

The Minnesota Atheist

Charter Schools and Religion

The American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota (ACLU-MN) filed a lawsuit in January 2009 in Federal District Court against Tarek ibn Ziyad Academy (TIZA) and the Minnesota Department of Education, stating that the charter school has violated the Establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution by using taxpayer money to illegally promote religion. The Minnesota Department of Education was named as a co-defendant because it has failed to provide proper oversight by disbursing taxpayer funds despite TIZA using such public funds for religious promotion. TIZA has been shown to advance, endorse, and prefer the Muslim religion over other religions or nonsectarian approaches in connection with school activities.



Nelson received a BA in History from Winona State and her JD from Hamline University School of Law. She has been with the ACLU-MN since 1996, having previously served as Legal Assistant and Assistant Legal Counsel. Please join us!

TIZA isn't the only charter school in Minnesota that has caught the eye of the ACLU-MN for possible violations of separation of state and church. Moreover, there are aspects of Minnesota law that need to be tightened to help prevent further violations of the First Amendment.

We are pleased to announce that our speaker for March will be **Teresa Nelson**, Legal Counsel for the ACLU-MN. She will bring us up to speed on what's been happening for the past two years with this issue.

IF YOU GO

What: Minnesota Atheists Monthly Meeting followed by Nelson's presentation

Where: Southdale Public Library, 7001 York Avenue South

When: Sunday, March 20th
 1:00-1:15 p.m. - Social Time
 1:15-1:45 p.m. - Business Meeting, including board elections
 1:45-2:00 p.m. - Social Time
 2:00-3:30 p.m. - Presentation
 4:00 p.m. - Dinner at:
Q. Cumbers Restaurant

INSIDE:

- Poker, sex, and genetic mutation.....see page 4
- More on MNA and the War on Drugs.....see page 8
- Meet a godless hedgehog.....see page 8
- *The Laramie Project* supporters.....see page 9



IN THIS ISSUE...

President's Column 3
 February Meeting Review 4
 News and Notes 5
 Meet a Godless Hedgehog 6
 The War on Drugs 7
 Book Review 8
 The Laramie Project 9
 February Radio Report 10
 Board Elections 11
 Freethought Cryptogram 13
 February Cable Report 14
 Things To Do... 15

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The Minnesota Atheist

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

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

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

Minnesota Atheists Mission Statement

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

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Reaching Out to Religious People



by August
Berkshire

How important is it to dialogue with religious people? I like to say that I don't care what people believe; I care how they vote: what they believe affects them; how they vote affects me. But since what religious people believe often affects how they vote, we can't ignore what they believe – at least so long as they are numerous enough to sway elections.

You might say there are generally two types of religious people: liberals who support separation of state and church, and conservatives who want to use the government to try to force their religious views on the rest of us. I think our goal should be to not alienate the former while doing what we can to turn the latter into the former.

Minnesota Atheists has succeeded in getting invitations to speak at Christian high schools, colleges, radio shows, and churches – not just debates but presentations about atheism. In addition to making our case, we are so friendly and thought-provoking that we often get invited back to continue the conversation.

When we speak to religious people and groups, we can't expect to convert many of them to atheism. Instead, by being logical and friendly, we might be able to change their minds in other ways.

We might be able to convince them that it's okay to question their religion – that following the road of doubt can lead to a happy, purposeful life (as opposed to what many of them have been taught, that a life without god-belief is fearful and meaningless).

We might also be able to convince them that, since we lead ethical lives and support their Constitutional freedoms, they don't have to fear voting for an atheist.

A couple of years ago I was on a Christian radio show and was asked why I wasn't angry and ridiculing, in keeping with the supposed stereotype of atheists. I replied that the reason was quite simple: Atheists had won the intellectual war; we had the best arguments and the more education a person had, the more likely

they were to be an atheist. We hadn't won the emotional war or the political war, but we had won the intellectual war, and I was here to spread the good news.

Minnesota Atheists will be forming a Speakers Bureau to increase our outreach into the community, including engaging with religious people of every persuasion, as we continue our efforts to make atheism mainstream.

If you would like practice dialoging with thoughtful, friendly religious people, there are two groups that get together regularly to discuss similarities and differences between atheists and theists. I encourage you to check them out:

Secular Bible Study

This is a group that Minnesota Atheists co-founded: the Secular Bible Study. They meet every other Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 2511 Taylor St. N.E., Minneapolis. They often expand their talks to religious ideas in general. Sign up for their Meetups at <http://www.meetup.com/Secular-Bible-Study>.

Science & Religion Roundtable

This group meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, 511 Groveland Ave., Minneapolis (on Lyndale Ave. on the south side of Loring Park). This is a book club that tackles the cutting edge of religious apologetics, pro and con. And the religious people there are just as likely to agree with us as disagree.

To get on their mailing list, e-mail NCPST@lists.luthersem.edu or go to the website <https://lists.luthersem.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/ncpst>. You can download a PDF of their latest schedule at www2.luthersem.edu/NCPST/Roundtable-2011-Jan-Apr.pdf.

A PZ Myers Weekend

by George Kane and August Berkshire

Renowned science-blogger and religion-scoffer P. Z. Myers was in the Twin Cities in late February for a busy weekend of presentations. Saturday morning (February 19th) he spoke at the Humanists of Minnesota public meeting, discussing the evolution of cooperation, which can be seen even at the cellular level. A common misconception is that evolution is driven only by the struggle for survival sorting out winners and losers, although in fact it often results from mutually beneficial cooperation between species. Social evolution favoring cooperation benefits human society now more directly than biological change.

Sunday morning, Myers was interviewed on *Atheist Talk Radio* by fellow science-blogger Greg Laden, focusing, of course, on biology and genetics. Sunday afternoon, Myers provided the educational presentation for the Minnesota Atheists' public meeting. He returned to the theme of correcting popular misconceptions on



Above: Myers takes a moment to conclude his lecture in prayer to the flying spaghetti monster.

the topic of "Genetics and Evolution." Using an extended analogy of a poker game, he illustrated the role of chance in evolution, with the draw representing genetic mutations. He showed that evolution is not a course of continuous improvement, but of adaptation to perpetually changing conditions. It is a process that would be used by a supernatural designer only if he were lazy and sloppy.

Then Myers headed back to Morris in a heavy snowstorm. The weather was so bad that he had to stop at a motel along the way and he missed teaching his Monday morning class and meetings he had later that day. While Myers stops just short of martyrdom, he was certainly a hero for our cause that weekend. Thank you PZ Myers!

Photos courtesy of Steve Petersen.



Above and right: Myers has "sex" with his four volunteers, without the courtesy of at least buying them a round of drinks first.



News and Notes



by George Kane

In early February, a three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio that Judge James DeWeese must remove from his Richland County Court of Common Pleas courtroom a poster that includes the Ten Commandments. The court ruled in *American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio Foundation, Inc. v. James DeWeese* that defendant DeWeese violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment when he put up a display entitled “Philosophies of Law in Conflict” that contrasted the “Moral Absolutes” of the Ten Commandments with the “Moral Relatives” of humanism.

The religious right has pointed to this case as yet another instance of liberals attacking the freedom of expression of Christians. Jay Sekulow, the Executive Director of the American Center for Law and Justice that defended DeWeese, denounced the suit as “an erroneous and timeworn interpretation of the First Amendment that is not based on the words, the history or the Founders’ understanding of the Constitution.” But the decision by the circuit court directly answers every argument for the defense.

The court rejected DeWeese’s contention that the display was private religious expression protected by the Constitution, noting that the poster was in a public space and was placed on the wall by a sitting judge. The court then applied the *Lemon Test* to determine if there had been a violation of the Establishment Clause. This is a three-pronged test established in the 1971 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* Supreme Court case:

1. The government’s action must have a legitimate secular purpose;
2. The government’s action must not have the primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion; and
3. The government’s action must not result in an “excessive entanglement” of the government and religion.

A violation of the Establishment Clause is proved if the government action violates any one of the three clauses of *Lemon*. The court found that DeWeese’s poster violated the first two, and did not address the Entanglement Test because it was not cited in the arguments by either party.

The court investigated the claim of a “legitimate secular purpose” by examining the history that preceded the poster.

In 2000, DeWeese first hung a Ten Commandments poster in his courtroom.

The ACLU filed suit, and that case went all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court. In 2004 it upheld a Court of Appeals order to remove the poster, noting that “DeWeese has not described a role for the Ten Commandments poster in his educational errand other than to admonish participants in talks or programs in his courtroom to look to the Commandments as a source of law. His own testimony belie[d] the secular purpose he wishe[d] to ascribe to it.”

Judge DeWeese hung the latest poster in his courtroom in 2006, hoping to justify a secular purpose by stating his “legal philosophy” in the poster itself. The court in the current case ruled that DeWeese only states that “our legal system is based on moral absolutes from divine law handed down by God through the Ten Commandments,” a purpose which is expressly religious. Given this history, it is clear that the second poster was drafted with the same purpose that the US Supreme Court already ruled violated the Purpose Test of *Lemon*.

The violation of the Endorsement Test of *Lemon* is even more explicit. The “Philosophies of Law in Conflict” poster shows the Ten Commandments in one column listed as “moral absolutes” and seven secular Humanist precepts in another column listed as “moral relatives.” The poster declares the two columns in conflict, and insists that the “moral absolutes” of “the God of the Bible” are the “fixed moral standards for restoring the moral fabric of this nation,” that should triumph in the “conflict of legal and moral philosophies raging in the United States.”

The court found that the poster is proved by DeWeese’s own words to endorse religion, as it is not

George Kane continued on page 6.

News and Notes (continued)

enough to avoid religious endorsement to simply call it ‘philosophy.’ But if the court had looked behind the poster they would have found religious intent even more threatening to church/state separation, the imprint of R. J. Rushdoony, the father of the Christian Reconstructionist movement. DeWeese is a graduate of the Witherspoon School of Law, which is dedicated to the premise that the bible must be the source of civil law.

Rob Boston wrote about Christian Reconstructionism and R. J. Rushdoony in particular in his book *Why the Religious Right is Wrong*. Reconstructionists believe

that the world must be completely reconstituted to enforce the laws decreed by Jehovah in the Old Testament. They would replace most government with autocratic rule by local church leaders. There would be no room for dissent, because, among the many offenses requiring the death penalty, they list blasphemy and “propagation of false doctrines.”

There is so little tolerance for dissent in the Reconstructionist view that many people who support Judge DeWeese could face a death sentence if his views on the relationship of religion and law were realized. People should always be careful of what they wish for.

Meet a Godless Hedgehog



Garfunkel (a hedgehog who lives with Minnesota Atheists member Sarah) checks out last month's edition of the newsletter. *(Thanks for the photo, Sarah!)*

Should Minnesota Atheists Support Ending the War on Drugs?

by Steve Petersen

I have read Matthew Richardson’s request that Minnesota Atheists (MNA) advocate for our government to end the “war on drugs” (see the February issue, page 9). While I am personally sympathetic to his view, I do not agree that MNA should adopt this position. MNA has a focused governing document that states “Minnesota Atheists is organized by atheists as a nonprofit educational corporation to promote the atheist viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse, to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church, and to work in coalition with freethought and civil rights/civil liberties organizations where joint action is needed to achieve these goals.”

As a member of the MNA policy committee for the past several years, I can say that when we propose a policy position we consider our governing principles and how a position would fit into these principles. I do not accept the “war on drugs” to be an atheist position. Belief or non-belief does not have a significant impact on this issue. Next, is this an issue that impacts the First

Amendment separation directive? The answer is no. The “war on drugs” does have constitutional issues, as the reference to the ACLU’s position paper quoted in Richardson’s article states; however, these are not First Amendment related issues.

When MNA was set up, we understood we have one defining view; that we are atheists, with no belief in the supernatural. After that we only decided to add one additional central issue, separation of government and religion. This principle reflects a strong consensus among atheists and with our members over the years. While there are humanistic issues that come up from time to time, we have stayed out of them in an official capacity to stay focused on our niche in society.

In conclusion, the “war on drugs” is an important issue in society and I encourage people to read Richardson’s article. However, it is not a religious issue and it is not related to the Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment. MNA should not take a position.

Spaghetti Dinner

On Sunday, January 30th, Minnesota Atheists members and their families enjoyed a delicious fundraising spaghetti dinner.



Thanks to Tom Riddering for the photos.

Book Review

by Grant Steves

In two forthcoming books, by Patricia Churchland (*Braintrust*) and Joshua Greene (unknown publisher), there will be a discussion of neuroscience and morality.

Their research parallels in time Sam Harris' research for *The Moral Landscape*. In this review I will reference their research to compare and contrast it with Harris' views.

Sam Harris has published another thought-provoking book. With his doctorate completed in the field of neuroscience, he has taken his research and presented it in a very readable and well argued book. It is to his credit that he states clearly how he believes a science of morality could be developed. The two criteria used are well-being and consciousness. Both terms are elusive concepts to define. In defining well-being he asks us to compare it to physical health. We know what 'good' physical health is, but we also know, as does Harris, that the standards change. That, however, should not prevent us from understanding it scientifically, according to him. His presentation reminds me of the Supreme Court's attempt to regulate pornography. The justices said they would know it when they saw it. Harris' well-being appears to have that same subjective element in it, i.e., it is identified in the eye of the beholder. Harris gives examples to clarify his answer. Most would agree that genital mutilation is not done to enhance well-being. However, he does not illustrate this idea with a more mundane example – we are left with the question, "Could he?"

If we were to accept his argument and definition of well-being, we are still left with his concept of consciousness. What is consciousness? Is it an awareness of self, and our role in a society?

Harris' presentation is persuasive. He simplifies his points for a general audience. In this book he seemingly becomes the expert because of the reader's ignorance. If we are not schooled in neuroscience, we can not successfully refute his points, but we should not completely accept his points, either. We must rely on others authorities to evaluate his arguments.



The Moral Landscape, by Sam Harris, ©2010, 304 pages, Free Press.

It is at this point that I would appeal to the works of the previously mentioned authors. Churchland, a neurophilosopher, has argued (in *Brain-Wise*, 2002 p. 133) that "theories about certain things and definitions as to what in the world count as those things evolve together, hand in hand. Firm, explicit definitions become available only fairly late in the game, as the science that embeds them firms up and matures." She presented this in a chapter on consciousness. Unlike Harris, she is more cautious and is clearer about the need for more research. In this same text, she briefly comments on morality. She does not find that to be an area where science will prevail. In her latest book, *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality* (release date March 21, 2011) she indicates that moral philosophers will have much to learn (factually) from neuroscience, but neuroscience will not take the place of moral philosophers. It is the learning from one another that will allow both to advance in their understanding.

Joshua Greene, in his forthcoming book, plans to "reveal our moral thinking for what it is: a complex hodgepodge of emotional responses and rational (re)constructions, shaped by both genetic and cultural influences, that do some things well and other things extremely poorly. My hope is that by understanding how we think, we can teach ourselves to think better, i.e., in ways that better serve the needs of humanity as a whole." His studies at Harvard, along with his colleague Marc Hauser (*Moral Minds*) do not appear to endorse the position taken by Sam Harris.

For example, it is clear that Harris has attempted to make the barrier between 'is' and 'ought' (naturalistic fallacy) disappear. Greene, however, states (*Neuroscience*, V.4, Oct. 2003, p. 847), "...I am skeptical of attempts to derive moral principles from scientific facts. I agree with proponents of naturalized ethics that scientific facts can have profound moral implications, and that moral philosophers have paid too little attention to relevant work in the natural sciences."

Professor Churchland has stated it in terms of the 'how' of science vs. the ought of moral philosophy. However, she does not appear to accept the stronger Harris position.

I endorse Harris' book without hesitation. It is very readable. It should get your mind ready for the forthcoming books by Churchland and Greene.

The Laramie Project

by Eric Jayne



The Hastings High School winter play, *The Laramie Project*, was on the anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church's (WBC) schedule of events to picket on Sunday, February 13. The play depicts the town of Laramie, Wyoming and the community's reaction after the brutal murder of Matthew Sheppard, who was killed for being gay. The WBC has picketed high schools who perform the play by carrying signs that read "God Hates Fags," and "You're Going to Hell." Members of Minnesota Atheists and Humanists of Minnesota were among the hundreds who joined in to support the play and counter WBC protest. Even though the WBC didn't show up, the supporters who gathered had a lot of fun supporting gay rights, and the high school sold a few extra tickets as well.



Photos courtesy of Richard Trombley.



Atheists Talk: February Radio Report



Our radio program is live every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 at the KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, at AM 950. Live steaming can be done through our web page, www.mnatheists.org. Original music is composed, played, and recoded by Brent Michael Davids. The six month cost is \$5,320.00. Every donation to support the program is greatly appreciated. To donate just send in a donation to our PO box or online at http://mnatheists.org/component/option.com_civicrm/Itemid.55. All past programs can be accessed via web page.

by Steve Petersen

would refuse the opportunity to see a \$27 million monument to biblical inerrancy? Jessie and Casey have developed an entertaining presentation based on their experience and will talk about what they learned from the museum as guests on today's show.

February 6, 2011 Nick Pease was interviewed by George Kane on "Literature, Atheism, Humanism and Existentialism." From our web description: "Nick and George Kane will discuss the humanistic

January 23, 2011

Scott Lohman, interviewed Roger Nygard about his new film *The Nature of Existence*. Nygard seeks to answer the questions that drive us crazy, such as: Who are we and why are we here? and What is the universe and why is it here?

January 30, 2011

Scott Lohman interviewed Jessie & Casey Clausen on *The Creation*

Museum. Creationism may seem like a joke to most atheists. After all, how could the universe and everything in it be only 6000 years old, when the light from galaxies 10 billion light years away takes (you guessed it) 10 billion years to get here from there? But creationism is no joke. Creationists consider it essential to the cause of converting people to evangelical Christianity, and they spend a lot of money promoting creationism, and a great deal of effort to oppose the teaching and understanding of "atheistic evolution."

Jessie and Casey Clausen were in Indiana on vacation, and realized that they were close to the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. Who



Photo courtesy of August Berkshire.

principles that infuse great literature bringing inspiration to the contemporary atheist movement. These values are universal and timeless, and they present an antidote to the political and religious "isms" that divide the nation. In literature as well as in other arts, the most perceptive interpreters of the human condition provide a coherent vision of human life unbound by such academic formalism.

February 13, 2011 Mike Haubrich interviewed Russell Blackford on Sam Harris's book *The Moral Landscape*. Description from our web site: "Sam Harris makes a case for using science to evaluate and

Atheists Talk: February Radio Report (continued)

direct morality for society, and he makes the strong point that religion has made a muck of the whole issue over the course of human civilization. Can science do better? We have new tools with which to work, including MRI's to evaluate the inner workings of human thought and emotional state. The questions raised by Harris are many, and philosophers have joined a large discussion on what next can be done in an atheist approach to society. Can science carry on such a task? Should science take on such a task? How do we measure "morality" in a way that tests can be run, hypotheses formed, and how can we apply what it learned?

February 20 Dr. Greg Laden interviewed Dr. PZ Meyers on Zebrafish and Dictionary Atheism.

PZ Myers is not shy of controversy, as he seems to invoke and generate it at will through his blog, Pharyngula. He writes about atheism, science, and politics from a liberal perspective, zebrafish, critical thinking, pirates, sexism and poorly reasoned emails. Greg Laden joined PZ for a question and answer session in our studios. Greg generates his own share of controversy at his own blog.

This show was more open ended than our usual format. Greg culled questions posted in the comment section from his blog.

Minnesota Atheists Board Elections

Elections to the Minnesota Atheists Board of Directors were held during the business portion of our Sunday, February 20, 2011 meeting at the Roseville Library. See page 2 for a listing of new and reelected board members.



Planning your estate?
Don't forget to include
Minnesota Atheists.

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

“Kgf kdsf blfz dx, kgf kdsf blfz lck, ixS ulc yix’k fmnaidx kgik.”

–Qlm Xfpz ylvvfxkiklh Jdaa L’Hfdaau’z acsdyhlcZ eczkdqdyikdlx

lq bls-jfadvq.

(Answer on page 14)

Godless Fun in Des Moines During the American Atheists National Convention

In 1988 the popular and controversial television evangelist, Pat Robertson received an impressive second place finish in the Iowa Caucus for the Republican presidential nomination. It's worth noting that he beat the eventual president, George H. W. Bush by six points (Bob Dole finished first). Twenty years later Iowa voters overwhelmingly selected a black man for the Democratic presidential nomination and one year after that the Iowa State Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of same sex marriage. A few months after the same sex marriage ruling, the Iowa Atheists and Freethinkers organization gained attention for their city bus ads that said, "Don't believe in God? You're not alone." I've become increasingly proud of my Iowa roots, and even though I haven't lived there for 17 years, I frequently make the 4-hour drive to visit family and friends. Since the American Atheists national convention will be held in my beloved hometown of Des Moines this Easter weekend (4/21 – 4/24), I thought I would play the part of ambassador and share some events, attractions, and information in and about beautiful Des Moines, IA.

Fortunately, the American Atheists picked the Embassy Suites in downtown for their venue so many hot spots and attractions are well within walking distance. If you're not staying at a hotel downtown, you might want to rent a car because much as I love Des Moines, the public transportation is severely limited.

If you're a baseball fan and have never attended a minor league game, you're in for a treat in Des Moines. The Iowa Cubs, Triple-A team of the Chicago Cubs, features up and coming stars, major leaguers who are recovering from injuries, and career minor leaguers who never quite made it to the big leagues. The team plays in a beautiful ballpark (about a 15 minute walk from the Embassy Suites) built in 1992, now known as Principal Park, which puts fans at close proximity to all the action on the diamond. From most of the seats you

can view Des Moines' beautiful skyline and watch the reflection of the sunset on the 23 karat gold leaf dome that adorns the state capitol building. The Iowa Cubs play host to the *Albuquerque Isotopes* on Thursday (4/21) at 6:05pm and Friday (4/22) at 7:05pm.



by Eric Jayne

Not much of a sports fan, or maybe baseball isn't your thing? Check out the historic, and recently renovated, *Temple for the Performing Arts* building on the westside of downtown. Built in 1913, it offers a unique dining experience that includes a midday concert on Thursdays during the spring. On Thursday 4/21, a celebrated local folk band called *The Nadas* will be performing from noon to 1pm. If you can't make the concert, be sure to visit *Centro* (pronounced chen'-tro) in the same building for a delightful Italian menu that is sure to please your palette.

After you've had your fill at the Italian bistro, walk two blocks west on Locust Ave. and take in the charming art displays at the *John and Mary PappaJohn Sculpture Park*. This four acre outdoor park features 26 works of art and is free and open to the public from sunrise to midnight.

Another area of downtown you might want to check out is the Court Ave. district where a plethora of clubs, bars, and ethnic cuisine will entice your godless, hedonistic spirit. One bar in particular that might be worth checking out is *Sinners & Saints* at 216 Court Ave. It's about a 10 minute walk from the Embassy Suites hotel on the other side of the river. Of course, you may want to stay on the east side of the river where the Embassy Suites hotel sits and enjoy all of the shops, restaurants, and nightlife spirits in the historic *East Village*.

If you find yourself outside of downtown and you're looking for some grub, you must—absolutely must!—visit *Tasty Tacos*.

You're not going to find a *Tasty Tacos* restaurant

Iowa continued on page 13

February Treasurer's Report

Compiled by Chris Matthews

Building Fund	\$25
Dean Borghorst	\$25
Paul Gramstad	\$36
Daniel Norte	\$120
Mike Haubrich	\$200
Vernon Young	\$406
Total Building Fund	

Radio Fund - 2010

Jon Strand and Kristine Strand	\$250
August Berkshire	\$500

Radio Fund - 2011

Christopher Matthews	\$25
John Lindlan	\$35
Alice Lesney	\$200
Total Radio Fund	\$1,010

General/Visibility Fund

Anonymous	\$38
Anne Hanna	\$10
Francis Leckie	\$10
Justine Hartz	\$12
Michael Toft	\$15
John McCallum	\$20
Kathy Alme	\$25
Dean Borghorst	\$25
James Koran	\$25
Christopher Matthews	\$25
Vicky Hagens	\$35
Robert McGeachie	\$50
Vanita Mishra	\$100
Total General/Visibility Fund	\$390

Total Income \$1,806

You Might Not Know...

In 2011, the Minnesota Atheists weekly radio program is expected to cost \$10,660. So far this year, we have received \$260. Our goal is to raise an additional \$10,400 by the end of 2011.

Godless Fun in Des Moines (continued)

anywhere else but in the Des Moines area so you're not going to want to miss out on this opportunity while you're in town. Founded by Richard and Antonia Mosqueda in 1961, the first restaurant opened about five blocks from the state capitol building. Fifty years later *Tasty Tacos* has become a chain of five restaurants spread throughout the metropolitan area. The original restaurant on Grand Ave. is the closest to the Embassy Suites—about one mile east on Grand Ave. You can't go wrong with any menu item, but I recommend the *Original Flour Taco* with a side of *Tasty Tators*.

With all the events American Atheists will have going on there might not be a lot of down time so I'll offer just two more suggestions: the *Des Moines Art Center* (4700 Grand Ave.) and the Earth Day celebration at the *Botanical Center* (909 Robert D. Ray Drive) on Friday (4/22) from 9am-5pm. Both are sure to provide a unique educational and cultural experience for the low price of FREE.

For more information (demographics, statistics, or visitor's guide) about the city of Des Moines, be sure to visit www.dmgov.org. I am so excited to celebrate freethought and secular humanism with fellow atheists from all over the nation in my hometown of Des Moines over Zombie Jesus weekend. Hope to see you there!

February Cable Report

In part one of our February taping, George Kane headed a discussion with James Zimmerman regarding the book *Disproving Christianity*, published in 2010. The book's author is noted atheist David McAfee. James first provided an overview of the book, and discussed the author's purpose in writing the book. Next, George and James reviewed some of the book's arguments against Christianity, such as the multiple contradictions in the bible, the scientific inaccuracies, and the atrocities and absurdities mentioned in the bible. James and George agreed that while the book does not provide a comprehensive polemic against the Christian religion, it does offer a sound starting point for doubters.

In part two, George Kane again headed a discussion with James Zimmerman regarding the new book *God Hates You, Hate Him Back*. The book was written by C.J. Werleman and was published by Dangerous Little Books. James first provided an overview of the book, expressing his commendation for the author's idea in attempting to provide the "ultimate case for the claim that the God of the bible is the most wicked character in the pages of history" (according to the book's back cover). Next, George and James pointed out why this idea was not executed well, and why the book fails to meet its main objective. Particularly, they discussed the crass humor that is sure to turn off many readers and the book's poor apportioning of space (e.g., too much space is wasted on Psalms, and not enough space is devoted to the Gospels). After highlighting a few of the insightful arguments and humorous aspects of the text, James noted several errors in the book itself, which should make a non-believer hesitant to reference it when engaged in discussions about the bible.

If you would like to sponsor our program in your community, please contact achair@mnatheists.org or call 651-484-9277.

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



by Steve Petersen

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

Cable Schedule:

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

Sponsor: Kevin Hardisty

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

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

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

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

St. Cloud: Ch. 12 Thursday 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. Sponsor Jack Richter.

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

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

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

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

“The tide goes in, the tide goes out, and you can’t explain that.”

-Fox News commentator Bill O’Reilly’s ludicrous justification of god-belief.

Minnesota Atheists

www.mnatheists.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1st Thursday: Rochester Area Freethinkers book club meeting. Visit meetup.com/raftmn for details.

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

2nd Thursday. Rochester Area Freethinkers monthly meeting at public library. Visit meetup.com/raftmn for details.

3rd Thursday. Rochester Area Freethinkers happy hour. Visit meetup.com/raftmn for details.

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

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



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"I have no idea what a god is. I can only critique what other people claim a god is."

- August Berkshire, President of Minnesota Atheists

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