

The Minnesota Atheist

PZ Myers to Speak at September Minnesota Atheists Meeting

PZ Myers will be our featured speaker at the September Minnesota Atheists meeting.

Myers is an associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota Morris. His research focuses on the evolutionary developmental biology of zebrafish. He is an active critic of religion who makes no attempt to be courteous in his condemnation. Noting that Myers once “publicly desecrated a Communion wafer,” *The New York Times* wrote, “Myers is way out of the closet as an atheist—proudly, outrageously so.”

Myers began the weblog Pharyngula.org in 2002, which is now hosted by FreethoughtBlogs.com. In 2006, *Nature* ranked Pharyngula as the most popular blog by a scientist. Myers covers a wide variety of topics on Pharyngula, but the weblog is primarily noted for its fierce opposition to Intelligent Design and creationism.

At the September Minnesota Atheists meeting, Myers will talk about his newly released book *The Happy Atheist*, published by Pantheon. *The Happy Atheist* takes a humorous look at the absurdities of religious thought and addresses the very serious problems superstitious thinking can cause. Here’s a sample from the first chapter of the book:

I’m an atheist swimming in a sea of superstition, surrounded by well-meaning, good people with whom I share a culture and similar concerns, and there’s only one thing I can do.

I have to laugh.

Living in America at the beginning of the twenty-first century is like attending the circus when the clowns are performing—it’s low comedy, full of pratfalls and pies in the face and silly costumes. It’s also hilarious.

The people all around me seriously believe most fervently in a god who briefly became human and was tortured to death for his trouble—and that this is the greatest story ever told. The omnipotent Lord of the Cosmos is a man-like entity who, in addition to



PZ Myers

keeping the planets in their courses, deciding fates of nations, and spawning hurricanes and earthquakes, frets endlessly about the sex lives of his chosen people. . . . Lately he has become a devotee of football, and players and spectators beg for his divine favor in helping to get a ball from one side of the field to the other. His followers are offended at the thought that they have distant relatives who are monkeys, but they feel ennobled by the myth that they were made from dirt. . . .

I try to laugh, but I also feel the human suffering caused by these follies. But then, as Shakespeare knew, the best comedy has always been born out of the truth of pain and has a leavening of tragedy mixed in with it.

The September Minnesota Atheists meeting will be held in the meeting room of the Roseville Library, 2180 Hamline Avenue North, Roseville, on September 15th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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President's Column • Eric Jayne

Why I'm an Atheist Activist

Now that our second annual regional conference and Mr. Paul Aints game weekend is behind us, I've been able to take a deep breath and remind myself why I volunteer so much of my time and energy toward the cause of atheism. I recognize that there are many self-identified atheists in the United States who seem to be getting along just fine without actively supporting atheism. They take no interest in supporting atheist organizations and some even complain that atheist activism is an unfavorable endeavor on par with religious proselytizing. So then why do I and others do it? Why do I make myself vulnerable by publicly proclaiming my atheism? Is atheism really worth supporting? To put it more simply, why am I an atheist activist?

In addressing these questions, I was compelled to first look back to my childhood, when I was brought up in an evangelical Christian home. It was a fine childhood overall, but I remember getting unsatisfactory answers to questions about God's origin, power, and goodness. I remember the mental anguish I had in trying to make sense of Sunday school lessons teaching about the promise of eternal damnation for having incorrect beliefs. I remember the terrified feeling of thinking about my adult brother—fourteen years older than me—going to hell since he didn't join the rest of our family at church.

Experiencing this intellectual dishonesty and fear-based indoctrination was a good reason to leave the church and even the religion altogether, but is that reason enough to become an atheist activist? Maybe, but just to be sure here are a few more reasons I considered.

ATHEISTS ARE MARGINALIZED IN SOCIETY. This marginalization is indicated not only by copious amounts of anecdotal evidence, but also through polls and comprehensive research findings that include studies from the University of Minnesota and the University of British Columbia. The Minnesota Atheists' brand of positive atheism in action—with philanthropic community outreach events and our self-promoting Mr. Paul Aints baseball game—helps to educate others about our high regard for happiness and well-being while dispelling rumors that

we're a bunch of nihilistic hedonists.

OUR SOCIETY IS ENCUMBERED BY THE WHIMS AND AUTHORITY OF A RELIGIOUS MAJORITY. It is incredibly discouraging that many of our elected lawmakers and popular media correspondents invoke their God and their Bible to shape public policy in various domains like LGBT equality, women's reproductive health, and embryonic stem cell research. Fortunately, we have a number of atheist-friendly organizations that work together to address the pernicious theocratic elements in our lawmaking institutions and ethnocentric narratives manufactured throughout the media.

ATHEISM PAVES A PATH WITH REWARDS OF CLARITY AND GENUINE SPIRITUALITY. Unlike my experience as a Christian, as an atheist I have been able to accurately understand a lot about the universe and life on earth. Following the evidence and learning about mind-blowing scientific discoveries, which are awesomely spiritual, is something that I no longer need to square with Bible teachings. I don't go out of my way to “proselytize” atheism, but I don't hesitate to explain how atheism has helped launch a more authentic and honest worldview.

ATHEISTS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES JUST LIKE PEOPLE IN RELIGIOUS SECTS. I feel honored that I have the opportunity to help continue and build on the fantastic work of the Minnesota Atheists organization, which provides an important outlet for freethinkers to talk without restraint and to socialize with other friendly freethinkers in a variety of ways.

PROGRESS IS BEING MADE. At least it seems that way. As I pointed out earlier, atheists are marginalized in our society, but it seems as though it's less so today than even a couple years ago. I could share my own positive experience of coming out as an atheist at work. Or I could point to the significant decrease in complaints and threats related to this year's conference and baseball game compared to last year's. But these are just anecdotes. As noted in George Kane's article on the opposite page, the recent Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism shows

Eric Jayne, Minnesota
Atheists President



that those who identified as “religious” went down from 73 percent to 60 percent since 2005. Moreover, the index found that self-identified atheists went up from one percent to five percent. Having more people shake off their religious identity while increasing the number of self-identified atheists shifts power away from those with a narrow, religious-based agenda. Without atheist activism this kind of progress would likely not have happened as quickly.

NEITHER ATHEIST NOR ATHEISM ARE FOUR-LETTER WORDS. These are perfectly fine words that nicely explain non-belief in God or gods. Through positive and friendly atheist activism, I want to help make these words more accepted and understood so that everyone who is without theism (i.e. a-theism) can feel as free to claim an atheist identity as a Bible-believer claims a Christian identity. This is not only important for individual comfort and pride but also for continued progress on the secular front on a larger level.

I could spend more time listing the reasons for my atheist activism, but I should really get back to the rest of my godless tasks. I am proud and honored to have the opportunity to funnel my activism through Minnesota Atheists. My colleagues on the board, Meetup leaders, and many other members in the organization have been wonderful friends, teachers, and motivators. After helping lead the efforts for two billboard campaigns, two regional conferences, two atheist-themed baseball games, several community-based volunteer events, many debaptisms, and numerous book club discussions, I am certain, now more than ever, of why I am an atheist activist: Because it is important, fun, rewarding, and markedly successful.

News and Notes • George Kane

Religiosity Declining in Worldwide Gallop Poll

At the end of July, Gallop International released its Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism 2012, which shows that the atheist movement is advancing rapidly worldwide. The international survey asked respondents, “Irrespective of whether you attend a place of worship or not, would you say you are a religious person, not a religious persons [*sic*] or a convinced atheist?” The response to polls on religiosity and atheism is heavily influenced by the way the question is worded. For example, a 1996 poll by *Free Inquiry* magazine asked people if there is a personal god who can answer prayer. By selecting this wording they avoided counting as “religious” people who define god, for example, as *love* or the laws of physics. As Gallop formulated the question, their “atheism index” counts only self-described atheists, thereby excluding people who prefer to call themselves, for example, rationalists, materialists, free-thinkers, humanists, skeptics, or secular. Gallop’s option of “convinced atheist” will also be selected only by “strong” atheists—people who believe that there are no supernatural gods—and not by “weak” atheists, who have no opinion on the existence of gods, or believe that the question of the existence of supernatural gods is unanswerable or meaningless.

The country with the most atheistic population is China, with 47% of respondents calling themselves convinced atheists, and another 30% reporting themselves as not religious. This result probably reflects the influence of a government which exerts considerable control over potentially dissident organizations. Although freedom of religion is guaranteed in China’s constitution,

the government bans churches that are centrally controlled outside of China. That is why Catholic Bishops are appointed by the Chinese government rather than by the Pope. Perhaps most significantly, Chinese law forbids religious indoctrination of anyone younger than sixteen years old.

Here is a list of the top ten atheist populations after China:

Country	Not Religious	Convinced Atheist
Japan	31%	31%
Czech Republic	48%	30%
France	34%	29%
South Korea	31%	15%
Germany	33%	15%
Netherlands	42%	14%
Austria	43%	10%
Iceland	31%	10%
Australia	48%	10%
Ireland	44%	10%

Of these nations, the only ones with the majority of the population reporting as religious are South Korea, 52%; Germany, 51%; and Iceland, 57%.

The ten most religious populations are Ghana, Nigeria, Armenia, Fiji, Macedonia, Romania, Iraq, Kenya, Peru, and Brazil. The data for all nations shows an undeniable trend: the nations with the most religious population have the lowest annual per capita income, while countries with the highest per capita income have the least religious populations. Worldwide, the highest income quintile is 19% atheist and the quintile below that 20%. The world’s lowest quintile of income is only 7% atheist. The rate of atheists among people with a college education is

George Kane, Minnesota Atheists Director-at-Large



19%, but only 7% among those with no formal education.

The decline of religiosity is surprisingly rapid. Comparing 2012 results to responses to the same survey in 2005, only seven years earlier, Gallop found that religiosity declined 23% in Vietnam, 22% in Ireland, 21% in both Switzerland and France, and 19% in South Africa. Globally, there was a 9% decline during those seven years, demonstrating a rapid cultural shift.

In the United States, only 5% describe themselves as convinced atheists, while 30% call themselves not religious and 5% are undecided. The percent of Americans self-identifying as religious declined from 73% in 2005 to 60% in 2012. This reflects the trend that we have seen in Minnesota, where we have experienced a surge in the numbers of people attending atheist events. The Gallop survey does not provide demographic information, but local experience suggests that the growth has come primarily among people twenty to forty years old. Older people reached their religious conclusions when atheism carried an enormous stigma. People who believed there were no gods kept their opinions to themselves; at the very least, they described their beliefs with a term other than *atheism*. Mainstream acceptance is a major cultural change that promises continued growth.

George Kane

Freethought Cryptogram

Qv qt dszotqylfro vm forqobo l gymgmtqvqms kios vioyo qt sm yoltms kilvtmoby amy tddgmtqsu qv vm fo vydo.

—Foyvylsz Ydttorr. (Answer on page nine.)

Book Review • Lewis Campbell

An Atheist Guerrilla Debating Manual

Playing Chess with Pigeons: A Compendium of Fundamentalist Apologetics and their Refutations by Chuck Hall. BMDO Publications.

Chuck Hall says he has been debating fundamentalist Christians for over forty years. *Playing Chess with Pigeons* certainly contains the largest arsenal of anti-fundamentalist debating points you are likely to find anywhere.

Hall provides a long list of typical fundamentalist arguments, along with a detailed refutation for each one. He also introduces some more unusual debating points. He gives us a very long list of contradictions in the Bible, and notes that even this long list is only the beginning. And in one especially interesting section, Hall cites numerous passages from scripture to show that the writers of the Bible almost certainly conceived of the Earth as flat.

Playing Chess with Pigeons covers the Omnipotence Paradox briefly, and what a paradox it is. In Hall's words:

"Could God create a rock too big for him to lift?" The purpose of this statement is to illustrate the absurdity of the argument of omnipotence. If God can create a rock too big for him to lift, then is his strength really omnipotent? On the other hand, if he can't create such a rock, does this mean that his powers of creation aren't omnipotent either?

In one impressive section, Hall surveys an extensive collection of research which demonstrates that fundamentalists are less intelligent than atheists on average. Of course this is an *ad hominem* argument which does not speak to the merit of fundamentalist beliefs themselves, but it does confirm many atheists' suspicions.

Hall uses analogy very effectively. In discussing the resurrection, he writes:

For example, let's say your Aunt Esther had died. You go to the funeral

home and discover an empty casket. Do you automatically assume that Aunt Esther has risen from the dead, or do you look for a more logical, reasonable and simpler explanation? Maybe Aunt Esther's body was misplaced. Maybe in your grief you got lost and you're at the wrong funeral home. Maybe necrophiliacs stole the body. There are dozens of possible explanations that need to be exhausted before leaping to the illogical conclusion that Aunt Esther has risen from the dead and is now out dancing at the VFW club.

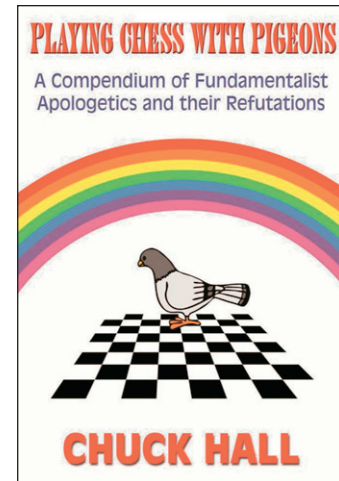
And in arguing that only an immortal god would create a hell, he writes:

Suppose I tell my daughter to clean her room, or I will punish her by taking her out in the back yard, dousing her with gasoline, and setting her on fire. Further suppose she disobeys me and doesn't clean her room, so I take her out into the back yard and make good on my threat.

When the police arrive and ask what happened, I tell them, "Well, she knew what the consequences were if she disobeyed me. So it was her choice. She set herself on fire!"

Hall does not address some well-known but relatively subtle arguments for the existence of God, such as the Argument from Degree of Thomas Aquinas or the Ontological Argument of Saint Anselm. But perhaps these arguments are rarely used by fundamentalists.

Hall makes no attempt to keep his arguments civil. He writes in a freewheeling style, with liberal use of expletives, sarcasm, and insults. For example, Hall argues that praying to a toilet would be as effective as praying to God. This may be true, but it is not an argument likely to win the hearts of many theists. However, Hall says at the outset of the book that he is not trying to win any converts to atheism but



merely providing support for those who already agree with him.

Playing Chess with Pigeons does not contain any obvious factual errors, but it does commit some sins of omission. For example, Hall argues that far from being an atheist, Hitler was a Catholic. What Hall fails to tell us is that while Hitler was a member of the Catholic Church throughout his life, Hitler was strongly opposed to the Church hierarchy and rejected large parts of the Bible. Because of Hitler's many contradictory statements and actions regarding religion, historians disagree on Hitler's actual beliefs.

Hall also cites *Pygmalion in the Classroom* by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobsen to support the idea that people often act according to the expectations others have for them, and that theists often see evil in others because that's what they expect. What Hall doesn't say is that numerous replications of the research reported on in *Pygmalion in the Classroom* have failed to duplicate its results, and the original research is now considered invalid by many experts.

Playing Chess with Pigeons provides an extensive array of rebuttals to a wide range of arguments in Christian apologetics, and it has some rollicking good fun doing so. Its arguments are unlikely to sway many theists, but if you favor a scorched-earth approach to debating fundamentalist Christians, this may be the perfect manual for you.

Eric Jayne

Minnesota Atheists Responds to a Local Billboard

This article originally appeared in a slightly different form in the St. Cloud Times.

“With atheism there is no hope, only despair.”

At least that’s what a billboard tells us on Stearns County Road 75 near Interstate Highway 94 in St. Joseph. Of course, a lot of billboards say things that aren’t true, and to be sure, this is one of those.

It’s important to first point out that all people, regardless of religious beliefs or cultural affiliation, are susceptible to feelings of hopeless despair. If those feelings negatively affect a person’s ability to successfully function in life, then it would likely be a good idea to seek help from mental health professionals.

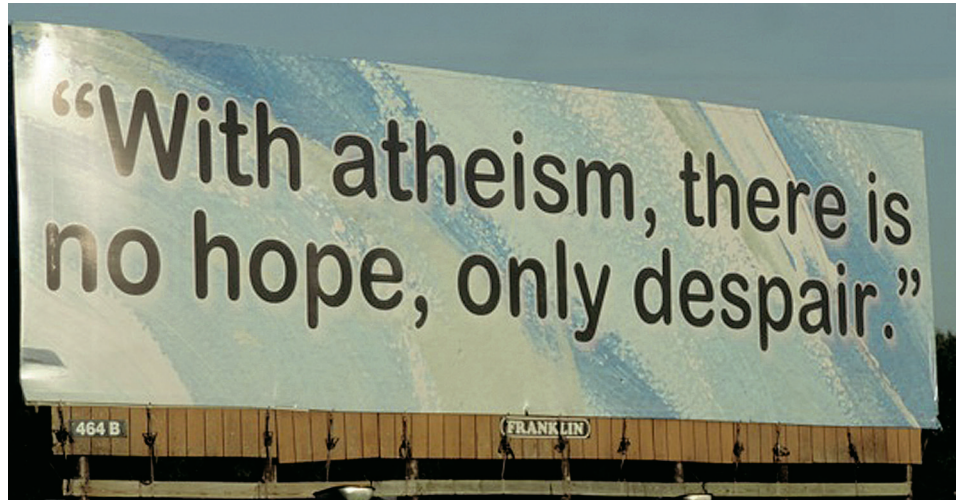
Regarding atheism, many people have been empowered once they reach the atheist conclusion because it provides clearer thinking and triggers a more focused approach to life here in the corporeal world.

Atheists exercise hope when we work to enhance the well-being of others, such as when we volunteer every month at a local homeless shelter, donate holiday gifts to children in hospitals, and work with our LGBT friends to bring equal opportunities and justice under the law.

Bernadette Chlebeck and Phil Cunliffe

Minnesota Atheists Meetup Group Continues Volunteer Work at Shelter

For the last year a group of Minnesota Atheists has been volunteering at The Family Place shelter to cook a meal for families facing homelessness and eat it with them. We are scheduled to serve dinner the third Saturday of each month. We use the Minnesota Atheists group on Meetup.com to organize the event. A menu with a list of ingredients is posted in the comment section. Each person that signs up brings what they choose from the ingredient list.



This billboard appeared recently in St. Joseph. Photography by Mary Carlson.

We find joy and genuine spirituality in learning how the vast universe works in and out of the blue speck we call Earth.

We celebrate our knowledge of life that Darwin crystallized through his theory of natural selection, which complements our understanding of how the atoms that flow in and out of our bodies zipped through the vacuum of space eons before our solar system formed and eons after Earth is swallowed up by our sun.

I invite everyone, including those be-

hind the misguided billboard message, to learn more about how we practice positive atheism in action.

Minnesota Atheists and Central Minnesota Freethinkers offer a variety of social gatherings and intellectually stimulating lectures happening throughout the Twin Cities and St. Cloud area.

My hope is that atheists become better understood and more accepted in Minnesota, but I will withhold despair if that doesn’t happen as quickly as I’d like.

Minnesota Atheists has been able to provide a healthy, home-cooked-style meal each month. We have prepared chicken Parmesan, jambalaya, chili, Asian stir fry, and other recipes high in protein and fresh vegetables. Meals are served family style with Minnesota Atheists volunteers eating with the families being helped by The Family Place.

Wilder Research Center estimates that more than 10,000 people are homeless or transitioning to a new home in Min-

nesota on any given night, including more than 3,000 children. The Family Place is a secular nonprofit homeless shelter that keeps families together and helps families transitioning to a new home. Families stay overnight in area churches and return to The Family Place each morning for breakfast.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating food for the meal, please watch for events at the Minnesota Atheists group at www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists.

The panel at the American Atheists/Minnesota Atheists Regional Conference. From left to right: Hector Avalos, Stephanie Zvan (officiating), Amanda Knief, Greta Christina, Annie Laurie Gaylor, PZ Myers, and Kelli Clement.



Weekend of Unbelievable Fun a Success for the Second Year in a Row

We did it again! We pulled off another unbelievably fun weekend this summer for the second year in a row thanks to the help of a lot of members and supporters of Minnesota Atheists!

The fun started in the late afternoon on Friday, August 9th, in the Midway Stadium parking lot, where we tailgated until a few minutes before our St. Paul Saints/Mr. Paul Aints baseball game. At about 6:30 p.m. our group began filtering into the stadium to watch Minnesota Atheists president Eric Jayne toss the ceremonial first pitch. He provided a little flair in his windup before pitching a perfect strike to the Mr. Paul Aints catcher behind home plate.

Unfortunately there wasn't much to cheer about during game play as the Mr. Paul Aints lost to the Sioux City Explorers by a score of 3-1. There was, however, much to cheer about in between innings when the atheist-themed antics were performed. These antics included an "Atheist Race" where two contestants raced against each other by first running to a Slip 'N Slide, at the end of which they donned a gorilla mask to represent the evolution of sea creatures to land creatures. The contestants kept running until the PA announcer told them that there was no finish because it was an atheist race. "You just keep going until you can't go any longer," he said.

After the fifth inning the crowd was treated to Seigo, who is a recurring character at many St. Paul Saints games. His routine was

advertised on the scoreboard as Karaoke sung by a Real Japanese Guy. For what was billed as "A Night of Unbelievable Fun: The Second Coming," Seigo sang the 1991 pop song *Unbelievable* by EMF.

In the middle of the sixth inning there was a Doubting Thomas who was "ejected" from the stands by the umpire after loudly questioning his judgment of balls and strikes from the previous at bats. The PA announcer narrated the kerfuffle so we could all be in on the joke.

The game ended with a loss, but the weather stayed dry despite a few gray clouds hovering above us. We won in that nature played nice with the atheists. And the postgame fireworks, which the Saints do every Friday night, were a fun way to end the evening for the 6400 in attendance—which included the 200 ticket sales in our atheist portal.

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Our American Atheists/Minnesota Atheists Regional Conference followed the next day at the Ramada Plaza in Minneapolis. The conference began at 8:00 a.m., with check-ins leading up to our 9:00 a.m. welcome. Thanks to walk-in registrations we had over 200 people attend the conference!

Iowa State professor Hector Avalos was our lead-off speaker. His presentation "How Archeology Killed Biblical History" was an extraordinary lesson. This was followed with two sets of four simultaneous workshops dealing with mental health, parenting, drug addiction,

science, schools, and animal ethics.

After lunch we went back to one large room with our headline speakers. Greta Christina spoke on "Coming Out: How To Do It, How to Help Each Other Do It, and Why"; Amanda Knief spoke on "Citizen Lobbyist"; and Annie Laurie Gaylor spoke on "The Religious War on Women."

After dinner, we concluded with a panel discussion that included all of our main speakers plus PZ Myers and Kelli Clement, a local Unitarian Universalist and the Executive Director of the Minnesota Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The topic of discussion was "Atheism and Religion: Confrontation or Accommodation?" It was a spirited discussion that was both entertaining and enlightening.

Many attendees stuck around for more socializing, appetizers, and cocktails. The party went until a few minutes after midnight.

• • •

The Minnesota Atheists would like to thank everyone who helped make this all happen.

Thank you to board member Phil Cunniffe for renting the baseball game tailgating spot, table, and chairs. Thank you to Bill Lehto for donating food and drinks, bringing his grill, and grilling all of the food.

Thank you to Jerry Rauser, Bob Salwasser, and Richard Trombly for taking excellent videos and pictures at the game and conference.

Thank you to Paul Heffron and Jerry Rauser for writing and performing the Mr. Paul Aints song to the tune of *Take Me Out* to

the Ballgame.

Thank you to Minnesota Atheists president Eric Jayne for leading the efforts for the Mr. Paul Aints game. Thank you to the St. Paul Saints team—both on the field and in the front office.

Thank you to the Conference Planning Committee of August Berkshire, Jill Carlson, Heather Hegi, Eric Jayne, and Stephanie Zvan for making all of the conference arrangements with the hotel, caterer, and speakers.

Thank you to the Minnesota Atheists board of August Berkshire, Jill Carlson, Phil Cunliffe, Andy Flamm, Heather Hegi, Eric Jayne, George Kane, Chris Matthews, and Stephanie Zvan for their time spent discussing issues and concerns regarding the conference and baseball game. Each of their contributions shaped the baseball game and conference experience for the better.

Thank you to all of our wonderful speakers, including those who provided workshops. It was a genuine pleasure to work with you.

Thank you to Minnesota Atheists treasurer Chris Matthews for all of his invaluable help setting up the online store for conference registration and Mr. Paul Aints merchandise (which is still available), and for keeping track of the finances.

Thank you to Steve Petersen and Shirley Moll for creating the name tags and meal cards for the conference. And thank you to them and Chris Matthews for keeping track of registration and checking people in to the conference.

Thank you to Emily Matejcek for helping with our press release.

Thank you to Clint Buhs for helping with our website content for the conference and baseball game.

Thank you to Stephanie Zvan, Steve Petersen, Eric Jayne, and the *Atheists Talk* radio show production team at KTNF – AM 950 for covering the baseball game and conference.

Thank you to the Ramada Plaza and all of its helpful staff.

Thank you to American Atheists and the Freedom From Religion Foundation for your support.

And finally, thank you to all of our leaders, organizers, supporters, paid members, and donors. Without you and your resources none of this could have happened. We cannot thank you enough for helping us continue our efforts to promote the positive contributions of atheists to our society.

Minnesota Atheists takes part in the Pride Festival parade.



Commentary • Heather Hegi

2013 Pride Festival

The Pride Festival is just about the best event Minnesota Atheists takes part in.

The highlight of the festival is the parade, which was June 30th this year. Each year, Minnesota Atheists registers for a spot in the parade and provides signs for marchers to carry. We have signs that read: *You Look Just Like an Atheist; Smile, there is no Hell; Gay Rights are Equal Rights;* and everyone’s favorite, *Hug an Atheist*, among others. These signs really convey our motto, *Positive Atheism in Action*. The cheering we receive as we march down Hennepin Avenue is just amazing. And I have heard it isn’t just that the crowd cheers for everyone; a person who has watched the parade has told me that the crowd cheers louder as our group marches by. It’s encouraging that we get such a positive response from the crowd, not to mention all the hugs the marchers who carry the *Hug an Atheist* sign receive.

For the whole weekend of the Pride Festival, Minnesota Atheists also registers for a booth in Loring Park, where all of the festivities take place. This year I volunteered to staff the booth on Saturday, the day before the parade. The festival

is a very bustling place both days, and many people stop at our booth to inquire about Minnesota Atheists and atheism in general. This year, I met one gal who was so overjoyed when she saw our booth that she broke into tears as she ran up and gave me a hug. She’d had no idea that there was an organization which shared her atheistic beliefs. I really enjoyed talking to her and letting her know that she wasn’t alone.

The whole Pride Festival is a great way for Minnesota Atheists to display our support, increase our visibility, and welcome non-believers to our community. I’ve participated in the Pride Festival for the past three years, and I’ve always had a fun, positive experience.

Minnesota Atheists has long been an ally of the GLBT movement, in part because most objections to GLBT rights are religious ones which don’t hold up to secular scrutiny. For Minnesota Atheists’ official position on GLBT rights, please see mnatheists.org/information/public-policy-positions.

Heather Hegi is chair of the Minnesota Atheists Board.

Chris Matthews

June/July Treasury Report

Radio Fund

Mark Nelson	\$200
George Francis Kane	\$100
Nancy Ruhland	\$50
James Barri.....	\$25
Rhonda LeSage.....	\$25
James Wright	\$25
Wes Barnes.....	\$20
Shirley Rae Moll.....	\$20
Mark Paquette	\$20
Steve Petersen.....	\$20
Thomas Dooley.....	\$10
Cash donations.....	\$125

Total Radio Fund

General/Visibility Fund

Valerie Gingras.....	\$190
Jerome Kelley.....	\$100
William Udseth.....	\$100
Donald Theis	\$75
Dean Borghorst.....	\$50
Gail Peterson	\$50
Michelle Tjernagel.....	\$42
Sean Carstensen.....	\$40
Justine Hartz.....	\$28
Richard Swenson	\$25
Brainerd Atheists & Freethinkers.	\$20
Sarah Gerold.....	\$18
Al Seever.....	\$5

Total General/Visibility Fund.....

Building Fund

Erik Englebretson.....	\$200
Dean Borghorst	\$50
Eleanor Rittenour.....	\$10

Total Building Fund

Cumulative Total.....

Total Income:

Top Expenses for June and July

Baseball Game.....	\$2,270
Radio Show	\$1,845
Printing (non-Newsletter).....	\$1,060
Newsletter Printing	\$949

Steve Petersen

Highway Cleanup Welcomes Volunteers

Join us as we continue our long tradition of helping beautify our highways and receiving atheist recognition in the form of a Minnesota Atheists Adopt-A-Highway road sign.

On Sunday, October 6th, Minnesota Atheists will be performing its Adopt-A-Highway cleanup. The work goes from 10:00 a.m. to about noon on Highway 10 in Rice, Minnesota. Gloves and sturdy footwear are recommended.

We'll meet at 9:45 a.m. at The Old

Creamery Cafe, 405 Main Street in Rice, west of the stoplight on Highway 10. All participants are invited to stay for lunch after the cleanup.

To coordinate car pools from the Twin Cities, visit the Minnesota Atheists Meetup page at www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists.

For more information contact Deb Doucette at 320-253-5422 or me at spetersen175@comcast.net.

Hope to see you there!

Jill Carlson

New Freethinking Families Meetup Group Organized

Atheist parents are welcomed to join the new Twin Cities Freethinking Families Meetup page and get plugged into the expanded programming offered in the Twin Cities for children and their adults.

Our secular kids deserve to have the same kind of programming that churches are able to support, and a group has arrived to fill this gap. We host events at local museums and we

have discussion groups at local libraries.

High quality child care is always provided if applicable. There is no fee to join our meetup.

Twin Cities Freethinking Families is also seeking group organizers and discussion leaders to help our efforts to provide nurturing, intellectually rich activities for kids.

Please check it out at www.meetup.com/Twin-Cities-Freethinking-Families.

Neighborhood Involvement Program of Minneapolis Seeks Volunteers

The Seniors Program of the Neighborhood Involvement Program of Minneapolis (NIP) seeks volunteers to assist people ages sixty-five and over. The Seniors Program provides a variety of services that help older people remain in their home or apartment.

Presently the Seniors Program is looking for volunteers to help clean house gutters for seniors. Individuals, groups, and families with children seven

and over are welcome. Only a one-time commitment is required, and the work can be done on any day of the week from October through November.

Other volunteer opportunities are available as well.

For more information, contact Jeanne at srvolunteer@neighborhoodinvolve.org or 612-746-8549, or visit the NIP website at www.neighborhoodinvolve.org.

Cable Television Schedule

Podcasts

Atheists Talk is available via both iTunes and YouTube. For more information see the Minnesota Atheist website at mnatheists.org. Podcasts are made possible by Grant Hermanson.

Cable

Bloomington Community Access Television, Channel 16. Sundays, 11:00 p.m. Sponsored by David and Joanne Beardsley.

Burnsville Community Television, Channel 14. Broadcast on an erratic schedule. Check www.burnsville.org/index.aspx?NID=484 to see if any showtimes are scheduled. Sponsored by Kevin Hardisty.

Eagan Community Television, Channel 15. Broadcast on an erratic schedule. Check www.eagan-tv.com/index.php/channels/channel-15 to see if any showtimes are scheduled. Sponsored by Kevin Hardisty.

Minneapolis Television Network, Channel 75. Mondays, 7:00 p.m. Sponsored by Steve Petersen.

North Suburban Access Corporation, Channel 21, serving the Moundview area. Wednesdays, 10:30 p.m. Sponsored by Shirley Moll.

Rochester Public Access, Channel 10. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by Jim Salutz.

Saint Cloud Public Access, Channel 12. Thursdays, 8:30. Sponsored by Tom Stavros.

Saint Paul Neighborhood Network, Channel 15. Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m. Sponsored by Jim Wright.

Suburban Community Channels, Channel 15, serving the Maplewood area. Saturdays 8:00 p.m. Sponsored by Michael Seliga.

Valley Access Channels, Channel 18, serving the Stillwater area. Check valleyaccesschannels.tv for showtimes. Sponsored by Lee Salisbury.

Grant Steves on left and Jack Caravela on right at the August recording of *Atheists Talk*.



Cable Television Report • Steve Petersen

A Diverse Nation

For our August recording of the *Atheists Talk* cable television show, Jack Caravela interviewed Grant Steves for two programs. The first, *The Founding of a Diverse Nation*, covered religion in the early years of America. Steves reviewed Colonial religious persecution by majority Christian sects over minority sects, other minority religions, and non-believers. He then went on to discuss the dissimilar religious beliefs of our founders and their impact on our Constitution

and Bill of Rights.

In the second program, *The Diverse Nation Struggles*, Steves reviewed religion in contemporary America, noting that as we become more diverse religiously and less religious overall, we create the need for a more secular government.

The *Atheist Talk* cable television show is created by George Kane, Brett Stemberge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Wendy Steinberg, Grant Hermanson, and Art Anderson.

Steve Petersen

Cable Television Ideas and Sponsors Still Needed

If you have an idea for our *Atheists Talk* cable television program, or if you have a public access television station in your community and would like to be a sponsor, please contact me at spetersen175@comcast.net or 651-484-9277. We would especially like to be back on in Duluth, Mankato, and Moorehead. Sponsorship is easy to do and you will help bring the atheist voice to your community.

Crpytogram Answer

It is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no reason whatsoever for supposing it to be true.

—Bertrand Russell

Radio Report

Annie Laurie Gaylor, PZ Myers, and Jerry DeWitt Featured on *Atheists Talk* Radio This Past Summer

The *Atheists Talk* radio show is broadcast live every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 on KTNF, 950 AM. A live stream and podcasts are available through the Minnesota Atheists website at mnatheists.org.

The shows for June, July, and August featured a number of nationally known atheists as well as leaders from Minnesota Atheists.

Paleofantasy—Marlene Zuk on *Atheists Talk* #225, June 30th, 2013

In her new book, *Paleofantasy: What Evolution Really Tells Us About Sex, Diet, and How We Live*, evolutionary biologist and behavioral ecologist Marlene Zuk takes the stories we are told about how our deep ancestry determines the way we are and puts them under the microscope. They frequently come up lacking, but along the way, Zuk provides an entertaining education about our Paleolithic and more recent pasts.

Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic—David Quammen on *Atheists Talk* #226, July 7th, 2013

David Quammen is an author, essayist, and science writer. In his recently published book, *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*, Quammen takes us along on his world travels as he explores where these emerging diseases come from, how and why they cross over to humans from their animal hosts, and what the next big human outbreak will be.

Cecil Bothwell on *Atheists Talk* #227, July 14th, 2013

A large number of states in the U.S. have laws which prevent atheists from holding public office. Although these laws have been found to be unconstitutional, they are sometimes still enforced.

When Cecil Bothwell was elected to the Asheville, North Carolina, city

council, he faced a challenge based in North Carolina's religious test. He joined us to talk about the influence of theism in North Carolina's politics and about his new novel, *She Walks on Water*.

The Complete Heretic's Guide to Western Religion Book One: The Mormons—David Fitzgerald on *Atheists Talk* #228, July 21st, 2013

David Fitzgerald is an author, atheist activist, and public speaker. His newest book is *The Complete Heretic's Guide to Western Religion Book One: The Mormons*. It's written for people who are new to Mormon teachings as well as ex-Mormons. Using history, expose, and humor, the book explains the practices and ideas that drive the Mormon church

Hope After Faith—Jerry DeWitt on *Atheists Talk* #229, July 28th, 2013

When it became known that Jerry DeWitt was an atheist, he lost his job, his community, and his wife. But he gained his freedom and a new community of nonbelievers. In his book, *Hope After Faith: An Ex-Pastor's Journey From Belief to Atheism*, DeWitt shares his story with us.

This show also included a short interview with Sunsara Taylor. Taylor is a writer for *Revolution Newspaper*, an initiator of Stop Patriarchy, and a proud atheist. In the interview, she talked about Stop Patriarchy's Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, a country-wide caravan opposing restrictions on abortion.

The Citizen Lobbyist—Amanda Knief on *Atheists Talk* #230, August 4th, 2013

American Atheists Managing Director Amanda Knief has taken her years of lobbying experience and distilled them down for us. Her new book, *The Citizen Lobbyist: A How-to Manual for Making Your Voice Heard in Government*, is full of practical, easy-to-follow advice

for people who have never lobbied and those who want to lobby more effectively.

Annie Laurie Gaylor on *Atheists Talk* #231, August 11th, 2013

Annie Laurie Gaylor is the co-founder and current copresident of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), an organization devoted to addressing violations of church-state separation and educating the public in matters related to non-theism.

The Happy Atheist—PZ Myers on *Atheists Talk* #232, August 18th, 2013

PZ Myers' solo blog, Pharyngula, and group blog, The Panda's Thumb, helped to pioneer the genre of science blogs. Through his commentary on the Discovery Institute and other creationist organizations, he also helped to pioneer atheist blogging, eventually becoming the cofounder of the most-read atheist network, FreethoughtBlogs.

The Happy Atheist, Myers' new book, collects some of his most-accessible writing.

The *Atheists Talk* radio show is produced by Minnesota Atheists. The June, July, and August shows were created by Brianne Bilyeu, August Berkshire, Carl Hancock, George Kane, Greg Laden, Scott Lohman, David Pacheco, and Stephanie Zvan. Original music was composed and performed by Brent Michael Davids.

If you would like to participate in the creation of the show, please contact us at radio@mnatheists.org.

To learn more about *Atheists Talk*, visit us on Facebook and at twitter.com/atheiststalk.

Atheists Talk radio costs about \$900 per month to produce. Please consider making a denotation by using the coupon on page eleven or by visiting mnatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund.

Upcoming Events

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous. Sundays, 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Men's Center, 3249 Hennepin Avenue South, Suite 55, Minneapolis. Meets in the basement. Open to all genders.

Atheists Talk television show recording. First Thursday, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., MTN Studio A, 125 Southeast Main Street, Minneapolis. Contact Steve Petersen, 651-484-9277.

Burnsville Book Club. First Wednesday. Dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:00 p.m. to about 9:00 p.m. Davanni's, 14639 County Road 11, Burnsville. Meet in the party room.

Dinner & A Book. Fourth Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Davanni's, 5937 Summit Drive, Brooklyn Center.

Freethought Dinner Social. Second and fourth Mondays, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Avenue South, Bloomington. Contact Bob or Marilyn Neinker, 612-866-6200.

Freethought Lunch. First Tuesday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Contact Bob or Marilyn Nienkirk, 612-866-6200.

Freethought Toastmasters. First and third Mondays, 6:00 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul. Contact George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

Little Canada Book Club. Second Sunday, 1:00 p.m., Caribou Coffee, 3354 Rice Street, Little Canada.

Lunch at the Dragon House Restaurant. Third Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Dragon House Restaurant, 3970 Central Avenue, Columbia Heights. Contact Bill Volna, 612-781-1420.

Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting. Third Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue West, St. Paul. Open to all members. Contact George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

For all the latest meeting news, visit www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists and subscribe to Atheists' Weekly Email (AWE) at mnatheists.org/atheists-weekly/subscribe-to-awe.html

We worship the Almighty. Send us some. Join Minnesota Atheists, renew your membership, or make a donation.

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Minnesota Atheists

Positive atheism in actionsm since 1991

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.

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MINNESOTA ATHEISTS GOALS

Minnesota Atheists
practices positive,
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neighborhood atheism in
order to provide a community
for atheists, educate the
public about atheism, and
promote separation of state
and church.

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