

St. Louis Launch Leads to Coalition Programs



The Greater St. Louis Coalition of Reason—made up of seven local groups in a broad area inclusive of St. Peters, Missouri, and East St. Louis, Illinois—launched on September 14 with a billboard reading: “Don’t believe in God? You are not alone.” On the scene was a St. Louis CoR videographer to record the billboard going up. You can view the time-lapse, fast-motion placement of their billboard at <http://GreaterStLCoR.org> . The ad/media campaign soon secured notable media attention and a group photo in front of the billboard soon followed (see page 2).

This, of course, is the usual story, one that has been repeated now in thirty cities across the United States. But St. Louis went further, jumping immediately on the larger and more long-term idea that a new community had been born. The Greater St. Louis Coalition of Reason represented a cooperative effort designed to express itself not only in profile-raising efforts like the billboard campaign but program activities like shared events sponsored by the whole coalition. The first such event got underway while the billboard was still up.

Held October 5 at the Ethical Society of St. Louis, but organized by Bob Greenwell of the



St. Louis CoR activists pose with their billboard. Second from the left is CoR Coordinator Kate Lovelady and fourth from the left is CoR Webmaster Joe “the Juggler” Welling.

Ethical Society Mid Rivers in St. Peters, Missouri, it featured two speakers from local political parties to discuss the rationale for allowing the tax cuts for the wealthy to expire, or why they should be renewed. The event was advertised this way: “The Coalition of Reason presents Responsible Public Debate.” And the questions raised were as follows:

Should the Bush tax cuts be extended for the upper class? Is it wise to attempt to spend your way out of a recession? Should we favor big businesses, small businesses, or both? What is the fiscally responsible way to reduce the debt and get ourselves out of the economic crisis?

While sponsoring a program this specifically political and economic is atypical for local CoRs, the even-handed promotion and handling of the event avoided elements that would have led to dissention among coalition partners. And this is always a paramount concern. As the promotional blurb for the event declared, the coalition “does everything in its power to ensure a fair forum where everyone feels comfortable expressing their point of view.”

Following this event, St. Louis CoR promoted a visit by Greg Epstein, humanist chaplain at Harvard University, who on October 25 at the Lee Institute gave a presentation followed by a book signing on “Good without God.”

San Diego CoR and Others Help Build Nationwide Community

If you visit the website of the San Diego Coalition of Reason, specifically this page:

<http://sandiego.unitedcor.org/node/40>

and scroll down, you’ll see a news section called “CoR Around the Country.” There it lists, in reverse chronological order, various news items related to the launches of other coalitions in our network. It’s a great way for San Diego coalition partners to keep up on events elsewhere, thus building a sense of national as well as local identity and unity.

Other local CoRs have been announcing national CoR participation in the Jon Stewart/Stephen Colbert dueling rallies on the National Mall in Washington DC on October 30—some sponsoring mirror events at home and others organizing group trips to the rallies.

This sort of thing is so important that it is one of the features being built into the new Web template that will be available for use by local coalitions starting in November. A whole new local website design is about to be released. And not only will the newest coalitions get to use it, but existing coalitions will be shown how they can easily switch over to it if they so desire.

More news will follow on this next month.

How Other CoRs Build Local and Statewide Community

Keeping their homepages lively and their communities vibrant, Oklahoma City CoR and Tulsa CoR feature Twitter feeds on their websites at www.OKCcor.org and www.TulsaCoR.org . The coalitions in Texas promoted attendance at the 2010 Texas Freethought Convention held in Dallas October 8-10. (See <http://austin.unitedcor.org/node/41> for details of what went on.)

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