

secular idaho

Humanists Of ID, ID Atheists, BUUF
Sages, Huumanists, BSU SSA, West Val-
ley Freethinkers, ID Society of Reason,
Cosmos Coffee Club, ID Falls, Twin Falls
HS Freethinkers, CSI Secularists

Free Thought Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason www.TreasureValleyCoR.org

February 2014 www.secularidaho.org

Our Darwin Day is a Week

all events are free.

Thursday February 6

“Evolution” with biologist Janet Layne 6:30pm
“Losing Faith in Faith,” Dan Barker 8pm at
Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200
Garrett street, Garden City

Friday February 7

“Does God Exist?” debate, Dan Barker &
Matt Slick 7-9pm at BSU Simplot ballroom,
SUB, sponsored by BSU Secular Students

Saturday February 8

“Reason is Free at the Zoo!” 10am-4pm Tour
the Boise zoo, visit the Coalition of Reason table,
be Darwin, see Darwin, on free zoo day.

Tuesday February 11

“Meet-an-Atheist” at Solid Grill & Bar, 7:30pm
405 S 8th street Boise (no host)

Mix and Socialize starting 7p at the Reef, 205 S
6th street Boise. Toast Susan Harrington 8pm.

Ask DG Van Curen, humanistsofido@aol.com
Or visit www.idaho.humanists.net for details.

*Dan Barker is co-founder of Freedom from Reli-
gion Foundation.*

*Matt Slick is a radio personality with emphasis in
Christian Apologetics.*

*Unitarian Universalists have suggestions rather
than creeds. No reason to apologize.*

Humanists of Idaho.....	2
Meet-Ups	3
Idaho Atheists and Treasure Valley CoR.....	4
BSU SSA	5
Huumanists and Sages.....	6
Calendar.....	7

Secular Idaho is a voice for Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason and other independent thinkers. Susan Harrington coordinates TV CoR. Electronic copies available without charge; contact Paul, roligpd@spro.net

LOOK INSIDE... for how you can participate in the state of your state.

Remodel of the Idaho Capitol Building provides several ways to improve access to legislators and the legislative process. It's bigger, it's wired, it's still welcoming.

- Live streaming video allows you to watch the sausage run through the grinder. You can see hearings, voting.
- The two new underground wings provide expanded seating for committee hearings.
- There's room for public meetings with legislators. At least one party has weekly brown baggers there.
- Go online to see schedules for hearings (those who recall the bad old days remember when you had to get yourself physically to the statehouse at 4pm to find a print copy of the next day's proceedings!)
- Go online to find the texts of upcoming bills.
- Go online for biographies of legislators and contact information. Emails are easy and they matter.
- Paul Rolig has summaries, links to details, inside.
- Know the schedule. The first two weeks of January are hearings on rules, your chance to learn how your state operates.
- Come early anytime, sign on your position; sign up to testify. Everyone gets three minutes; bring a print copy.



Humanists of Idaho, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We meet 4th Mondays, Jan-Nov, back in upper room of the Flicks, Boise. Expect open discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm; program 7:30pm pm. Our next meeting is **Monday February 24, 2014**

President's Message

Early in January, several members of HOI participated in the "Add The Words" rally at the State Capitol, in support of adding gender identity and sexual orientation to the human rights act. It turned out to be a beautiful day for an outdoor event, unseasonably warm for January, and the sizable crowd was enthusiastic.

The high point of the event was a sing along featuring Curtis Stieger. Will the Idaho Legislature finally act this year? Only time will tell.

In late January, we turned out in support of the Women's shelter during a fund raising, donation gathering, wellness showcase event at the Hasbrouck House in Nampa. This century old historic home on 12th Ave is a fully restored three story structure that houses a number of businesses, including an art school in the third floor loft. The owner was kind enough to give us a tour, including historical footnotes.

January brought one piece of bad news. For more than 10 years, we have had our own show, "The Humanist Perspective" on local access channel 11, TVCTV. In fact, in recent years the show aired 3 times per week. On 31 December, TVCTV lost all sources of public funding, and officially went "dark".

They are back on the air, but now require a pay-as-you-go-per-episode format to fund operations. Unfortunately, this makes the cost beyond our limited budget, and so HOI will no longer be able to air The Humanist Perspective on channel 11. It was a great opportunity while it lasted.

As we close in on Darwin's birthday (205th, I believe), there are a number of events and celebrations taking place. On the last Saturday in January, BSU is hosting the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Experience in the Engineering complex on campus.

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On Feb 6 at BUUF (6200 Garret in Garden City), there will be an Evolution Lecture featuring Janet Layne, followed by "Losing Faith in Faith", featuring Dan Barker of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

On Feb 7th, BSU Secular Student Alliance will be hosting "Does God Exist" debate in the Simplot Ballroom.

On Feb 8th, Idaho Society of Reason will have a table at Boise Zoo's "Free Day." *editor's note:* [Expect information, good company, and a playful surprise.]

Our friends at IA will be hosting "Meet an Atheist" at Solid on 8th St, on Feb 11th. TV Cor's Darwin Day Mixer and Social will be at the Reef on Feb 12 .

TV Cor's Darwin Day Mixer and Social will be at the Reef on Feb 12 (Darwin's Birthday).

So many things going on. Check HOI meetup and Facebook pages for more details. This is as much about supporting freethought and the sciences as it is about having a good time, so plan to attend as many events as you can, to show your support. Hope to see you all there, and there, and there.

D G Van Curen
 President, Humanists of Idaho

Meetups and other informal groups

West Valley Freethinkers, Nampa Contact Charlie B deepbluesigh@gmail.com wvfreethinkers@gmail.com

C of Southern Idaho Secular group see Facebook "Secular Student Alliance at CSI". For Freethinkers Twin Falls Contact is Erica, erical@eaglemail.csi.edu

COSMOS COFFEE CLUB conversation varies. Meet 6:30pm 1st & 3rd Mondays at Papa Joe's (handicap accessible). <http://www.meetup.com/CosmosCoffeeClub>

Humanists in Idaho Falls meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Ask Doug at gerstner_doug@yahoo.com

Idaho Society of Reason is led by Art and Dave. They have just officially joined the Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. Their webpage has links to several other groups, also. <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events>

Local Objectivists meet last Wednesday 6pm each month at varying restaurants, for food and conversation. Interested? email Tim Scharff at tim@scharffdesignworks.net

Meet An Atheist or several, socialize 2nd Tuesdays, typically at The Reef. Their contact info is on next page.

Secular Families and Secular Homeschooling provide community for secular families. Contact Candace Norvell, at secularmama@yahoo.com.

Protect Religious Privilege? Paul Rolig, Humanists of Idaho & Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason

The Idaho Legislature is in session now, and several bills in progress merit the attention of secularists of all stripes.

House Bill 426 (<http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2014/H0426.htm>) is summarized as *"RELIGIOUS FREEDOM - Adds to existing law to prohibit any occupational licensing board or governmental subdivision or entity from denying, revoking or suspending a person's professional or occupational license, certificate or registration due to certain conduct."* This bill is being pushed by religious conservatives who want special legal sanction to discriminate against other people based on religious beliefs. For example, a licensed professional in some field could refuse to deal with gay or lesbian (or African or Muslim) customers if they claimed their religion told them not to deal with such people, and not be disciplined by the respective licensing board.

House Bill 427 (<http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2014/H0427.htm>) is summarized as *"FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION - Amends existing law to provide that a person whose exercise of religion is burdened in violation of specified law may obtain appropriate relief against any person relying upon any government action, enactment or law that burdens a person's religious exercise of religion."* This bill is being pushed by religious conservatives who want special religious privilege not to obey laws that apply to the non-religious. An example: a church would not have to follow zoning laws requiring a certain number of parking spaces for buildings that attract many people, because it would unduly burden those folks' exercise of their religion, no matter how big a nuisance it causes for their neighbors.

Needless to say, these bills alarm most secularists, and we should make our opposition known to our State Legislators. Contact information can be found at <http://legislature.idaho.gov/who'smylegislator.htm>.

Remember that any interaction with government officials (or any other human being, really) should always be polite and respectful. Name-calling is never appropriate, and reflects poorly on the name-caller and everyone they claim to represent. If you make the effort to testify at a legislative committee meeting, there are guidelines available at <http://legislature.idaho.gov/about/committeetestimony.htm>.

FAITH HEALING: Representative John Gannon of Boise is considering legislation to **repeal – YAY!** – Idaho's "faith healer" exemption in state law that says parents can't be charged with a crime if their children die from lack of medical attention for ordinary treatable diseases. Coverage can be found on all major Idaho media outlets. Just 'google' "Idaho faith healer repeal". So far there is not a specific bill in the legislative index. Those interested should send all encouragement they can to Rep. Gannon through the Idaho legislative website at <http://legislature.idaho.gov/about/contactmembersform.cfm?ID=2144>.

For guidelines on Letters to the Editor, see: <http://www.idahostatesman.com/submit-letter/index.html> or editor@boiseweekly.com or https://idahopress-dot-com.bloxcms.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/



Idaho Atheists Incorporated Community, Education, Ethics, Tradition dedicated to the needs of Atheists PO Box 204 Boise, ID 83701 Mailbag@IdahoAtheists.org

Meet an Atheist night: <https://www.facebook.com/events/514997328561655/>

See the front page for events sponsored by Idaho Atheists and other members of the Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. Our Darwin Day is nearly a week!

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Donate through Idaho Atheist website

(mailbag@idahoatheists.org), or contact us to donate via PayPal. Donations are tax deductible.

Humanism - Reflections On Women: D G

Van Curen (from a presentation at BUUF, Jan 2014)

In pondering the Humanistic view of women for tonight's event, I realized that it wasn't so much about finding something to say on a topic so deep and complex. The real challenge is to do the subject justice within a few short minutes. Given that our social and political environments often create hurdles and barriers for women, what I settled on this evening is a snapshot view of the two "E"s – Equality and Empowerment.

Humanist Philosophy frames the concept of equality - equal rights - more accurately as Human rights. We are all very different and diverse with respect to origin, culture, beliefs, perceptions, talents, abilities, age, and gender.

All too often, perceptions of inferiority are based upon such subtle differences, while ignoring the value of the individual contributions. But we are all the same, in the broader genetic context, as members of the Human family. And within that context, shouldn't all humans be considered equal? And shouldn't we be embracing the richness that is diversity, rather than trying to vilify it?

Empowerment can mean many different things. First is opportunity of choice, the freedom to decide the direction of one's own life, based upon individual needs and desires, in concert with individual talents and abilities. It makes sense that we each have the best insights into our strengths and weaknesses, as well as an in-depth knowledge of your personal desires, and should, therefore, make those life choices. It doesn't make a lot of sense for society to be making those choices for you.

Second is the power derived from the opportunity of access. This means that everyone should enjoy equal access, that upward mobility be a function of measurable contribution and that success should ultimately be a measure of ability, effort, and accomplishment.

When choices are denied, you enjoy neither freedom nor equality. Unfortunately, planet earth contains many patriarchal cultures that sustain and promote the notion that women should be subject to a man's rule, and that women's choices are for men to make. Controlling choices and access are fundamental to controlling behavior. As parents, we do this as a normal part of growing and protecting our children. But it takes on a very different purpose when it is used to control a segment of the population, or the population as a whole.

The effort to create a level playing field that is both fair and gender neutral is where the issue becomes complex. Long established norms and cultural perceptions create barriers that resist change. The most critical factor is found under the heading – Family Planning. Studies show that in parts of the world where women have little or no say in family planning choices and/or contraception is deliberately unavailable - family sizes are generally large, women are unlikely to be either well educated or economically independent, and their involvement in other aspects of culture is usually quite limited. Humanist Charities recognize that educating women and giving them an active role in family planning serves many purposes – from simply enabling the family to plan to have children when they can afford to have children, to addressing the issues of world overpopulation, rapidly depleting resources, inequality and even world violence.

Women, historically, are impacted by lack of access to information and the tools of family planning. This is why the American Humanist Association and the International Humanist and Ethical Union support efforts to bring family planning tools, including and especially low or no cost contraception, to overpopulated and poverty stricken regions. Proactive family planning reduces the strain on natural resources and slows the human population growth - both pluses for all other species on planet earth - while improving economic and creative opportunities for women. Informed choices make good choices.

Boise State

We are a home for secular students. We educate ourselves, encourage critical thought, practice open, rational, scientific examinations of the universe and our place in it. We believe ethics and morality can be based on humanistic and rational values. We present a positive view of atheism, agnosticism, rationalism, secularism, humanism, skepticism and non-religious worldviews. We offer debates, educational workshops, speakers, movies, a book club, open discussion, and social gatherings.

The Gates Foundation 2014 newsletter, here and at their web site, <http://annualletter.gatesfoundation.org/#section=home> provides a glimpse into their humanitarian efforts by showing how their work is mitigating three global issues. It also illustrates progress driven by the United Nations, foreign aid, and other efforts to better the plight of the world's poor. Such generosity and concern for today's impoverished people and for the future of the world balance seemingly unrelenting criticism of the wealthy and evils of capitalism.

The letter, penned by the two Gates, is augmented by embedded videos, slide shows, illustrative graphics and photos. It effectively addresses **three current myths that block progress for the poor: that Poor countries are doomed to stay poor, that foreign aid is a big waste and that saving lives leads to overpopulation.**

The myth of the permanence of poverty in today's poor countries has been effectively countered by data and information showing real progress in rising incomes in third world countries Old World and New. Efforts to provide education, jobs, better health, and other amenities of first world life, reduce the cost of survival poor countries arise from Bill Gates predicts that by 2035, there will be almost no poor countries in the world. The chapter on foreign aid dissolves urban myth with credible information and data. Gates shows that our government's foreign aid is small – for the most generous, the Norwegians, the cost is 3% of the national budget, while for us, it's only 0.8%. Second, Gates makes a strong case that foreign aid theft through graft and corruption is small, and that it is an investment in the future since history shows that recipient countries improve their lots and then become self-sufficient.

Melinda Gates provides a very informative look at a third rail issue for today – overpopulation. She presents a strong case that as mortality rates for the young decrease, access to modern contraception becomes available, and women's education improves, birth rates decrease. In fact, this has occurred in so many cases over the past two or three centuries, that she predicts a stable or declining world population by 2100. This chapter contains a fascinating short video by expert Hans Rosling depicting this process. *From Wally Keltner*

Boise

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Living without Answers

Jeanette Ross

Listening to Alan Alda share his enthusiasm for the Stonybrook center for Communicating Science, I was impressed by his enthusiasm and optimism. Where do we get the courage to ask big questions? This center brings exemplars from many cultures together with children and aspiring science writers to feed the flames that lead to new questions as well as new answers.

Alda has brought the insights of his experience to this science center. He has writers use improvisational techniques to simulate human encounters, the kinds we miss when we only keep company with those who share our perspectives. Imagine that the audience for your words stood before you; imagine that you are in an elevator with four NASCAR fans. What's essential, what communicates?

Alda gave me an one connection I'd been missing. Science, he said, is a way of examining the evidence of the world and then, as an ongoing commitment, agrees to reconsider conclusions previously made.

Ah-Hah, I thought, this is what Humanists do, also. Atheists KNOW there's no godlike control, but humanists have a more uncomfortable position. What about all the evidence that humans make really bad choices all the time? Maybe the best we can do is learn as much as we can from those with whom we disagree. Even if we don't have proof we have some evidence. We can model good listening. And we do have neighbors.



When Humanism Surprises... Jeanette Ross

This topic produced several fascinating responses.

One of our most active participants has spent years representing Humanists. As a secularist in Interfaith Alliance he is in company with many of our progressive clergy. He tells us that Rabbi Fink of the Jewish Synagogue and Dr. Said, representative of Muslim residents, are good friends and consider themselves to be humanistic. He came from another direction, in opposition to religion, as have many other atheist thinkers through history, like Spinoza.

This humanist was born into a relatively liberal religious theology, discarded in college, when he was attracted to Ayn Rand's rational basis for philosophy. He agreed with her confidence that humans are capable of doing good. He has come to question other aspects of objectivism the last few years, prefers to describe himself as a secular humanist because he doesn't define himself by what he is against. He mentions upcoming legislation sponsored by John Gannon, who wants to repeal religious faith of parents as reason enough to avoid allowing medical treatment for their minors.

Another humanist was an early supporter of Madelaine Murray. He was introduced to her pioneering efforts in support of atheism as a way of life by a professor of history, George Axtell. This humanist didn't always agree with Murray but admired her courage, philosophy. He sees churches as temples to avoidance of death by promise of a hereafter that can be earned by loyalty to a creed. Humanists are concerned with the quality of life right here. A surprise: he hoped that Humanists could pick up those who fall out of churches. Lately he's followed the Sunday Assemblies, a positive place to provide the best of what churches offer, a time and place to sing, laugh, talk, hear stories, deal with common issues.

Another attendee rejects any underlying tone of superiority among nonbelievers. She prefers positive psychology. She also attended a conference for secular humanists, liked their focus on family issues. At this conference, protesters stood throughout the audience, 2 feet away from her holding signs that said "Baby Killer." Who was persuaded by this?

One newcomer among us goes to churches for their stories, which he re-frames, re-creates. He had a memorable visit to a leper colony in Hawaii. Delivering orders from residents of the colony he found people who live with pleasure and purpose. Their disease is under control but they live with a stigma. They catch lobsters and care for each other (they got no benefit from the previously administered faith healings.) Father Damien showed them how to look after each other.

Humanists meet 3rd Sundays, 11:15am, at Boise Unitarian Universalist fellowship library. Next: Feb 16 11:15 BUUF library. Sages meet February 13 and 27.

This humanist, who has crafted a life without the benefits of formal education, spent several years organizing sweat ceremonies in an area prison. He's learned, he says laconically, that it's possible to get along with those considered despicable by others, in his experience with native American men who were confined for selling drugs. You get prison time for stealing— if you are poor.

We had one new visitor, a longtime Christian who illustrated how much we have in common with Christian humanists, even those who are surprised to find out what we have in common.

She said, "I was raised Nazarene, got out of that as fast as I could, when I got married. If there's a heaven there will be more people there than many Christians expect. I lived in Vietnam, my husband was Navy. The Vietnamese don't believe in a god and they were good to me, mostly.

Anyone can be good. I don't criticize people for what they believe; we can learn from everything. Her husband was in Iwo Jima as a signalman, had to stand above everyone and give signals with flags (quite a target!) That's the one military experience he wouldn't talk about.

Next month's topic : what we can do to advance humanist values. Meet us in the BUUF library 11:15am, February 16.

SAGE TIME AND PLACE

Tom von Alten

Did you know George Bernard Shaw was a co-founder of the London School of Economics? Me neither, but Wikipedia says so. Dr. Chuck Lauterbach is a virtual walking Wikipedia when it comes to playwrights though and he'll give us his take on GBS' voluminous work in drama, at the first meeting of the Sages in February. (And some economics? Not sure; come hear.)

For our second meeting, we'll have a potpourri of home towns, as we share stories of where we came from, and where we have lived. We'll be at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), 9:30 am on second and fourth Thursdays: Lauterbach on Shaw February 13, all of us on "home" on February 27. Contact Tom von Alten at 378-1217 or tva@fortboise.org for more information or to be added to our reminder list.

February 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 BUUF RE: Celebrate new year of Horse	3	4	5	6 Janet Layne & Dan Barker at BUUF	7 Dan Barker debate at BSU SUB	8 Zoo Boise & CoR free!
9	10	11 Meet Atheists at Solid	12 Darwin Fest mixer at Reef	13 BUUF Sages	14 Who do you LOVE?	15
16 BUUF Huumanists	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 HOI meeting	25	26	27	28	

“David and Goliath” By Malcolm Gladwell

This look at “Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants” examines conflicts of grossly mismatched opponents.

In mismatches from war, sports, cultures, education to civil rights, flaws in logic and perception can bring unexpected “underdog” victories. A California girls’ basketball team composed of poor athletes and a foreign born coach with no basketball experience were in a league of seasoned teams with good players. On paper, the season presented a series of predictable massacres.

The coach analyzed his team’s predicament and concluded that the other teams would shred his girls if he followed the common strategy of the games played in his league. Instead,

This coach followed a path of strategy seldom travelled. He trained his girls to apply a full court press defense for the entire game and contend every shot, pass and dribble. Further, he trained his team to run the entire game, never giving the other team a chance to catch a breath.

Tiring the less conditioned opposition players and forcing a very high rate of turnovers on all opponents allowed the underdogs to beat the opposition with regularity despite their apparent hopeless plight. This strategy riled the opposing teams, their fans and coaches, even though it was legal by the rules of basketball.

His apparent non-athletes consistently beat the favored teams in the tradition of David vanquishing Goliath.

The gist of Gladwell’s message was that people’s perceptions are often poorly based, utilizing unsound logic and erroneous assumptions. This leaves apparent over-matched opponents with wide paths for strategies that exploit formerly unrecognized weaknesses. Gladwell provides several brief examples and analyses, and these portions of the book are very informative. He devotes larger amounts of text to coverage of the recent history of violence in Ireland, the American civil rights movement, and California’s “three strikes and you’re out” bungled approach to criminal prosecution.

The reader learns novel insights into problem analysis and mitigation in contentious situations in this work of Gladwell’s. He provides additional fuel for healthy skepticism. For the reader unfamiliar with this author’s works, this reader recommends the preceding work, “Outliers” as the more valuable introduction to Malcolm Gladwell.

Wally Keltner

Darwin Day is really a Darwin Festival around here! *You have two chances to meet Dan Barker, co-founder of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Thursday and Friday; you can see a song and dance of how Dan lost his faith (oh, maybe no dance). He promises to sing, accompany himself. And you can visit the Boise Zoo free, get candy for the kidees and dress as Charles Darwin (get your picture taken with him?) Expect the unexpected, even hear biologist Janet Layne speak in favor of evolutionary theory. Join us! Details inside.*

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