If you have any other suggestions on these changes we're all ears.

For the January 21st meeting, Lunch With Humanists returns to catered lunch at the Nokomis Community Center from noon to 1 PM. Fat Lorenzo's did a wonderful job at providing Italian fare in October and word is that their PIZZA is equally as delicious. So that's what we'll be ordering after our Chapter meeting. They make New York style, hand-tossed thin crust pizzas. We'll get different kinds of toppings, vegetarian options as well, and a dinner salad too.

Cost will be \$10.00 /person.

If you have internet access please go to our meetup.com site to sign up in advance and answer our polling questions so we can accurately order ahead. If you do not have internet access, leave me a note at (612) 226-9132. ■



*Scott Lohman presents a plethora of gifts from our generous Winter Solstice attendees to Julia Meyer from The Bridge for Runaway Youth, our local solstice charity.*

***“The man who views the world at 50 the same that he did at twenty, has wasted 30 years of his life.”***

***-Muhammad Ali***

## ***Cable Program***

Kammy Lyon of Minnesota Skepchicks and Minnesota Skeptics was Scott Lohman's guest at the HofMn December Cable taping. Kammy and Scott discussed Humanism and Skepticism.

Look for it (and other podcasts) in the near future on our website at [humanistsofmn.org](http://humanistsofmn.org)



## **HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS**

**Editor**, Nathan Curland

**Editorial Committee** - Brad Bolin, Dale Handeen, Mark Thoson

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: [editor@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmn.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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January 2012

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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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- (R) Regular, \$35.00
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\*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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Washington, DC 20009-7125  
[www.humanist.net](http://www.humanist.net)

Council for Secular Humanism  
PO Box 664  
Amherst, NY 14226  
[www.secularhumanism.org](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_