

The Minnesota Atheist

Make it a PZ Myers Weekend!

Internationally acclaimed science-atheist blogger PZ Myers (<http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula>) will be in the Twin Cities on Saturday and Sunday, February 19th and 20th. Professor Myers will give different presentations at each of the three following venues.



Humanists of Minnesota
Saturday, Feb. 19, 10:00 a.m.-noon
Nokomis Recreation Center

2401 East Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis
Myers will present on the topic “The Evolution of Creativity.” Lunch will be held afterward at a nearby restaurant

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Atheists Talk Radio

Sunday, Feb. 20, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

KTNF AM 950

<http://www.am950ktnf.com/listen>

Interviewed by Greg Laden.

Minnesota Atheists

Sunday, Feb. 20, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Roseville Public Library

Myers’ presentation will be preceded by a Minnesota Atheists business meeting, which will include **elections to our board of directors** (see page 4), and followed by a trip to a restaurant.

Please join us.

IF YOU GO

What: Minnesota Atheists Monthly Meeting followed by Meyers’ presentation

Where: Roseville Public Library, 2180 Hamline Ave. N., Roseville

When: Sunday, January 16

1:00-1:15 p.m. - Social Time

1:15-1:45 p.m. - Business Meeting, including board elections

1:45-2:00 p.m. - Social Time

2:00-3:30 p.m. - Presentation

4:00 p.m. - Dinner at:

Panda Garden Buffet

1706 Lexington Ave. N., Roseville

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MNA Meetup members: 833
 Life memberships: 30

Honorary Members
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 Annie Laurie Gaylor
 Dick Hewetson
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The Minnesota Atheist

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Minnesota Atheists is an affiliate of Atheist Alliance International, American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Council for Secular Humanism, and International Humanist and Ethical Union.

Submit material for the newsletter to editor@mnatheists.org. Submissions may be edited. Publication is not guaranteed.

Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly neighborhood atheism in order to:

- Provide a community for atheists;
- Educate the public about atheism; and
- Promote separation of state and church.

Minnesota Atheists Mission Statement

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The New Year



by August
Berkshire

I'm very excited about our upcoming year. We start out having restored our membership to the level it was at two years ago, mostly through lapsed members having renewed, but also through gaining many new members (welcome!).

We will once again have a strong, talented board of directors, supplemented by numerous other leaders and volunteers. Nevertheless, we can always use more help. At the moment, we could use a volunteer to help lead an advertising campaign. We also need someone to submit listings of our activities to media calendars. It's not very hard and we will provide the necessary information.

We are very pleased to announce that our new public relations officer is Emily Matejcek (emily.matejcek@mnaatheists.org), who takes over from George Kane. Emily has professional experience in writing and distributing press releases, as well as experience with the internet, websites, and fundraising, and she has hit the ground running.

In addition to an ad campaign, I anticipate that we will enlarge our Speakers Bureau and be more pro-active about seeking opportunities to present atheism and related topics to the general public.

We are also investigating the possibility of co-hosting a conference with our friends and colleagues, the Humanists of Minnesota. We will also solidify our connections with the Campus Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists (C.A.S.H.) at the U. of M. and other student freethought groups in the state. We should also work more with Camp Quest of Minnesota to reach out to families with children. I would like us to do a better job at creating a sense of "freethought family" among our members and among the various groups in Minnesota.

On April 22 and 23, 2011, American Atheists will be hosting their national convention in Des Moines, Iowa. Check out their website (atheists.org) to see the great speakers they have lined up, including Christopher Hitchens.

Finally, one of our long-time members and volunteers, Matthew Richardson, has an article in the newsletter this month (see page 9). He proposes that Minnesota Atheists, as an organization, officially take a position that the United States end its War on Drugs and legalize drug use for adults. One of the arguments he makes is that the ACLU has already taken this position.

There are two main issues to consider regarding this proposal. First, is the issue itself something that merits support? Second, is this the type of issue that falls within the parameters of what we should be addressing?

This issue brings up a good point. Minnesota Atheists belongs to its members and any member can bring forward an idea, make a motion, and present it to the rest of the membership for a vote. For an item that might be controversial and needs a good conversation before a vote takes place, it's good to allow time for that, as Matthew is doing. He is soliciting opposing viewpoints before we vote on the matter.

Should our April or May meeting have speakers on both sides of the debate on the War on Drugs and their legalization, after which we will take a vote as to Minnesota Atheists' official position on the matter? This seems like a reasonable approach. What do you think? Send your responses to editor@mnaatheists.org or let us know by phone or at our monthly meetings.

Minnesota Atheists Board Nominations & Elections

Nominations for the Minnesota Atheists board of directors occurred during the business portion of our **January 16, 2011** meeting at the Roseville Library. **Elections** will be held during

the business portion of our **February 20, 2011** meeting, which will also be held at the Roseville Library.

Candidates' statements are as follows:

Nominee for President: August Berkshire:



It has been an honor to be president this past year and I look forward to doing it for another year. I believe my experience and connections will help us network and grow.

I am especially interested in developing a sense of family among our members and encouraging more people, especially women, to step forward into official leadership positions. I'd also like to see how we could make our organization more kid-friendly.

This will be a busy year, with more intense monitoring of our state legislature and an anticipated ad campaign and conference and other attempts to increase our outreach into the community.

I am so grateful for the many leaders, volunteers, and members that we have. Because of you, we are able to bring positive atheism to Minnesota and, through our podcasts, to the rest of the world.

Nominee for Associate President: Mike Haubrich:



I am a recovered Catholic atheist who has been a member of the Minnesota Atheists for four years. I have been involved in several activities with the group, including hosting the radio show *Atheists Talk*. I look to promote a Minnesota in which the contributions of non-religious citizens have as much say in our society and its ethics as the religious do. I am a strong supporter of science education and find life on this Pale Blue Dot to be awesome enough without worrying about pleasing a Creator.



Nominee for Chair: George Kane:



During my 15 years of membership I have served Minnesota Atheists in a variety of roles. I have served on the board of directors for 13 years, eight of those as secretary, but also including a term as president and my current office as chair. My other service for the organization includes a variety of outreach beyond our modest community. I am technical director on *Atheists Talk* cable TV as well as a frequent interviewer. I am also an occasional interviewer on *Atheist Talk* Radio, and in the past I was a frequent interviewer on the now defunct *Freethought Forum*. I write the "News and Notes" column on church/state separation issues, the cryptogram and other articles as needed for this newsletter. In 2000, I started a Freethought Toastmasters Club in Saint Paul, the second Toastmasters Club in the nation formed especially for the development of Freethinkers. I have been the organizer for many social events such as the spaghetti dinners.

Minnesota Atheists Board Nominations & Elections (continued)

Nominee for Associate Chair: Steve Petersen



I am a candidate for Associate Chair as I am qualified if needed to fill in as Associate Chair. My goal for 2011 is to work to enable atheists to be viewed as a valid position in our society. The organization of Minnesota Atheists gives each individual atheist assets that facilitate our social connections and political activism. Almost every function of Minnesota Atheists has a social aspect. We get together to share meals, books, movies, meetings, and political activism all with a social cohesion that binds us together for a common need. That need is to use our voice to try and bring some sanity to a society that practices irrational behaviors daily. Together our voice has a better chance of being heard in the crowded room of noise. I look forward to the next year of activism.

Nominee for Treasurer: Chris Matthews



I have been a long-time supporter of Minnesota Atheists; especially interested in the group's political efforts to help keep government separate from church influence. I have recently become more active, helping out as Assistant Treasurer and attending meetings. It is clear that there are many great people who contribute to the success of the group. As a native Minnesotan, a long-time atheist, and a person who values quality time with my computers, my cat, and sometimes my friends, I am happy to have this opportunity.

Nominee for Secretary: Rick Rohrer:



I would like to serve Minnesota Atheists as the Secretary on the Board of Directors. I take the Secretary's role seriously, carefully recording actions and commitments at the Board meetings, and improving accountability in the organization. I have broad experience serving in leadership positions on the Boards of various non-profit organizations, notably YouthCARE, Humanists of Minnesota, Camp Quest of Minnesota, and Minnesota Atheists. I draw from this experience in fulfilling my fiduciary duties as a Board member. I look forward to serving you.

Nominee for for Director-at-Large: Andy Flamm



I have served on the Board in the past, including two years as Treasurer, and I am running once again in order to continue contributing to the organization as best I can. My primary objectives are to enhance the community of atheists we have developed here in Minnesota and to get the word out about what we offer. I encourage members and friends to contact the Board with their suggestions and offers of assistance. **Nominee**

Continued on page 6

Minnesota Atheists Board Nominations & Elections (continued)

Nominee for Director-at-Large: Eric Jayne:



I was born and raised in a very conservative Christian home in Des Moines, Iowa. Although my family attended Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist churches, we settled at an Evangelical Free church on the city's east side—and it was there that I was baptized at the age of 13. During my senior year in high school, as I learned more about other religions and their popularity, I began to self-identify as agnostic. By the time I moved to Minnesota and started a family I realized that I am an atheist because I simply have no theological beliefs. I eventually stumbled upon the Minnesota Atheists organization and started attending events. Now I organize some Minnesota Atheists events myself including the monthly Burnsville book club discussions and occasional tongue-in-cheek debaptisms. I am looking forward to advance my involvement as a member on the Minnesota Atheists board.

Nominee for Director-at-Large: Robin Raianiemi:



I believe that Minnesota Atheists, with its many wonderful members, presents a positive vision for a life without religion. We've been an upbeat presence at many events here in Minnesota, and over in Wisconsin. That needs to continue. We need smiling faces, and fun people for these events, and a positive attitude will translate into a welcome presence in our communities (and, ideally, new members!). I'd like to see Minnesota Atheists have an even more robust presence at GLBT rallies; if there's any group out there who could benefit from a non-theological worldview, it is that community. I would like to see more GLBT people become members, and supporters of Minnesota Atheists! (And hey, I don't want to be the only transgendered member!)

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

“Bcxim Kjr zjf oxmwik oh xi xbchwqb!”

-Fwnma Khfdxwq, xb bch hir jz
bch Kjurhi Kujlh Xexfrq.

(Answer on page 14)

Mount Soledad Cross Opponents Win the Latest Decision

News and Notes



by George Kane

Since I started writing this column in 2001, I have covered litigation over the Mt. Soledad Cross many times. It has been of particular interest to me because I could see the cross from Rancho Bernardo, where I lived in the early '90s before I came to Minnesota. I think that we are likely no closer to a resolving the fate of the cross now than we were when I lived about 20 miles away from it.

In early January, a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the cross was still in violation of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, even though it was now owned by the federal government rather than the county of San Diego. This overturned a 2008 trial court ruling that held that the cross was permissible because, as written by Judge Larry Alan Burns, "the memorial at Mount Soledad, including its Latin cross, communicates the primarily nonreligious messages of military service, death and sacrifice. As such, despite its location on public land, the memorial is Constitutional."

Plaintiffs in the case include the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America, several local residents, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Litigation began in 1989, but the case outlived the original plaintiff, Phillip K. Paulson.

The County of San Diego, the original defendant in the case, first transferred ownership of the cross itself to the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association, a private company created solely to circumvent one court ruling, and then transferred the hill-top park to the federal government to reprise that slight-of-hand when it was faced by a court order to remove the cross or pay daily fines.

But, of course, we have reached this point before in the battle to remove the cross. The appeals court returned the case to the trial court in San Diego to decide whether the cross will have to be removed, or if there is a way that it can be modified to correct the Establishment Clause violation.

In the 50-page ruling by the appeals court, Judge M. Margaret McKeown, a Clinton appointee, re-examined the history of the Soledad cross. She concluded that it remains a "predominantly religious symbol" despite

efforts since the 1990s to reinvent the site by installing around the base of the cross hundreds of plaques and photographs honoring fallen soldiers.

"The history and absolute dominance of the Cross are not mitigated by the belated efforts to add less significant secular elements to the Memorial," McKeown wrote.

The Appellate Court explained why its ruling nevertheless does not yet order the cross to be removed: "This result does not mean that the Memorial could not be modified to pass constitutional muster, nor does it mean that no cross can be part of this veterans' memorial. We take no position on those issues."

There are a few ways this case may develop. The trial court could order the cross to be moved, or propose remedies by which the Establishment Clause violation could be rectified. The federal government, the defendant in the case, could ask a larger panel of the appeals court to review the panel's decision. This is unlikely because the Ninth Circuit is considered to be liberal and likely to affirm the ruling by the three judge panel. The administration could also appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, to determine once and for all the fate of the cross. Cross supporters are hoping for this because the current court has demonstrated a weak interpretation of the Establishment Clause.

Or the president could instruct his Justice Department not to appeal the case and simply order the cross removed. Given Obama's record of obeisance to the religious right, this is extremely unlikely.

Three Republican congressional representatives from San Diego County have already introduced a bill to stop the court from ordering removal of the cross. The bill, authored by Representatives Duncan Hunter, Darrell Issa and Brian Bilbray would expressly allow religious symbols that are part of military monuments. This would raise the question, of course, of whether such a law could itself withstand Establishment Clause scrutiny.

Letter from the Bridge

This letter was sent to Minnesota Atheists (care of member Shirley Moll) following our gift to the Bridge. Items were collected at the Freethought Follies, held in December 2010:



December 30, 2010

Shirley Moll
Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 6261
Minneapolis, MN 55406-0261

Dear Shirley,

Thank you so much for the basic need and gift items which we received on Sunday, December 19, 2010. Your generosity makes an immediate difference in the lives of the runaway and homeless youth at The Bridge for Youth. The holidays are a hard time for youth at The Bridge, but because of your support they're also full of hope – hope for reuniting with their families, hope for never having to spend another night on the street, hope for a better future.

So thank you for doing your part to support youth and families in crisis. We will make sure that these items are used wisely and given to the youth who need them the most. On behalf of the many youth and families assisted each year by your generous support for The Bridge for Youth, our most sincere gratitude.

Thank you,

Chelsea Miller
Chelsea Miller
Development Coordinator

Thank you to all our atheist and humanist friends! Another great celebration. Thank you for the invite.

The Bridge for Youth is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, to which contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law; no goods or services were provided in exchange for this donation.

THE BRIDGE FOR YOUTH | 1111 WEST 22ND STREET | TEL 612.377.8800
WWW.BRIDGEFORYOUTH.ORG | MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55405 | FAX 612.377.6426

Volunteer Opportunity

by J.T. Eberhard

My name is JT Eberhard (you may recognize me as the founder of Skepticon) and I'm the new full-time high school campus organizer for the Secular Student Alliance. I'm writing to you because I'm looking for potential high school leaders. Due to the lack of secular groups in American high schools, I suspect that many of those students are turning to community groups like yours for camaraderie with their fellow non-believers.

I think that's fantastic! High school is a tough time for anybody, especially atheists, and I'm very grateful to the community groups that welcome atheistic students. But there are still other students unaware of community groups or unable to get to them, which is why I'm leading a charge to create more secular clubs in high schools. These will provide an outlet for all the closeted atheists to have the same social opportunities and refuges from bullying and harassment available to every other student. The SSA has an abundance of resources to devote to these groups including an extensive Speakers Bureau, project grants, business cards, tabling supplies, travel grants to regional and national conventions and much more. We also have full-time staff like myself available, and a variety of group-running resources like our Group Running Guide to help guide and sustain these groups. You can get a complete listing of our Group Services at www.secularstudents.org/services.

But in order to help, we need students willing to form the groups and to set up a leadership structure. I would like to reach out to the students in your community group. Could you convey my message to them and let them know that if they want to contribute to the national skeptic/atheist movement in this way that I will be there to help them? If they are interested, they may contact me at jt@secularstudents.org or call me at [\(614\) 441-9588](tel:6144419588) extension 5.

Minnesota Atheists Should Support Ending the War on Drugs

by Matthew Richardson

Minnesota Atheists has taken official positions on a number of social and political issues, and has subsequently written policy papers on these issues. These positions and policies are based on separation of state and church, human rights, and humanitarianism.

I think the time is long overdue for Minnesota Atheists to take a position on the War on Drugs, namely, that Minnesota Atheists advocates an end to the Drug War and that drug use be legalized for adults.

In this essay I will present the case for my position. I invite others, for and against this position, to also submit their views, to be published in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter. I then propose that at the April 2011 Minnesota Atheists meeting, a discussion be held and that a vote be taken on whether or not Minnesota Atheists will support this proposal.

Overview

Racism and religion are the basis of the Drug War. It is *not* about protecting the lives and health of the people. Ending the Drug War is the humanitarian thing to do, in view of the hundreds of thousands of deaths that have resulted since Nixon announced his "War on Drugs" in 1970. And we, the United States' citizens, are responsible for as many deaths in Latin and Central America.

Equal to the outright killings from turf wars are the lives that have been ruined by criminalizing millions of Americans – mostly those of color – who have spent years in prisons, mostly for possession of marijuana, while federal and state governments diverted tax dollars away from drug rehabilitation clinics and education.

Another aspect of this war on drugs is the splitting up of families. Not only husbands from wives but, when both parents are imprisoned, children being placed in foster care. The cruelty has not been fathomed by

most middle-class Americans because this takes place mostly among black families.

Constitutional Principles

"Prohibition will work great injury to the cause of temperance. It is a species of intemperance within itself, for it goes beyond the bounds of reason in that it attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation, and makes a crime out of things that are not crimes. A Prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded." – Abraham Lincoln

Racism

By taking a stand against the drug war, we are also taking a stand against racial profiling. "Although African Americans comprise only 12.2 percent of the population and 13 percent of drug users, they make up 38 percent of those arrested for drug offenses and 59 percent of those convicted of drug offenses causing critics to call the war on drugs the 'New Jim Crow'." [1]

Religious Prohibition

"The Bible puts using drugs in the same category as getting drunk (Gal. 5:19-21): both are forbidden by God because of what they do to the individual personally, and how they make him unfit to minister to others. . . . What God does say, in many different ways, is that the Christian is a minister of God to His people, and should be alert and prepared to serve at all times, even if that is just being alone praying for people. Being drunk or high on drugs renders one incapable of being effective for God." [2]

Wasted Tax Dollars

Then there is the specter of trillions of dollars lost as a result of this war. We must be mindful of the loss of tax revenue, the cost of incarceration, enforcement, and – very significantly – money that crosses our borders to enrich drug lords in foreign countries. This includes the financing of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other such entities. Included in that are the billions of dollars

that disappeared from *Continued on page 10*

Minnesota Atheists Should Support Ending the War on Drugs (continued)

the US Treasury and into the pockets of unknown Pakistani politicians and businessmen.

Crime

When something in great demand is prohibited, a black market, crime, violence, and death are sure to follow. Not only do we have these negative consequences in America but we Americans are responsible for more than 30,000 deaths in Mexico since 2006. [3] By ending the War on Drugs and making them legal, these negative affects will disappear almost overnight.

Libertarianism

As atheists we reject being controlled by god ideas and clergy. We should also reject supporting legislature simply because it is the law or because it has been around for awhile. As atheists, we support principles of privacy, self-determination, and personal responsibility. While legalizing drugs may lead some people to make bad choices, the taxes on the sale of those drugs can be dedicated to solving those problems, just as occurs with alcohol and tobacco.

Conclusion

Most certainly Minnesota Atheists should be taking an official position to end the horrors and injustices of the Drug War. To stand by and say nothing is akin to the "Good Germans" saying or doing nothing while more than six million Jews were being liquidated. We, as atheists, must show the world that we care about human life, justice, and rationality. The Drug War is utterly irrational and harmful.

I have heard some people argue that Minnesota Atheists should not take an official position on this issue since it is not a strict separation of state and church issue. Yet should we not take a stand against violence, crime, and irrationality in whatever form it takes?

On January 6, 1995, the ACLU took a stand against the Drug War – this includes all drugs: "The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) opposes criminal prohibition of drugs. Not only

is prohibition a proven failure as a drug control strategy, but it subjects otherwise law-abiding citizens to arrest, prosecution and imprisonment. In trying to enforce the drug laws, the government violates the fundamental rights of privacy and personal autonomy that are guaranteed by our Constitution. The ACLU believes that unless they do harm to others, people should not be punished – even if they do harm to themselves. There are better ways to control drug use, ways that will ultimately lead to a healthier, freer, and less crime-ridden society." [4] I strongly urge people to read the entire ACLU statement at the link at the footnote below.

Now it is the turn of Minnesota Atheists. Will you join me in this humanitarian effort?

REFERENCES:

- [1] <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/race>
 [2] http://www.truthortradition.com/iphone/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65:what-does-the-bible-say-about-drugs-and-drinking-alcohol&catid=36:faqs&Itemid=59
 [3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/17/world/americas/17briefs-Mexico.html?ref=world>
 [4] <http://www.aclu.org/drug-law-reform/against-drug-prohibition>

Planning your estate?

Don't forget to include

Minnesota Atheists.

Fighting for Family Acceptance

About an hour after Alabama governor Bob Bentley was inaugurated on Martin Luther King Day, he delivered a speech saying that he would serve all Alabamans regardless of party affiliation or race. In the next breath, however, the governor indicated that anyone “who has not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior” is not his “brother” or “sister.” After receiving unfavorable news coverage over his remarks, Governor Bentley publicly apologized a couple of days later. But did he really need to apologize? If we recognize how much God is invoked and whored out in the United States we might be able to cut the Governor some slack and focus our energy on the more problematic bigger picture.

It doesn't seem like an elected policy maker today can deliver a speech, participate in an interview or debate, or write a book without praising God—and by “God” I mean, specifically, the Judeo-Christian god character that is simply referred to as “God” with a capital “G”. Whether it's Tim Pawlenty and Sarah Palin, or Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi, virtually all elected policy makers explicitly confess their belief in God and present that belief as the most important virtue (if you want to call it that) they own that enables them to hold public office.

For our part, we (the voting citizens) accept their piety-pandering because virtually all of us were raised to faithfully believe in the same imaginary magical characters they believe in. There are of course some differences among denominations of which



by Eric Jayne

magical beliefs and ceremonial rites are most important. At any rate, a well advertised belief in God is the first step in getting elected, and as long as our collective citizenry demands our policy makers to be devoted to God, candidates for public office will praise “Him” as much as any given televangelist.

Besides the typical God-peddling politician there are plenty of other public endorsements of God that continue to marginalize non-believers from the likes of Gov. Bentley's “family”. I will include just a few examples of these exclusionary endorsements that happen on a daily basis:

- Millions of school children (including my own) are led by their teachers every morning to proclaim that the United States of America is “one nation, under God.”
- I feed the vending machine at work dollar bills and coins issued by the United States government that remind me I'm not the “we” in the motto, “In God We Trust.”
- The United States Congress routinely opens the day's business with a prayer, and my own representative, John Kline, is a member of the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

Don't confuse my fact-telling with whining. This just simply the way it is. Atheists, other non-believers, and even other theists are reminded almost every



Fighting for Family Acceptance (continued)

single day that they're not entirely welcomed into the "family." The burden to fight this rejection falls upon us atheists, secularists, and non-Judeo-Christian believers. No matter how daunting or hopeless it may seem, we must continue to speak out against the intrusion of God in our secular civic engagements. Public schools, for example, should encourage our children to pledge their allegiance to "one nation, under God" no more than they should encourage them to pledge their allegiance to "one nation, under SpongeBob SquarePants (at least SpongeBob comes across as more genuine and tolerant). We can write our local and national representatives, petition our local school board, write letters to the editor on government/religion separation, respectively discuss our position with our friends and family, and continue to participate in (and donate to) the Minnesota Atheists organization.

Have fun with your protest! Those of you with children can come up with different characters for your child to invoke for the Pledge of Allegiance recitation each day at school: "...one nation, under Scooby Doo"; or "...under the Hamburgler"; or "...under Spider-Man." Have fun with it and nurture your freethinking child's creativity.

Instead of falling victim to complacency, let's identify and call attention to the discriminating and unjust public endorsements of a weird belief that many either conflate with basic national citizenship or recognize as a license for enhanced citizenship. Until we routinely and collectively reject the inappropriate invocations of God in our public institutions (which are funded by our tax dollars), Gov. Bentley's apparent ecclesiastical decree seems to be on par with the magical God belief that permeates throughout our civic institutions.

January 2011 Membership Report

by Steve Petersen

As of January 16, 2011--

Individual Memberships: 194 (email 67; Paper 127)

Household Memberships: 44 (email 14; Paper 30)

Lifetime Memberships: 30 (email 12; Paper 18) We have sold 33 memberships, but three of our members have died.

Student Memberships: 5 (email 2; Paper 3)

Sustaining Memberships: 20 (email 3; Paper 17)

Donors 16 (email 3; paper 13)

Newsletter Subscribers 15 (email 4; Paper 11)

Totals: Memberships 291; Members 316. All Current financial Supporters: 347. For the last mailing those who were in an active paid group: 105 received the email newsletter and 218 received the paper newsletter. The total mailed January newsletter was 265. The total emailed newsletter was 1,426. 105 of those were in a paid group and we had 296 who opened the email. This equates to 20.8% or just better than the industry average of 19.5%.

Atheists Talk: January Radio Report

by Steve Petersen

Atheists Talk's director is Mike Haubrich. He and Scott Lohman host. The radio program is live every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 at the KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, MN AM 950. Live streaming can be done through our web page mnatheists.org. Original music is composed, played and recoded by Brent Michael Davids. The six month cost is \$5,320.00, each donation to support the program is greatly appreciated. To donate just send in a donation to our POB or online at mnatheists.org/component/option,com_civicrm/Itemid,55. All past programs can be accessed via web page.

January 2: Science and Reason Future Watch 2011. Lynn Fellman did four interviews on the program. The first was with Maggie Koerth-Baker, science journalist and writer for BoingBoing.net. She discussed the future of energy. Also interviewed was Steve Borsch, media trend expert at Connecting The Dots; Greg Laden, anthropologist and blogger Sciencevlogs.com; and Will Steeger, arctic explorer. Steeger talked about global warming. Brent Michael Davids hosted for this program.

January 9: Scott Lohman interviewed Kristen Wintermute, a member of the Board of Directors of the American Humanist Association, and the director of the Humanist Institute. For over 28 years, The Humanist Institute has trained the next generation of leaders for the humanist movement, graduating over 100 students, many of whom work as Ethical Culture Leaders, Unitarian Ministers, Humanist Counselors, professional administrators in our national organizations, and as officers and other volunteers leaders in humanist fellowships, chapters, associations. Mike Haubrich hosted.

January 19: Mike Haubrich interviewed Tom Clark, director of the Center for Naturalism. The Statement On Naturalism Naturalism is the understanding that there is a single, natural



world as shown by science, and that we are completely included in it. Naturalism holds that everything we are and do is connected to the rest of the world and derived from conditions that precede us and surround us. Each of us is an unfolding natural process, and every aspect of that process is caused, and is a cause itself. So we are fully caused creatures, and seeing just how we are caused gives us power and control, while encouraging compassion and humility. By understanding consciousness, choice, and even our

highest capacities as materially based, naturalism re-enchants the physical world, allowing us to be at home in the universe. Naturalism shows our full connection to the world and others, it leads to an ethics of compassion, and it gives us far greater control over our circumstances. Additional source material was Tom Clark's short book *Encountering Naturalism: A Worldview and Its Uses*, a great introduction to naturalism. I have read it a few times, and while the concepts may seem obvious upon reflection, the implications are enlightening. Many people have difficulty understanding the concept of free will and why it doesn't exist, often confusing "Free Will" and "Free Choice." It has clear implications for the definitions and deriving of morality, and yes, a worldview. Tom will explain how naturalism can help you fit into your world more accurately and help you determine your courses of action. Scott Lohman hosted.



January Cable Report

by Steve Petersen

In January Jack Caravela interviewed Nick Pease, adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota and founder and CEO of Pease Prose Service, for two programs on Existentialism as it relates to a freethinking, atheistic worldview. We would like to thank Jack Richter for sponsoring our program in St. Cloud, MN. If you would like to sponsor our program in your community, please contact steve.petersen@mnatheists.org or 651-484-9277. Podcasts are available via iTunes.

Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Wendy Steinberg, Grant Hermanson and Art Anderson .

Podcasts:

MinnesotaAtheists.org. Made possible by Grant Hermanson.

Cable Schedule

Burnsville / Eagan Community Television: Ch. 14. Check their web site www.bect.tv for day and times. Sponsor: Kevin Hardisty.

Bloomington: Ch. 16. Monday 9:30 p.m. and Tuesday 5:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Sponsors: David and Joanne Beardsley.

Minneapolis: Ch. 17. Saturday 8:30 p.m. Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

Rochester: Ch. 10. Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 7:30 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Salutz.

Roseville, Shoreview, Arden Hills, North Oaks, Little Canada, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Moundsview/ New Brighton: Ch. 14. Wednesday 10:30 p.m. Sponsor: Shirley Moll.

Stillwater: Ch., 16. Tuesday 7:00 p.m.; Wednesday 9:00 a.m. Sponsor: Lee Salisbury.

South Washington County: Ch. 14. Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Bodsberg.

White Bear Lake, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale, Vadnais Heights: Ch. 15. Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.



FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

“Thank God for making me an atheist!”

-Ricky Gervais, at the end of the Golden Globe Awards.

Minnesota Atheists

www.mnatheists.org

P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112

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>> Minnesota Atheists has IRS 501(c)(3) status. All contributions are tax-deductible. <<

Things to do, Places to go: A Calendar for Atheists

Sundays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous, 3249 Hennepin Ave. South, #55 (Men's Center, in the basement), Minneapolis. Open to men and women. Contact: tcAgnostic@gmail.com.

Third Sunday, 1:00-3:30, Minnesota Atheists Monthly Meeting. See front cover for details.

Fifth Sunday, Fundraiser Dinner for Building Fund. Price: -\$7.00. Remaining 2011 dates: May 29, July 31, October 30.

1st and 3rd Monday, 6:00p.m. Freethought Toastmasters Club. Larpenteur Estates apartment complex, 1280 Larpenteur Ave. West, St. Paul. (Park directly in back and follow sidewalk to party room.) George Kane, nup@minn.net.

2nd and 4th Monday, 5-7 p.m. Dinner Social. Davanni's Restaurant, 2312 W. 66th Street, Richfield. Bob and Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m., Lunch Social, Old Country Buffet, Co. Rd. B2, between Snelling and Fairview, Roseville. Bob and Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., Lunch Social. Dragon House Restaurant, 3970 Central Ave., Columbia Heights. Bill Volna, (612) 781-1420

4th Wednesday, Meal and a Reel. Uptown, Minneapolis (Hennepin and Lake). 6:00 meal, 7:00 movie. Details in Atheists Weekly Email.

Thursdays, 7:00, Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH) meeting. See cashumn.org for details.

1st Thursday, 6:00 p.m., Atheists Talk TV Show taping. MTN Studio A, 125 SE Main St., Minneapolis. Steve Petersen, (651) 484-9277.

2nd Thursday. Rochester Area Freethinkers monthly get-together. Bill Kass, hawthorn@hotmail.com, or (507) 259-4237.

3rd Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Minnesota Atheists board meeting. Location varies. Contact George Kane, nup@minn.net.

To sign up for the Atheists Weekly Email (AWE), send a request to awe@mnatheists.org.

To sign up for Minnesota Atheists Meetups, visit atheists.meetup.com/493.



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“We’d be a lot better off if we listened to songs and not preachers and politicians.”

-Jimmy Buffett, during his January 25th concert in Sydney Australia, moments before he fell off stage

**Check us out on the radio!
AM950 on Sundays at 9:00 a.m.**