

secular idaho

Humanists Of ID, ID Atheists, BUUF Sages, Huumanists, BSU SSA, West Valley 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

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HumankIND project

A Non-theist Community Service Project.

By Tenesita Kinikini

Service has always been a part of my life. The rewards are often intangible and difficult to quantify beyond saying “It feels good to help.” For whatever reason, I have always been susceptible to it, but 30 years ago when I left the “Faith of my family” (LDS), I also left the community that facilitated many of those experiences.

Over the years, I’ve taken opportunities to participate in community and church sponsored events. The people I met were often terrific examples of what humankind is capable of: Generosity, Empathy and Sacrifice. When working with these folks, casual conversation will often turn to personal inquiries: “Where are you from?” “How long have you lived in Idaho?” “Where do you go to church?”

For me, the transition from “faith” to reason has been a long process. I don’t think many of us just wake up one morning declaring “Hey world, Today, I am an atheist!” No, the arc towards reason, and how we respond to people in a way that is honest and true, that too is an evolving process. “So Dan, where do you go to church?”

In the Early Questioning Period I would mumble “I don’t go to church anymore, I use to be Mormon...blah, blah,

In the Middle Reform Period (fully detached from mysticism), I might respond, “I’m not religious. I believe we are responsible for our actions and blah, blah, blah...”

Now in the Sturdy Foundation Period (confident and sure) My answers: short and sweet “ I don’t believe in god”

The responses and reactions this have varied over the years: “That’s nice” (clearly they don’t want to provoke me. I could be dangerous) “But god believes in you” (they’re itching for a fight and are hopeful to convert an infidel) “You have to trust in him” (as if I didn’t try to fit in?) I was even told once “You shouldn’t be here.”

That’s the one that stuck with me.

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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

The humankIND project is a new approach to an old idea, that we find and express our better selves as we help others. We are what we do.

To quote Dan, his project idea is for a “small effort to correct the imagined evils about non-belief. Through service we satisfy our desire to make a difference. But the residual effect of that service is that some in the broader community might one day see us differently, and that is the moment when change begins.”

Why Get Involved ? Jeanette Ross

You like stability? Consider the tribal system of Gaelic Ireland, with roles clearly defined. Chiefs knew their responsibilities and everyone else had a role, a place, too. Chiefs enforced rules and favored those who liked this system. Such systems have their vulnerabilities, especially when they have space or goods desired by others. The Irish loved their traditions; the English loved their opportunities to increase wealth and would use any excuse or chance. Although we have a system based on a set of laws enforced at each level, we can see what happens with the inevitable mixing of needs and opportunities. Even the best and highest plans for government need daily overseeing. A dynamic society needs support, tinkering, adjustments, reforms. It takes all of us to raise a community.



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 March 24, 2014**

President's Message

DarwinFest 2014 made for a very busy February, with an event or party every day for a week. The highlight of the week, of course, was the Dan Barker/Bill Pubols "Does God Exist" debate at Boise State, which drew a crowd of @ 300. The key to growing Freethought in Idaho is to increase our exposure – faces in the crowd – letting like minded people know that they are not alone, and that there are places they can go to share their inner thoughts.

Spring is fast approaching, and that means putting the booth up at fairs, festivals, and other events. This year we hope to expand our booth outreach, as we boldly go where we haven't gone before. All events will be calendared at our meetup page (meetup.com), and general notices of events will be posted on our Facebook page. We encourage everyone to let us know about community events that might be Freethought Friendly. The more the better.

It will soon be time for HOI elections of our Board of Directors. The nominating process will begin at our March meeting and will close at our April meeting. Ballots will be available for all members and votes may be cast up to the date of the May meeting, when ballots will be counted and officers certified for the next two years. Any member wanting to become more active in Humanism and interested in any board position is encouraged to throw their hat in the ring. The 4 board positions elected by active membership are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Three additional officer positions – Charitable Co-ordinator, Program Director, and Newsletter Editor - are assigned by vote of the current Board. Inquiries regarding any of the positions mentioned should be sent directly to me at CelebrantVan@aol.com.

D G Van Curen, President, HOI

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Service is about lifting others up, giving assistance to those in need, working to build a kinder community and living in a way that ensures a sustainable world. But for meaningful change to take hold, it matters what drives the action to serve. The human-KIND project is wholly devoted to service, but it is a secular cause. Our mandate comes from the knowledge that only humanity can cure the ills of humanity.

Why is this project needed? As non-theists, humanists and doubters of the "divine supreme" we're too easily dismissed as not having anything valuable to contribute to the question of how to build a moral society. Those ideas spring from ignorance about who we are. When we look at women's rights, civil rights or the LGBT movement, I would argue that the strides that have been made are accelerated by the willingness of those who have a vested interest, to stand up and be seen. As an example, the changes in perception about the LGBT community come not as result of gays joining groups of straights calling for change. It comes because LGBT's have united to confront those who would hold them down. In the struggle for equality, they did not join us. We joined them.

We need volunteers to staff upcoming service projects. Those of you who are inclined to serve in a leadership role please contact me at dan@human-kind-project.com. And finally for those who find support with dollars an easier option, we have a fundraising event planned for Saturday, March 15th in Nampa. For more information about our projects and fundraisers, check us out on Facebook or visit the website.

www.Human-kind-project.com

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 part of Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. Their webpage has links to several other groups, <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events>

Local Objectivists meet monthly, last Wed 6pm at varying restaurants. Email Tim Scharff 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 Contact Candace Norvell, at secularmama@yahoo.com.

Church and State in the Idaho Legislature

as of Feb. 26

Paul Rolig

The good news is that the two worst bills, [HB426](#) and [HB427](#), are dead for this session. Early on, the Idaho Attorney General questioned the constitutionality of HB426, which would have explicitly allowed state-licensed professionals to discriminate based on their religion. HB 426 never even got a hearing in committee.

HB427 got a hearing, at which 500 people showed up. Two were in favor; I was one of the multitude who testified against it. (See following article.) It explicitly allowed discrimination based on religious belief in various legal situations not having to do with licensed professionals. The House State Affairs Committee voted 11-5 to send it to the House floor, but the widespread negative attention led the leadership to put it aside, and they have said it is dead for this session. It was Idaho's version of the Arizona bill that attracted national and international attention, and which just today (Feb. 26) was vetoed by Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer.

Two other bills of interest to secularists have yet to be scheduled for hearings:

[HB458](#) is one we should cheer – it repeals Idaho's current exemption that allows religious belief to be cited as a defense against charges of neglect by parents who let their own children die or suffer permanent disability from lack of basic medical care ("faith healing").

[SB1294](#) establishes licensure of genetic counselors. Whether or not genetic counselors should be licensed by the state is a question I do not wish to debate here, but

there is one provision of the bill which secularists will question. Page 3, lines 12-14 of the bill text read, "(6) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to apply to the activities and services of any religious denomination or sect or faith-based counseling." I want to ask the bill's author and co-sponsors if this means religious counselors can make up anything they want to tell people about genetic science. Watch your news sources for when these bills get scheduled for hearings.

Two anti-gay-marriage bills will make sure Idaho same-sex couples don't get the benefit of the overturning of DOMA at the federal level. The IRS now allows same-sex married couples, no matter which state they got married in, can file joint tax returns at the federal level. We can't have that in Idaho! So the legislature has already hurriedly passed, and Governor Otter has signed, [HB375](#). It disallows the Idaho Tax Commission from accepting joint returns for same-sex married couples.

Dear Legislators,

Is it "Opposite Day" in the Idaho Legislature?

Republican leadership won't even allow "Add the Words" legislation to be printed for a hearing. They say they oppose "special rights" for gay, lesbian, and transgender citizens. By "special rights," of course, they mean "equal rights." Now Republicans have printed and introduced H426 and H427 to protect "religious freedom." By "religious freedom," of course, they mean "special rights to discriminate against and otherwise torment gays and lesbians." That's right, folks, these bills write into Idaho Code special rights and privileges for religious people to disobey laws that others must follow. I guess our Legislators think the US Constitution's 14th Amendment guarantee of "equal protection of the laws" means "unequal laws for our religion versus others."

Won't these laws effectively repeal all the civil rights laws of the last 60 years? Sincerely, Paul D. Rolig



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 facebook for events sponsored by Idaho Atheists and Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason.

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Donate through Idaho Atheist website (mailbag@idahoatheists.org), or contact us to donate via PayPal. Donations are tax deductible.

Morals and Values in the modern era

By D G Van Curen

Morals and values. Where do they come from? Must they originate from the will of a god, or can they come from human agreement regarding the concepts of right and wrong? Are they found only in divinely inspired books, well defined, easily followed, and rigidly adhered to; or are they more subjective, ever changing, and often a challenge? Are morals and values the same for all people, regardless of location, culture, education and economic level, personal needs or beliefs, and century, or should morals and values be fluid, so as to change along with the humans that rely upon them?

As children, we learn valuable moral lessons through story telling. This concept can be personally relatable. But it can also be counterproductive, especially when unchanging absolutes drenched in faith are added to the mix. Chastity and monogamy can be worthy values, but are stories of burning or stoning women to death the best way to teach our children those values? Especially when adding the "burn in hell for all eternity" at the end

Taking a day of rest maintains a healthy body, a worthy value, but do we need stories of stoning people to death for not taking the day of rest as a way to instill that value?

Consider stories used to instill moral behavior through fear and hate - such as Sodom and Gomorrah as proof that homosexuality is such a sin that God would destroy cities over it - creates intolerance toward anyone who is different and/or believes differently. Values and morals should come from weighing CURRENT human needs against CURRENT human perceptions in the CURRENT world setting, with equal rights for all as the center most point. When some are treated separately and differently than others, moral issues become more a tool of bias, than of meting equality through fairness.

Are rules regarding the proper maintenance of slaves applicable in 21st century America? Should they be? If the operating manual is obsolete, shouldn't it be rewritten or replaced? From my perspective, using fictional stories to teach morals and values is fine, so long as the morals are current, relevant, and fair; are not rigid, unchanging or absolute; do not include fear, hate and arbitrary violence; and the stories are acknowledged as fictional presentations - like Aesop's Fables.

From a moral perspective, the first purpose of any law should be the protection and security of all people, equally applied. The U.S. Constitution was created for the express purpose of protecting the minority from the will of the majority, knowing full well that the will of the majority can often be oppressive and discriminatory. Some things, for morality sake, should be weighed carefully and legislated delicately, to insure that the innocent should not be made to suffer at the hands of a misguided majority. Most importantly, human perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and needs are in a constant state of evolution.

What is today may not necessarily be tomorrow. Morals and values can not be allowed to become rigid, stagnant, and unchanging. Those morals and values must remain fluid enough to change in response to the changes in humanity that they represent, for they are a reflection of humanity here, now and today; not of humanity past or humanity future. For that reason, a book of rules written in the first century is not particularly relevant to humans living in the 21st century. The issue of morality, especially in America, has become stagnant and controversial. The updating of the human moral code is something that is long overdue.

Boise State

SECULAR STUDENT ALLIANCE

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.

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advisor Robin W Allen, assoc. Prof.
Social Work

Testimony to Idaho House State Affairs Committee in Opposition to H427 Paul D. Rolig

Mister Chairman, Members of the Committee: Good morning. My name is Paul Rolig. I live in District 15 in West Boise. I am a member of the Board of Directors of Humanists of Idaho, and I am also a Media Contact for the Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. TVCoR is an umbrella organization of half a dozen secular groups in southwest Idaho. I represent **non-religious** voters from throughout our state. We **oppose this bill** because we **oppose special rights for religious** people. We believe that religious and non-religious people should all have the same rights and responsibilities under the law.

Which laws should the religious not have to follow? One notorious former Boise religious leader claimed that a church should 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. Never mind how big a nuisance that might cause their neighbors. But atheists have to follow zoning laws. Could a religious person take out a home loan, and later refuse to pay interest, because it burdens his practice of religion? The Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 23, Verses 19-20, clearly says that one cannot lend upon interest. But atheists do not enjoy this exemption.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to go much further than simply opposing this one bill. I call on you to **repeal the complete section 73-402 of Idaho Code**. All this section does is create **special rights** – something that Idaho Republicans frequently say they are against. I should think such a bill would pass easily! All Idaho citizens have complete freedom of religion to attend any church, temple, synagogue, mosque, kingdom hall, or coven they wish – or none at all – but we should all have to live by the same laws and rules. If a law should not apply to the religious, then it also should not apply to the non-religious. Secular Humanists “attempt to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.”^{*1} This bill does the exact opposite. **Please vote NO on H427**. Thank you. *1. The Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles – see <http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/12>

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Archeology Speaks

Jeanette Ross

Information Clearing House this month contributed one more reminder of how stories shift and change to feel true to teller and listener. One particular study examines archeological digs near the Jordanian border and found evidence for settlements, including the bones of domesticated camels, going back no further than 930 bce. And the residents of this area and the area around Jerusalem were the ones described in written records, particularly in texts collected and now called the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, were not Jews but their close relatives (and supposed enemies) the Canaanites.

This and much more evidence tells us what we recognize from other research, other cultures. The manuscript called Genesis, describing the patriarch Abraham sending out his servant with ten of his choice camels, was written more than a thousand years after Abraham (using, by the way, an alphabet borrowed from Canaanite relatives). And we can't be sure of the dates because our dating system is also part of an ancient oral record, the 'begats, that estimates the lifetime of its heroes in the hundreds of years. For each. The stories themselves are vivid, fascinating, but they are lore, the record of what the Hebrew people hoped had happened. The old lore celebrates a glorious temple of David and his son Solomon, where the ground has no record that there was any kind of settlement and certainly not the records of communities or the skills needed to build a kingdom. This is pattern is seen by folklorists and anthropologists all over the world. Ancestors were giants, kings and gods! If we don't expect literal truth and let the legends of beginnings carry us where they will, much remains. My favorite comes from southeast Asia, where the Han Chinese had often run over the top of natives. One story of the founder of this race: “We are descended from the little dog that lived at the feet of the Emperor of Heaven. The Emperor fed him well, and provided a cushion, but one day our ancestor ran away and jumped down here, where the Emperor would not find him.”



SAGES SPRING EXPLORATIONS

Tom von Alten

Join the BUUF Sages this month for friendly conversation, a no-host breakfast (if you like) and a couple interesting topics. On Thursday, March 13, our guest speaker will be Lee Flinn, Director of Advocacy for AARP Idaho, with advice on how to stay out of trouble in a world full of “creative” new scams. On Thursday, March 27, Jim Lyons will tell us what it’s like to be a Google Glass Explorer, out on the leading edge of mobile technology.

We’ll be at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), 9:30 am, second and fourth Thursdays. Contact Tom von Alten at 378-1217 or tva@fortboise.org for more information, directions, or if you’d like to be added to our reminder list.

Becoming Who we Want to Be Jeanette Ross

BUUF’s Humanists are a mixed and independent lot, as you might expect. We are a quixotic blend of the social and the skeptical. Does that sound familiar? Do we have a healthy balance between the critical eye and the willing hands? Just where would we like to go, in the future, and how do we get there? One of our more emphatic members is a close follower of the Sunday Assemblies movement and would like to see a secular celebration of singing and conversation between freethinkers in our community. I’d add dancing, if it were my party. Anyway, all interested in this approach are encouraged to show up to help talk it up; there’s room in this town for all of us, Pardner.

Many more have found ways to contribute in the existing structures of open-minded organizations of our region, including BUUF. It does take some persistence and willingness to compromise to join an existing organization; those less outspoken than your author here could benefit from more deliberate outreach to newcomers, which we discussed at some length. One long-time BUUF member, longtime UU and acute (also professional) observer of human nature reminded us that institutional self-protectiveness is a given, in churches as everywhere else. She says that new groups form around stated ideals, have an exciting growing time learning how to work together, then congeal and experience newcomers as a disturbance. Change is uncomfortable, even when theoretically desired.

Next meeting is March 16, 11:15am, BUUF library, after that April 13, leaving time for Easter brunch, or whatever.

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

“Knocking on Heaven’s Door” By Katy Butler

reviewed by Wally Keltner

Katy Butler’s book will be valuable anyone facing the death of a relative or loved one, or doing their own end-of-life planning. Its subtitle, “The Path to A Better Way of Death”, defines her purpose in writing it, and she has done a thorough job of describing that path, along with the many pitfalls that may be menacing the way.

Our author could be called intrepid in her unabashed candor as she describes the prolonged death of her parents. She gives most of the narrative to the demise of her father because of the difficult ordeal it was compared to her mother. He was a retired college professor whose demise was driven by a series of strokes and made worse by dementia. The author describes in detail, bluntly, but with compassion, her father’s slow, years-long decline. His final exit is unnecessarily and perhaps needlessly prolonged by modern medical practices. His painful, extended death affects the entire family. Her mother copes as best she can, but the long trek strains her strong devotion to her husband. Her iron will and persistence may have prevailed, but her health and perhaps her spirit were strained beyond recovery. The mother’s death follows that of her husband, but in a far better manner. And the surviving family members begin the acceptance and coping process.

Katy Butler’s family was somewhat dysfunctional with many unsettled issues among the parents and their three adult children. Conflict reigned supreme in various forms and its history went back to the beginnings of the family. The higher level of education among most of the five immediate family members, and the agnosticism and Buddhism of two of the adult women provided some mitigation. However, Katy could offer only limited help to her mother because of the isolating nature of the family relationships and her siblings were of almost no help for similar reasons. With the family situation as a background, Butler describes the role of the medical community in a typical “final exit”. Her parents’ deaths provide anecdotal examples to illustrate the ordeal that can be imposed by government entities and a medical community sometimes poorly aligned with their clients’ needs. Indeed, the dying and their support group may face hospitals, emergency rooms, and intensive care units honed to a razor’s edge to prevent death at all cost, and to prolong life with no regard to the wishes of families and patients, or to quality of life issues. And this encounter occurs at a time of crisis, high stress, and concern for the patient and family.

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The typical last visit to the emergency room may have been preceded by years of encounters with medical specialists, treatment protocols including medical replacements and implants, and a “pass along” medical system driven by impersonal factors like economics, or the generic rules of a government system like Medicare. Then too, the patient and family may encounter unwelcome barriers - the religious tenets of the operators of the medical facility, or the influence of lawyers striving to protect the medical professionals, organizations and facilities.

Often missing from the treatments and recommendations of these end-of-life emergencies are the practical considerations of a more human and personal nature. Words like, “Their time has come.” might not be uttered. Instead, the emergency or ICU team attaches or inserts life-sustaining devices with little patient or family involvement. Comatose patients remain alive because no one will agree to deactivate an implanted pacemaker or defibrillator. Living wills and “do not resuscitate” orders may not be respected by the medical community. Katy Butler provides good counsel to prepare the reader to navigate the treacherous waters of modern medicine.

She describes merciful end-of-life hospice care and the more recent concept of palliative care. Butler offers a message of hope and suggestions for personal planning that might assist others in avoiding her family’s experiences. Reading “Knocking on Heaven’s Door” will be a valuable experience to most readers. That is not to say that it is pleasant reading – it definitely is not.

Katy Butler’s message is strong both in the personal parts and in her informative chapters on the medical industry that supports our declining years and demise. From her research there is ancillary material, disturbing in its own way, and yet welded to the story about her parents.

The reader will learn the history of the medical device industry, replete with sometimes tawdry sales and promotional practices, some confirmed by litigation and settlements. Sometimes, the worst attributes of our economic system and big business trump consideration and compassion for those in vulnerable situations. Butler also provides a summary of how money and political pressures have affected and warped systems of government health care with more concern for the vendors and service providers than for consumers and taxpayers. Her book is an asset for those who choose to avoid the unpleasantness, costs, and human discomfort that can occur during end of life.

What we owe to someone we should know... *Claude Levi Strauss. It took a century for us, starting with philosophers and then anthropologists dragging along the rest of us, to revise our understandings of those human societies that are less immersed in written languages than ourselves. Once we called pre- or non-literate people 'savages,' or 'primitives.'* Strauss lived with and wrote about such human groups and insisted that they have much in common with us. We share, he said, underlying structures, ways of organizing ourselves and looking at and using the world around us. He interpreted their mythologies, their family relationships, their ways of organizing work, including coordinated efforts. They are no more or less likely to have personal biases even as they value objective knowledge and curiosity. They force us to define 'rational' to mean much more than 'scientific.' And they remind us that we may value different things but we all value and protect human life and dignity. He was a careful, remarkable thinker, a quintessential French intellectual, and he was lucky to live long enough to know how world-changing he was for all of us.

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