

# THE MINNESOTA ATHEIST

## Family Friendly Freethought Summer Picnics

Join us for a Family Friendly Freethought Picnic featuring food for everyone, conversation for adults, and lots of opportunity for playing for children and youth. We have a picnic for each of the summer months, June-August, held at two different picnic shelters with the sponsor of each picnic rotating.

Dates and Location:

**June Picnic sponsored by Camp Quest Minnesota**

Sunday, June 12th at noon, Columbia Park Picnic Area, 800 Columbia Pkwy, Minneapolis

**July Picnic sponsored by the Humanists of Minnesota**

Sunday, July 17th at 11:00 a.m., Wabun Picnic Area Shelter B, 4655 46th Ave S, Minneapolis

**August Picnic sponsored by Minnesota Atheists**

Sunday, August 21st at noon, Columbia Park Picnic Area, 800 Columbia Pkwy, Minneapolis

About the Picnic:

- This is a Potluck Picnic, so bring some picnic food to share if you can!
- Bringing your own beverage, plate, and utensils helps out.
- The picnic takes place in a shelter so it will occur rain or shine.
- The shelter area has electrical outlets.

There will be:

- Lots of Friendly People!
- Lively Discussion
- A Playground for the Kids
- Room for Frisbee, Ladder Ball, etc.



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Map is for July picnic only.

# President's Column

By Alyssa Ehni

Would you believe that I have been trying to attend the May Day parade and celebration for the last eight years, but something has always come up? I FINALLY made it this year and had a great time. I walked in the parade with my puppy, Ella, who thoroughly enjoyed her new role as an adorable ambassador for atheism.

I was caught off guard with the amount of excitement the parade goes expressed as we passed by, shouting "It's the atheists!" along with other exclamations. After all, we were near the end of the parade and I was surprised people were sticking around for any reason. But there they were running up to leshia for a hug (she was holding our "hug an atheist" sign) and laughing with Ron or Heather, who took turns following Ella with our curb your dogma sign. It was exciting to be so visible as an atheist and be so well received.

Atheism isn't visible, unless it is intentionally and outwardly expressed. You would have to wear a tee-shirt with an atheist message, or perhaps the red "A", or hold a sign for someone to be able to observe your atheism. This is different than how most people typically experience other aspects of identity, like race, gender, or physical ability.

As an organization, Minnesota Atheists is fairly visible in the metro area. We participate in Pride, host a Day of Reason at the state capital, and sponsor the Mr. Paul Aints (the secularized version of the minor league baseball team, the Saint Paul Saints). This year will bring additional visibility for us and the game in the form of billboards advertising the July 16th game. (Get your tickets now at saints groups.com, password: 2016atheists. And don't forget to tailgate with us beforehand!) Additionally, small groups volunteer at a homeless shelter and a food network, as atheists.

What can Minnesota Atheists do to increase its visibility and attract new dues-paying members? Although we are present at many public activities, I am confident there are more than a few additional spaces in which we could increase our visibility and draw in new members. Are there different ways in which we can connect with our new and prospective members to get a better feel for what they need and want from our organization? What other ways can we let our neighbors know they look just like their friendly neighborhood atheist?

In addition to our secular celebrant legislation, what other current issues, related to our public policy positions, might we want to address and what organizations can we collaborate with in order to move these additional issues forward? "Religious Freedom" legislation has been proposed in the Minnesota legislature. While I am not familiar with the language specific to the Minnesota bill, similar bills elsewhere in the United States would allow for discrimination based upon sincerely held religious beliefs. Not only could this result in discrimination against LGBT communities, but it could also result in discrimination against open atheists and other non Christians, single mothers, divorcees, interracial couples, or anyone else with whom a person disagrees. You know, as long their god(s) say it's okay.

If I could only take away one thing from the LGBT rights movement over the past 20 years, it is that being visible, letting your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers know who you are, makes a difference. In that spirit, I ask that you join me in being visible, as an atheist. Also, let Heather or me know what additional ideas you may have about how Minnesota Atheists can become more visible and what else we can do to support the separation of state and church.

## Cryptogram By George Francis Kane

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# News and Notes

By George Francis Kane

The races for the presidential nominations of the two major parties is, for all practical purposes, decided. Donald Trump will be the Republican nominee, and Hillary Clinton the nominee of the Democratic Party. I expect that there will be very few Americans straddling the fence in this election. Probably the opinions of voters on these candidates is more firmly set than in any election during my lifetime, even before the conventions have been held. As atheists, however, we have a particular political interest: the separation of church and state. Where do the candidates stand on our core political issue?

Their views on church/state separation have not been addressed in their stump speeches, so we will have to rely on the questions interviewers and audiences ask them to draw their views out. What questions do we want asked of the candidates?

I think that it would be improper and unproductive to ask the candidates of their own religious beliefs, and how those beliefs would influence their presidential decisions. Such questions would invite hypocritical expressions of piety to appeal to religious voters. They are, after all, a larger constituency than atheists. We could, however, ask the candidates if they agree with John Kennedy's belief that the separation of church and state should be absolute.

Here are some other questions that atheists should ask.

- Will you close Obama's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships? If you are keeping it, what will be its function in your administration?
- What is your position on charitable choice?
- Will you issue a National Day of Prayer proclamation?
- When you take the oath of office, will you append "so help me God" to the oath required by the constitution?
- Do you support state Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (RFRAs)? These laws permit people to claim an exemption from laws based on a "sincerely held religious belief," unless the state can prove that it achieves a compelling state interest in the manner that least burdens the freedom of religious conscience of the people. "Surely" we should ask, "states can't permit a religious exemption to every law; how do they draw the line?" (Generally, there is no point to asking a presidential candidate about state laws. The tactic of using state RFRAs to override local anti-discrimination laws to permit discrimination against same-sex couples, however, could be precluded by adding sexual orientation as a protected class to federal nondiscrimination laws, or by presidential proclamation to prohibit employment discrimination by federal contractors.)
- What is your opinion of the various tests that the

Supreme Court has created to determine whether a government action violates the Establishment Clause — the Neutrality Test, the Endorsement Test, the Lemon Test, practice in the early days of the nation, and the Coercion Test? Will you ask all Supreme Court Nominees their views on these tests?

- Are you committed to retaining the contraceptive mandate of the Affordable Care Act?
- Would you act to withhold federal public education funding from states that permit the teaching of intelligent design, or promote religious activities in schools?
- Do you characterize the War on Terror as a war against "radical Islam?" What are you going to do to keep Muslim citizens in the United States from becoming terrorist recruits? (Minnesota Atheists regards it as a violation of Free Exercise Clause for the government to treat Muslims any differently than the practitioners of Christianity or any other religion.)
- There has been continuous litigation since 1989 to remove the Mt. Soledad Cross from a city park. It was ruled to be unconstitutional, and the city responded by transferring ownership to the federal government. Will you remove the cross?

The Secular Coalition of America has congressional report cards on its web site, [secular.org](http://secular.org), but does not yet provide a secular report card or policy analysis for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. I expect that to be released as we approach the November election.

What questions do you want asked of the candidates? Write to me at [nup@Minn.net](mailto:nup@Minn.net).



# Secretary's Report - May

By Tim Berry

- A motion was made and approved that we pay half of the cost of tabling for \$100.00 for the Juneteenth Festival. The Black Freethinkers of Minnesota will pay for the other half

Complete meeting minutes are available to dues paying members by contacting Tim at [sec@mnatheists.org](mailto:sec@mnatheists.org)



## Quarterly Business Meeting

by Heather Hegi

The Minnesota Atheists' Quarterly Business Meeting for the Second Quarter will be held on Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul, Minnesota. NOTE: It isn't intuitive on how to get to the party room. The trick is to park/walk to the back side of the complex (opposite Larpenteur Ave) and look for the gap between buildings (toward the east side of the building). Signs will direct you to the room.

Last year we initiated this format for the 'Members' Meeting to allow it to be more in-depth and of more value to our members. We want to hear from you, so if you have any agenda items you would like to be discussed, please submit them to me, Heather Hegi, at [chair@mnatheists.org](mailto:chair@mnatheists.org)

Current items which will likely be discussed are getting more people involved in the production of our radio program, Atheists Talk; final planning for the Aints Game; any committee reports provided, and any other discussion items that come up.

Dinner will be provided to those who are interested for a suggested donation of \$10. Dinner will include salad, pizza, dessert, and drinks.

If you have any questions or comments about this evening, again, please email me, Heather Hegi, at [chair@mnatheists.org](mailto:chair@mnatheists.org). Hope to see you there!

# Cable Report By Steve Petersen



**Janet Conn and Rebecca Thoman with George Kane.**

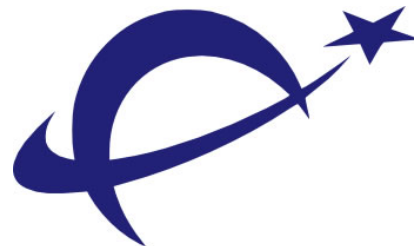
George Kane interviewed Janet Conn, President of Compassion and Choices Minnesota and Rebecca Thoman, M.D., State Campaign Manager for Minnesota & Iowa Compassion and Choices. We discussed the Minnesota Compassionate Care Act, introduced two years ago. Minnesota Atheists has a public policy favoring aid in dying for the terminally ill. Go to [mnatheists.org](http://mnatheists.org) and click on the 'Info' tab on the navigation bar and select public policies from the drop-down menu. To review the Minnesota Compassionate Care Act go to [CompassionandChoices.org](http://CompassionandChoices.org) or to the Minnesota state legislature web page and search for the act (<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis/>) This bill will only pass if everyone talks to their legislator, particularly when they are knocking on your door this election season asking for your vote.

We are actively looking for people to host and produce programming. If you have ideas on programming most or interest in hosting please get involved. Contact Steve

Petersen at [address@mnatheists.org](mailto:address@mnatheists.org).

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

**Podcasts:** Programs are available on the MinnesotaAtheists.org website. Access via iTunes and YouTube has been made possible by Grant Hermanson. To date, our channel has had over 261,000 downloads.



## Cable Schedule

**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: <http://nwct.org/programming.aspx>. Sponsor: 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.

# MNA's IHEU Membership Maintained

By August Berkshire

I have been involved with international atheism for about 20 years – much more so in the past than the present. During this time I became acquainted with the good work being done by the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). About 10 years ago, I persuaded the board of Minnesota Atheists to apply for membership in the IHEU. This was to show support for the atheist and humanist community worldwide. However, since I didn't see any direct benefit to Minnesota Atheists, I offered to pay the dues, which were about \$50 a year. We were accepted as IHEU members, and this was notable because there were very few state-level organizations in the US that were part of the IHEU.

Several months ago I decided to trim my personal budget. I went to the Minnesota Atheists board and told them I didn't want to pay the dues anymore and, though I still considered the IHEU to be a great group, I couldn't justify spending our members' money on it. No one else on the board volunteered to personally take over the payments, and so on my recommendation we voted to let

our membership lapse. (We did not say we wanted to leave; we just figured that they would eventually discontinue our membership.)

I see now that I should have approached our members about this first. In April, I was chatting with Mary Myers about this, explaining that it was simply a matter of money, not principle. Well, she and her husband P.Z. (both life members of Minnesota Atheists – and world-travelling atheists themselves) offered to take over the funding and generously handed us a check for \$100 for the first two years!

Once again I am reminded of the many ways and many areas in which our members rise to the occasion, in time, effort, or money, to promote our worthwhile causes of atheism and humanism.

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## Out of the Closet!



**I've been a humanist all my life.  
I just never had a word for it.**

**Joseph Fieber  
Out of the Closet Humanist**

# Cryptogram Answer

If you think your belief is based upon reason, you will support it by argument rather than by persecution, and will abandon it if the argument goes against you. But if your belief is based upon faith, you will realize that argument is useless, and will therefore resort to force either in the form of persecution or by stunting or distorting the minds of the young in what is called 'education.'

Bertrand Russell

# Call for June 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. Article length should ideally be 500-1000 words and no more than 2000 words.

Please send submissions to the editor, Jenny Nolan at [editor@mnatheists.org](mailto:editor@mnatheists.org) by 11:59 p.m. on May 22. All submissions may be edited for style and length.

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

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# Dues Assistance Fund

By Steve Petersen

Becoming a member of Minnesota Atheists is a way to support the organization's mission of "building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs." Achieving that mission requires the active participation of as many atheists as we can reach, and empowering them to be involved in running the organization.

Almost every function – Meetup social events, educational meetings and other activities we sponsor – is open to all who want to attend. Running for the board and voting for board members, however, are restricted to dues-paying members only. Even though dues are only \$35 a year, regrettably there are some in our community who cannot afford to join. To assist people of limited means, some of our members have proposed creating a fund to cover memberships of those who cannot afford the dues.

Requests for assistance with dues will be strictly confidential, although we would like a brief explanation of why applicants are not able to afford the membership. We will encourage sponsored members to get as involved in the organization as they reasonably can.

A request can be sent in writing to Minnesota Atheists, POB 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112 or [membership@mnatheists.org](mailto:membership@mnatheists.org). Please include your name, address and email, and note whether you would like the paper or email delivery of the newsletter. Students, please include a copy of your school ID.

If you are a member and are willing to donate funds to this project, please contact Art Kallenbach or Steve Petersen in person or at [membership@mnatheists.org](mailto:membership@mnatheists.org).

# May Day 2016

Minnesota Atheists walked in the May Day parade this year, held on May 1, in St. Paul. At the end of the parade volunteers from our organization staffed an information booth. It was a great day and a Minnesota Atheists tradition.





# Day of Reason 2016

The National Day of Reason was begun as a response to the federally supported National Day of Prayer, an annual abuse of the U.S. Constitution. Minnesota Atheists has inaugurated an annual observance of the Day of Reason at the State Capitol Building. The public is invited to join us in the Rotunda every first Thursday of May (the same date as the Day of Prayer) as we celebrate the First Amendment and remind our state legislators of the importance of separation of state and church. This year Minnesota Atheists celebrated the Day of Reason on May 5.



# Featured Blogpost

## Where Were You?

by Niki M, reprinted with permission from <http://the-orbit.net/seriously>

So I made this comment on a friend's Facebook in response to their concerns about the voting process here in these United States:

*I really wish everyone who is this concerned about the voting process would be this concerned when there isn't a big deal election happening.*

*...then maybe, just maybe something could be done about it.*

The comments quickly devolved into a "Bernie lost/No he hasn't" argument, which made me roll my eyes at the missed point and post that same comment on my Facebook.

Then I realized I had a lot more to say, and I haven't done a blog post in a couple of days.

\*ahem\*

For most of those who are now complaining about how broken our voting process is and how it disenfranchises some voters (who usually are poor or a minority or elderly or some combination of the three) or how super delegates work or why gerrymandering is kinda bullsh\*t, I have one question for you:

WHERE  
THE  
F\*CK  
WERE  
YOU?

Where the f\*ck were you when the Voting Rights Act was struck down, and Southern states immediately jumped into passing bullsh\*t Voter ID laws?

Where the f\*ck were you when felons who have

served their time were campaigning to get their right to vote back?

Where the f\*ck were you when hundreds of legal voters were struck from voter lists in state after state?

Where the f\*ck were you when there was talk of making voting more inclusive, fewer long-a\*\* lines, expanding absentee voting, and so on. (Obama mentioned this in a SoTU speech, but it ain't like he can wave a magic wand and make the sh\*t happen.)

This sh\*t doesn't become an issue every Presidential election. And it sure can't be fixed during an election year. It needs to be addressed during those quiet, not so sexy moments between attending rallies and talking too damn much about how great your chosen candidate is.

These issues are the bedrock of democracy, a bedrock that is crumbling with each and every attempt to make people who may vote "incorrectly" not be able to vote, or decide that it's not worth it. It needs to be repaired, or the crumbling slowed down – sorry, I know d\*ck all about foundations or construction. And that requires giving a sh\*t when it's not party time.

Educate yourself on how the system works now, and help work to fix it. Rattle the cages and make noise, not just when it might screw your candidate over. Because then it's too f\*cking late to help you, your candidate, or what is supposed to make this representative democracy an actual f\*cking representative democracy.

So, where will you be once November 2016 is over and done?

Don't miss your chance to cheer on the ~~X~~aints at CHS Field!

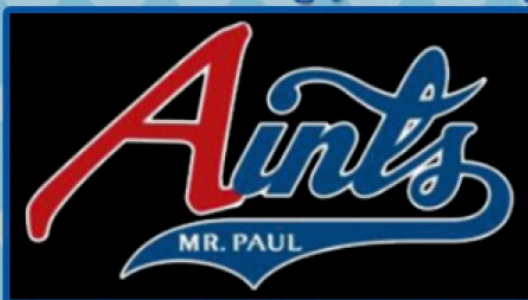
\$11 = GA Ticket + Saints Hat

\$21 = Infield Reserved Ticket + Saints Hat

Purchase tickets online at [saintsgroups.com](http://saintsgroups.com)

Password: 2016atheists

Saturday, July 16 @ 7:05pm



vs.



Fargo Moorhead RedHawks

# Upcoming Events

**June Freethought Picnic** Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at noon, Columbia Park Picnic Area, 800 Columbia Pkwy, Minneapolis. Potluck picnic sponsored by Camp Quest.

**Atheist Night with the Mr Paul Aints** Saturday, July 16 at 7:00 p.m., CHS Field, 310 5th St E, St Paul MN. Atheist sponsored St Paul Saints minor league baseball game. Purchase tickets at SaintsGroups.com, password: 2016atheists

**July Freethought Picnic** Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m., Wabun Picnic Area Shelter B, 4655 46th Ave S, Minneapolis. Potluck picnic sponsored by the Humanists of Minnesota.

**August Freethought Picnic** Sunday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at noon, Columbia Park Picnic Area, 800 Columbia Pkwy, Minneapolis. Potluck picnic sponsored by Minnesota Atheists.

**Atheists Talk Community Branch** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Q. Cumbers, 7465 France Ave S, Edina

**Godless Gamers** Every Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and Thursday at 6:00 p.m., Fantasy Flight Games Center, 1975 County Rd B2, Roseville

**Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous** Every Sunday from 6:00-7:00 p.m. and Wednesday from 7:00-8:00 p.m., Health Recovery Center building, lower floor, 3249 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis. Based on A.A, minus beliefs in any form of a God.

**Freethought Toastmasters Meeting** 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month from 6:30-8:00 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul. freethought.toastmastersclubs.org

**Freethought Dinner Social** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month from 5:00-7:00 p.m., Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave S, Bloomington

**Freethinking Females** 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m., Claddagh Irish Pub, 7890 Main St N, Maple Grove, and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month at 7:30pm, Sweeney's Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul (Note, two different locations). Shattering the myth that Atheist groups are male dominated with a female's only event.

**Volunteer Food Packing** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m., The Food Group, 8501 54th Ave N, New Hope

**Blasphemer's Branch** 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield

**Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting** 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 6:30p.m., Amherst H Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Pkwy N, St Paul. All Minnesota Atheists members are welcome.

**Bowling for Deities** Last Saturday of every month at noon, Memory Lanes, 2520 26th Ave S, Minneapolis

For more events, visit [www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists](http://www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists)

## Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

- 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

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.

**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.**

General Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Building Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Radio Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email (required for student memberships and email subscriptions): \_\_\_\_\_

# Minnesota Atheists

## Positive Atheism in action 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@mnaatheists.org

**President**  
Alyssa Ehni  
pres@mnaatheists.org

**Associate President**  
Art Kallenbach  
apres@mnaatheists.org

**Chair**  
Heather Hegi  
chair@mnaatheists.org

**Associate Chair**  
Georgia Hancock Tsoi  
achair@mnaatheists.org

**Secretary**  
Tim Berry  
sec@mnaatheists.org

**Treasurer**  
Chris Matthews  
treas@mnaatheists.org  
763.428.3424

**Directors-at-Large**  
August Berkshire  
dir1@mnaatheists.org  
612.868.2267

Eric Jayne  
dir2@mnaatheists.org

Hertzzy Hertz  
dir3@mnaatheists.org

### The Minnesota Atheist Newsletter

**Editorial Board**  
editor@mnaatheists.org

**Editorial Board**  
George Kane  
nup@minn.net  
651.488.8225

Heather Hegi  
chair@mnaatheists.org

Shirley Moll  
smoll@comcast.com

James Zimmerman  
zgoatee@gmail.com

**Editor**  
Jenny Nolan  
editor@mnaatheists.org

**Chief Photographer**  
Richard Trombley

**Membership and Change of Address**  
Steve Petersen  
address@mnaatheists.org  
651.484.9277

### Minnesota Atheists Media

**Public Relations Chair**  
Emily Matejcek  
pr@mnaatheists.org

**Atheists Weekly Email (AWE)**  
Chris Matthews  
awe@mnaatheists.org

**Cable TV Chair**  
Steve Petersen  
cable@mnaatheists.org

**Webmaster**  
Clint Buhs  
Grant Hermanson  
web@mnaatheists.org

**Podcasts Chair**  
Grant Hermanson  
podcasts@mnaatheists.org

**Minnesota Atheists Goals**  
Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educated 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: 264  
Life members: 42  
Meetup members: 2,230

### Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

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



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info@mnaatheists.org  
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