

The Minnesota Atheist

“Unbelievable Baseball” featuring St. Paul Saints Assistant General Manager, Scott Bush May 17, 2015

Sports teams have been holding faith and family nights for many years, but in 2012 Bill Murray’s St. Paul Saints became the first ever professional sports team to feature *atheists* night in what was billed “A Night of Unbelievable Fun” (sponsored by Minnesota Atheists and American Atheists). Even though the morning show hosts at Fox & Friends told their viewers to pray for a rainout, it turned out to be a beautiful, sunny evening.

Never afraid to embrace controversy, the St. Paul Saints partnered with Minnesota Atheists for another *unbelievable* night in 2013 and then again last year. The fourth consecutive year of atheist-sponsored baseball continues on August 8 when the secularized Mr. Paul Aints play at the brand new CHS Field in downtown St. Paul. The Saints’ assistant general manager, Scott Bush, played an integral part in making each game happen. Join us May 17 at the Roseville Library to hear Scott share his experience with past games and updates for this year’s game.

Scott first joined the Saints organization as an intern while attending the University of Minnesota in 2004. Following his graduation in 2005, Scott’s career began with the Fresno Grizzlies of the Pacific Coast League and the Stockton Ports of the California League. While in Stockton, Scott oversaw the California League – Carolina League All-Star Game and once forgot to inform the rest of the front office staff of a C-130 flyover.

Scott returned to the Saints in 2008 as the Director of Corporate Sales. In 2010, he left the organization for other opportunities, something now referred to as a “hiatus.” He began his third stint in his current role as Assistant General Manager in 2012 and oversees the organization’s marketing and corporate sales departments.



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Ramsey County Library, Roseville
2180 Hamline Ave N, Roseville MN
Please note, new meeting format:
2:00-2:10pm - Special Announcements
2:10-3:30pm - Presentation
4:00pm - Dinner at Panda Garden Buffet
1706 Lexington Ave N, Roseville

President's Column – Thank God for Millennials!

By Eric Jayne

It was initially discouraging when the state of Indiana passed their discriminatory Religious Restoration Act. The law gave religiously faithful people increased power and special privilege which was used to legally justify refusal of service to gays, lesbians, and genderqueer people. Discouragement didn't last long though since the response in Indiana and the rest of the nation was quick and mostly condemning. It validated my confidence in the United States trending toward irreligious secularism.

Thanks to the socially progressive millennial population, the number of religiously unaffiliated adults (a.k.a. "nones") increased significantly each year in the United States since 2007. Of the millennials polled by Pew Research in 2014 nearly 1 out of 3 indicated they are *nones*, and according to the 2014 General Social Survey (funded by the National Science Foundation) about 7.5 million Americans left their religion since 2012. The Public Religion Research Institute recently reported that 23 percent of Twin Cities residents are *nones* (slightly above the 22 percent nationally).

The recent burst of secular-friendly and ethically-minded millennials reaching voting age partly explains why there was a sudden turnaround in the national discourse on same-sex marriage. After an ugly series of states adopting constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage in the early 2000s, the appeal to faith-based arguments became increasingly unimportant. Six states recognized same-sex marriage in 2010. Today, that number is at 36 and the Supreme Court is expected to settle the issue at a federal level this year.

We can see how the path toward tolerance and social progress becomes less obstructed as religious influence continues to decay. Consider the resources of time and money that could be reallocated in the public policy business if our elected officials didn't engage with faith-based lobbying groups. Legislators would no longer waste time scrutinizing absurd propositions like creationism in science classrooms, abstinence-only sex education, and unnecessary religious freedom acts. It's probably worth noting here that the free exercise of religion is already constitutionally protected under the First Amendment.

This type of aggressive religious advocacy seeks exclusionary privilege which is harmful to the general welfare of our diverse nation. The Christian owners of the *Hobby Lobby* retail chain, for example, received extra entitlement under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act last year. The owners objected to the contraceptive mandate in the Affordable Care Act because of their biblically-based beliefs on contraceptive use and abortion. In a 5-4 decision the predominately Catholic and conservative-leaning Supreme Court ruled that the owners' faith-based motivation was more important than the employee's practical-based motivation.

Along with the 20 state-level Religious Freedom Restoration laws, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act remains controversial and will hopefully be reversed or overridden by legislation in the near future. For the moment, our government grants preferential treatment to the religiously faithful, but the bigger picture reveals religion is losing esteem with the forward-looking millennial generation. They are just beginning to adjust the inequity dispatched by religious texts, religious institutions, and religious leaders – Thank God!



News and Notes

By George Kane

In the April 2014 issue I wrote about Arizona Governor Jan Brewer's decision to veto that state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA, pronounced *riffra*). Her decision was in response to economic pressure from companies that threatened to boycott the state because they believed that Arizona's RFRA would permit businesses to discriminate against GLBT customers. Now nearly identical scenarios are being played out in Indiana and Arkansas. Atheists should applaud the opposition to RFRA for advancing the cause of secular government, but in the case of Arizona, Indiana and Arkansas, GLBT opposition to the state RFRA rests on a misconception.

The day after Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed his state RFRA into law, I was listening to the Norman Goldman Show on KTNF radio. A caller recounted the experience of a married same-sex couple on a trip to a conference in Terre Haute. Their car broke down *en route*, and they called AAA. While they were waiting, they walked to a diner, but made no attempt to conceal their relationship. They were denied service at the restaurant, and so returned to their car. When the tow truck came, the driver realized that the men were married, and refused to take the car to his shop for repairs. The couple tried to check into a hotel, and were turned away again. According to the caller, the couple had to spend the night in their car until AAA could get them a different tow truck.

The liberal radio host was infuriated by the story, denouncing the merchants as bigots making a self-righteous display of religiosity, and excoriating Governor Pence for encouraging such discrimination by signing the RFRA. But RFRA could not possibly have been a factor in this story, because the law does not take effect until July 1. If we accept the veracity of the story without question, as Norman Goldman did, we have to see it as the way businesses in parts of Indiana already treat gay customers. They can discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation without fear of legal consequences, and without claiming that they were doing so because of their religious beliefs.

The problem is not with RFRA, but with the state's Non-discrimination in Public Accommodations law. These state laws typically prohibit discrimination in areas such as employment, housing, credit and retail goods and services, but they can differ from state-to-state in several ways. They all prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin and physical disability. These are known as "protected classes." In 28 states, including Indiana, Arizona and Arkansas, there is no state-wide protection on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, although they may be a protected class in city or county public accommodation laws.

Gay rights activists have sounded the alarm that state RFRA will allow individuals and businesses to assert exemptions from anti-discrimination laws; but if sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected by public accommodations laws, defeating RFRA will not help them. Their most urgent political goal should be to add sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes to the public accommodations laws of every state.

This is an important lesson for atheists, too. I believe that everywhere public accommodations laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, but it is not clear that atheists can everywhere claim this protection. Atheism has been treated as a religion for First Amendment purposes, but I do not know of a case in which the courts have ruled whether atheism is covered by the protected class of religion in public accommodations. A merchant can refuse to serve people if he finds their political beliefs abhorrent; why not atheists? Some courts might put us in a class of 'secularists,' and deny us the protection that the law guarantees to religion. In April, Madison, Wisconsin became the first city in the United States to make atheists a protected class. This should become a political priority for atheists everywhere in the nation.

George Kane **Cryptogram**

Ighaqjqigo hj dtxjvhqbj vgvf yfo bxuxp wx fbjnxpxs.
Pxahmhqb hj fbjnxpj vgvf yfo bxuxp wx dtxjvhqbx.

Fbqboyqtj

Minnesota Atheists April Meeting Review

By Nancy Somers

It was standing room only at the Rondo Library on Sunday as a room full of atheists listened to Marya Hornbacher's story of alcoholism and recovery. Marya is a best-selling, local author who wrote the book, Waiting: a Nonbeliever's Higher Power. The presentation of her compelling story was energetic, hilarious and fast paced.

Marya says that her journey in sobriety began in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, where (to put it mildly) it can be difficult for atheists to reconcile with the god-centered language. Marya bridges this divide beautifully in her book. According to the traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous: "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking." Hornbacher asserts that it is perfectly possible to sober-up, work the 12-step program and live a fulfilling sober life without belief in a god. Her story is proof of that possibility.

This is good news, not only for atheists in recovery, but for the many families and friends directly affected by substance abuse. Sobering up from addiction is not easy. It is brutally hard work. But it does not require a belief in god. Spread the word.



New World-Wide Poll Lists Religiosity by Nation

By George Francis Kane

According to a new WIN/Gallup International poll conducted over Easter, only 63% of the world's population describe themselves as religious. The survey was taken of 63,898 individuals in 65 countries. Of the 37% remainder, only 11% say that they are convinced atheists.

China is the least religious country with almost twice the percentage of convinced atheists (61%) of any other nation, followed by Hong Kong (34%), Japan (31%), the Czech Republic (30%), and Spain (20%). If you throw the category "not religious" in with atheists, then Sweden emerges as the least religious country in the Western World with the combined categories totaling 78%.

Thailand is the most religious country globally (94%), followed by Armenia (93%), Bangladesh (93%), Georgia (93%), and Morocco (93%). In the United States, 66% of respondents describe themselves as religious.

I find it surprising and disappointing that younger people, those under 34, tend to be more religious than other age groups. About 66% describe themselves as religious, while the other age groups average about 60%. People without a formal education are the most religious, at 80%. The influence of income on religious belief appears to be even greater. The medium high and high quintile income groups were both polled at less than 50% being religious, while in the low, medium low and medium income quintiles the rate was about 70%. Likewise, the number of convinced atheists is 22% in the medium high quintile and 25% in the high income quintile, but only 6% and 5% among people with low and medium low income. The message seems clear: the best condition for atheism to grow is a well-educated and prosperous population.

Recent Blog Post from an Atheist in Minnesota

By **Brianne Bilyeu**, reprinted with permission from <http://freethoughtblogs.com/biodork/>

So I haven't written about Purvi Patel yet. Or the spike in HIV cases. Or the RFRA. I think it's partly because I've been too numb and scared and bewildered and trying to grok what's going on in Indiana. And across the country. Across my country. So let's break up this overwhelming set of circumstances and take them in smaller bits. Today let's talk about Purvi Patel.

For an explanation of who Purvi Patel is and the ordeal that she's been put through, check out this article from The New York Times, *Purvi Patel Could Be Just the Beginning* (<http://nyti.ms/1GhqVwP>).

Someone was just sentenced to 20 years in prison for aborting a fetus. This just happened in the United States of America, y'all. The first person in US history to be convicted of feticide for aborting her own pregnancy.

Purvi Patel's trial and sentencing has been an exercise in contradiction. Feticide and felony child neglect. Pathologist for the defense says no way the fetus could have survived. Pathologist for the prosecution says the baby was born alive.

A woman driven to a self-administered abortion, who presents to the ER when she needs subsequent medical care. Later she's charged with murder...of a fetus... and sentenced to a draconian 20 years in prison on the shakiest of excuses (but...it might have been alive...at 24 weeks...lungs float...or something...) It's not right. It's not humane. It's the judgment of a self-righteous population that thinks women should be chaste and f*ck 'em if they get themselves pregnant. Especially women of color like Purvi Patel.

Where is it going to end? People are going to be afraid to present to the ER in the case of a reproductive health medical emergency if they're going to be treated like suspects in a crime. Every miscarriage open to scrutiny. Our bodies reduced to the incubators that some in our society think we are. We become responsible not just for carrying a pregnancy, but for carrying a pregnancy to term – and that baby better be healthy when it exits your body, people! This burden is unbearable.

I'm overwhelmed by the sorrow and despair that I feel. Is this really happening in the country in which I live? On the sidewalk, anti-choice protesters claim to want to help women. When pressed, they're loathe to say that women should be sent to prison for having an abortion, https://youtu.be/Uk6t_tdOkwo but the jury in Indiana did just that.

According to LifeNews – a website devoted to excoriating abortion and reproductive choice – Purvi Patel killed her newborn baby via neglect of a dependent. Except in the very next paragraph when they gloat that she killed her 25-week-old unborn baby when she took an abortion drug. Cake and eating it too. Killed the unborn baby in utero, then killed the baby again when it was born. String the double-murdering bitch up, y'all!

I would say that I couldn't care less about the commentary coming out of LifeNews, but when I have probed friends and acquaintances in various social circles I've gotten this same sort of vague, helpless "I dunno..." reaction from way too many people. The victim blaming and self-righteous judgment around Purvi Patel's circumstances and decisions is simply nauseating. The uneasiness that some people have about late-gestation abortions (driven by anti-abortion groups such as Pro-Life Across America) is causing us to overlook the fact that we have just sentenced a woman to 20 years in prison because she ended her pregnancy. It's smoke and mirrors in the anti-choice camps right now.

Oh, and PRI just put out a piece (<http://fw.to/idinu2a>) that highlights the self-righteous, inhumane doctor who reported Purvi Patel for child abuse:

The person who set the legal process in motion was Dr. Kelly McGuire, who was on call the night in 2013 when Purvi Patel showed up in the emergency room of St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center near South Bend, Indiana. McGuire is listed as a pro-life physician for the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

The association has about 2,500 members and associates. Its web site declares that a physician's "right of conscience" in medical decision-making is a crucial part of their advocacy aims, and that the association seeks to counter "[s]trong voices within our culture (and within our professional College) [which] espouse elective abortion on demand as a standard of care for unwanted pregnancies."

Well Dr. McGuire – he just went above and beyond the call of duty this time, didn't he? What a f*cking hero.

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Recent Blog Post from an Atheist in Minnesota

(continued from page 5)

There are ways to show your support for Purvi Patel. Deepa Iyer has written a blog post with four ways to show your support (<http://wp.me/p47wyT-gbd>) She also addresses the racial implications of Patel's case.

- Sign the petition at RhReality Check: (<http://action.rhrealitycheck.org/page/s/condemning-indiana>) Send a message to Indiana leaders about Purvi's case and the feticide law.
- Support Purvi Patel's Family: (<https://rhrc.democracymachine.com/purvi-patel>) Patel was the breadwinner and caregiver in her family. Donate to support her family.
- Raise awareness: Share articles and resources about the verdict with your own networks; write blogposts and opeds; and tweet using #Justice4Purvi to raise awareness about the implications of this case on the rights of all women.
- Send a note of support to Purvi Patel: You can send cards to Purvi Patel c/o The Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Justice (IRCRC), PO Box 723, Lafayette, IN 47902. They will deliver them to Patel on their visits to her in prison.

Get mad. Get outraged. Get vocal and involved. This is too far.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I read the article titled, "The Thing About Cops" by Mike Haubrich, reprinted in the April 2015 MN Atheists newsletter. I can understand his frustration with being stereotyped and how we cannot control the judgments placed upon us that are based upon those stereotypes. I am not sure that I can fully agree with him on the prosecution of police officers for the crimes of killing innocents. Admittedly, my knowledge of how the police departments function is limited to mostly 3rd hand information, but from what I understand, the training police officers receive is to deliver a killing shot as an automatic response to a dangerous situation. Police officers are not trained to evaluate the situation, apply common sense, and assess the risks.

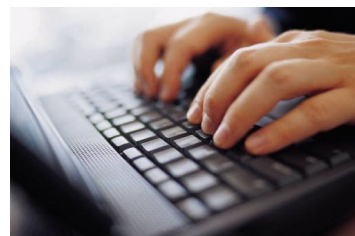
I would contrast this with my military experience in the Marine Corps where the ammo dump guards went through training on how to wound a suspect and other tactics to evaluate the situation. We were trained to use deadly force as a last resort, and the admonishment was that somebody had better be shooting at you first if deadly force was used. I find the training given to our military personnel in the use of deadly force to be in stark contrast with the training given our police officers. I also think that equal blame for killing innocent unarmed civilians resides with the leadership in the police departments and elected officials. For the killing of innocent civilians to stop, there needs to be a change in the thinking of police and political leadership, and that change in thinking needs to be reflected in training reforms for our police officers.

Joe Smith
Ramsey MN

If you would like to respond to something you saw in The Minnesota Atheist, please send it to:

editor@mnatheists.org

We value your thoughts. Thank you.



Treasury Report

March

Baseball Game Fund	
Jon Strand	\$500
Jerry Rauser	\$100
Justin Elder	\$50
Shirley Moll	\$50
Steve Petersen	\$50
Caroline Brunner	\$30
Renee Murray	\$20
Total Baseball Game Fund	\$800
Building Fund	
Dean Borghorst	\$50
Total Building Fund	\$50
Radio Fund	
George Kane	\$200
Nathan Curland	\$50
Nancy Ruhland	\$50
James Barri	\$35
Mark Hougen	\$25
Steve Petersen	\$25
Herbert Davis	\$20
Richard Ellingsen	\$20
Mark Paquette	\$15
Cash, Fifth Sunday fundraiser	\$310
Total Radio Fund	\$750
General/Visibility Fund	
Jerrold & Joyce Larson	\$250
Ben Zvan	\$111
Dean Borghorst	\$50
Joel Bartos	\$8
Total General/Visibility Fund	\$419
Total Income:	\$2,019
Current Building Fund Total	\$133,859
Top Expenses	
Radio Show	\$820
Newsletter Printing	\$549
Parade, Booth, etc	\$275
Internet Expense	\$244

A Look Back – Minnesota Atheists History

By Steve Petersen

Past articles in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter have given much of the history of the founding of Minnesota Atheists, but the indirect contribution of the little-known Fred Kholer should not be forgotten.

Fred was an independent jeweler who sold his products at street fairs. As one can see by his photo, once you met him he left a memorable impression. About a year before the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists was disbanded, Fred came to a meeting and presented Chapter Director Shirley Moll with \$5,000.00 in crumpled up bills of various denominations in a small brown paper bag, and gave her instructions on how to use it in the event of his death. Shirley



requested he write out his instructions, and he did on the back of an envelope he found nearby. Basically, Fred wanted a few parties: one for Friends Free of Theism a freethought social group that met on the Solstices and Equinoxes of the year; one for the Minnesota Skeptics; and one for the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists. He pledged a single dollar to a group he did not like, and instructed that the remainder should be spent locally.

Fred died shortly after leaving the money with Shirley, and each of the provisions was carried out as directed. That \$5,000.00 went a long way in 1991. When the American Atheists disbanded all state chapters, the last item was to "keep the money local," which was one of the reasons Minnesota Atheists was formed. The three officers of the chapter, Shirley Moll, Cora Wheeler and Steve Petersen, all still members of Minnesota Atheists, sought out legal advice on how to transfer the remaining funds to a new organization. A Board of Incorporators for Minnesota Atheists was formed, and registration was filed with the state and a bank account was opened with funds donated from the chapter. Fred Kholer's remaining funds became the seed money for Minnesota Atheists. Shirley and the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists honored his directive to keep the funds local. Even though Fred died before the founding of our organization, he was an integral part of local atheist activism.

The Something (rather than nothing) That I Attended

By James Zimmerman

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend and present at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research, held at Eastern Washington University (near Spokane). My presentation was in the History discipline, and I made an effort to support and attend other History presentations.

However, in the listing of presentation descriptions, one topic caught my eye: "Something Rather than Nothing: Theism Explained." Despite this being from the Philosophy and not the History department, I felt I just had to attend.

The young man who gave the 15-minute presentation was a student from the hosting University. He began by asking everyone to approach his discussion with an open mind – advice that I thought was very applicable to many of the presentations I attended.

He said that he would prove a theistic creation of the universe to us and, simultaneously, point out how the atheistic worldview is lacking.

He first asked us all to accept that whatever caused the universe to begin is God. As much as I dislike the term "God" for whatever started the universe, I had to admit that there wasn't anything wrong with his proposition, so I continued even more intrigued.

He next showed a list of five bulleted points on the screen. I didn't have time to write them all down, but the gist was that the universe did have a beginning, that everything that begins to exist has a creator, that creators have individual personalities, and that infinities cannot exist (except in the abstract, such as with numbers.) Of course, the first point – that the universe had a beginning – has near universal acceptance. The student then moved on the next points. He was careful to point out that only things that *begin* to exist have creators. He explained that this argument satisfies the atheist's question of who created God: Since God never *began* to exist, then surely he did not need to be created. God thus, he claimed, is both eternal and omnipotent.

For those who were unsatisfied with this argument, he gave a detailed argument of the absurdity of infinities – and then applied this to a God who was supposedly created by someone, who was then supposedly created by someone else *ad infinitum*. This is ridiculous, he claimed (evidently the absurdities of infinities does not include a being who imbues such infinities such as omnipotence or omniscience).

He singled out atheists again by saying that the burden of proof is on them to prove the non-existence of God, especially since he has just proven that God does exist. Atheists are the ones who categorically state that God does not exist just as, say, most people claim that unicorns do not exist.

The only difference is that there is proof of God's existence. Besides, he pointed out, the universe is clearly fine-tuned for life and ideas such as a cyclically recurring Big Bang or expanding multiverse are without evidence and only serve to provide reassurances to atheists who have been scrambling ever since Hubble determined that the universe had a beginning.

During the Q and A segment, I asked how he was defining "atheism," since he seemed to be conflating it with anti-theism. I suggested that most atheists simply see no evidence for gods and thus live as though they don't exist. He rifled through some papers and said he used the definition provided from a source (sorry, I can't recall which one) that defined atheism as the rejection of gods. I was hoping to ask a follow-up question, but he next called on a few other people.

After a couple minutes, he called on me again, but this time I said, "You mentioned that the burden of proof is on non-believers, but I don't think you can ever disprove a negative." A few people in the audience nodded their heads in agreement. I added, "To use your example of unicorns, maybe they do exist...who knows?"

The student chuckled a bit and then pointed out that at a certain point we *can* prove a negative. He said that, for all practical purposes, you can disprove the existence of unicorns.

But without waiting to be called on again, I said, "I don't think you can disprove unicorns. Even if we photograph every square inch of the solar system. I mean, maybe they're really small. Maybe they're invisible, or live somewhere we haven't explored."

This got a few chuckles. The student noted that this is something Christopher Hitchens has noted in the past. He was going to continue, but his time was up just as someone else asked him how he knew which god was true. The student, as he was leaving the lectern, said he felt the New Testament provided the most compelling argument for God which, I felt, negated any credence he had built up by that point. I left rather disappointed that the presentation didn't offer anything new, just the same tortuous logistical leaps I used to employ to keep my own faith alive.

As I headed to the field house for lunch, a fellow Hamline student (who had attended the presentation with me) agreed: there were a grievous numbers of errors in logic during the presentation; an especially appalling fact considering it had been in the Philosophy and Ethics discipline. It's too bad. There were several presentations I attended during the conference that challenged my notions and opened my mind to new arguments. "Theism Explained," however, wasn't one of them.

Secretary's Report – April

By Heather Hegi

- A mission statement for "Atheists Talk" radio was approved, it reads: "'Atheists Talk' radio and podcast is a communications service of Minnesota Atheists. Our volunteer producers, hosts, interviewers, and contributors are committed to presenting topics of interest to atheists and humanists. Topics include, but are not limited to, general atheism and humanism, separation of church and state, science, religion, gender, race, culture, and the arts."
- A different quote for the 2015 T-Shirt design was approved due to the previous quote that was identified not originating by the author who we thought originally authored it. The text on the back will now read "The only position that leaves me with no cognitive dissonance is atheism. - Ayaan Hirsi Ali"
- There was discussion on appointing someone to fill a vacant position on the board. No appointments were made.
- The frequency of Public Members Meeting was discussed. Bylaws require them to be at least quarterly; we have been holding them 8 times a year along with featured speakers. The decision was made to separate the two events and hold more focused Quarterly Public Members Meetings.

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 by 11:59pm on May 22. All submissions may be edited for style and length.

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

Complete meeting minutes are available to dues paying members by contacting Heather at sec@mnatheists.org

Chair Report from Minnesota Atheists New Chairperson – Jill Carlson

I am pleased this month to accept the position of Chairperson of Minnesota Atheists. I am ready for this challenge and commitment. This role is responsible for managing meetings within our organization including monthly board meetings and our business meetings. Minnesota Atheists requires four business meetings a year according to our bylaws. At the scheduled board meeting in April, the board of directors discussed a change to our traditional format for our required business meetings. Currently our business meetings are held prior to our monthly public meetings, January through May and September through December. The meeting lasts about thirty minutes and member attendance ranges between ten and thirty. Business meetings convey information about organizational announcements, elections, committee reports, etc. There is a concern that these meetings do not foster participation so the full scope of our membership is not able to voice opinions or develop leadership. The Minnesota Atheists Board of Directors is proposing a change in the meeting structure and my message is to spell out the details, gain buy-in and increase enthusiasm.

Instead of Sunday afternoons, our new business meetings will be held on Monday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. These meetings will occur quarterly on the second Monday of the month. The venue our team is researching is the Surly Brewing Company in Minneapolis that offers free meeting room space to 501(c)3 non-profits on Mondays. These quarterly meetings will be advertised in our newsletter, on Meetup and in other marketing outlets to foster visibility. A few of the goals for our new business meeting will be to increase engagement of our working committees, manage organizational achievements and create a better forum for listening to member concerns or successes. Sometimes doing things the way we have always done it works, sometimes it is time to try something else. Please assist the Minnesota Atheists Board of Directors to investigate a new approach. If the consensus of our membership rejects this initiative the Minnesota Atheists Board is happy to brainstorm other options or modifications. I appreciate your attention, and please watch for future details on this project in the near future.

Radio Report

By Mike Haubrich

The Minnesota Atheists Board of Directors approved a mission statement for the Atheists Talk Radio show:

Atheists Talk radio and podcast is a communications service of Minnesota Atheists. Our volunteer producers, hosts, interviewers, and contributors are committed to presenting topics of interest to atheists and humanists. Topics include, but are not limited to, general atheism and humanism, separation of church and state, science, religion, gender, race, culture, and the arts.

We hope that this clears up any questions as to the topics we often present on the show.

"Ten Ways That Heaven Would Be Hell," Valerie Tarico on Atheists Talk #308, March 29, 2015

Dr. Tarico returned to the show to discuss the conceptions of Hell. If you consider immortality and bliss, the future beyond the grave is not very attractive. It would be boring beyond belief, and in a short period of time, perfection would be maddening. Hell and Heaven, upon examination, are eventually indistinguishable.

"How God Works," Marshall Brain on Atheists Talk #309, April 12, 2015

David Pacheco and Brianne Bilyeu reviewed and discussed popular explainer Marshall Brain's work "How God Works." Brain is the host of National Geographic Channel's "Factory Floor with Marshall Brain," and the founder of the explanatory website "How Stuff Works."

"A New Vision for the SSA," August Brunsman on Atheists Talk #310, March 19, 2015

The Secular Student Alliance provides support for student groups in colleges and high schools and has been doing so for fifteen years. This year, they released a new vision statement that addresses some of the unique needs of a movement with leadership that graduates every few years, as well as many of the questions the broader atheist movement has been facing as a whole. They have embraced humanist ideals, civic engagement, and inclusion. August Brunsman is the executive director and Stephanie Zvan interviewed him.



Minnesota Atheists is the producer of the radio program, and the director is Mike Haubrich with hosts Mike Haubrich, Brianne Bilyeu, Scott Lohman, David Pacheco, Mahad Muhamad and Stephanie Zvan. Both Stephanie and Brianne upload podcasts to our web site. The radio program is broadcast live every Sunday from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. from AM950 KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, MN. Live streaming is available on our web page. www.mnatheists.org. Original music was composed, played and recorded by Brent Michael Davids. The cost to us is \$5,320.00 every six months. Your donations will be appreciated. They can be sent to our post office box or posted online at <http://minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund>. Thanks to Brianne Bilyeu the program has a presence on social media: an Atheists Talk Facebook page and an account at [Twitter.com/atheists_talk](https://twitter.com/atheists_talk). All past programs can be accessed via MNA web page <http://mnatheists.org/news-and-media/podcast> or on iTunes. If you are interested in helping on the radio program, please send a message to radio@mnatheists.org

AM 950 KTNF

Cryptogram Answer

Philosophy is questions that may never be answered. Religion is answers that may never be questioned.

Anonymous

Upcoming Events

Flying Spaghetti Monster Dinner Sunday, May 31 at 6:30pm, Old Spaghetti Factory, 233 Park Ave S, Minneapolis

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

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous Every Sunday from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, Men's Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave S, Suite #55, Minneapolis. Meet in the basement. Open to all genders.

Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30pm, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, Saint Paul. freethought.toastmastersclubs.org

Volunteer Food Packing 2nd Thursday of every month at 1:00pm, The Food Group, 8501 54th Ave N, New Hope

Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30am, Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield

Shooting Pool with the Infidels 2nd Saturday of every month at 7:00pm, Dunham's Bar and Grill, 173 Lothenbach Ave, West St Paul

Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm, Amherst H Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Pkwy N, St Paul. All Minnesota Atheists members are welcome.

Freethinking Females 4th Monday of every month at 7:30pm, Chatterbox Pub, 800 Cleveland Ave S, St. Paul. Shattering the myth that Atheist groups are male dominated with a female's only event.

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at Noon, Memory Lanes, 2520 26th Ave South, Minneapolis
2015 Aints Game Saturday, August 8, CHS Field, 360 N Broadway St, Saint Paul. Save the Date!

Secular Women Work Conference Friday-Sunday, August 21-23, Humphrey Conference Center, 301 19th Ave S, Minneapolis. Save the Date!
 For more events, visit:

www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists



There's always time to make a difference.

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

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
- General Fund \$_____
- Building Fund \$_____
- Radio Fund \$_____

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

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

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

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

Minnesota Atheists

Positive atheism in actionsm since 1991

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

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Minnesota Atheists Goals

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

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

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

Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 204
Life members: 40
Meetup members: 1792

Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

Hector Avalos, PhD
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Gerald Erickson, PhD
Annie Laurie Gaylor
Dick Hewetson
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