

# The Minnesota Atheist



## Minnesota Atheists wants YOU to throw the first pitch at the 2014 Mr. Paul Aints Game!

Help Wanted! We need someone to represent the Minnesota Atheists at our co-sponsored St. Paul Saints game. The minor league baseball team will change their name to the secular-friendly Mister Paul Aints for the third year in a row in what is being billed as a *Night of Unbelievable Fun: The Third Strike* sponsored by the Minnesota Atheists and Freedom from Religion Foundation. After losing the first two years, the Mr. Paul Aints will be going for their first win when they face the Kansas City T-Bones on Friday, July 11. There will be pregame tailgating, post-game fireworks, atheist-themed antics, atheist team jerseys, and we want YOU to toss out the first ceremonial pitch of the game! Email your bids to [atheistbaseball@gmail.com](mailto:atheistbaseball@gmail.com)

Your first name and initial of your last name will be posted in the list of bids on [MinnesotaAtheists.org/FirstPitch](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org/FirstPitch)

Payment must be received within five business days. Electronic payment via PayPal is preferred. Check or money order is acceptable and can be sent to Minnesota Atheists P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112.

The winner will receive a complimentary Mr. Paul Aints t-shirt and hat which they will be required to wear when throwing out the first ceremonial pitch.

Must be at least 18 years old to bid and participate.

If you're interested in attending the game, game tickets are available at [SaintsGroups.com](http://SaintsGroups.com). After you get through the Captcha screen you'll need to enter in the code word, "Atheists" You might want to consider staying in town the next day and join other friendly heathens for our third annual regional conference in downtown St. Paul. Speakers include Susan Jacoby, Debbie Goddard, PZ Myers, and more! For more details about the baseball game and conference visit [MinnesotaAtheists.org/conference](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org/conference)



- President's Column 2**
- News and Notes 3**
- Cryptogram 4**
- May Meeting Review 4**
- May Day Report 5**
- Day of Reason Report 6**
- 30 Years in Atheism 7**
- Cable Report 10**
- Cryptogram Answer 10**
- Radio Report 11**
- Conference Info 13**
- Aints Game Info 14**

### Here are the bidding rules:

Bidding begins on June 9, 2014 and ends on June 23, 2014 at 5pm (central time). Submit your bid to [atheistbaseball@gmail.com](mailto:atheistbaseball@gmail.com) Along with your bid, you will need to include your full name, address, and phone number. You will be contacted by a Minnesota Atheists board member to verify your bid. Bids placed without this information will not be accepted. The bidding will be updated daily at [MinnesotaAtheists.org/FirstPitch](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org/FirstPitch) so you can see how your bid compares to others.

## President's Column – Experimenting with Christian Radio

By Eric Jayne

A couple weeks ago I picked up a box of gluten-free crackers at the grocery store. They were on sale and I've heard several testimonials from trusted friends about how much better they feel after going gluten free so I thought it would be worth the two dollar investment to give this product a try. After getting home and putting the groceries away I opened the box of gluten free crackers. I grabbed one out of the box and proceeded to put it in my mouth. It was awful; tasteless at best, repulsive at worst. So I tried another. And then another. I finally gave up trying to like them but I was glad I gave it an honest consideration. My experiment with KTIS-98.5, the popular local Christian music station, rendered similar results.

Some acquaintances outside of my godless social network listen to KTIS and some are big enough fans that they drive around with a KTIS bumper sticker on their car. I decided to listen to the station on the way into work for a week just to see what it was all about.

Admittedly, I was pretty sure that I was not going to like the music but I was curious, so I turned the radio dial until it landed on 98.5 and kept it there for a week. Or at least that was the idea. To be honest, I ended up being able to listen for only about 20 minutes each road trip—and I drive a lot.

Since the music is unique to this one station, and since it's a significant draw to the station's listeners, I'll start there. I don't mean to sound like a music snob but the first thing I noticed is that the musical composition of every song I heard during this listening adventure was excruciatingly dull and simple. Were they all mass-produced from Joel Osteen's recording studio at Lakewood Church?

Lyricaly, the songs seemed more depressing than inspirational; more disempowering than empowering. Hopelessness and despair were typical themes and it should come as no surprise that God was the only source of relief. Some songs were musically upbeat, and even danceable, but even those had a disturbing element: groveling and constant tribute to a supreme leader. It was hero worship at its best and it reminded me of what's been happening in North Korea for the last several decades.

The radio program hosts seemed nice and wholesome, as one would expect. They were good with routine weather and traffic reports, and they were as professional as anyone else I've heard on the radio. Just like other commercial radio personalities the KTIS hosts opined and pontificated about various news stories, but unlike the other commercial radio personalities the KTIS hosts prayed on air about some of the people in the story. One prayed for Miley Cyrus after reporting that the pop singer was in the hospital after postponing her concert tour. The prayer was more about Miley accepting Jesus Christ as her lord and savior and less about her physical and mental health. They also took on-air prayer requests.

The radio commercials even invoked Jesus, God, and the Christian faith. It's probably worth mentioning though that many of the advertisers were from faith-based places like home schooling products, youth academies, and churches.

So that's my brief report about what's going on with our pious friends on the FM. If you're curious like me, I encourage you to also take the KTIS experiment. It's a peculiar sociological trip but it's free and kind of entertaining if you bend your ear just right.

I would be remiss if I didn't remind our fine readers that our own *Atheists Talk* radio show airs from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. every Sunday on KTNF AM-950. For comparison, KTIS is an FM radio station that disseminates an evangelical worldview in crystal clear stereo every day. We are able to sustain our show and share the atheist view on the radio, online streaming, and podcasts, thanks to our donors. If you'd like to donate to our radio show or become a paid member please visit [MinnesotaAtheists.org](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org) and click the "Join/Donate" button. With enough donations maybe we can increase our radio time!



## News and Notes

By George Kane

Since Sandra Day O'Connor's retirement in 2006, supporters of Jefferson's wall of separation between church and state have feared that the Supreme Court would dismantle its Establishment Clause protections. That came to pass on May 5 when the Supreme Court rendered its decision in the *Town of Greece v. Galloway* case.

Two women, a Jew and an atheist, brought suit against the Town Council of Greece, which adjoins Rochester, New York, to end its practice of opening their meetings with Christian prayer. When the suit was first filed, the council responded by inviting a couple of ministers of other faiths to lead the invocation, but thereafter returned to its original list of churches within the town borders for invitations. While there is a diversity of faiths among the residents of Greece, the only houses of worship in the town are Protestant. Most of the invocations given at the council meetings were offered in Jesus' name, with no recognition of non-Christians in attendance.

Since the 1984 *Lynch v. Donnelly* case over the display of a crèche in a public square, the Court has held that certain nominally religious practices of government such as the national motto "In God We Trust" and the mention of God in the Pledge of Allegiance constitute a merely ritual *ceremonial deism*. Justice Brennan wrote that as such they are "protected from Establishment Clause scrutiny chiefly because they have lost through rote repetition any significant religious content."

One prong of the *Lemon Test* for an Establishment Clause violation holds that the government's action must have a legitimate secular purpose. O'Connor's decision in *Lynch v. Donnelly* has until now guided court decisions on how that test should be employed.

O'Connor wrote:

*The Establishment Clause prohibits government from making adherence to a religion relevant in any way to a person's standing in the political community. Government can run afoul of that prohibition...[by] endorsement or disapproval of religion. Endorsement sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.*

*The proper inquiry under the purpose prong of Lemon, I submit, is whether the government intends to convey a message of endorsement or disapproval of religion*

For thirty years this Endorsement Test set the boundary of permissible government prayer. It was understood that they could not be expressly sectarian, such as by invoking Jesus, but had to be ecumenical and inclusive.

The decision in *Greece v. Galloway* trashed the Endorsement Test. "To hold that invocations must be non-sectarian would force the legislatures sponsoring prayers and the courts deciding these cases to act as supervisors and censors of religious speech," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote.

Lawmakers and judges would otherwise have to police prayer, he wrote, involving "government in religious matters to a far greater degree than is the case under the town's current

*(continued on page 12)*

### George Kane **Cryptogram**

Zrt spjz aeyewlmpij wpxwtvz tbtavtadzty fu Rpsp Jdvetxj ej zrdz zrt Mpay Cpy  
ph Watdzepx qdxzj zrt jdwwraext dypadzepx ph rej watdzepxj, zrdz rt wdx ft  
vtajldyty fu zrtea vadutaj, dxy ftwpstj vtzlmidx eh rt yptj xpz atwtebt zrej hmdztau.

Apftaz Rttxmtex

## Minnesota Atheist Meeting Review – May

By Jordan Peacock

Like global warming, the topic of our April meeting, the nature of free will is an issue on which opinion, while unevenly distributed, cuts across the theist/atheist divide. August Berkshire presented free will as an illusion to be rid of, for our own benefit and for benefit of the species. The talk was divided into two parts. In the first, free will was discussed against the background of what we know of the physical universe (that even if it isn't deterministic in Laplace's sense, its degree of indetermination results in statistical regularity; not everything goes), and of the biological world (brains are matter, and have evolved from ancestors whom we would not typically describe as 'possessing free will'). Most striking here was the discussion of some recent experimentation on the subject, with the paper *Internally Generated Preactivation of Single Neurons in Human Medial Frontal Cortex Predicts Volition* (Itzhak, et al, 2011) showing that for a particular neuronal group, scientists could predict decisions before the person was conscious of having made them (with up to 80% accuracy).

In the second half of the talk, August discussed the moral implications, including the perceived threat to personal agency. He presented the process of disillusionment as an unmitigated good, and held the utmost faith that people would survive the death of free will with as much grace and aplomb as the prior deaths of being unique creations, or being the center of the universe.

There was a discussion period after each half of the talk, and the comments were impassioned and varied. Several in the audience spoke of interactions in therapy that led to questions about personal agency. Paul Heffron spoke about the feelings of guilt experienced by the men he visits in prison as a humanist chaplain. A member of the audience, originally from Louisiana, stressed a distinction between the terms "choice" and "decision," using the former as a proxy for the kind of "free choice" that proponents of free will refer to, but with the latter representing the experienced choice of the individual that is co-conditioned by nature and nurture.



This was a helpful distinction, and as the conversation progressed, it seemed that the biggest challenge was terminology, rather than deep ideological disagreement. It seems our language about choice and decision needs to make this separation explicit, as there genuinely is a phenomenological experience of *making choices*, but apart from this there is scant evidence of free will, and a significant, albeit not decisive, amount against.

Unclear language was also the source of a dispute about whether free will could be an "emergent property." August rightly placed it on a list of problematic explanations for free will, if by 'emergent' one means a cause additional to those understood by traditional physics (a usage common, for instance, in some New Age literature). However, there is also a materialist definition of emergent which is not subject to that critique, when describing phenomena (such as hurricanes or consciousness) that only exist at certain scales; a few neurons do not consciousness make. This latter is almost certainly true of the felt experience of free will, although this does not support the folk notion of free will as being 'free from influence.'

A more actionable approach to the subject could be to de-privilege the cognitive decision as a causal factor, and accept multi-factor causal explanation as better. Praise and blame should be directed at the entire "decision environment," and not simply at the individual-as-a-moral-agent. Whatever it means at the neuronal and subatomic levels, we can deploy our experience of choice to make decisions that privilege empathy and de-emphasize the acausal "libertarian free will" in favor of more holistic appraisals that incorporate environmental and unconscious influences as well.

# May Day!

By August Berkshire

Twenty-six people helped make our presence in the Minneapolis May Day Parade and Festival a success. As always, we were greeted with applause as we marched and by some friendly, like-minded people at our booth. The event is second only to the Twin Cities Gay Pride as a source of names and addresses of people interested in our organization. It is through your continued memberships, donations, and participation that we are able to engage in successful outreach efforts like this.

Thanks to: Mike A., August Berkshire, Dave Bradley, Heath Burthwick, Patrick Currier, Mark Friedl, Daniel Hansen, Ella Haubrich, Mike Haubrich, Heather Hegi (event organizer), Hertzey Hertz, Jim Hoogenakker, Laura Hutt, Dan Jensen, George Kane, Mahad Muhammad, Shirley Moll, Drake Olson, David Perry, Steve Petersen (event organizer), Angie Stehr, Les Stordalen, Rachelle Stumpf, Richard Trombley (photographer), Georgia Tsoi, and Rachel Wilson.

**Thank You!**



Photos by Richard Trombley

## Day of Reason 2014 - 30 Years and Growing with Good Reason

Minnesota Atheists and the Humanists of Minnesota co-sponsor the ninth annual Day of Reason

The theme of this year's Day of Reason was "30 Years and Growing with Good Reason"

Program Chair: Heather Hegi

Logistics: Steve Petersen

- Minnesota Atheists, Eric Jayne (Opening)
- Secretary of State, Mark Ritchie (Welcome)
- Minnesota Atheists, August Berkshire
- Humanists of Minnesota, Audrey Kingstrom
- CASH, Brendan Murphy
- Secular Student Alliance, Chelsea Du Fresne
- Camp Quest of Minnesota, Jeannette Watland
- MN Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, George Kane
- Secular Coalition for Minnesota, Bill Wehr
- Cannon Falls Freethinkers, Ken Kressin
- RAFT, Jim Salutz
- American Atheists MN Rep, Randall Tighe

We were also joined by Representatives Phyllis Kahn and Mike Freiberg.



## Thirty Years of Atheism in Minnesota

By August Berkshire

*This is based on my talk at our "Day of Reason" at the State Capitol. I do not list all the atheist/humanist/freethought groups in the state. Nor have I mentioned any local people, since, fortunately, there have simply been too many who have contributed to our movement's success. Nor have I detailed all the group name changes that have occurred. Instead, I have tried to give an overall sense of the progress we have made.*

In March 1984, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, then president of American Atheists, came to Minneapolis as the featured speaker for the annual fundraising dinner for the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union (now the ACLU-MN).

Afterwards, in a meeting room in the basement, she was joined by her son, Jon Murray. They had previously notified everyone on their mailing list in Minnesota that this was to be a chapter formation meeting. About 150 people showed up.

This was the second or third time they had tried to start a chapter in our state, and this time it was successful, with the formation of the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists. That continued until 1991, when American Atheists disbanded its chapters and we became Minnesota Atheists.

In 1985, the group that we now know as the Humanists of Minnesota was formed. A year later they became a chapter of the American Humanist Association.

In 1991, the group that came to be known as the Campus Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists formed at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. It is the oldest, continuously operating, student group in the country.

In 1996, an *ad hoc* group called the Atheist-Humanist Outreach was formed from members of Minnesota Atheists and the Humanists of Minnesota. From this effort, in 1997, came the Red River Freethinkers in Fargo/Moorhead, the Lake Superior Freethinkers in Duluth/Superior, and the Rochester Area Freethinkers.

Also about that time, the group now called the Central Minnesota Freethinkers was formed in St. Cloud.

In 2003, Camp Quest of Minnesota was formed, and this year they will host their 11th camp.

In the past five years or so, we have seen the formation of the Cannon Falls Freethinkers, the Brainerd Area Atheists & Freethinkers, and the Grand Rapids Atheists and Freethinkers. As a sign of our progress, some of these newer outstate groups are not afraid of the word "atheist."

Over the years various student atheist groups have formed, not only in the Twin Cities but also in St. Cloud, St. Peter, Northfield, Duluth, Moorhead, Grand Rapids, Winona, and Mankato. There has even been an occasional high school group. Most, if not all of these groups, have been affiliated with the national Secular Student Alliance.

Minnesota has also hosted two national conventions of American Atheists, in 1988 and 2008.

The past two years has seen the formation of the Minnesota Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State (not an atheist organization but it advocates for atheists' rights), as well as the Secular Coalition for Minnesota. This year has seen the start of a local Sunday Assembly.

And finally, we must not forget our cousins, the Freethought Toastmasters, the Minnesota Skeptics, and four or five Critical Thinking Clubs.

To borrow from Charles Darwin, from so simple a beginning endless atheist and humanist groups most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

Yes, it's been 30 years, and we're still growing, with good reason – thanks to all of you.



## Minnesota Atheist Volunteers Support Emergency Food Network

By Steve Petersen

In the fall of last year, Minnesota Atheists President Eric Jayne set up volunteer opportunities at the Emergency Food Network (EFN). This is a food bank that supplies food shelves throughout the state of Minnesota. In 2013 supporters of MNA logged 83 hours at EFN and helped serve 5,146 people in need. In 2014 a regular day and time slot was set up, the second Thursday of the month from 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

Daytime hours are when our help is most needed. The EFN is very appreciative of our volunteers and they always have positions. They accommodate helpers of all abilities. Events are arranged on the Minnesota Atheists Meetup site, but if you would be interested in volunteering, please contact Steve or Shirley at 6561-484-9277, or [address@mnatheists.org](mailto:address@mnatheists.org). Upcoming dates are: June 19 (June is the 3rd Thursday) July 10, August 14, September 11, October 9, November 13 and December 11.

### Call for July Articles

We welcome contributions from all readers of The Minnesota Atheist. While we cannot guarantee that your submission will be accepted for publication, we will carefully consider anything that is related to atheism. We would especially like to receive contributions which provide profiles of individual atheists and which report atheist-related events in the wider community.

Because we are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, we cannot print articles that support or oppose a specific candidate, but we can print articles that support or oppose specific causes. A good length to aim for is about 500-1000 words and no more than about 2000 words.

Please send submissions to the editor, Jenny Nolan at [editor@mnatheists.org](mailto:editor@mnatheists.org) by 11:59pm on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. All submissions may be edited for style and length.

We look forward to receiving your submissions. Without contributions for readers like you, The Minnesota Atheist would be needlessly constrained in its breadth and depth.

# VOLUNTEERS!





## “Out of the Closet” Photo Booth at Our July 12 Conference

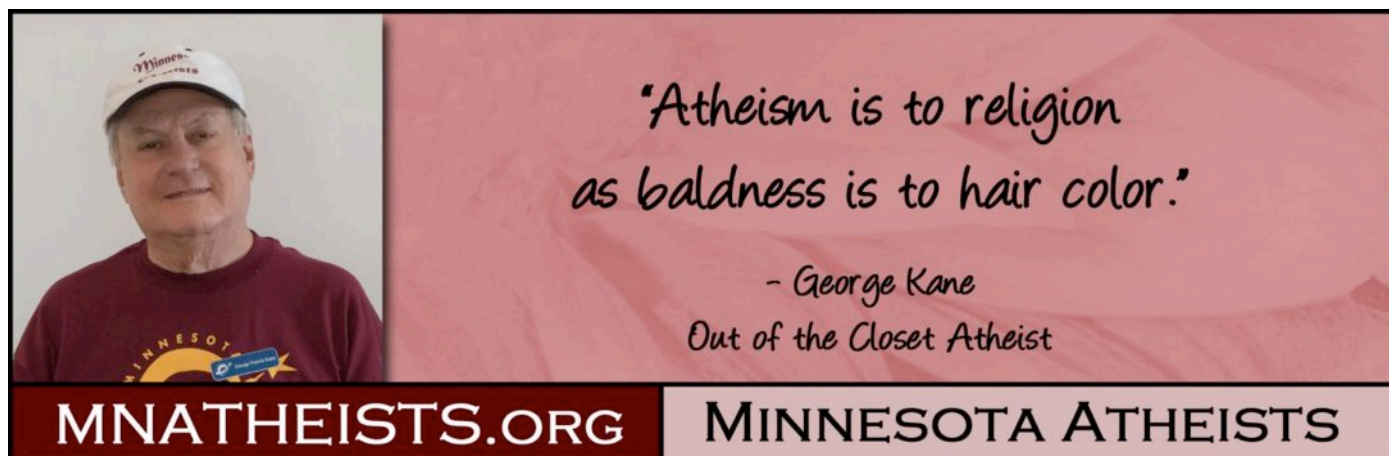
by Jerry Rauser

We atheists and Humanists have always been leaders in rational thought and moral decisions based on human well-being. Here is an opportunity to share your personal philosophy by coming “out of the closet”.

Many national, state and university organizations of nonbelievers have established “out of the closet” campaigns. The goals include strengthening our communities, enhancing social acceptance of atheists and Humanists, enabling our election to public offices, and defending separation of church and state. All of these will come to us when we have enough “out of the closet” nonbelievers.

Personal reasons include living a more honest and free life, feeling proud of whom we are, and letting others know they are not alone. You can share your secular values by participating in our local campaign.

Our joint Minnesota Atheists and Humanists of Minnesota conference on July 12 will include a free photo booth where you can have your portrait taken, and give a personal quote. With your permission, our atheist newsletter and web site will publish your “virtual billboard”. See the examples below. You will receive a free copy of your portrait by email. So, please be thinking about your quote, and stop by the photo booth on July 12.



A photo booth example featuring a man in a white cap and a maroon t-shirt. The background is a pinkish-red fabric. The text on the fabric reads: "Atheism is to religion as baldness is to hair color." attributed to George Kane, Out of the Closet Atheist. Below the photo is a dark red banner with the text "MNATHEISTS.ORG" and "MINNESOTA ATHEISTS".

*"Atheism is to religion  
as baldness is to hair color."*

- George Kane  
Out of the Closet Atheist

**MNATHEISTS.ORG** **MINNESOTA ATHEISTS**



A photo booth example featuring a man in a light-colored shirt. The background is a blue fabric. The text on the fabric reads: "Atheism is Like Living in the Sunshine and Breathing Fresh Air" attributed to Jerry Rauser, Out of the Closet Atheist. Below the photo is a blue banner with the text "MNATHEISTS.ORG" and "MINNESOTA ATHEISTS".

*Atheism is Like  
Living in the Sunshine  
and Breathing Fresh Air*

- Jerry Rauser  
Out of the Closet Atheist

**MNATHEISTS.ORG** **MINNESOTA ATHEISTS**

## Cable Report

By Steve Petersen

In May we were honored to have Grant Steves for a return visit. George Kane did two programs with Grant. The first program discussed *The Relevance of Religion for Atheists*. Grant used his lifetime of both professional and personal experience to help guide atheists and others as to when, where and how to talk about religion. Bibliography for this program: Boghossian, Peter: *A Manual for Creating Atheists* 2013, Cialdini, Robert: *Influence: Science and Practice* 2001, Eller, David: *Natural Atheism* 2004, Kuhn, Deanna: *Education for Thinking* 2005, Johnson, Judy: *What's So Wrong With Being Absolutely Right* 2009 and Shermer, Michael: *The Believing Brain* 2011. The second program was a review of CS Lewis' book *Mere Christianity*. Grant suggests all skeptics be familiar with this book because this is what many believers use as a resource to understand atheists.

We would like to thank Deb Doucette for the many years she sponsored the program in Little Falls, MN. The station in Little Falls has stopped public access broadcasting. If you would like to see if a program could be shown in your area, please contact Steve Petersen at [address@mnaatheists.org](mailto:address@mnaatheists.org)

**Cable Crew:** George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Les Stordalen, Grant Hermanson and Art Anderson.

**Podcasts:** MinnesotaAtheists.org. Available via iTunes and YouTube. Made possible by Grant Hermanson.

## Cryptogram Answer

The most ridiculous concept ever perpetrated by *Homo Sapiens* is that the Lord God of Creation wants the saccharine adoration of his creations, that he can be persuaded by their prayers, and becomes petulant if he does not receive this flattery.

-Robert Heinlein



## Cable Schedule

**Burnsville/Eagan Community Television:** Ch. 14  
Check their web site [www.bect.tv](http://www.bect.tv) for day and times. Sponsor: Kevin Hardisty

**Bloomington:** Ch. 16. Sunday 11:00 p.m. Sponsors: David and Joanne Beardsley.

**Minneapolis:** Ch. 75. Monday 7:00 p.m. Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

**Northwest Community Television (NWCT) Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, New Hope, Osseo, Plymouth and Robbinsdale,** Ch. 20 check web page for date and times: [nwct.org/programming.aspx](http://nwct.org/programming.aspx) Sponser: Grant Hermanson

**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.

**St. Cloud:** Ch. 12 Thursday 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. Sponsor Tom Stavros.

**St. Paul:** Ch. 15 Wednesdays 5:00 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Wright.

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

**White Bear Lake, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale, Vadnais**

**Heights:** Ch. 15. Saturday 8:00 p.m. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.

## Atheists Talk Radio Report

By Mike Haubrich



The following programs were broadcast in the last month:

**“Coming Out Atheist,”** Greta Christina on Atheists Talk #266, April 27, 2014

So, is coming out as an atheist a problem for many people? It can be, but with support and a guide on how to do it, a difficult process is likely to be made easier. While there are lessons to be learned from the process of how LGBT people open their closet doors and step out, either boldly or tentatively, there are some key differences. Stephanie Zvan talked with Greta about her new guide. A point to remember is this: when coming out as atheists we need to be sensitive to the fact that we are telling people that they are wrong in their beliefs. Wars have been started over this, so it is not trivial. *Coming Out Atheist: How to Do It, How to Help Each Other, and Why* is a great guide and as Stephanie wrote “it tackles the challenges of each while never losing sight of the fact that there is joy in being known for who we really are.”

**“Spin Doctors,”** Mark White on Atheists Talk#267, May 4, 2014

Coming off his talk at the American Atheist's National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah this past month, Mark White continues his atheist speaking as this Sunday's Atheists Talk radio show guest. He spoke about leaving Christianity and shared a few stories about his musical career, this time with The Spin Doctors. Carl Hancock interviewed him and Mark talked about his life as a skeptic who tried to believe. Mark's experience coming to atheism is similar to many who sincerely tried to believe but just couldn't.

**“Atheist Art”** Amy Davis Roth on Atheists Talk #268, May 11, 2014

Stephanie Zvan interviewed Amy Davis Roth, known to many of us as the artist who makes ceramic necklaces under the brand “Surly-Ramics.” Roth has made some inroads into broadening the humanistic method of doing good without supernatural impetus and carrying it over into art. As an artist, Amy has been expanding her work to paintings, focusing on illustrating how people can do well, live well and be good for “the now.” Religious art has long focused on how people should be moral now for the hope of a reward after death, but her interest is in seeing the world that is in front of us

now. In addition, there are problems in the skeptic/atheist community with misogyny and her response is to paint portraits of people who do great work for their communities as atheists. While portraiture is not her main interest, putting a positive face on women who make a difference now is her response to the bile laid on her and other women who write and speak of women's issues and involvement in atheism.

**“Camp Quest of Minnesota”** on Atheists Talk #270, May 18, 2014

Camp Quest is a secular summer camp that promotes critical thinking, skepticism, and open discussion among its attendees, campers who range in age from 8-17. Campers get to have fun with exciting activities like field games, swimming, archery, crafts, and campfires. Camp Quest's programming is focused on humanist values and ethics, and the encouragement of rational inquiry, free speech and respect.

August Berkshire, one of the founders of Camp Quest Minnesota interviewed Jeannette Watland, CQM's board chair, and Nicole Infinity who is Camp Director. Camp Quest is a great opportunity for kids to just “be” in a summer camp with no religious load that they would otherwise get in Bible Camp. As the dad of a young man who has grown through Camp Quest to be a counselor, I am proud to see this opportunity for kids of skeptics and atheists.

Minnesota Atheists produces the radio program, and the director is Carl Hancock with hosts Carl Hancock, Brianne Bilyeu, Scott Lohman, David Pacheco and Stephanie Zvan. Both Stephanie and Brianne upload podcasts to our web site. The radio program is broadcast live every Sunday from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. from AM950 KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, MN. Live streaming is available on our web page. [www.mnatheists.org](http://www.mnatheists.org). Original music was composed, played and recorded by Brent Michael Davids. The cost to us is \$5,320.00 every six months. Your donations will be appreciated. They can be sent to our post office box or posted online at [minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund](http://minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund). Thanks to Brianne Bilyeu the program has a presence on social media: an Atheists Talk Facebook page and an account at [Twitter.com/atheists\\_talk](https://twitter.com/atheists_talk).

## Secretary's Report

The following is a summary of Board of Director's activities for Minnesota Atheists May, 2014.

- Registrations for the annual conference have reached 32 and the Board continues to promote the event with increased marketing
- The MNA Public Policy Committee welcomes a new chairperson, Phil Cunliffe. Georgia Tsoi, George Kane and August Berkshire will serve as committee members.
- Georgia Tsoi has accepted the role of the new MNA librarian and will facilitate the growth of a lending library of atheist related texts.
- MNA has successfully secured a new meeting space for the monthly board meetings at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation building in St. Paul. The Wilder building offers free meeting space for registered non-profits.

## April Treasury Report

### Radio Fund

Mark Nelson	\$200
Joshua Robertson	\$100
Steve Petersen	\$15
Mark Paquette	\$10
Tom Stavros	\$10
<b>Total Radio Fund</b>	<b>\$335</b>

### Building Fund

Carl Dawson	\$25
Pierre Girard	\$15
<b>Total Building Fund</b>	<b>\$40</b>

### General/Visibility Fund

Jerrold Larson	\$100
Leonard Sojka	\$65
Tom Stavros	\$10
general	\$333
<b>Total General/Visibility Fund</b>	<b>\$508</b>

**Total Income:** **\$883**

**Current Building Fund Total** **\$132,344**

### Top Expenses

Radio Show	\$820
Newsletter Printing	\$644
T-Shirts	\$620

## News and Notes (continued from page 3)

By George Kane

practice of neither editing nor approving prayers in advance nor criticizing their content after the fact."

Kennedy supplanted the Endorsement Test with a new Coercion Test that will rarely be triggered. It holds that legislative prayers may not be used to praise the virtues of one faith or to denigrate others, but that courts have no role in judging whether individual prayers satisfy that test. Rather, they can only examine the "pattern of prayer" to see whether it crossed a constitutional threshold to create a form of "coercion." Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Justice Antonin Scalia, argued that a coercion test would be violated only if a government body had actually induced people to be followers of one faith, such as by requiring them to go to religious services or to pay taxes to support religious institutions.

The decision in *Greece* eviscerates the Establishment Clause as the guarantor to American citizens of the rights of conscience against the government. This shifts the struggle for separation of church and state from the courts to the polling booth. That struggle will be much more difficult.



Minnesota Atheists, Humanists of Minnesota, & FFRF present:

## 2014 All-Star Freethought Conference

Saturday, July 12, 2014

RiverCentre, 175 W Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul, MN

Big Speakers, Workshops, Auction, Networking, & More!

**DAN BARKER FROM FFRF JUST ADDED!**



**James Croft** - Research and Education Fellow at the Humanist Chaplaincy at Harvard. He is a Cambridge and Harvard Graduate, and is currently studying for his Doctorate in the philosophy of education.



**Susan Jacoby** - Best-selling author, scholar, and former Washington Post reporter. Her work has explored law, religion, medicine, aging, women's rights, and political dissent. Her most recent book about Robert Ingersoll is now available in paperback.



**Debbie Goddard** - Director of African Americans for Humanism, a program of the Council for Secular Humanism, and the director of Outreach at the Center for Inquiry-Transnational. She participated with and helped organize freethought groups and is involved with LGBT activism.



**Rebecca Watson** - Skeptical female activist and founder of the Skepchick blog. She is a popular speaker around the world on topics about atheism, feminism, skepticism, and science.



**Dan Barker** - Dan served as an associate pastor in three churches, and was a protestant missionary in Mexico. He publicly came out as an atheist in 1984. He's the author of several freethought books and is currently the co-president of Freedom From Religion Foundation.



**PZ Myers** - Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Minnesota in Morris. He is the author of the science-atheist blog Pharyngula, which can be found on Freethought Blogs and Science Blogs. His recently published book is titled *The Happy Atheist*.

Register at [MinnesotaAtheists.org/Conference](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org/Conference) or fill out the details below and mail in this flyer with your check to Minnesota Atheists PO Box 120304; New Brighton, MN 55112

- \*\*\*\*\*
- **Full Package** (speakers, lunch\*, and dinner\*\*) \_\_\_\_\_ \$90 Non-Members \_\_\_\_\_ **\$81 Members**
  - **Speakers Only** (add \$20 for optional lunch; \$30 for optional dinner) \_\_\_\_\_ \$55 Non-Members \_\_\_\_\_ **\$49 Members**
  - **Student Rate for Speakers Only** (25 and under, with ID) \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Non-Members \_\_\_\_\_ **\$18 Members**

\* Lunch Choices: \_\_\_\_\_ **Italian Hoagie** \_\_\_\_\_ **Brie and Apple Croissant** \_\_\_\_\_ **Vegan (TBD)**

\*\* Dinner Choices: \_\_\_\_\_ **Mexican Buffet** (with vegetarian options) \_\_\_\_\_ **Vegan (TBD)**

**Additional 10% Discount for MN Atheists members!**

**Become a member:** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$10 Student** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$35 Individual** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$45 Household** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$75 Sustaining** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$600**

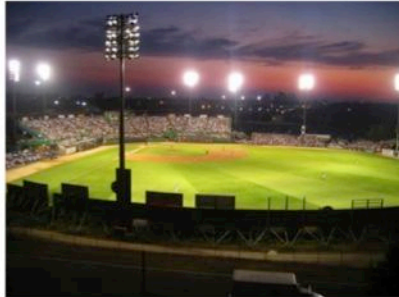
➤ **TOTAL:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



# Night of Unbelievable Fun: The Third Strike presented by Minnesota Atheists and Freedom From Religion Foundation



**St. Paul Saints become  
Mr. Paul Aints**

\$22 Package

- Infield Reserved ticket
- Mr. Paul Aints hat

\$12 Package

- General Admission ticket
- Hot dog & soda

July 11<sup>th</sup> @ 7:05 PM



VS



**Order & Print  
Tickets Online**

Go to: [SAINTSGROUPS.com](http://SAINTSGROUPS.com)

Enter "atheists" as the  
password and pick out  
your seats!

For more information about the Saints call  
651-644-6659

For more information about this game's  
sponsors visit  
[MinnesotaAtheists.org](http://MinnesotaAtheists.org) and [FFRF.org](http://FFRF.org)

## Upcoming Events

**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.

**Lake Superior Freethinkers Monthly Membership**

**Meeting.** First Sundays, social time 9:00 a.m., breakfast 9:30 a.m. (\$13.00), program 10:00 a.m., Duluth Radisson, 505 West Superior Street, Duluth.

**Freethought Toastmasters.** First and third Mondays, 6:30 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue West, Saint Paul. Contact George Kane, nup@Minn.net

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Crafty Freethinkers North.** Second Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Brookdale Library, Study Room I, 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center.

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

**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.

**Godless Gamers—Board Game Night.** Second and fourth Thursdays, 6:00 p.m., Fantasy Flight Games Center, 1975 County Road B2, Roseville.

**Blasphemer’s Brunch.** Second Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 West 66th Street, Richfield.

**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., Open to all members. Contact Heather Hegi, chair@mnaatheists.org. for location.

**Freethinking Females Evening** at Chatterbox Pub. Fourth Monday, 7:30 p.m., Chatterbox Pub, 800 Cleveland Avenue South, Saint Paul.



Check out more events on our Meetup page at: [meetup.com/minnesota-atheists](http://meetup.com/minnesota-atheists).

### Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations



**There’s always time to make a difference.**

**Join Minnesota Atheists, renew your membership or make a donation today.**

- One-year student membership \$10
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600
- General Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Building Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Radio Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. All other memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

- Please send my subscription by email

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email (required for student memberships and email subscriptions): \_\_\_\_\_

**Minnesota Atheists, PO Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112. Please make checks payable to Minnesota Atheists. Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.**

# Minnesota Atheists

Positive atheism in action<sup>sm</sup> 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.

## Minnesota Atheist Board of Directors

### Board Email

Board@mnatheists.org

### President

Eric Jayne  
pres@mnatheists.org

### Associate President

Stephanie Zvan  
apres@mnatheists.org

### Chair

Heather Hegi  
chair@mnatheists.org

### Associate Chair

Phil Cunliffe  
achair@mnatheists.org

### Secretary

Jill Carlson  
sec@mnatheists.org

### Treasurer

Chris Matthews  
treas@mnatheists.org  
763.428.3424

### Directors-at-Large

August Berkshire  
dir1@mnatheists.org  
612.868.2267  
Georgia Hancock Tsoi  
dir2@mnatheists.org  
Alyssa Ehni  
dir3@mnatheists.org

## The Minnesota Atheist Newsletter

### Editorial Board Email

editor@mnatheists.org

### Editorial Board

George Kane  
nup@minn.net  
651.488.8225  
Jo Marsicano  
jo.marsicano@gmail.com  
Christopher Matthews  
c03m13@bluebottle.com  
Shirley Moll  
srmoll@comcast.com  
James Zimmerman  
zgoatee@gmail.com

### Editor

Jenny Nolan  
editor@mnatheists.org

### Chief Photographer

Richard Trombley

### Membership and Change of Address

Steve Petersen  
address@mnatheists.org  
651.484.9277

### Submissions

Submit material for the newsletter to the editor at editor@mnatheists.org  
Submissions may be edited.

## Minnesota Atheists Media

### Public Relations Chair

Emily Matejcek  
pr@mnatheists.org

### Atheists Weekly Email (AWE)

Christopher Matthews  
awe@mnatheists.org

### Cable TV Chair

Steve Petersen  
cable@mnatheists.org

### Webmaster

Grant Hermanson  
web@mnatheists.org

### Podcasts Chair

Grant Hermanson  
podcasts@mnatheists.org

## Minnesota Atheists Goals

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 Affiliations

Minnesota Atheists is affiliated with the Atheist Alliance of America, Atheist Alliance International, American Atheists, The American Humanist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism, The International Humanist and Ethical Union, and the Secular Coalition for America.

## Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 207  
Life members: 37  
Meetup members: 1566

## Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

Hector Avalos, PhD  
Dan Barker  
Gerald Erickson, PhD  
Annie Laurie Gaylor  
Dick Hewetson  
Robert M. Price, PhD



The Minnesota Atheist June 2014.  
Published by Minnesota Atheists  
PO Box 120304  
New Brighton, MN 55112  
612-588-7031  
[info@mnatheists.org](mailto:info@mnatheists.org)  
Copyright © 2014 by Minnesota Atheists.  
All rights reserved.