



The Idaho Humanist

The Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education and community involvement.

January 2009

<http://HumanistsOfIdaho.org>

Idaho@humanists.net

President's Message: 2008 in Review

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the
American Humanist
Association

Happy New Year 2009! Humanists of Idaho had a number of successes, as well as some setbacks, in 2008. I ask for your continued support throughout 2009 and beyond. We should be proud of what we accomplished this past year.

We have a new web URL: humanistsofidaho.org. At the moment, our old one, idaho.humanists.net, still works, but we do not know how much longer it will continue to work. Please bookmark the new one.

Doug Van Curen got his book published: *Dissecting a Bible, A Critical Analysis of the Holy Scriptures*. Congratulations, Van!

Nancy Rolig continued editing and publishing a wonderful monthly newsletter.

We staffed the phones for Idaho Public TV's spring pledge drive.

Doug Van Curen, as ordained Humanist Celebrant, continued to perform weddings.

Van also maintains an extensive library of books and DVDs on humanism.

We continued sponsorship of "The Humanist Perspective," Council for Secular Humanism's half-hour talk show, weekly on TVTV Channel 11, Boise's community access cable channel.

Paul Rolig, Doug Van Curen, and several other members of HOI have had several letters to the editor published in the Idaho Statesman. In some, Paul and Van have identified themselves as HOI officers to promote awareness of our organization. This has attracted some new members.

Nancy and I, at least, participated in "National Night Out," in which neighbors are encouraged to have a cookout or other activity in their front yard, driveway, stairway, or whatever. We had a very enjoyable time socializing with a number of our neighbors.

Paul, Doug, Jan Rowe, and Gene Barrett raised several hundred dollars for CROPWALK, supporting anti-hunger programs locally and globally.

HOI was a \$250-level sponsor of Planned Parenthood of Idaho's annual programs.

We raised about \$500 to support a local single mother and her son through the Women and Children's Alliance holiday family sponsorship program.

We provided some organizing contact information and cheering for Lloyd Lowe and Andrew Choufrine, BSU students, who founded the Boise State Secular Student Alliance on campus at BSU. BSSSA is affiliated with the Secular Student Alliance. They are sponsoring a speaker on Evolution on Darwin Day, Feb. 12, 2009. See elsewhere for more details.

We had our annual Darwin's Birthday Party potluck in February, and had a successful Winter Solstice potluck party in December.

(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued from Page 1) Paul Verhage and Rachel Balcerzau got married (good!) and then moved to Kansas (bad for us!). Paul is pursuing a PhD in curriculum development while Rachel works on a law degree. We miss Paul and Rachel, but cheer for their future endeavors!

Wally Keltner led a very productive effort to plan a Vision and Mission Statement for HOI, instituted organized, advance planning for meeting programs, and contributed several newsletter items. Sadly, Wally subsequently dropped out of HOI. We wish him well in his future endeavors, and hope to welcome him back one day.

There continue to be lively discussions of humanist topics at the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 11:00 a.m. on the second Sunday of each month.

John Harms, 87, and Dale Hall, 83, died in 2008. They had been leaders of HOI years ago.

Many thanks to all of you who supported our efforts in 2008! We hope you will see fit to continue this support in 2009. *Better still, we would love to see your faces at our parties, meetings, and other activities!*

Humanists of Idaho Monthly Meetings

From 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM we are now the Humanist Supper Club. We invite everyone to arrive whenever they can for dinner and join the group for informal discussion and socializing. At 7:30 we will start our program.

4th Monday of the month
The Flicks in Boise
646 Fulton, at 6th and Myrtle
6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club
7:30 PM Program

January Meeting, Monday, January 26th

Melanie Curtis of Second Chance Building Supply Center,

The entire construction process -- from the raising of a new structure to the tearing down of an old building to make way for a new one -- can generate a lot of waste. Approximately 33 percent of the waste that goes into the landfill is construction waste. -- Much of this waste still has a useful life. We have received tiles, lighting, hardwood flooring, cabinets, appliances, hardware, antique doors, windows, etc. These were all items that would have ended up at the landfill; now these products are readily available for low-cost home improvements. If someone has leftover building materials they don't know what to do with -- we have the answer.

The center accepts donations of reusable building materials from individuals and businesses alike. The center takes new and used materials left over from remodeling projects, demolished buildings and overstocked stores and sells them at no more than 50 percent of the retail price.

**Second Chance
Building Materials**
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Moments & Milestones

*Weddings and other family celebrations
 Custom designed to suit the needs &
 preferences of the participants located in
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 Services performed by D. G. Van Curen
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www.angelfire.com/id/vancuren/weddings.html

Darwin Day Celebration
Thursday, February 12 at 7 PM at BSU
Speaker James G. Coors, PhD

Presented by Boise State Secular Student Alliance

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth Professor Emeritus Department of Agronomy, James G. Coors from the University of Wisconsin, Madison will be speaking to us on Feb 12, 2009 at 7:00pm. The exact place on campus has not been decided, so contact Lloyd Low at loweb1@gmail.com for more up to date information.

The talk will be about natural selection (with lessons learned from artificial selection) and how Darwin's concepts of natural selection continue to be misconstrued by creationists and those of like mind.

Jim Coors received his Doctorate in Plant Breeding and Biometry at Cornell University. He's developed and released novel corn germplasm as part of research program that involves studies of long-term selection and the domestication of corn. Jim has served in a number of professional organizations including the Board of Directors for the Crop Science Society of America (President in 2005) and the American Society of Agronomy. He is a lifetime member and serves on Board of Directors of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.



Jim greatly enjoys talking about selection, both natural and artificial, and its role in evolutionary biology. Selection is, perhaps, the least understood and most abused topic by creationists, and Jim speaks to the effectiveness of selection to counter the nonsensical and anti-evolutionary concepts put forth by the Discovery Institute and others.

BUUF Discussion Group –Sunday, February 14th

Second Sunday of the Month at **11:00 AM**

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City
Library in the south wing

Everyone is welcome whether you consider yourself a UU or not.

Save the Planet, Get your Newsletter Electronically!

Receive your HOI newsletter by email. I already make a .pdf file of the newsletter each month. Email me, Nancy Rolig at nrolig@spro.net and I will add you to my recipient list. I will notify you of your membership expiring by email. I will continue to mail the newsletter to everyone I don't hear from.

Dissecting a Bible

A Critical Analysis of the Holy Scriptures
 By D G Van Curen, Celebrant HSCCC

To purchase a copy directly from the Author:
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 Boise, ID 83709

**The Humanist Perspective on
 Channel 11**

Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

“The Humanist Perspective” now airs each Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and then repeats at 8:00-8:30 Wednesday morning on Boise's local cable access television station, TVTV Channel 11 on CableOne. The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) produces a weekly half-hour television program exploring issues of interest from a humanist point of view.

CHARLES ROBERT DARWIN

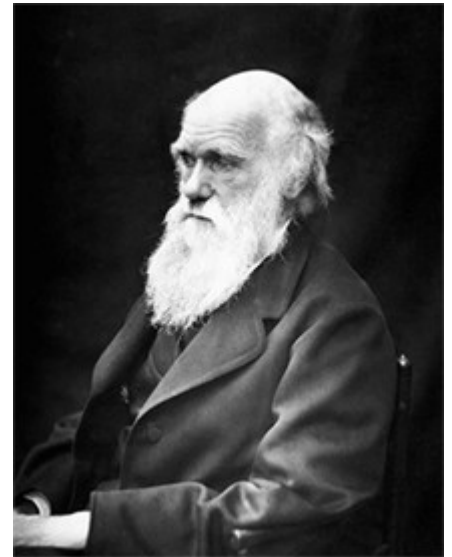
February 12, 1809 to April 19, 1882

A Global Celebration

Darwin Day is an international celebration of science and humanity held on or around February 12, the day that Charles Darwin was born on in 1809. Specifically, it celebrates the discoveries and life of Charles Darwin -- the man who first described biological evolution via natural selection with scientific rigor. More generally, Darwin Day expresses gratitude for the enormous benefits that scientific knowledge, acquired through human curiosity and ingenuity, has contributed to the advancement of humanity.

The Darwin Day Celebration website provides resources and publicity for individuals and institutions across the world to celebrate science and humanity every year, on, or near, February 12, Darwin's birthday. In addition to information about the life and legacy of Charles Darwin, this website provides practical examples, advice and templates for organizing and publicizing Darwin Day events. It also provides a directory of events where you can find celebrations taking place near you or register your own event for others to find.

Recognizing science as an international language accessible to all individuals and societies, the Darwin Day Celebration provides a new global holiday that transcends separate nationalities and cultures. Darwin Day can be celebrated in many different ways: civic ceremonies with official proclamations, educational symposia, birthday parties, art shows, book discussions, lobby days, games, protests, and dinner parties. Organizers may include: academic societies, science organizations, freethought groups, religious congregations, libraries, museums, galleries, teachers and students, families and friends. In Darwin Day, we are able to recognize the diversity among us, while celebrating our common humanity and the universal understanding we share.



Mission Statement

The dual mission of Darwin Day Celebration is to *promote public education about science* and in addition to *encourage the celebration of Science and Humanity* throughout the global community including the general public, private and public institutions, science professionals, science educators at all levels, libraries, museums, the print and electronic media, and science enthusiasts everywhere. *Science is our most reliable knowledge system.* It has been, and continues to be, acquired solely through the application of human curiosity and ingenuity and, most importantly, it has provided enormous benefit to the health, prosperity and intellectual satisfaction for our human existence. These are worthy achievements for all people to celebrate!

To accomplish this mission Darwin Day Celebration will maintain an attractive website that provides potential participants with extensive educational material, together with examples and appropriate suggestions, on ways to develop meaningful celebrations. All participants are invited and encouraged to register their events on this website by going to www.darwinday.org in order to both advertise their celebrations and to develop a sense of common purpose among all participants.

To support this mission, Darwin Day Celebration will maintain an ongoing, continually expanding, international outreach effort, using all means at our disposal such as, lists of names and email addresses in the categories named above, in order to encourage participation. Press releases, email announcements and even snail mail invitations will be employed to promote this worthy cause. The countdown to 2009 -- Darwin's 200th birthday, is underway. We hope you will join this effort and experience the satisfaction of participating with others to establish a positive celebration that reaches out to our entire Global Community! We believe it's an idea whose time has come!!!

Parenting Beyond Belief: Congratulations, Dr. Ann

COLUMN By DALE MCGOWAN, Ph.D. For HumanistNetworkNews.org Jan. 7, 2009

(HNN's *Parenting Beyond Belief* column provides a forum for humanist parents and parenting experts to share their wisdom, advice and knowledge of parenting and family issues. Edited, and sometimes written, by Dale McGowan, the monthly column features guest writers who provide information and support about issues affecting freethought parents and children in the 21st century.)

There was a lot to celebrate last month, of course. You may have heard that we elected the first black president. But there was another first that night, one that has gone almost totally unremarked. The next president of the United States — a man who has been praised not just for his intelligence, but for his ethics, empathy, and broadmindedness — was by his own account raised in an entirely nonreligious home.

"For all her professed secularism," Barack Obama wrote in *The Audacity of Hope*, "my mother was in many ways the most spiritually awakened person that I've ever known." And even as she expressed her deeply-felt outrage over those aspects of organized religion that "dressed up closed-mindedness in the garb of piety (and) cruelty and oppression in the garb of righteousness," she urged her children to see the good as well as the bad.

Ann Dunham recognized the importance of religious literacy and saw to it that her children were exposed to a broad spectrum of religious ideas. "In her mind," Obama wrote, "a working knowledge of the world's great religions was a necessary part of any well-rounded education. In our household the Bible, the Koran, and the Bhagavad-Gita sat on the shelf alongside books of Greek and Norse and African mythology. On Easter or Christmas Day my mother might drag me to church, just as she dragged me to the Buddhist temple, the Chinese New Year celebration, the Shinto shrine, and ancient Hawaiian burial sites. But I was made to understand that such religious samplings required no sustained commitment on my part...Religion was an expression of human culture, she would explain, not its wellspring, just one of the many ways — and not necessarily the best way — that man attempted to control the unknowable and understand the deeper truths about our lives."

In this and several other respects, Dunham was a nonreligious parent raising a child forty years ago according to the exact philosophy of *Parenting Beyond Belief* — educating for tolerance and empathy, lifting up those religious ideas that are life-affirming while challenging and rejecting those that are life-destroying, and seeking the human foundations of joy, knowledge, and wonder of which religion is only a single expression — and, as our next president put it, "not necessarily the best" expression.

Obama went on to identify as a Christian. Whether this is a heartfelt position or a political necessity is less relevant than the kind of faith he has embraced — reasonable, tolerant, skeptical and non-dogmatic. He sees faith as something deeply personal, possibly because he had the freedom to choose and shape it himself.

That's the freedom I want my children to have. It's hard to picture this man forcing his religious opinions on others or using Scripture to derail science or justify war. And when he lists the various worldviews that share our national life, there is a new entry: "Whatever we once were," he said in 2006, "we are no longer a Christian nation—at least not just. We are also a Jewish nation, and a Muslim nation, a Hindu nation, and a Buddhist nation, and a nation of nonbelievers." I never thought I'd live to see an American president who so clearly understands the basic principles of religious freedom and pluralism and includes me in it.

Is it a coincidence that a child raised with the freedom and encouragement to think for himself, raised with a broad exposure to a number of perspectives, chose such a moderate and thoughtful religious identity? I don't think so. And if my kids choose a religious identity, I'm confident they'll do the same. And if our children turn out anything like Barack Obama, my wife and I will consider our contribution to the world pretty damn impressive, regardless of the labels they choose to wear.

Neither do I think it's a coincidence that the man who has inspired such trust, hope, and (yes) faith is the product of a home free of religious dogma. This is what comes of an intelligent and broadminded upbringing. It's not incidental—it is one of the key ingredients that have *made* him what he is.

So I'll end this morning by thanking Ann Dunham, from all the nonreligious parents following in her footsteps. We now have a resounding answer for those who would question whether we can raise ethical, caring kids without religion: *Yes We Can.*

Dale McGowan, Ph.D., holds degrees in the arts and sciences from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and the University of Minnesota. He is the editor of the 2007 book Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion.

Can a Humanist Believe in God?

COLUMN BY C. MARTIN CENTNER HumanistNetworkNews.org Jan. 7, 2009

Editor's Note: This week HNN features what may be a controversial essay to some. I think that the writer casts fresh eyes on humanism, and presents yet another lens in which to view this philosophy. Readers, I'll be curious to hear what you think.

Many people seem to confuse humanism with atheism, and seem to think that no humanist could believe in God. We have, however, seen many who believe in God act in ways that are sterling examples of humanism. Prior to the Civil War, evangelicals joined with freethinkers to oppose slavery in the United States.

In the 20th century, humanists, secularists, Jews and Christians, joined forces to support civil rights for all Americans. We now join with more liberal members of churches to reinforce the crumbling wall separating Church from State, and to enshrine in law full equality for our gay and lesbian citizens.

Lincoln was a perfect example of a humanist with faith. He repeatedly referred to God, but acted in a way he thought right based upon human need. He hoped his actions were consistent with God's will, but he never assumed they were, and instead took a path that, to him, was consistent with the ideals of his nation and its founding principles.

At our own Ethical Society, we've had speakers who are quite devout, but come with a message of humanism. Chaplain Kristi Pappas spoke last year about our ethical obligation to the veterans who return with invisible injuries. A Methodist, she had dedicated her life to the welfare of others.

Carol Bullard Bates, founder of Bethany, was called by her faith and her interpretation of Jesus' words, to help the homeless and recovering addicts in Washington D.C. These two deeply religious people, and many others like them, commit themselves to helping those in need, bringing hope and care to their fellows. What better definition of humanism is there?

If humanists can believe in God, one might ask, then what is the difference between them and those of faith? The answer was given years ago, in the *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In one section, Huck is attempting to figure out what is right and what is wrong. His limited experience, Southern society, laws, and the church are his guideposts to correct action.

But when faced with turning in his friend, the runaway slave, Jim, he finds their guidance repulsive. After ruminating, he decides not to turn in his friend, even after acknowledging that he will probably go to "hell" for his decision. Huck let his innate sense of right and wrong guide him to a humane, morally correct decision to "steal Jim out of slavery."

The fable Twain created helps us understand what a humanist is: A humanist is one who can say "no" to social standards and even to divine guidance when they see them as incompatible with justice and humanity. They rely upon reality to determine whether their actions are good or bad, and while possibly inspired by the metaphysical, seek the correct path by observing how their actions affect their fellow beings.

To argue that humanists cannot believe in God is to posit a creed, one as narrow as those found in a thousand sacred books. We should only look upon actions to see whether someone is committed to humanity. As the saying goes, "Deed, Not Creed."

Humanists are everywhere there is charity and empathy. We humanists should not question the purity of fellow humanists by whether or not they believe in a transcendental world. When their fellow human beings call for assistance, we can see humanists throughout the religious spectrum: they are the ones who get off their knees and roll up their sleeves.

C. Martin Centner lives in Vienna, Va., and is a member of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society.

HOI Membership

We have 40 full memberships and 3 newsletter subscribers.

To those of you who have received this newsletter complimentary, I hope you will decide to join our group. Please fill out the form below and send in the payment for the level of involvement you wish to the address below.

Nancy Rolig, Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Administrator

<p style="text-align: center;">Humanists of Idaho Board</p> <p>President: Paul Rolig377-0535 or roligpd@spro.net Vice President: Doug Van Curen:.....376-5475 or CelebrantVan@aol.com Secretary: Nancy Rolig..... 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net Treasurer: Jan Rowe376-5475 or janiejolee1@aol.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Auxiliary Positions</p> <p>Webmaster/Yahoo Group Administrator:..... Van Van Curen 376-5475 or CelebrantVan@aol.com Newsletter Editor/membership Administrator:.....Nancy Rolig 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net 9877 W. Ripley St. Boise 83704 Charitable Giving Coordinator:OPEN Program Manager:.....OPEN Permanent Building Fund:Paul Rolig 9877 W. Ripley St., Boise 83704</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization Information</p> <p>Your support of this local chapter with your membership, donations and ideas is greatly appreciated.</p> <p>Mailing Address: Humanists of Idaho P.O. Box 44913 Boise, ID 83711-0913</p> <p>Website: http://HumanistsOfIdaho.org Yahoo Group: idaho-humanists@yahoogroups.com Email Address: Idaho@humanists.net</p>
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Humanists of Idaho Membership and Donation Form

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- \$25 **Individual** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$45 **Couple** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$15 Newsletter subscription only
- \$___ donation to help promote public awareness of Humanism
- \$___ Humanists of Idaho Permanent Building Fund Donation

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P.O. Box 44913
Boise, ID 83711-0913



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Monday, January 26th - HOI Meeting

6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club, 7:30 PM Planning Meeting

Thursday, February 12 at 7 PM at BSU

Darwin Day Celebration

Presented by Boise State Secular Student Alliance

BUUF Senior Sages

2nd and 4th Thursdays of the Month, 9:30 AM at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way)

Sunday, December 13th, 11:00 AM – BUUF Humanist Group

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City,