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Welcome to the first issue of the United Coalition of Reason's electronic newsletter. This is a new service, created to benefit all local CoR coordinators and web administrators in the United CoR network. Other select individuals are also receiving it. The purpose is to keep CoR leaders up to date on organizational developments, plans, and new initiatives. It is also to serve as a forum for sharing information and ideas within the CoR community.

To begin, the United CoR board and staff wish everyone a Happy New Year as the organization sets its course for 2010. There are exciting new projects in the works. But before we begin to fill you in on those, below, we start with a news wrap-up of our progress in 2009.

Rapid Growth in the First Year

The United Coalition of Reason went public on March 30, 2009, with the launch of the Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason in Texas. News coverage was significant, followed by a dramatic upsurge in Web traffic and new membership growth for the participating local groups.

In the months that followed two existing coalitions were brought into the United CoR network: the Greater Philadelphia Coalition of Reason and the Colorado Coalition of Reason. The *New York Times* mentioned the United CoR phenomenon in its April 27 article, "More Atheists Shout It from the Rooftops."

Then the billboard campaign for Arizona CoR was unveiled at a well-attended press conference on June 5. For added news impact, this was held in conjunction with the national conference of the American Humanist Association. The media results were impressive and Arizona CoR's stature in the community rose rapidly thereafter.

Later that month, work commenced on coalitions in Ohio, Washington State, and Oregon. In July CoRs were organized in Minnesota and Oklahoma. In August one was organized in West Virginia. A pre-existing coalition in Houston, Texas, was also recruited. Then in September initial CoR meetings were held in Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington DC.

Meanwhile, United CoR provided logistical and media support, but no ad funding, for two individual organizations: the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association and the Iowa Atheists and Freethinkers. New Orleans unveiled a billboard on May 29. Later, in Des Moines, Iowa, a bus campaign launched August 3.

Then the dam broke as 14 CoRs suddenly went public in the last quarter of 2009. These were Morgantown CoR on September 29 (with media activity continuing well into October), Big Apple CoR on October 19, Chicago CoR on October 20, New Jersey CoR on October 27, and Boston CoR on October 28. In Ohio three CoRs launched at once on November 10: Cin CoR, Columbus CoR, and NEO CoR. On November 11 San Diego CoR launched, followed by Silicon Valley CoR on November 16. That same day, Philly CoR unveiled its second ad campaign (its first had begun May 1, 2008). It involved ads on 25 buses and 25 subway cars. Portland CoR launched its campaign on November 17, Baltimore CoR on December 1, and Tulsa CoR on December 7. In Houston, a pre-existing coalition called the Houston Freethought Alliance unveiled its United CoR billboard on December 9.

A number of local coalitions using the “Good without God” advertising theme were able to coordinate their launches with a book tour for the new book, *Good without God*, authored by Greg Epstein, who is the humanist chaplain at Harvard University. The book was released October 27 and media attention is still going strong, accompanied by large crowds at Epstein’s speaking engagements. Many local CoRs benefited from the extra publicity boost that this tie-in made possible.

Such a concentrated blizzard of CoR activity in the last quarter of 2009 was not only felt nationwide but overseas as well. The New York story went worldwide, including coverage in the *China Daily* and on *Al Jazeera* television. The *Baltimore Sun* put Baltimore CoR on its front page. The temporary removal of the bus ads in Des Moines and a billboard in Cincinnati created reverberations across the country. And attendance at the annual Texas Freethought Convention, held November 14 in San Antonio, was more than double that of the previous year, reportedly due in large part to the energized coalition activity in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas.

And on November 2, at a special ceremony held on the Harvard campus, the United Coalition of Reason received the Harvard Humanist of the Year Award—the only organization ever to be so honored—for its “historic” multi-city coalition-building campaign. Included in the ceremony was Amanda Gullledge of Montgomery, Alabama, winner of the United CoR “Good without God Essay Contest.” (Her essay is online at http://unitedcor.org/UnitedCoR_essayWinnerWEB.pdf.)

The year concluded with a second Des Moines bus ad campaign, which launched December 22, this one geared to the winter holiday season. Further details on this and all of the above developments can be found on the United CoR website at <http://unitedcor.org/whatsnew.htm>. Moreover, as the homepage reveals, there are now 20 CoRs in the national network.

New Initiatives for 2010

In addition to new ad campaigns, such as a billboard in Seattle, Washington, this month, and more coalitions forming, the United Coalition of Reason is moving in new directions. For 2010 the emphasis will be on developing the CoRs that have already launched. The idea is that not only should the movement spread wide but it should reach deep. Foundations need to be built that will ensure long-term stability.

Toward this end, United CoR is doing some new things. For starters, it is offering the following list of recommended CoR celebrations that can be used to build local bonds of cooperation and generate further publicity.

Darwin Day (February 12)
Earth Day (April 22)
National Day of Reason (May 6)
Banned Books Week (September 25-October 2)
National Secular Service Day (October 18)
Winter Solstice/HumanLight (around December 21)

Since Darwin Day is just a little over 5 weeks away, it is recommended that local groups and their CoRs begin making plans as soon as possible. Program ideas for this observance can be found online at <http://www.darwinday.org/> .

United CoR will also be redesigning its national website to give it more features of value to local CoR leaders and it will be creating a new, more user-friendly Web template which CoRs both new and old can make use of. Details on these changes will be made available as they are worked out.

Watch for the next issue of this e-newsletter for additional news and information.

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