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Jacksonville Billboard Poll Gets Pharyngulated

It's called "Action News" and it broadcast a story March 25 on CBS Channel 47 and Fox Channel 30—both in Jacksonville, Florida—about one of two billboards sponsored by the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason. You can still see the print version of a March 26 rendition online with the kicker "Red Flag Warning" and the headline "Anti-God billboard finally up."



Anti-God? Hardly. But here's the fun part. Action News originally accompanied its story with a survey bearing the question, "Are you offended by the message in this atheist billboard?" In short order, respondents had made their feelings known: Yes (54.1%) and No (45.9%). But at 8:02 PM that evening, famous scientist and atheist P.Z. Myers posted those poll numbers on his famous blog, *Pharyngula*, followed by the gentle words, "Hmm. Those numbers might change soon. Look quick!" Which is all it takes these days for Myers to mobilize his fans to log onto any given online poll and register their own feelings. Thus, by 10:41 PM, with fans clicking in from as far away as Australia, the numbers had changed to Yes (12.0%) and No (88.0%). And by 11:13 PM it had somehow registered Yes (0.00%) and No (100%), causing one individual to comment, "We either broke it, or we won." By this means the poll was totally "pharyngulated," as the phenomenon is now termed, and the next day's equally worthless poll soon replaced it.

Save Your News Hits before They Disappear

Baltimore CoR got front page coverage for its billboard in the *Baltimore Sun*. The CoR linked to the online version of the story from its website. But now that link is dead because the story has cycled off and isn't archived. This offers a cautionary tale. It's always good to save a file copy of any online coverage you get. That way you'll always have it for your records.

Local CoRs in Action

After the big billboard, bus, or subway campaign is over, what will your local coalition do for an en-CoR? Here are some examples of what a few of the coalitions in our network are up to.

Boston CoR will be participating in an expanded concept of Earth Day that is being celebrated all over the world on April 17-18. (Earth Day itself is Thursday, April 22.) Called “Global Days of Service,” this earlier observance will feature volunteer actions by tens of thousands of global participants. These actions will include projects in parks, beaches, schools, and forests like tree planting, energy efficiency retrofits, water protection, urban gardens, and forest restoration. Produced with the help of the Earth Day Network, along with local community organizations and governments, these activities will address current challenges and help cities and organizations streamline their energy needs as well as “green up” their communities. Many of the projects are suitable for individuals of all ages, including children and families, and encourage active lifestyles and healthful living. For details go to <http://boston.unitedcor.org/node/34> .

Cin CoR, the Cincinnati Coalition of Reason, will be participating in the Helen Kagin Memorial Service honoring the longtime atheist and humanist activist, and co-director of Camp Quest, on Saturday, April 24, from 2:00 to 5:00 PM at Lakeridge Hall, 7210 Pippin Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45239. For more information email info@lakeridgehall.com and RSVP to caeling@fuse.net .

Morgantown CoR in West Virginia held a Spring Equinox Celebration March 20 at which it selected a charity for secular service. It is the West Virginia Botanic Gardens. Now, as planned for April 11, members of its participating groups will go for a volunteer orientation there. Later they will conduct their service in the name of their CoR. The coalition even designed a special identifying shirt for all participants to wear during their volunteer work. For details on all of this, go to <http://www.morgantownatheists.com/2010/03/28/our-secular-service-endeavor/> .



Tulsa CoR in Oklahoma is promoting an “In Reason We Trust” license plate. To get such a plate recognized in the state, 750 citizens of Oklahoma need to agree to purchase one. The plate will cost between \$15 and \$20. Currently the CoR is completing its plate design and collecting a list of names of those interested. When ready, it will file for the plate’s issuance. For more information, go to <http://tulsa.unitedcor.org/node/37> .

Celebrate the National Day of Reason

The next major community of reason observance is the National Day of Reason, held each year on the National Day of Prayer to offer an alternative. The date this year is Thursday, May 6, and the United Coalition of Reason encourages all of its local coalitions to celebrate on that day. For event ideas, go to the National Day of Reason website at <http://www.nationaldayofreason.org/> .



Can Tulsa CoR Keep the Record for Longest-running Billboard?

Although the Tulsa Coalition of Reason was launched December 7, 2009, with its billboard slated to run the usual four weeks, its billboard stayed up for over fifteen weeks! Apparently Lamar had been unable to find another advertiser for the space near I-44 and Highway 75 and so had simply left the Tulsa CoR vinyl right where it was. No charge. And this actually did some good. While the initial publicity for the coalition had lasted a little over a week, it picked up again three months later on March 16 when a reporter at KTUL Channel 8 noticed the billboard and interviewed Tulsa CoR leaders in what became a rather amusing news segment (you can see the video online at <http://tulsa.unitedcor.org/node/49>). Will any new CoR beat this record?

United CoR Represented on Unity Event Planning Committee

Efforts are currently underway to develop a comprehensive plan for holding a unity event in 2013, a convention or rally, for the entire community of reason. One of the ideas is that all the national atheist, freethought, humanist, and other groups should combine all their annual conferences into a single large event. Organizing tasks, expenses, and revenues would be shared. And the overall goals would be to promote cooperation and generate massive publicity for the larger movement. The United Coalition of Reason is represented on the planning committee for this event and will work with the meeting planners of the various organizations to try to hammer out a practical arrangement that all the national organizations can get on board with.

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