



The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

Freethought NEWS

Volume 1 No. 5 Oct. 2012 Jim Peterson, Editor

What's Inside?

- Unified Calendar..... 2
- Humanist Society..... 3 *
- Tampa Humanists.... 7 *
- Clr.UU-Humanists... 7 *
- Post Carbon Council.. 8
- Freethought Films..... 9
- Humanist Families... 10 *
- Americans United.... 10
- Military Atheists..... 10 *
- Atheists of FL 11 *
- Ctr. For Inquiry..... 12 *
- Tampa Bay Skeptics. 14
- Coalition News..... 15

* Member organizations

Directory

Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

Calendar

Rick O'Keefe

Web site

Jim Peterson

Newsletter

[Jim Peterson](#)

Special Projects

Mark Brandt

Be Included!

Group Leaders are invited to send items for this Newsletter. Please send them to:

Jamestp@metrodirect.net

For calendar items, include as much info as possible.

It Is Time for Secular Humanists to Run for Public Office

By Paul Kurtz, Ruth Mitchell, Toni Van Pelt, and Tom Flynn

As secular humanists, we live in this world here and now, not in an imaginary world beyond our lives. This is our place, and it can only be better if we take responsibility for it. The Council for Secular Humanism and the Center for Inquiry are committed to a set of humanist ethical values, many of which can be fulfilled only by social and political action for which we need to take responsibility.

These take many forms, both private and public. Private responsibility includes acting with compassion and consideration in family and professional life. Public responsibility is found in many forms and at many levels. The basic public responsibility is voting, which involves not only going to the polls but also knowing about the intentions of candidates, their values, and background. Other public responsibilities include service on juries when called and attendance at meetings when important issues are discussed.

One public responsibility that, so far, secular humanists have not taken up in sufficient numbers is *running for public office*. American democracy is built on a hierarchy of public offices, from membership in neighborhood commissions through school boards, councils, county commissions, state legislatures, and elected judicial positions to national office in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and, yes, the presidency itself. All these and more are open to qualified people. But very few are occupied by self-proclaimed secular humanists.

This may produce a horrified response: are secular humanists going to ally themselves with the Democrats or Republicans or the Libertarian, Independent, or Green parties? By no means. Secular humanists may be Left or Right, conservative or liberal, libertarians or social democrats: our secular worldviews do not ally us with a single party.

(Continued on [Page 9](#))

Faith

is a Humanist Value

Faith? ...in Humanism? Yes, actually. Not in deities or superstitions of course, but in ourselves as human beings; and in each other. Faith in human potential, confidence in the instruments of reason and logic; in the value of the world we have created; these are the basis of real hope. This is faith carved in the immutable granite of human history. We embrace both Mozart and Stalin, the ugliness and horror, the beauty and delight. For they are both an expression of the human, and define for better or worse, our possibilities. Though we are not shaped as passive stone, our character is chiseled in the context of history tracing in time, the contours of interior humanity in each and all of us.

To feel the optimism to be found in imagining how we might be, and to make choices that embrace our social nature, we must have an accurate account of how our species has been.

A Humanist is one who is conditioned by the bad news, but who sees in such news the possibility of the good. Knowing the difference is the ground of genuine morality. Understanding that our lives as beings in an ever changing universe, a universe in which simultaneous creation and destruction is a constant through all time, gives us a perspective to have the courage to move, and the will to choose. We are the tip of the pen from which the current line of the human story is being written. We cannot hide from the narrative, we cannot remove ourselves from the changes going on all around us and within us. Always, the question is, how shall we live? Socrates said that knowledge is the highest human good. Perhaps he said this in recognizing that we cannot truly become ourselves without it. It is the instrument of our uniquely human evolution. But as the edifice of knowledge makes us powerful, it must also humble us with its reach and size. Thus is struck the balance of creation. Our part is to keep the torch lit as it passes through our hands and to make whatever changes we think will help. Though what illuminates also burns, this is the delicate condition that bestows confidence, and faith, if you will, in the beneficence inherent in our evolution.

JP





Sept/October 2012 COR Calendar

Compiled by **Rick O'Keefe**, with **Dale Friedley & Jim Peterson**

Dates/times may change due to unforeseen reasons,
Check for more events + details on the Coalition of Reason Web site at:
<http://tampabay.unitedcor.org/tampabay/>

Joint CFI & Brandon Atheists—BRANDON

Starts Sunday night, October 14th, at 7:00 PM
Location: The Brass Tap, 775 Brandon Town Center, Brandon, FL
map: **RSVP** to Kathryn before Friday, October.12th, noon.
The Brandon Atheists are a fun and friendly social-only group (no divisive activism). So, if you want good conversation and a choice of 400+ craft beers, visit our monthly joint evening of freethought enjoyment. Ask the host for the Brandon Atheists table.



The Suncoast Humanist Society

Countryside Library, 2741 S.R 580 .
Saturday, Oct. 6th at 2 PM

This is an open session discussing "The Humanist Approach to the Issues of our Times". See page [3](#)

Brandon—CFI Skeptic/Humanist Mixer

Ghengis Grill 910 Providence Ave. Brandon FL.
Sunday October 21st at 3:30 PM.

Details: <http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/>
RSVP to Carl at (813) 661-0633 or [here](#).



UU Clearwater Humanists

Sunday, October 21, at 12:30, for it's monthly meeting at Unitarian-Universalist Clearwater. The presentation will be a TED Talk with Jonathan Haidt: "The Real Difference Between Liberals and Conservatives". A discussion will follow the presentation. For information, contact Bill Norsworthy (687-9867) or Mark Brandt (560-0971) or mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu. All are welcome.



Tampa Bay Thinkers Discussion Group

CARROLLWOOD CULTURAL CENTER

Monday October 15th at 6:30 pm RSVP at Web site.

They Don't Want Some of You to Vote will be discussed in depth. Details can be seen on our [Meetup](#) site. If you will be going, please bring a potluck snack, or picnic-type treat.

Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Rd,
Carrollwood, FL 33618 (NW Tampa)
Click for a [MAP](#) to the Center.



Humanist Families of Tampa Bay

Family outings and other activities are ongoing.
For more information, see our Facebook page [Here](#)

Café Philo—philosophical discussion group in Tampa at Dale Mabry Barnes & Noble See [Web site](#) for more info.

Tampa Humanist Association—NEW TAMPA



Saturday, October 20th, 2012 at 11:00 am
Jimmie B. Keele Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave.,
Wesley Chapel, FL Click for the [MAP](#)
Topic: **Censorship—Past, Present, & Future.**
With Frank Prahl

CFI Skeptics/Humanists Social—DUNEDIN

Monday, October 22nd, 6:00 PM
Café Alfresco, 344 Main Street, Dunedin, FL 34698
[Map](#), [menu](#), etc.

Our monthly Dunedin gathering is a congenial affair, with far-ranging discussions and good humor. Join us! Voted "Best Restaurant on the Pinellas Trail 2009" by *Tampa Bay Magazine*. **RSVP is required** if you are coming so we can reserve enough space. *Seating is limited to 12!* [Click here](#) before noon, Oct. 21 (Sunday) (Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net).

THA German Beer Night—NEW TAMPA/USF

On hiatus for now- Check back next month.

Location: Mr. Dunderbak's Beer Garden, 14929 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa FL 33613 (813) 977-4104 Come and enjoy German food and a wide variety of beers with your fellow freethinkers.



Americans United for Separation of Church & State will have its annual meeting in March. Details forthcoming.

Art Film Meetup:

Dale Friedley hosts a showing/discussion of:

Great Existential Cinema

Friday, Oct. 5, at 6:45 PM

Eckerd College Miller Auditorium, 4200 54th Ave. S.
St. Petersburg FL [Map](#) **RSVP:** DaleFried@aol.com



October Social Dinner for the Humanist Society

at the **Salt Rock Grill** on Sunday October 21st at 5:00pm.
This fine but inexpensive restaurant is located at 19325 Gulf Blvd in Indian Shores. See details on Page 4.

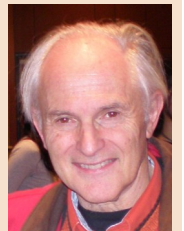
Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meeting

Click for [details](#). Saturday, **Sept. 29**, 11 a.m.

UU Clearwater Humanists hosts

Nobel Laureate Sir Harry Kroto

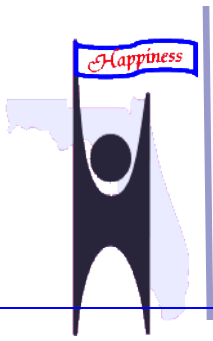
Sunday, **Sept. 30**, 12:30 p.m. UU Clearwater
For information, contact Bill Norsworthy (687-9867) or Mark Brandt (560-0971) or mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu. All are welcome.



CAMP INQUIRY
IMAGINE. INVESTIGATE. ILLUMINATE.

[Click to register](#) for next year

Ages 7-16, Holland, NY



The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.
Associate organization of the Humanists of Florida, the AHA, COR, and CSH. Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Volume 20 No. 10

October, 2012

What is the Humanist Approach

to the issues of our times? A community discussion

What is the condition of our state, country, world, and universe? The common media are awirl with conflict and controversy on many questions. We do not propose any singular solutions, nor an easy way out of our multiple dilemmas. Sorting these things out and trying to find the nuggets of true and sensible propositions is plainly very hard. But our survival may depend on the ability of the majority of human beings to live up to their potential and do precisely that. We are together, many minds with many levels of education and experiences. This is an opportunity to look to each other to help break through the barriers of intense propaganda and ubiquitous nonsense that pervade our lives, and try to sort out just a few matters before we make important decisions.

(It must be noted here that the Humanist Society is a 5013C organization, and consequently can take no position on political matters as an organization. This should not inhibit individual members from doing so however.)

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast is a member of the **Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason..**



There are 45 days until the elections.

We need to use every one of those days making sure people aren't intimidated into not voting or wrongly turned away at the polls by sinister voter suppression efforts.

In the critical coming weeks, the ACLU will continue to challenge voter suppression efforts and mobilize our voter protection network to reach out to impacted communities with the information they need to protect their rights.

From distributing localized voting right guides to creating PSAs to preparing teams of lawyers to monitor Election Day activities, we're pulling out all of the stops to make sure that the people most affected by these voter suppression tactics — senior citizens, African Americans, Latinos, students — have the information they need to stand up to those who seek to turn them away at the polls.

We also need your help to stop efforts to purge voter rolls in Florida.

We're facing one of the most serious challenges to voting rights America has ever seen. But tough challenges have never stopped us before and they certainly won't stop us now.

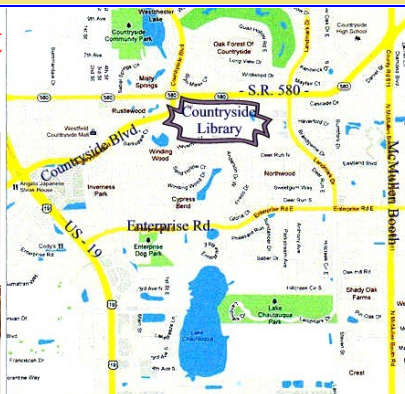
But, we really need people like you to step up today and support our efforts to protect the vote.

**People
Over Politics**

Remember... we meet
in the **Countryside Library** at
2741 State Rd. 580 in Clearwater



Food: the first kindness. Humanists aspire to true friendship with our fellow human beings. An important measure of this concern is care for the physical well being of others. There is increasing hunger here in our community. Don't forget to bring canned and boxed food or checks for
Tampa Bay Harvest.



Please join us for this free and open discussion.

On Saturday, October. 6th at 2 PM:

**Clearwater Countryside Library
2741 State Rd. 580
Clearwater, FL 33761**

Following our meeting, many of us will dine and argue together at the **Greek City Cafe**, across from the mall.



*Humanists work to build a world
in which happiness is the
enduring criterion of social policy.*

What is the Humanist Way?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

Our monthly social dinner,

The Moveable Feast for October will be at:

The Salt Rock Grill

on Sunday October 21st at 5:00PM. This fine restaurant is located at 19325 Gulf Blvd in Indian Shores between where Walsingham Rd. and Park Blvd intersect with Gulf.

They are featuring early dinners at this time for \$12.50 each with a wide variety of seafood, beef and chicken dinners with a small dessert included plus coffee/tea or other soft drink at this time. Note: We must order before 5:30PM for these early dinner and special drink prices!

Contact Glenn Paul by the at 727-595-3347 or email at kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com.

Laugh Lines Laws of Nature

1. Law of Mechanical Repair--After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch and you'll have to pee.
2. Law of Gravity--Any tool, nut, bolt, screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible place in the universe.
3. Law of Probability--The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.
4. Law of Random Numbers--If you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal--and someone always answers.
6. Variation Law--If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now (works every time).
7. Law of the Bath--When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone rings.
8. Law of Close Encounters--The probability of meeting someone you know INCREASES dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with.
9. Law of the Result--When you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, IT WILL!!!
10. Law of Biomechanics--The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

10/12

Thanks to **Connie Purdum**

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.
The Association of Secular Humanist Societies

Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

Steve Brown, VP

Jim Butler

Robert Byrch (Dec.)

Terry Eckstien

Lois Fries, Secretary

Jon Green

Jim Peterson, President

Frank Prah

Marios Psomas, treasurer

Emeritus members: Anita Garcia,

Mark Kligman, Jerry Moore, Mark

Winterbottom, Bob Collette, Glenn

Paul, Don Acenbrach, Jackie Jordan,

Brent Yaciw, Mike Hubbard, Matt

Cooper

~*~*~*~*~*

Jim Butler Publisher.

Jim Peterson, Editor

E-Mail us at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

How you can Help

I hope these general notes are helpful.

Contribute to the welfare of our own local chapter by leading efforts to bridge gaps, bring tolerance and social unity, and exercise kindness everywhere. A little financial help is always appreciated as well. **Start by renewing your membership!**

At a recent board meeting, we made plans to participate with an **information table** at a major public event in the coming year.

We are putting together a **Speakers Bureau** for outreach. You can help in many ways.

And we need help in setting up our meetings: chairs, electronic components when needed, literature and food collection tables. **See a Board member** to offer your help. **JP**

A Humanist Helping Hand

Several members have formed a caring response team to help members of our Humanist family who may need supportive practical help. This is an independent group, not affiliated directly with the Humanist Society. But their efforts are wholly consistent with the Humanist outlook. Contact a helper below if you or another member needs help or wishes to participate.

- ◆ Terri Eckstien (813) 891-9399
- ◆ Jerry Moore (727) 455-4973
- ◆ Nan Owens (813) 662-6612
- ◆ Patricia Walters (813) 988-5977
- ◆



Read Humanist Periodicals: [The Humanist](#), [Free Inquiry](#), [Free Mind](#), [Humanist Perspectives](#), [Skeptical Inquirer](#), [Secular Humanist Bulletin](#), [The Florida Humanist Journal](#), [Skeptic](#), [Essays in Humanism](#), and many others. Look 'em up!

~ *Join or Renew* ~
The Humanist Society of the Suncoast.

Annual Dues

- _ Trial -3 month- free news
- _ **Regular - \$25.**
- _ **Renewal (January)**
- _ **Reg. Couple - \$30.**
- _ **Supporter -35/45 (W/ pin)**
- _ **Life - \$200.**
- _ **Life Couple - \$250.**
- _ **Associate - \$10.**
- _ **Contribution for growth**

If new, please fill out the form; if renewing just indicate your name and any changes from our previous information. Thanks!

Name: _____

Address -if new : _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

(Privacy respected)

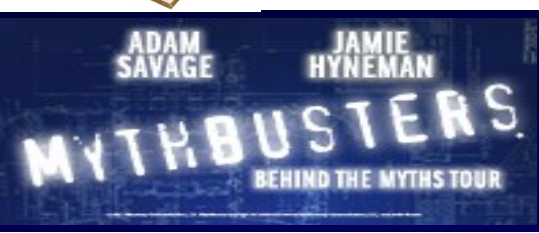
Send to:

Glenn Paul, Asst. Treasurer
Humanist Society of the Suncoast
2507 First St. #E
Indian Rocks Beach
33785-3010



Our Humanist Traveling Library Has a new Librarian - **Marios Psomas!**

We have a wonderful library of current books. This is a circulating library that depends on the integrity (and memory) of members to return and keep circulated, the many volumes in this fine unique collection. Thanks once again to the great and generous efforts of **Matt Cooper**, Matt has "paid it forward", now it's our turn.



Sat, Oct 13, 2012 08:00 PM
[USF Sun Dome](#) 4202 East Fowler Ave, Tampa, Bay Coalition of Reason is coordinating a group ticket purchase - a minimum of 10 prepaid attendees get a discount. Details: go to the [CoR Calendar](#).

Your published Letters.... Bring on open criticism

Perhaps we are watching Islam go through a reformation, as did Christianity in the 1500's, when followers started questioning their religion and Catholicism started losing political power. Public criticism is the democratic way of overcoming public problems and abuses. Only when publicly criticizing religion become as popular as publicly criticizing government officials will we even start to resolve political and social divisiveness throughout the world.

Frank Prah, St. Petersburg

Scott's phony stance

So your editorial mentions Florida Gov. Rick Scott being on an education "tour" to show the amazing "education governor" that he is not. He is talking lots about his "new" teacher evaluation strategies so he can feign a loathing of the hated FCAT.

In truth this is just a phony early strategy for Scott's re-election campaign that has started two years out. Hence his constant 30-second TV ads that have me changing the channel constantly.

But these new evaluation systems are just ways to give more public school money to campaign contributors who desire to steal as much public education money as they can. In the end our kids and their dedicated teachers will just remain in that black hole, the real goal all along.

Dale Friedley, St. Petersburg



Know an interesting speaker with novel and well thought out ideas ?

Let any Society board member know if you would like to recommend a speaker or topic.

Humanist Quotes

“There is some kind of a sweet innocence in being human—in not having to be just happy or just sad—in the nature of being able to be both broken and whole, at the same time.”



— [C. JoyBell](#)



Amendment 8

Of the 11 proposed constitutional amendments that the Legislature – not the voters – put on the Florida ballot this year, your **ACLU** is working to defeat three: Amendments 5, 6, and 8. **But one particular proposal, Amendment 8, poses such a threat to one of our most basic rights that I wanted to be sure you knew all about it.**

Amendment 8 on the Florida ballot is a repeal of the 127-year-old constitutional tradition of “no aid” to religion, which bars taxpayer dollars for religious programs and schools. Because it has been deceptively packaged by supporters as a “Religious Freedom Amendment,” I have written a short fact-sheet describing what the proposed constitutional amendment says, and what its effect will be if voters are fooled by the misleading language.

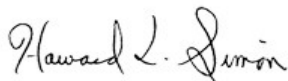
In short, the misleadingly-called “Religious Freedom Amendment,” threatens historic separation of church and state and creates a constitutional entitlement for any entity calling itself a religion to receive any government benefit.

We are working closely with other groups who are also opposing Amendment 8, including the League of Women Voters, The PTA, the Florida Education Association, the Florida School Boards Association, the Anti-Defamation League, and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. But we need you to be informed to help in our efforts.

We know that religion can only be truly free when it is free of government entanglement. [Read the fact sheet so you know exactly what's at stake in this election.](#)

Most important – whether you are voting early, by mail or on Election Day – please make sure that you, your family, and friends go down the entire ballot to the proposed constitutional amendments. Stand up for civil liberties by voting “No” on 5, which would modify the Florida Supreme Court for the worse, “No” on 6, which would curtail reproductive freedom, and “No” on 8, which would undermine religious liberty.

There is a lot at stake this election, and we're counting on you!



Executive Director
ACLU of Florida
www.aclufi.org



These Rare Books are Amazing, and only a penny a page. Bank of Wisdom is listing thousands of Rare and Suppressed books in PDF format. These eBooks have a picture of every page so exact reliability is maintained. Yet these eBooks can be Searched and the Cut-and-Paste feature is active, these books can be used for scholarly research, and quoted by page and paragraph, just like the actual book. And for the casual reader there is no end of amazing and interesting facts and ideas that will enlighten, educate, astound, and elevate your view of History and the World. Most important we specialize in books to un-brainwash. The cost of most PDF instant downloads is \$.01 per page. (\$1.00 per hundred page book.) Set up your account here:

<http://bankofwisdom.com>

The ritual performance of **the legend of democracy** in the autumn of 2012 promises the conspicuous consumption of \$5.8 billion, enough money, to prove that our flag is still there. Forbidden the use of words apt to depress a Q Score or disturb a Gallup poll, the candidates stand as product placements meant to be seen instead of heard, their quality to be inferred from the cost of their manufacture. The sponsors of the event, generous to a fault but careful to remain anonymous, dress it up with the bursting in air of star-spangled photo ops, abundant assortments of multi-flavored sound bites, and the candidates so well-contrived that they can be played for jokes.



University of South Florida

Freethinkers@USF is a multicultural, interdisciplinary student society which welcomes USF students who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, humanists, or religiously open-minded who seek to promote reason, compassion, tolerance, and free inquiry on campus. We hope to contribute opportunity for interdisciplinary dialog to the USF community, and build scientific literacy for all to enable objective and rational interpretations of issues affecting our lives. The student organization is open to anyone of any religious persuasion or personal beliefs. Write [Rodrick Colbert](mailto:Rodrick.Colbert) or freethinkersusf@gmail.com for details.

Clearwater UU Humanists

We are a group of Unitarian Universalists committed to a humanistic and non-theistic worldview. Currently, meetings are scheduled once a month and are usually held on the third Sunday of most months from 12.30 pm to 1:30 pm, after UU services.

The UU Humanists are open to all aspects of humanism, including investigation of religious humanism. However, the focus of the group is on secular aspects c

Programs have been well received with attendance between 50 and 75. To learn more, please contact: co-facilitators: Bill Norsworthy bnorsworthy@verizon.net Mark Brandt mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu Web site: www.uuclearwater.org



Clearwater, Florida

UU Humanists will be meeting on Sunday, October 21, at 12:30, for it's monthly meeting at Unitarian-Universalist Clearwater. The presentation will be a TED Talk with Jonathan Haidt, entitled "The Real Difference Between Liberals and Conservatives". A discussion will follow the presentation. All are welcome.



Florida Now

<http://www.flnow.org/>

NOW is a multi-issue political organization. NOW's self-defined role has been to initiate change for the benefit of the greatest number of people, to affect the legal and institutional structures of the society in a way that systematically expands the choices and possibilities available to all women. In this way, NOW takes action to bring women, as a class, into the mainstream of society, rather than offering aid to individual women in achieving personal solutions or temporary relief from oppression.

The Florida National Organization for Women (NOW) is in strong opposition to the Personhood Amendment ballot initiative for which the organization Personhood Florida is currently collecting signatures, according to Florida NOW president Donna Slutiak. "This amendment is ridiculous and an insult to women," Slutiak said. "The issue of Personhood would have very far reaching results, and would do more than criminalize abortion; it would also make birth control pills and the IUD illegal in the state of Florida. The amendment states that human life begins at the time when an egg is fertilized, which will also impact in-vitro-fertilization clinics. How would you like your mother's fertilized eggs that are sitting in a clinic freezer to have inheritance rights?"

Do you want to have to go underground to get your birth control pills?" Florida NOW expects all intelligent people to pledge not to sign this initiative, and to vote against it, if by some fluke it does get on the ballot. Personhood is bad for womanhood."

Tampa Humanist Association

Saturday October 20th, 2012 at 11.00am

Jimmie B. Keele Library,
2902 W. Bearss Avenue, Tampa, FL.

Look for the Tampa Humanist Association sign.

Topic: Censorship now & in the future
with **Frank Prahl**



The constriction of ideas by fearful people threatens the lifeblood of civilization. What must we do to ensure the health and survival of our species in the challenging times ahead?

After the untimely death of our leader, **Rob Byrch**, the board of directors has set about the task of reorganizing the association, and continuing the programs, finding new leadership, and keeping the flame lit which Rob ignited for the benefit of the people of Tampa.

You are invited to be part of this process. We need your help to facilitate various functions, and to provide for the financial well being of the group.

All around the world people are finding a way to free themselves from the tyranny of conventional uncritical thinking about the many urgent problems that require our attention if our species is to survive. We must do our part to extend the hand of true friendship in assistance to our neighbors.

In addition to our regular meeting, we have instituted a Humanist Movie club and run joint Humanists and Skeptics in the Pub with our colleagues from the Center for Inquiry. For a **complete schedule of events** see:

<http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association>

Or Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/tampahumanist> Or our Web site: <http://www.tampahumanist.com> **We need active members to help maintain these activities.** Join us for the fun, open your mind!

Annual Membership Dues

Most people belong to one or more membership organizations and are dues paying members. These dues constitute donations to the organization and are tax-deductible under IRS laws. While many take advantage of the tax deduction, people primarily join and renew because they believe in the organization. Most feel they are helping to make a difference and trust that the organization is wisely investing the dues they pay. Tampa Humanist Association, Inc. is your Association and paying this small annual dues gives you the right to vote and a vested interest in its growth and success.

The Web site, Meetup page and refreshments served at our meetings are all ongoing costs necessary to make this organization live. Any ideas that you have about building the association will be most welcome.



Freethought Film Festival

Promoting Reason through Film

The International Freethought Film Festival is a home for Independent films from around the globe that critically examine truth-claims. The International Freethought Film Festival tagline, "Going there!!!", is a reflection of this.

Tickets for the events and screenings can be purchased at our Web site at www.freethoughtfilmfest.org

Freethought Film Festival Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization, exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Federal tax code. Established in August, 2009. For more information contact: **Andrea Steele**

Freedom of Thought for Our World, and Our Future



Tampa Bay CoR
TAMPA BAY COALITION OF REASON

Promoting Action & Unity in the Tampa Bay Area

Freethought Organizations in the Tampa Bay Area:

Americans United,* Tampa Humanist Association, Humanist Society of the Suncoast, Center for Inquiry, UU Humanists Clearwater, UU Humanists Tampa,* Secular Student Alliance USF,* Atheists of Florida, Plus numerous Meetup organizations that promote what are essentially Freethought ideas and principles.
(*= not currently members of the Coalition)

Member organizations and agencies should contact the following CoR representatives about the matters indicated:

Calendar:
Rick O'Keefe

Newsletter:
Jim Peterson

Web site:
Jim Peterson

Special Projects
Mark Brandt

For several years now, various leaders of the Freethought community in the bay area have been meeting informally to share experiences, and occasionally to coordinate plans. But recently, changing circumstances have brought additional pressure to cooperate in bringing programs and members services to an expanding movement.

At this point leaders continue to meet, and together with the various boards of directors and committees, try to develop policies that will enable every group to enhance its unique role in serving its members.

There appears to be general agreement on developing several community wide programs over the year that will allow significant speakers to be presented in our area. The costs of these programs will be shared among the organizations proportionally.

Thus substantive and exciting new activities will be offered to the Tampa Bay area that were not possible for most organizations before. We are especially grateful to the national office of the United Coalition of Reason and its director, Fred Edwards. You may recall that UCoR was the major impetus to getting a large number of billboards erected across the nation with such messages as "You can be good without God. Millions are!"

TBCoR is an alliance of groups identified with the freethought / Humanist /Atheist movement.

As this momentum continues to grow, we will keep you informed of developments. JP



TBPC is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society.

Building Resilience in a Changing Climate

Climate shocks are on the way. We've already spewed so much carbon into the atmosphere that a cascade of worsening crop failures, droughts, floods, and freak storms is virtually guaranteed. You, your family, and your community will feel the effects.

Ironically, however, avoiding climate change also has its costs. It makes sense from a climate-protection standpoint to dramatically and rapidly reduce our use of fossil fuels, which drive global warming. But these fuels largely, well, fueled the spectacular economic growth of the past 200 years, and weaning ourselves from them quickly now—while most industrial economies are over-indebted and starved for growth—could risk financial upheaval.

Oil, the most economically pivotal of the fossil fuels, is getting more expensive anyway. Cheap, onshore, conventional crude is depleting; its replacements—deepwater oil, tar sands, and tight oil—cost more to produce, in both dollar and environmental terms. Though high oil prices discourage driving (good for the climate), they also precipitate recessions (bad for the economy). While renewable energy sources are our hope for the future and we should be doing everything we can to develop them, it will be decades before they can supply all our energy needs.

In the face of impending environmental and economic shocks, our best strategy is to build resilience throughout society. Resilience is the subject of decades of research by [ecologists and social scientists](#) who define it as "the capacity of a system to tolerate disturbance without collapsing into a qualitatively different state that is controlled by a different set of processes." In other words, resilience is the capacity to absorb shocks, reorganize, and continue functioning.

by Richard Heinberg, Director of the Post Carbon Institute

We invite you to become a member of the Council, and make a difference in the quality of our lives. Click www.tampabaypostcarbon.com for more.

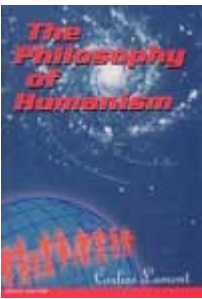
Humanist Books

One Planet One People by Carl Coon \$22.



Former Ambassador to Nepal, Carl Coon provides a highly readable overview of the evolution of human society, arguing that the 21st century will witness a crucially important and difficult transition for the human race. Blending the disciplines of anthropology and evolutionary psychology with over thirty years of experience in the diplomatic corps, Coon traces the evolution of the human tendency to divide others into two groups, "us versus them." Today, he argues, we have reached a stage where the whole world must be viewed as "us," if we are to overcome the global challenges we face. Hardcover 149 pp.

The Philosophy of Humanism - Corliss Lamont



\$16.95

By Dr. Corliss Lamont.

In a work that is a standard text and reference in the ongoing international discussion around secular humanism, Lamont offers an argument for a philosophy that advocates for happiness in this life rather than hope for an undefined afterlife. Paperback, 371 pages.

Why Was I Born? \$5.00



What is my purpose for being here? A Humanistic view of life by Lyle J. Simpson.

These books and a great many more, plus pins buttons, stickers, etc. can be ordered from:

Evolve Fish

<http://evolvefish.com/fish/HumanistPress.html>



The Foundation Beyond Belief is sponsoring a local "light up the night Walk" on behalf of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). This is a walk, not a run or jog, and there will be assistance along the trail. For more information see:

<http://pages.lightthenight.org/2012/>

Endorsed by the American Humanist Association, Center For Inquiry, Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy & Alumni, Secular Student Alliance, and United Coalition of Reason, and nearly every national association. The Steifel Family has promised to match every dollar up to \$500,000. **A short walk for a great cause!**

"...being a Humanist means trying to behave decently without expectation of rewards or punishment after you are dead."

Kurt Vonnegut

Writer and past president of the American Humanist Association

Continued from [Page 1](#))

9

What distinguishes secular humanists is our positive celebration of life in this world, our spirit of inquiry that values most the exercise of reason on scientifically defensible evidence. If secular humanists using their reason find that the facts about a certain social situation lead to the conclusion that the Republican solution is most congenial, then they should embrace that solution; they should act similarly in the case of a Democratic platform.

What is important is that we *acknowledge our secular humanism as a strength* and should not feel compelled to assume a belief we do not subscribe to. It has been said that no one could be elected president as an atheist. *Atheism* is a negative term, almost aggressive, and it is interpreted as an attack on belief in God, which etymologically it is. While *secular humanism* implies nontheism, it is nonetheless a profoundly positive term, affirming human reason and intelligence. We don't know whether a secular humanist could be elected president, but we could begin to find out by supporting secular humanist candidates for school boards and local councils.

Now is the right time to introduce secular humanism into the political arena, because major religions are losing membership to what a recent survey calls "the unaffiliated." The Pew Forum of Religion and Public Life says that 16.1 percent of Americans are religiously unaffiliated—double the percentage who report being unaffiliated with a religion as children. Even more important, the unaffiliated are young: 31 percent are under thirty years of age and 71 percent are under fifty years of age. The country is moving away from religion, and many of the 16.1 percent could be persuaded that secular humanism is a viable alternative.

But many of them do not know what secular humanism is and are often unaware that their neighbor or coworker may be a secular humanist. They *would* know if their neighbor or coworker ran for local office as a secular humanist on a platform that met their needs. Running for office—any office, from a seat on the school board to Congress—requires meeting people, shaking their hands, exchanging views. Constituents would soon discover that secular humanists subscribe to the same moral code as everyone else. A secular humanist running for office embodies what secular humanism means. Just talking to potential voters would significantly reduce the fear of those who believe that morality must be supported by religion and increase the understanding that secular humanism does not threaten American values—in fact, it strengthens them.

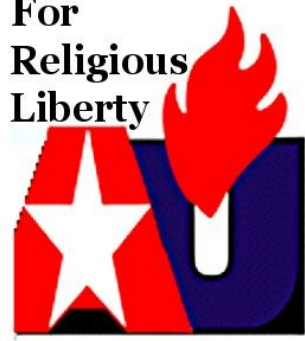
That's one argument for getting involved in public life as an office seeker. Another is the fact that more than 16 percent of the population is quite sufficient to influence political decisions. We haven't explored its potential as a *political* group, able to not only support secular humanist values but also to spread news of them to others susceptible to our message. For example, we advocate making public policy decisions on the basis of reason and scientific evidence. We do not object to anyone's religious beliefs but insist that legislators should not base political decisions on faith. A school-board member may believe in the literal truth of the biblical story of human origins but has no right to impose that belief on the choice of biology textbooks, because it is not supported by scientific evidence. The confusion of private belief and public policy is rife in our government at all levels: we need to combat the confusion by appealing to the unaffiliated 16.1 percent through blogs, Web sites, editorials, letters to the editor, and explicit support for all office holders and seekers who will speak out against it.

Secular humanists must step out of our comfortable existence. Our humanism must be more than an intellectual haven for freethinkers; more of us should become involved in political life. We need to

(Continued on [page 11](#))

A Tradition of Advocacy

**For
Religious
Liberty**



**Americans United
for Separation of Church & State**
~ Pinellas County Chapter ~

For more information, see: <http://www.au.org/>
The Chapter meets at Good Samaritan Church located at 6085 Park Blvd, Pinellas Park (61st St.). The next meeting will be the annual meeting in next March. We are working for the defeat of Amendment 8, the so called Freedom of Religion Amendment. It allows tax payer funds to support religious schools & organizations. Also, we will be contacting local churches to remind them of the legal dos and don'ts concerning pulpit

Humanist Families of Greater Tampa



Jennifer Hancock started this organization several years ago. It uniquely serves Humanist families with a variety of wonderful programs throughout the year.

There is a strong emphasis on creative childrearing. Here, you can make connection with other families dealing with the problems of living in a society that is still hostile to an explicitly Humanist Way of life.

Jennifer is author of several books including; *The Humanist Handbook*, *The Humanist Approach to Happiness*, and her latest book, *The Bully Vaccine* (illustration below). - JP

Humanist Families organizes social outings every month. These are opportunities to do something fun, socialize and enjoy each other's company. Sometimes we go to a park, sometimes a museum, sometimes we go swimming. Our group has grown over the past year to the point we now organize Tampa area outings and Manatee/Sarasota area outings every month.

Throughout the year we host parties like Darwin Day in February, World Humanist Day in June, Freethought Day at Disney in October and Carl Sagan Day in November.

Among our spin off groups, is a Parenting Beyond Belief group which gets together to discuss the challenges of raising children without religion. We are on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/HumanistFamiliesTampa/>

The Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers



Nontheistic service members serve honorably throughout the world—always have; always will. However, nontheists are the last unprotected minority. The nontheistic, whether an atheist, humanist, agnostic, freethinker, or other secular minority, have a strong community.

Jason Torpy, a West Point graduate, serves as president of MAAF. He also holds seats on the boards of the Secular Coalition for America and the American Humanist Assoc.

On the web at: www.maaf.info

Contact: Chris
(christbrown@yahoo.com)

MSgt, USAF (Active) Co-Organizer:
MacDill Atheists & Secular Humanists
(MASH) MacDill AFB, FL

Pragmatic Problem Solving Works

Hello everyone, I hope the school year is treating you well so far. My son is now in the 1st grade and loving school—Yay!

Today's topic is about pragmatic problem solving. There are several ways to go about solving your problems. Humanists prefer to take a pragmatic approach. The main reason we reject supernaturalism is because supernatural approaches to problem solving don't work very well. In fact, they work about as well as doing nothing. Sometimes things get better on their own, but sometimes they don't. We Humanists like to actually solve our problems instead of just hoping for the best. So, we start by using skepticism and science to figure out what is actually causing our problem (as opposed to assuming we know). We also like to challenge our assumptions and think of a variety of ways our problems might be solved. Most people call this brain storming. But it is important precisely because we tend to get stuck in our own heads. By thinking about a variety of possible solutions, we can often find something that will have a better chance of working than our normal standby options. Finally, we know that if we are going to be successful, we need to take action to solve our problems. It isn't enough to worry, you have to put your fine plan into action.

Jennifer Hancock

Holidays of Special Interest to Freethinkers

- **Oct 12th** - Freethought Day
- **Oct 24th** - United Nations Day
- **Oct 31st** - Halloween – a little old fashioned pagan challenge to orthodoxy

Atheists of Florida



Chair, Tracy Thomas
President, Ed Golly
Vice President, Frank Prahl
Treasurer, Nan Owens

AoF outreach programs can be found at our [Meetup](#) site. The next meeting is on Oct. 14th at 1:30 at the new meeting hall on 5103 South Westshore Blvd. in Tampa. A copy of the current 2012 newsletters are available by writing to: AthAIFLE@aol.com.

Look for exciting new programs in the offing very soon. We are a resource for those with questions and doubts about the standard religious narrative of life. We affirm the positive values of a rigorously logical and scientific approach to the problems of life.

At the same time, we bring a human centered ethic to bear in serving our fellow human beings as they struggle to overcome the delusional psychology of years of religious conditioning.

As an institution committed to bring the enormously prolific benefits of the atheist proposition to ever larger numbers of our citizens, we desire to enable an enlightened majority of truly free people to turn their intelligence toward the real problems we all must face.

AoF has been a leader in the effort to preserve church state separation. We look forward to serving a growing constituency.



Institute for Science and Human Values

Inspired by Empathy, Creativity and guided by Reason

No Local chapters. See <http://www.instituteforscienceandhumanvalues.net/>

Fighting Cracks in the Wall

The following statement authored by the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination earlier this year supports the first Amendment.

The undersigned religious, education, civil rights, labor, and women's organizations write to voice our opposition to the language of the Adams Amendment (Amendment #1) to H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. We oppose the Adams Amendment insofar as it would alter the nondiscrimination clause in the base bill to remove protections that bar federally funded religious discrimination. **We urge you to Vote NO on the Adams Amendment**, as government funds should not be used to underwrite employment discrimination within government-funded projects and activities.

We appreciate the important role religiously affiliated institutions historically have played in addressing many of our nation's most pressing social needs, as a complement to government-funded programs. Indeed, many of us are directly involved in this work. We also recognize that the separation of church and state is the linchpin of religious freedom. In our view, effective government collaboration with faith-based groups does not require the sanctioning of federally funded religious discrimination.

In accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, religious organizations may prefer co-religionists in hiring when using their own private funds. The Adams Amendment, however, would permit religious organizations to take VAWA funds and use those funds to discriminate against a qualified individual based on nothing more than his or her religious beliefs. VAWA should protect against taxpayer dollars being used to underwrite jobs where religion is a factor in hiring decisions.

Adopting the language in the Adams Amendment would be inconsistent with the longstanding principle that federal dollars must not be used to discriminate. Accordingly, **we urge you to vote No.**

Ed. Note. As of 9-25 the congress adjourned without acting on the VAWR for 2012.

organize campaigns for any office that is open at any level. We will be defeated over and over again, but our voice will be heard, and eventually we will win. The future of humankind depends on the application of science, reason, and humanist values to the huge problems—perhaps even our annihilation as a species—facing us. We cannot retreat from the challenge. So step up and run for public office. And call on others to help you run your campaign. Together we will create a seat at the table and a voice that is heeded, and so fulfill our public responsibility.

We wish to make it absolutely clear that by these statements we are not supporting any specific candidate; we're merely stating that Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews run for office and are eventually identified as such. We simply suggest that secular humanists likewise enter into the political arena, whatever party they may align with, and identify themselves as secular humanists. To say this does not compromise any organization's 501(c)(3) tax exemption, for we are *not* endorsing specific political candidates, only suggesting that the voices of secularists and humanists be heard.

Paul Kurtz is professor emeritus of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, the chair of the Institute for Science and Human Values, Tom Flynn is editor of FREE INQUIRY. Toni Van Pelt is executive director of the Institute for Science and Human Values, Ruth Mitchell, PhD, is on the staff of the Center's Office of Public Policy.-

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CFI–Tampa Bay is supporting Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation with two teams (click for the team page), **12** **Light The Night's Pinellas Walk** at Bright House Networks Field on **Nov 3**, 2012 for the team Center for Inquiry-Tampa Bay-Pinellas-FBB, and **Light The Night's Tampa Walk** at George M. Steinbrenner Field on **Nov 10**, 2012 for the team Center for Inquiry-Tampa Bay-FBB. *How can you help?* If you can't walk, you can donate. All the Humanist organizations are participating. Details and sign-up: <http://www.lightthenight.org/>.

Local Events

CFI is co-sponsoring The Humanist Society of the Suncoast lecture, October. 6th in Clearwater <http://www.meetup.com/SuncoastHumanist/events/>

CFI is co-cponsoring Tampa Humanist Assoc. lecture, Oct. 20th, in New Tampa,

<http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association/>

Click for our **Calendar**: <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/tampa/events/calendar/2012/09/>

National Events

October 25-28: **CSICON**--Nashville, TN

May 17-29, 2013--Women in Secularism

Some of our divisions:

African Americans for Humanism

Tampa Bay Skeptics -- Central Florida's famous Skeptics assoc. See page **14**.

The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry – world-wide assoc. of Skeptics and scientific investigations.

Cognitive Neuro Sciences, Inc. -- Science-of-the-brain secular humanist oriented counseling/therapy center.

To become part of our important work, and to make a difference, become a member:

http://www.centerforinquiry.net/support/donate_now/

Free Inquirers Club, a monthly discussion. Contact David Vangsness for details: **CLICK here.**

The Tampa Bay Computer Society is holding an Open House

on **Saturday, October 20, 2012 from 9am to 2pm**

We'll have several excellent speakers on the following topics:

9am: iPad Tips & Tricks

10am: Preview of Windows 8 and the Microsoft Surface Tablet

11am: "Fast and Furious" - speakers shares how she got a new project buzzing. Attendees will get the resources SHE used and tell you exactly what and how she did it.

12pm: "Viral Videos" - this fun seminar shows why some videos go viral, and how to use video to drive traffic to your Web site.

1pm: "Using LinkedIn to Open New Doors (and Fast!)"

Plan on coming for coffee and donuts in the morning, and staying for potluck in the afternoon... all the while sitting in on a variety of useful seminars. PLUS: during all the refreshments and seminars, our tech crew will be slaving away fixing our guests' computers! If you would like your computer repaired also, you MUST pre-register for this service. Here is the link to the registration form: <http://www.tampa-bay.org/rak2/rak-form.html>

This event will take place at our facility on 1510 Barry Rd. in Clearwater:

Map: <http://tampa-bay.org/map.html>

Doc (Dave Dockery)

President, Tampa Bay Computer Society

www.tampa-bay.org

"We repair our members' computers for free!"





Skeptical Inquirer's Benjamin Radford Coming to Tampa

By *Gary P. Posner*

Note: This is a much-abbreviated version of the hardcopy TBS newsletter's article.



Benjamin Radford, a research fellow with the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and deputy editor of *Skeptical Inquirer*, will be visiting Tampa in October.

Author of six books and hundreds of articles, and a guest on numerous television programs, Radford will first speak at the University of South Florida in Tampa on Tuesday, October 16, and will meet with members of TBS (and other invitees) the following evening.

An experienced investigator in numerous aspects of the paranormal, Ben has offered to present one of his many exciting talks. We have selected "Reflections on a Decade of Paranormal Investigation," in which he will discuss the nature of

"unexplained mysteries" such as ghosts, Bigfoot, crop circles, and psychic powers, emphasizing what science says about the evidence and why there is still debate about these issues. He will draw from case studies over a decade of personal investigations into these and dozens of other topics. And any subjects that Ben fails to satisfy our curiosity about can be covered during the wide-ranging Q&A session afterwards.

Radford will speak **7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 16, in the TECO Room, College of Education**. A wine and cheese reception will begin at 6:30pm and continue after the talk, where the author will be available to meet and sign books. The event is free and open to the public; metered guest parking available in the **Collins Blvd. Parking Garage**.



What is Tampa Bay Skeptics?

Founded in 1988, Tampa Bay Skeptics is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of **paranormal** and **fringe-science** claims, and the dissemination of factual information about such claims. In 2004, TBS became a Special Interest Group of the [Center For Inquiry–Tampa Bay](#).

Particular areas of interest to TBS include **UFOs**, **"psychic" power**, **astrology**, **fringe science & medicine**, purported **miracles** and other **New Age** claims. Our interest in religion is restricted to claims that can be objectively tested and potentially verified, such as "weeping icons" or miraculous healings.

TBS conducts its own investigations, follows the activities of other skeptics groups, monitors the press coverage of the paranormal, and publishes a quarterly newsletter, [Tampa Bay Skeptics Report](#), which is also distributed gratis to members of the press and to many other skeptics groups around the world. TBS also makes its representatives available to local and national media to provide a skeptical voice as a counterweight to the irrationalism and superstition that is increasingly prevalent in the television and print media. We have been instrumental in examining and reporting upon the Tarpon Springs "weeping icon," hypnosis, (in)famous psychics, local astrologers, etc.

TBS does not reject claims out of hand, but rather is committed to objective and critical inquiry. In this vein, we share the philosophy of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (**CSI**) -- publisher of [Skeptical Inquirer](#) magazine, an international organization that has nurtured the growth of local skeptics groups (such as ours) all over the world.

Membership in TBS

We encourage those who wish to help further the cause of skepticism to join TBS! You can take your first step, and make a statement about irrationality and superstition at the same time, by writing a check for \$15 to cover your first year's dues. Annual membership includes four issues of [Tampa Bay Skeptics Report](#), each snailmailed to you in advance of our quarterly meetings (last Saturday of every March, June, September, and December). Members also receive a 30% discount on any [Prometheus Books](#) purchased through TBS.

Make your \$15 check payable to "Tampa Bay Skeptics" and mail to:

CFI c/o O'Keefe, 4011 S. Manhattan Ave., Box 139, Tampa, FL 33611-1277

Or click to simply join our [TBS e-mail list\(s\)](#)? Or order [TBS T-shirts](#)? Or join [CFI–Tampa Bay](#)?



<http://tampabay.unitedcor.org/tampabay/>

Ideas to share with the religious

By Rick O'Keefe

I don't use the word "believe" because it means acceptance of something as being true with no evidence.

Skeptics use science and common sense to discover reality. We believe that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof -- not opinion or belief or because some unqualified person said so.

Skeptics are open to proof of a claim such as "I can contact the dead." Proof being scientific, fact-based evidence, not opinion.

Skeptics are like people from Missouri - we demand proof.

"I doubt it," is the skeptic's attitude: without doubt and a search for proof, only gullibility and ignorance are left.

Secular Humanists rely on reason and evidence in relating to claims of supernatural beings and events.

We simply ask where the proof for faith is. Where is the evidence? Where is the logic? If there isn't any, why would we believe?

Secular Humanists believe that Human Rights ought to apply equally to everyone. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of and from religion, freedom to inquire into every aspect of human endeavor, the rights to food, medical care, shelter, clothing, gainful employment, education, opportunity to "get ahead."

I respect and defend your right to your opinion, but I won't respect an opinion not based on reason and science.

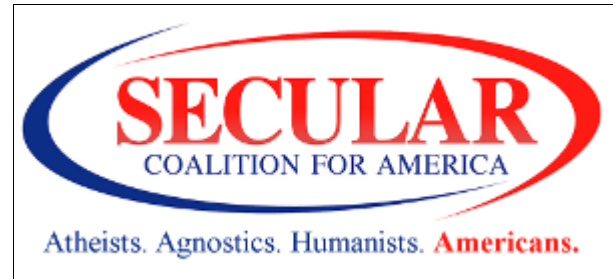
We ask, "If god isn't to be known, and the universe exhibits only chaos, and there is no clear purpose for living, then what kind of "god" can exist?"

Given the choice between irrationality and denial of massive evidence, that is, "faith", versus the fruits of scientific reason, give me the truths of science and critical thinking. I choose rationality.

Secular Humanists base their lives on ethics, reason, and enjoying the good life. We live once and do our best to leave the world a better place than we find it.

The Center for Inquiry is a transnational nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that encourages evidence-based inquiry into science, pseudoscience, medicine and health, religion, ethics, secularism, and society.

The Center provides rational ethical alternatives to the reigning paranormal and religious systems of belief, and develops communities where like-minded individuals can meet and share experiences.



National Secular Movement Update Newsletter and Call

Call Every Thursday from 12PM - 12:30PM (ET)
 Phone Number: 559-726-1300 Code: 199568

<http://secular.org/>

Tampa Bay Secular Celebrants

Memorials, Weddings, Rites of Passage. Contact:

Rick O'Keefe, CFI certified,

Virginia Kohl-Lieberman, AHA certified



CoR Leadership Team 2012

Jim Peterson, Mark Brandt, Rick O'Keefe, Ed Golly,
 Inset.- Jennifer Hancock

Editorial E-mail: tbcor@metrodirect.net