

The Minnesota Atheist

An Active Summer!



Minnesota Atheists hosted a booth at the Juneteenth Celebration again this year (June 16th), and this time we had something additional to celebrate: the formation of the Minnesota Chapter of Black Atheists of America. Helping staff the booth were (photo on left): Mahad Muhammad, C.J. Perry (making the letter A for "Atheist" with her fingers), Chris Pederson, and Dan Jensen, and (photo on the right): Greg Hart, Kristin Meyer, Wynter McGruder, and photographer August Berkshire (not pictured). For more information about the Minnesota Chapter of Black Atheists of America, contact Aly Jiselle at Aly.Jiselle@gmail.com.

On June 3rd, Minnesota Atheists had a booth at the East Central Minnesota Gay Pride festival in Pine City. This was our first time at the festival, which is slowly growing in size each year. These gay pride festivals allow us to show our support for equality and opposition to theocracy. They also allow us a venue in different parts of the state to promote our organization. Staffing the booth

were August Berkshire, at right, and Matthew Richardson (not pictured; photographer).



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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.

MNA Meetup members: 1,159

Life memberships: 30

Honorary Members

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

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

Pride



by August Berkshire

Almost fifty people took part in marching in our contingent in the Twin Cities Gay Parade on June 24, or staffing our booth in Loring Park during the Gay Pride Festival on June 23 and 24. Our friendly volunteers collected lots of hugs and handed out a hundred “Saved By An Atheist” cards as we marched, as well as signed up almost 200 people at our booth to get more information about Minnesota Atheists. Most of us were wearing our new Minnesota Atheists’ “Minnesota Atheists Supports Marriage Equality” tee shirts.

At the end of the festival, a couple people passing out Bibles stopped by our booth and engaged in more that a half-hour’s worth of debate with some of our members. No minds were changed but at least we delayed, for a while, the spread of homophobic literature.

Thank you to everyone who made this event such a great success! Participants included:

Sarah Bachmann-Lane, August Berkshire, Dave Bradley, Caroline Brunner, Jack Caravela, Stephanie Chase, Morgan Christian, Brandy D., Linda Davis, Brad G., Carl Hancock, Greg Hart, Ella Haubrich, Mike Haubrich, Heather Hegi, Grant Hermanson, Joseph Homrich, Laura Hutt, Eric Jayne, Catey

Jordan, George Kane, Nikki Lambert, Pete Lane, Ben Lass, Rhonda LeSage, Michelle Losey, Brenda M., Marisa M., Finn McCauley, Karen McCauley, Pete McCauley, Kristin Meyer, Shirley Moll, Mahad Muhammad, Ryan Nichols, David Norris, JuliAnne Owens, David Pacheco, Chris Pederson, David Perry, Steve Petersen, Rohit Ravindran, Tom Riddering, Katy Strum, Mike Toft, Richard Trombley (photographer), Georgia Tsoi, Amy Wilkerson, and Rachel Wilson.

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and U.S. Representative Keith Ellison (pictured below with our members) greeted our group and posed for a couple of pictures with us. Perhaps they saw one of the signs we were carrying: "Atheists Vote." Also, Minnesota State Senator John Marty stopped by our booth to say hello.



Church-State Rally



George Kane

At noon on Friday, June 8, Catholics staged demonstrations across the country to publicize the objection by bishops to contraceptive coverage in the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. The bill required employer-subsidized health care insurance to provide full coverage for contraceptives. Catholic churches were exempted from the rule, but they objected that

Instead, the bishops have just become ever more intractable in their opposition to any contraceptive coverage requirement. Some argue not only that an exemption should be provided to organized religions, but that **any** employer should be allowed to set aside **any** coverage requirement to which they morally object! This would permit a Christian Scientist to provide coverage only for prayer!

In Minnesota, two Catholic organizations, the Pro-Life Action League and Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, organized a demonstration at the Federal Courthouse in downtown Minneapolis. We only found out about it two days before, when we received a broadcast e-mail warning from Stuart Bechman of American Atheists. We announced a counter-demonstration on Meetup, and I picked up a few signs for people to hold. About a dozen atheists showed up, nearly half of whom brought their own hand-made signs.

Every one of us encountered Catholic demonstrators who wanted to confront us and argue politics and religion. Some of these discussions immediately turned into shouting matches. Certainly the intent of many aggressive Catholics was to intimidate us. One with an incredibly booming voice stood amongst us, cheering

the speakers so loudly that it was impossible to hear even the Catholics who were trying to argue with us. I had no intention of engaging in debates, since I had learned years ago that an individual cannot argue when outnumbered by opponents who are pelting him with questions all at



once. When a single individual approached me, however, I did engage in conversation. Despite my every intent, I could not avoid at one point raising my voice in response to one of his questions, as the hostility at the event was so irresistible.

I did not see any reporters or photographers from the newspapers or broadcast media in attendance, and I



the requirement applied to corporations such as universities and hospitals that the church operates. Several states previously had enacted this requirement, and the church-run companies complied, showing that their moral convictions on the matter cannot have been inviolable.

Nevertheless, the Obama administration made a major change to the rule to accommodate the Catholic objections. No requirement to pay for contraceptive coverage would be placed upon any business run by the church, but it must be provided and paid for by the insurance company. This is not regarded as a grab into the profits of the insurance companies, because the reduction in costs for pregnancies is expected to be sufficient to cover it.

Catholic bishops objected that this was a ruse, and that insurance companies were certain to pass the costs back to them at the first rate adjustment. It might very well be reasonable for them to insist upon regulations to ensure that insurers cannot do this.

Church-State Rally continued on page 9.

Board Adopts a New Anti-Harassment Policy

by George Kane

Everyone is looking forward to the Regional Conference that we are co-sponsoring with American Atheists in St. Paul on August 11. It prompted one of our members to write to our board on a very serious matter, however. She noted that it is becoming standard for atheist and skeptic organizations to adopt anti-harassment policies for their conventions. This is a direct consequence of several incidents that were widely discussed in popular blogs, in which female participants complained of sexual harassment. It is not clear if these incidents are on the rise or if conference organizers are merely becoming more sensitized to them.

The member provided a link to a web site with models for a conference anti-harassment policy. These models were designed specifically for conferences, and American Atheists was already drafting a policy for our joint event, which our board would review. It pointed up a need, though, for a Minnesota Atheist policy to state the board's position regarding harassing conduct by members at any event we sponsor. To this end, the board adopted the following policy at our June meeting.

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to ensuring a harassment-free membership experience at all of its events for everyone, regardless of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, national extraction or ethnicity. We do not tolerate harassment in any form. Sexual language and imagery is not appropriate for any event we sponsor. The Board of Directors may impose sanctions in accordance with the Bylaws on members who violate these rules, including expulsion.

Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, national extraction or ethnicity; sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Members asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.

We ask our members to familiarize themselves with this policy, and to comply with it.

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

OtkS wjh sksm vsadvsv, ojrsksm msehaqtgqew,

qotq dq rtc qdbs qj imstl jxx tg tihcdks

msetqdjgcodz? Btwis qotq qdbs otc ajbs rdqo Fjv.

-Vm. Mjismq Zmdas, Qos Mstcjc Vmdksg Edxs

(Answer on page 10.)



More Photos from
Pride 2012

Photos courtesy of Richard Trombley.



Harmonious Fun in Mr. Paul, Minnesota

Many will be coming to the Twin Cities in a few weeks to play ball with the atheists!

As of this writing there are still tickets available for the American Atheists/ Minnesota Atheists sponsored St. Paul Saints baseball game at Midway Stadium on August tenth. We'll have around 50 atheists sitting in the reserved outfield section rooting on the *Mr. Paul Aints*—which is what the team will be renamed that night—and cheering for American Atheists President Dave Silverman as he delivers the first ceremonial pitch of the game.

The following day we'll gather at the Double Tree Hotel in lovely downtown St. Paul (or what will now be referred to as "Mr. Paul") and listen to a stellar line up of great speakers including Hector Avalos, Robert Price, Ayanna Watson, PZ Myers, Teresa MacBain, Dave Silverman, and Andy Thomson.

The evening will conclude by getting our spirits high with a pub crawl in downtown Mr. Paul.

If you have a long drive and you're looking for some good tunes to listen to on the way to Mr. Paul, or if you just want to celebrate the mood of the weekend, I have included a list of apropos songs. Half of the songs celebrate baseball and half celebrate atheism. You may notice that Wilco has two entries—one is a baseball song, and the other, "One Sunday Morning," is one that I consider to be among my favorite pro-atheist songs, ever. Enjoy...



by Eric Jayne

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. <i>Centerfield</i> | John Fogerty |
| 2. <i>And When I Die</i> | Blood, Sweat & Tears |
| 3. <i>A Dying Cub Fan's Last Request</i> | Steve Goodman |
| 4. <i>Dear God</i> | XTC |
| 5. <i>Joe DiMaggio Done it Again</i> | Wilco |
| 6. <i>Hard Believer</i> | First Aid Kit |
| 7. <i>1976</i> | Baseball Project |
| 8. <i>The Only Way (Hymn)</i> | Emerson, Lake & Palmer |
| 9. <i>Catfish</i> | Bob Dylan |
| 10. <i>The Meek Shall Inherit Nothing</i> | Frank Zappa |
| 11. <i>Talkin' Baseball</i> | Terry Cashman |
| 12. <i>East Jesus Nowhere</i> | Green Day |
| 13. <i>Tessie</i> | Dropkick Murphys |
| 14. <i>One Sunday Morning</i> | Wilco |
| 15. <i>Baseball Card Lover</i> | Rockin' Ritchie Ray |
| 16. <i>Four Winds</i> | Bright Eyes |
| 17. <i>Glory Days</i> | Bruce Springsteen |
| 18. <i>One Foot</i> | Fun |
| 19. <i>The Greatest</i> | Kenny Rogers |
| 20. <i>Rational Response</i> | Greydon Square |

If you'd like to add one more song to the baseball/ atheist repertoire perhaps you'd like to sing these words to the melody of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame:"

*Take me away from your Bible
 Take me away from your church
 Buy me some Dawkins and Harris books
 I don't care if I get nasty looks
 Let me think, think, think for myself please
 If you're Christian, Muslim, or Jew
 For Mark, Luke, John are all false
 Mo - hamm - ed is too!*

Atheists Talk: June Radio Report

Atheists Talk is produced by Minnesota Atheists and directed by Carl Hancock. Original music is composed, played, and recorded by Brent Michael Davids. The program is broadcast live from KTNF studios in Eden Prairie every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 at AM950. Listen to live streaming of all past programs through our web page, www.mnatheists.org. The six month cost of the program to MN Atheists is \$5,320. Your kind donation will be greatly appreciated. Donate online at minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund, or by check to Minnesota Atheists, P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112. If you can contribute your time, please write to radio@mnatheists.org.

Recent shows included:

"Space Chronicles," #170, June 3rd, 2012

The space shuttles have been retired. Nothing is immediately in the pipeline at NASA to replace them. We, as a country, look up into space and know that we are not going there in person any time soon. To commemorate this change, astrophysicist Neil DeGrasse Tyson collected his commentaries on space, from magazine articles to interviews to speeches and consolidated them into *Space Chronicles: Facing the Ultimate Frontier*.

On April 30, Stephanie Zvan and Brianne Bilyeu chatted with Neil about the book, bad depictions of aliens in science fiction, and his favorite poem.

"The Christ-Myth Theory and Its Problems," #171, June 10th, 2012

New Testament scholar Robert M. Price, one of America's leading authorities

by Steve Petersen

on the Bible, summarized much of the scholarship that has led him and a growing number of modern scholars to conclude that Christ - a partial synonym for Jesus of Nazareth - is mythical.

Carl Hancock and Scott Lohman conducted the interview. Stephanie Zvan hosted.

"The Bully Vaccine," #172, June 17th, 2012

Bullies are not the most creative types. They tend to have a small number of strategies they use to get what they want and make our lives miserable. That leaves their tricks vulnerable to analysis and defusing. Jen Hancock offers to do just that for you with her book, *The Bully Vaccine: How to Inoculate Yourself Against Bullies and Other Petty People*.

Jen was interviewed by Scott Lohman. Stephanie Zvan hosted.

"The Good News Club," #173, June 24th, 2012

Katherine Stewart is an investigative journalist and a parent. When the Good News Club came to her children's public elementary school in 2009, Katherine put her skills to use to learn more about the club. She found that the club wasn't only an after-school Bible study, but rather a program designed to indoctrinate children with Christian fundamentalism.

Katherine's book, *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*, is the result of her research. She discussed her book on today's show.

Scott Lohman conducted the interview. Brianne Bilyeu hosted.



The Radio Fund Needs Your Help!

by August Berkshire

Do you enjoy listening to our "Atheists Talk" radio show, either live on air on AM 950 KTNF radio, or streaming live on-line, or as a podcast later? What many people don't realize is that we have to pay for our time slot – over \$10,000 a year. We think it's worth it because we get a lot of positive feedback from people we meet at the festivals at which we have booths.

Our costs are defrayed a bit by ads from the Humanists of Minnesota and Q.Cumbers Restaurant, but we still have to come up with thousands of dollars each year. Can you help us? We have enough funds to do another month or two, but after that we'll have to seriously consider cancelling our show.

Please make a generous donation on-line at <http://mnatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund> or mail a check to Minnesota Atheists, P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112. Thank you!



**"As much as we can, whenever we can, we have to tell our stories. Exactly as the writers in this book have done."
-Greta Christina, from the Foreword**

After much hard work from many people, *Atheist Voices of Minnesota* will be released in August. It is currently available for pre-order through mnatheists.org, amazon.com, and barnesandnoble.com. This book promotes a positive view of atheism by letting ordinary atheists tell their stories and speak for themselves. All net proceeds support Minnesota Atheists, so please purchase a copy for yourself and a friend or family member, and help spread the word of this important book. *-Bill Lehto*

Church-State Rally (continued)

cannot find any coverage of the event. Nevertheless, it was an impressive demonstration of the numbers that the Catholic Church can turn out for its political causes. They bussed in enough parishioners to densely fill the courthouse plaza. It shows the enormity of the task we face to develop an equivalent countervailing force to support the separation of church and state.



Photos courtesy Christina Pederson. -ed.



June Treasury Report

Compiled by Chris Matthews

Radio Fund	
Dorothy Rae French	\$250
Steve Petersen	\$25
Arthur Scearcy	\$25
Total Radio Fund	\$300
General/Visibility Fund	
Paul Larson	\$100
Valerie Gingras	\$60
Steve Petersen	\$50
James Salutz	\$50

Arthur Scearcy	\$25
Dale Howey	\$10
Meghan Kosowski	\$10
anonymous	\$45
Total General/Visibility Fund	\$350

Total Donations: \$650

Current Building Fund Total \$130,489

Radio Show Fundraising Goal \$8,215

(for 2012)	
Amount Raised (thru Jun 24, 2012)	\$2,679
Amount Remaining to Reach Goal	\$5,536

Top Expenses for June

Radio Show	\$820
Solstice Event	\$500
Logo Merchandise	\$489

June Atheists Talk Television Show Report

by Steve Petersen.

The June recording of *Atheists Talk* focused on *Atheists Voices of Minnesota*, the upcoming anthology of personal stories from Freethought House. George Kane hosted. He interviewed Bill Lehto, the project coordinator, Stephanie Zvan, and James Zimmerman. All four



participated in the project. The discussion included the diversity of atheist voices presented in the book and why it is important our individual stories be told. The anthology's release date is August 28, 2012.

All can be viewed on the following cable stations or via iTunes, thanks to Grant Hermanson.

If you would like to sponsor our program in your community, or have an idea for a program, or if you have a public access television station in your community, please contact write to dir3@mnatheists.org.

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

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

Television Schedule:

Burnsville/Eagan Community

Television: Channel 14. Check their web site www.bect.tv for day and times. Sponsor: Kevin Hardisty

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

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

Rochester: Channel 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: Channel 14. Wednesday 10:30 p.m. Sponsor: Shirley Moll.

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

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

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

Vadnais Heights: Channel 15. Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.

CAMP QUEST SO CAL EMERGENCY!

The So Cal Session of Camp Quest West, a summer camp for kids of atheist, humanist, and freethought families, needs a camp nurse volunteer fast! Must be a RN or have a medical certification above RN (Including MD) and be available July 22-28. Yes, you can bring your child (or grandchild or any child) to camp for free! Our camp can't function without a nurse so this is super important! Thanks!

Contact Brian Parra 805-794-4714
west.camp-quest.org

CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

Have you ever decided, however reluctantly, that it was time to break off an abusive relationship? Maybe that time has come with God.
-Dr. Robert Price, *The Reason Driven Life*



www.mnatheists.org

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

CHECK THE WAYS YOU WANT TO HELP ATHEISM GROW

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

JOIN OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP

_____ \$35 - Individual Membership
 _____ \$90 - 3 years for Individual

_____ \$45 - Household Membership
 _____ \$115 - 3 years for Household

_____ \$75 - Sustaining Membership
 _____ \$200 - 3 year Sustaining

_____ \$10 - Student (newsletter by email; send copy of fee statement or school ID

_____ \$600 - Life Membership

\$ _____ General Expense/Outreach Fund

\$ _____ Building Fund

\$ _____ Radio Program

Other than students, please let us know if you wish to receive your newsletter by e-mail or regular mail. If you prefer e-mail, please add your e-mail address. _____

Check (enclosed) for \$ _____, payable to **Minnesota Atheists**.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Things to Do, Places to Go: A Calendar for Atheists

In addition to these regularly scheduled events, there are many more events every month. Please subscribe to Atheist Weekly e-mail on our web site, mnatheists.org, and join our Meetup group.

Sundays, 9:00am-10:00am *Atheists Talk* Radio. AM 950 KTNF in the Twin Cities or stream live at <http://www.am950ktnf.com>. Contact us during the show with questions or comments at (952) 946-6205 or radio@mnatheists.org.

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

2nd Sundays, 1:00pm Minnesota Atheists Little Canada Book Club, Caribou Coffee 3354 Rice St, Little Canada, MN 55126

3rd Sundays, September through May, 1:00pm-4:00pm. Minnesota Atheists Public Meeting. Various libraries. Business meeting, educational program and dinner afterwards at a nearby restaurant.

5th Sundays, 5:00pm (July, September, December). Flying Spaghetti Monster Dinner. Old Spaghetti Factory, 233 Park Ave., Minneapolis. Get together for drinks and pasta.

1st & 3rd Mondays 6:00pm Freethought Toastmasters. Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave. W, St. Paul 55113. George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

2nd and 4th Mondays, 5:00pm-7:00pm Freethought Dinner Social. Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Avenue South, Bloomington, MN. For more information call Bob or Marilyn Neinkerk at 612-866-6200.

1st Tuesdays, 11:30am-1:00pm Freethought Lunch. Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Bob or Marilyn Nienkirk at 612-866-6200.

4th Tuesdays, 7:00pm Maple Grove Book Club. Byerly's Meeting Room - 12880 Elm Creek Blvd N Maple Grove, MN 55369

Every other Tuesday, 7:00pm Secular Bible Study. Various locations. See the Meetup page <http://www.meetup.com/Secular-Bible-Study/>.

1st Wednesdays, 7:00pm Minnesota Atheists Burnsville Book Club. Davanni's, 14639 County Road 11, Burnsville MN 55337. Meet in the Party Room.

3rd Wednesdays, 11:30am-2pm Lunch at Dragon House Restaurant. Dragon House Restaurant 3970 Central Avenue Columbia Heights. Private room reserved. Bill Volna 612-781-1420

3rd Wednesdays, 6:30pm Minnesota Atheists Monthly Board Meeting. Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue, St. Paul, 55113. Open to all members. George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

1st Thursdays, 6:00pm-9:00pm *Atheists Talk* television show. MTN Studio A, 125 SE Main Street, Minneapolis. Steve Petersen at 651-484-9277.

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.



Summer Picnics



On June tenth, Minnesota Atheists enjoyed the first Freethinkers' Picnic of the summer (above). The June Picnic was Sponsored by CASH. Another picnic is scheduled for July 15th and August 18th. All picnics are being held at Columbia Park Picnic Area, 800 Columbia Parkway in Minneapolis.
Photo courtesy of Richard Trombley.

“Telling our stories about our atheism makes the world safer for other atheists...and for atheists-to-be.”

-Greta Christina, from the foreword to *Atheist Voices of Minnesota*, page 10 (The book goes on sale this August!)

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