



# 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.

September 2007

<http://Idaho.humanists.net>

[Idaho@humanists.net](mailto:Idaho@humanists.net)

*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

## ***President's Message:***

### **Responding to Rep. Sali**

Idaho's First District Congressman, Bill Sali, is in the news. In an interview with American Family News Network, Sali said: "We have not only a Hindu prayer being offered in the Senate, we have a Muslim member of the House of Representatives now, Keith Ellison from Minnesota. Those are changes – and they are not what was envisioned by the Founding Fathers." Sali says America was built on Christian principles that were derived from scripture. He also says the only way the United States has been allowed to exist in a world that is so hostile to Christian principles is through "the protective hand of God."

I've dashed off a letter to the editor quoting our Constitution's prohibition of any religious Test for holding office in this country. Apparently Sali overlooked Article 6. I encourage all freethinkers to speak out for freedom of religion.

### **National Night Out – Tuesday, August 7, 2007**

Nancy and I had a very pleasant evening this past August 7. We gathered for "National Night Out," and munched on hot dogs and salads with our neighbors. In our case, about 30 people showed up, and we were able to get to know one another better and share some neighborhood concerns. Hope many of the rest of you did also.

### **Hyde Park Street Fair – Friday-Sunday, September 14-16<sup>th</sup>**

Humanists of Idaho have been invited to share the booth with Idaho Atheists at this year's Hyde Park Street Fair in Boise's North End Friday, September 14 – Sunday, September 16.

I hope a number of HOI members will be able to volunteer to help staff the booth. Please contact Lori Howard of Idaho Atheists directly. Her email address is: [lori @ roscoeandlori.net](mailto:lori@roscoeandlori.net).

At least two people should be in the tent during the following times:

**Friday, September 14:** 5 - 10 p.m.

**Saturday, September 15:** 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

**Sunday, September 16:** 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Help tearing down the tent.

This is a fun event and we have never had any bad incidents. Most people just want to know who we are. A lot of people don't even know that we exist - can you believe that! Thanks for your help, - Lori

## Humanists of Idaho Monthly Meetings

We have instituted a new format for our 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 at the Flicks, try some of their delicious food for dinner and join the group upstairs for informal discussion and socializing. At 7:30 we will start our program.

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

### HOI Meeting - **Monday, August 27<sup>th</sup>**

**6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club**

**7:30 PM Discussion of "Letter to a Christian Nation" by Sam Harris**

In response to *The End of Faith*, Sam Harris received thousands of letters from Christians excoriating him for not believing in God. *Letter to A Christian Nation* is his reply. Using rational argument, Harris offers a measured refutation of the beliefs that form the core of fundamentalist Christianity. In the course of his argument, he addresses current topics ranging from intelligent design and stem-cell research to the connections between religion and violence. In *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Sam Harris boldly challenges the influence that faith has on public life in the United States.

"Thousands of people have written to tell me that I am wrong not to believe in God. The most hostile of these communications have come from Christians. This is ironic, as Christians generally imagine that no faith imparts the virtues of love and forgiveness more effectively than their own. The truth is that many who claim to be transformed by Christ's love are deeply, even murderously, intolerant of criticism. While we may want to ascribe this to human nature, it is clear that such hatred draws considerable support from the Bible. How do I know this? The most disturbed of my correspondents always cite chapter and verse." So begins the book.

Here are a few quotes from the book's website: [www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/harris](http://www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/harris).

- More than 50% of Americans have a "negative" or "highly negative" view of people who don't believe in God. 70% think it important for presidential candidates to be "strongly religious."
- "A person who believes that Elvis is still alive is very unlikely to get promoted to a position of great power and responsibility in our society. Neither will a person who believes that the holocaust was a hoax. But people who believe equally irrational things about God and the bible are now running our country. This is genuinely terrifying."
- 44% of Americans think Jesus Christ will return in the next 50 years. (22% are "certain" that he will, another 22% think he "probably" will.)
- "According to the most common interpretation of biblical prophecy, Jesus will return only after things have gone horribly awry. Imagine the consequences if any significant component of the U.S. government believed that the world was about to end and that its ending would be glorious. The fact that nearly half of the American population apparently believes this should be considered a moral and intellectual emergency."
- Only 28% of Americans believe in evolution (and two-thirds of these believe evolution was "guided by God"). 53% are actually creationists.
- "Despite a full century of scientific insights attesting to the antiquity of the earth, more than half of our neighbors believe that the entire cosmos was created six thousand years ago. This is, incidentally, about a thousand years after the Sumerians invented glue."
- 87% of Americans say they "never doubt the existence of God."
- "Had the residents of New Orleans been content to rely on the beneficence of the Lord, they wouldn't have known that a killer hurricane was bearing down upon them until they felt the first gusts of wind on their faces, but a poll conducted by The Washington Post found that 80% of Katrina survivors claim that the event has only strengthened their faith in God."
- 28% of Americans believe that every word of the Bible is literally true. 49% believe that it is the "inspired word" of God.

## HOI Meeting - **Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup>**

### Parenting Beyond Belief: Chapter One

*Parenting Beyond Belief* is a book for loving and thoughtful parents who wish to raise their children without religion. It includes essays by Richard Dawkins, Julia Sweeney, Penn Jillette, Mark Twain, Dr. Jean Mercer, Dr. Donald B. Ardell, Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, and over twenty-five other doctors, educators, psychologists, and secular parents. This book will be used for discussions at both HOI and the BUUF discussion groups in the fall. Paul Rolig has one copy left of the book that may be purchased for \$13.00. He will have it at the HOI meeting or you can contact him at [roligpd@spro.net](mailto:roligpd@spro.net) or call 377-0535. You may find out more at: <http://www.parentingbeyondbelief.com>.

Chapter One: Personal Reflections includes the essays:

1. **Navigating Around the Dinner Table** by Julia Sweeney
2. **Thinking My Way to Adulthood** by Norm R. Allen, Jr.
3. **Good and Bad Reasons for Believing** by Richard Dawkins
4. **Growing Up Godless: How I survived Amateur Secular Parenting** by Emily Rosa
5. **I'd Rather Play Outside** by Anne Nicol Gaylor
6. **My Father's House** by Dan Barker
7. **Passing Down the Joy of Not Collecting Stamps** by Penn Jillett

## **Note New Time** BUUF Discussion Group - **Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>**

**11:00!!**

Second Sunday of the Month at **11 AM** in the Senior High classroom

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship , 6200 Garrett, Garden City

With the change of time we hope more will be able to attend the lively discussion we have in this group. Everyone is welcome whether you consider yourself a UU or not.

At our September meeting we will be organizing our topics for the upcoming year. All suggestions are welcome, before, during or after our meeting. Contact Rick Groff or Jeannette Ross.

## Voices of Humanism

**Sunday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at the 10 AM Service**

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship , 6200 Garrett, Garden City

The BUUF Humanist Group is presenting their *Voices of Humanism* program at the BUUF regular service. This program was developed by Jeannette Ross with the help of the Humanist group for the Unitarian Universalist Associations Northwest Regional Assembly in February. Jeannette will be leading the service and group members Rick Groff, Gene Barrett, Nancy Harms, Webb Van Winkle, Linden Boice, Paul and Nancy Rolig will be the "Voices" of the program.

## BUUF Senior Sages

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of the Month, 9:30 am at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way)**

This group of Humanist/Freethinkers meets over a cheery, no-host breakfast and discusses a variety of topics. They would welcome new members to join the discussion. If you would like more information or to get on the email list and/or phone tree contact Tom Von Alten a 378-1217 or [tva@fortboise.org](mailto:tva@fortboise.org).

## 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. To check on programming schedules, see the website at [www.tvpatv.org](http://www.tvpatv.org). The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) produces a weekly half-hour television program exploring issues of interest from a humanist point of view.

## Debate: Atheist vs. Humanist

By ELAINE FRIEDMAN [HumanistNetworkNews.org](http://HumanistNetworkNews.org) July 18, 2007

The distinction between atheism and humanism used to be a debate that one could only find in the pages of niche publications or on Internet discussion boards. Now the topic has captured the interest of the mainstream media. "Interfaith Voices," an international radio show, broadcast a July 12 debate between atheist Christopher Hitchens and humanist Edd Doerr.

Hitchens is the author of the recently published *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Doerr is president of Americans for Religious Liberty and immediate past president of the American Humanist Association. He is also an occasional *Humanist Network News* contributor.

The program was titled *Atheism and Humanism in a Pluralist Democracy: Differing Approaches to Belief and Non-Belief in Today's World*. The show touched upon several topics that continue to be disputed within atheist and humanist circles.

Regarding semantic differences, Doerr argued that he prefers to be defined by the term "humanist," which indicates what he believes in (science, reason, compassion), rather than "atheist," which indicates what one does not believe in (a deity).

The crux of the debate was whether religion can be a force for good. While Hitchens conceded that religious groups have advanced good causes, they have not done so specifically because of their religion. He believes that accepting and promoting religion in any form will erode belief in science and reason and promote intolerance and violence. Doerr, on the other hand, believes that there are progressive religious groups who have a humanist agenda, and that one should be careful to differentiate them from the Religious Right and fundamentalists. He believes that humanists can work with these groups in pursuit of common causes.

The debate also touched upon the nature of religious belief. While both agreed that many people do not believe in all the doctrines of their religion, Hitchens decried this "cafeteria approach" to religion, calling it a form of hypocrisy. Doerr believes that this approach to religion is simply a necessity in the modern world, particularly because many people turn to religions for primarily ritualistic and community reasons rather than for indoctrination in a set of beliefs. To listen to the entire program, visit the *Interfaith Voices website*.

*Elaine Friedman is the editor of Humanist Network News, the weekly e-zine of the Institute for Humanist Studies.*

### *HNN Readers Reaction to the Debate*

#### **There's No Real Debate Between Humanism And Atheism**

As it happens so often in a debate, one participant responds to an assertion that the other has not raised.

For example, "Doerr, on the other hand, believes that there are progressive religious groups who have a humanist agenda, and that one should be careful to differentiate them from the Religious Right and fundamentalists. He believes that humanists can work with these groups in pursuit of common causes."

But Hitchens only asserted, according to the summary, "that religious groups have advanced good causes, they have not done so specifically because of their religion. He believes that accepting and promoting religion in any form will erode belief in science and reason and promote intolerance and violence."

Of course, Doerr is not refuting anything Hitchens said. Belief in the supernatural is itself an act of erosion of reason and science, and unless a believer thinks their belief in the supernatural is irrelevant, which would be strange, then they think it IS relevant, to the detriment of their ability to assess the real world.

Both parties are making valid points, in other words. The supernatural brings nothing to the table and can cause harm, according to Hitchens, and we must work together with all persons of good will according to Doerr.

Here's where Hitchens prevails, however, in this debate; he is willing to tell it like it is, while Doerr prefers to ignore the obvious. The telltale sign is the response to an assertion never made

-- *Gerry Dantone, Long Island, N.Y.*

#### **I'm An Atheist and a Humanist**

Well, Edd Doerr, I'm both an atheist and a humanist. As an atheist, I consider myself an independent thinker, and as a humanist, I believe in science, reason and critical thinking.

--*Carol Mariane Harrison, Ontario, Canada*

## Try To Keep It Simple

A one-sentence answer will inevitably be far too simple. However, let's try to minimize the message.

Humanism is about values - ethics. What should be right and wrong?

Atheism is about existence or non-existence. What is or is not.

You can talk about either one of these with or without talking about the other.

*Francis Mortyn, San Diego Calif.*

## Good to See That Humanists Aren't Anti-Religion

I thought humanists were totally against religion. It was nice to discover that that is not the case. Religion is not an enemy that needs to be attacked; however, it does need to be analyzed and speculated about. *-Dora, N.Y*

## A Humanistic Christian

I am a Christian who knows God exists (from personal experience). But I am not one of those who condemn humanism. But rather, paradoxically, my spiritual beliefs justify humanist ideology. God gives us free choice and an intelligent mind. Therefore we don't need religious freaks imposing their point of view on society as a whole. I could go on and on.

Another thing interesting is that those Christians who oppose humanism are usually the ones who worship Jesus as God. The Bible does not say that Jesus is God! The Bible says "Do not judge for ye will be judged." Yet somehow it is the Christians who are the most judgmental within our society. And who are the most tolerant of other religions? Not the Christians, but the secular humanists!

However, I noticed that you have a rather anti-religious flavor. Can you not see that in terms of humanism, belief in God is irrelevant? Does it really matter if I justify my humanistic beliefs by believing in a higher power in the universe?

*--Martin Cone, Christchurch, New Zealand*

## Van is Writing a Book and You can Help!

For those who don't already know, Van (D. Van Curen) is in the process of writing a book tentatively titled: *Dissecting a Bible: A Critical Comparative Analysis*. Major components of the book will include identifying conflicts between scriptures, various conflicts with sound science, comparison of the scriptural history to non religious historical source materials, and, of course, high lighting scriptural accounts that are clear violations of ethics and morals. One chapter is even devoted to the Biblical view of women. The main purpose is to ask all the questions that people seem so reluctant to ask. He would appreciate input from anyone in this effort. Personal stories of unanswered religious questions, especially those that eventually led people away from religious belief, would be appreciated. Any case of knowledge versus religion creates a conflict is of interest.

What prompted him to write this book was the non stop claims of the religious right that the Bible is a historically accurate work, how all gospels are in such agreement that they had to be inspired by god, and how Human morality comes from God and his Bible. He hopes to identify as many of those key questions as possible - the ones that every Christian should be asking every Sunday in Church - and perhaps get people thinking. So, if you have ideas, suggestions, knowledge of scriptural conflicts, etc, pass them along - The more the better.

One example: God is supposedly all seeing and all knowing. Nothing gets past him. Yet in Genesis 3, god couldn't find the only two humans he had created, in the very garden he also created. And when he did find them, he had to ask them what they had done (ate the apple), because he had no clue. If he couldn't keep track of two people in one garden, how could he possibly keep track of 6 billion people scattered across the face of the earth? You can contact Van at [saw2thking@aol.com](mailto:saw2thking@aol.com).

## Moments & Milestones

*Weddings and other family celebration Custom designed to suit the needs & preferences of the participants*

*located in Boise, but serving most of Idaho*

*Services performed by D. G. Van Curen*

*A Celebrant, Ordained through the Humanist Celebrant Certification Committee*

[www.angelfire.com/id/vancuren/weddings.html](http://www.angelfire.com/id/vancuren/weddings.html)

## Secular Coalition Update from Lori Lipman Brown

In the last month before the August recess, a number of our church/state issues were sidelined in favor of action on budget and other Congressional priorities. The Secular Coalition for America prepared an analysis of the *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* Supreme Court opinion. We concluded that this decision clearly indicates that there is a need for Congress to now address abuses of faith-based initiatives. While we were unable to grab the attention of our targeted members on this issue prior to the break, we are confident that the month of August will allow key staffers to turn their attention to this matter. The allied organizations we work with are using the Secular Coalition for America's *Hein* analysis and the quotes we cited as they prepare a sign-on letter regarding faith-based initiatives.

In anticipation that our lobbying efforts to cut funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs might not prevail in the House, we have also been lobbying key senators on the conference committee. Since the Senate cut the funding, and the House increased the funding for these programs, the final appropriation will be determined in the conference committee. Our grassroots efforts on this aspect of the appropriations bill were highly effective, with numerous e-alert recipients responding. This should also help produce a positive conference committee result.

Our opposition to the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which privileges religion over nonreligious land owners is still a slow and uphill battle. But as more parts of the country are affected by lawsuits arising from this statute, we are targeting members in the areas affected.

Our attention also turned to the military this past month. We are working closely with the investigation arm of the House Oversight Committee regarding insults against atheist military hero Pat Tillman's family. While this information is not yet public, that office indicates to us that they have more information and additional allegations of inappropriate comments which they are prepared to investigate. Recent information regarding the improper use of the pentagon to support the "Christian Embassy" evangelical group, and improper behavior toward an active duty atheist soldier in Iraq is also on our plate as we try to weave all of this together. Last year's successful battle to kill a House-passed amendment which would have allowed military chaplains to proselytize unwilling soldiers was just the tip of the iceberg. It is clear that more needs to be done about the hostile atmosphere towards non-Christians and especially towards nontheists in the U.S. military.

During July, I again had the opportunity to spend a weekend with twenty U.S. Senators and their families. This kind of access is unheard of in the nonprofit advocacy world, especially amongst organizations as relatively small as ours. I owe a huge thanks to our advisory board chair, Woody Kaplan, for making it possible for me to do such extensive face-to-face lobbying with the Senators.

We are continuing to increase our visibility. On July 26th, the Secular Coalition for America got a letter to the editor published in *The New York Times* (page 18A). And last weekend I had a wonderful visit with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore, an exceptionally nontheist-friendly group.

These efforts are only possible because of the generosity of our sustaining donors. YOU are making it possible for the Secular Coalition for America to change the conversation. You are ensuring that nontheists (and our allies) are recognized as involved in the Congressional actions which affect us. Because of your support, we are being heard in the media, in cities throughout the U.S., and in the halls of Congress. I thank you for making that possible.

### Sam Harris Joins SCA

Sam Harris, atheist author of *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation* recently joined the advisory board of the [Secular Coalition for America](http://www.secular.org). The Secular Coalition for America is a Congressional lobbying organization representing the interests of nontheistic Americans. Harris joins other noted atheists and humanists on the advisory board, which includes Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Julia Sweeney. "We are pleased to welcome Sam Harris to our board of advisors. We now have an extremely diverse representation reflecting the coming together of nontheistic Americans across a wide spectrum of political and philosophical voices," said SCA Director Lori Lipman Brown in a press release.

For a complete listing of advisory board members, see [http://www.secular.org/adv\\_board](http://www.secular.org/adv_board)

The Institute for Humanist Studies is a founding member of the Secular Coalition for America.

# HOI Membership

We have 39 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;"><b>Humanists of Idaho Board</b></p> <p><b>President: Paul Rolig</b> .....377-0535 or <a href="mailto:roligpd@spro.net">roligpd@spro.net</a>  <b>Vice President: Van Van Curen:</b>.....376-5475 or <a href="mailto:saw2thking@aol.com">saw2thking@aol.com</a>  <b>Secretary: Nancy Rolig</b>..... 377-0535 or <a href="mailto:nrolig@spro.net">nrolig@spro.net</a>  <b>Treasurer: Jan Rowe</b> .....376-5475 or <a href="mailto:janiejolee1@aol.com">janiejolee1@aol.com</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Auxiliary Positions</b></p> <p><b>Webmaster/Yahoo Group Administrator:</b>..... Van Van Curen  376-5475 OR <a href="mailto:saw2thking@aol.com">saw2thking@aol.com</a>  <b>Newsletter Editor/membership Administrator:</b>.....Nancy Rolig  377-0535 or <a href="mailto:nrolig@spro.net">nrolig@spro.net</a>  9877 W. Ripley St. Boise 83704  <b>Charitable Giving Coordinator:</b> .....Jan Rowe  376-5475 603 or <a href="mailto:janiejolee1@aol.com">janiejolee1@aol.com</a>  <b>Publicity Chair:</b>.....Van Van Curen: 376-5475 or <a href="mailto:saw2thking@aol.com">saw2thking@aol.com</a>  <b>Permanent Building Fund:</b> .....Paul Rolig  <a href="mailto:roligpd@spro.net">roligpd@spro.net</a> 9877 W. Ripley St., Boise 83704</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Organization Information</b></p> <p>Your support of this local chapter with your membership, donations and ideas is greatly appreciated.</p> <p><b>Mailing Address:</b>  Humanists of Idaho  P.O. Box 44913  Boise, ID 83711-0913</p> <p><b>Website:</b>  <a href="http://Idaho.humanists.net">http://Idaho.humanists.net</a>  <b>Yahoo Group: idaho-humanists@yahoo.com</b>  <b>Email Address:</b>  <b>Idaho@humanists.net</b></p>
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## Humanists of Idaho Membership and Donation Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

- \$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

Mail to:  
Humanists of Idaho  
P.O. Box 44913  
Boise, ID 83711-0913

### Fundraising Needs

HOI is collecting for two good causes. Please help if you can.

1. Sponsorship for Planned Parenthood of Idaho's banquet in November: We have \$178 pledged so far from members.
2. Sanctuary, Boise's non-sectarian homeless shelter. We have \$625 pledged so far from members.

If you would like to help please mail whatever amount you care to give to the HOI post office box or bring it to the August meeting.



Humanists of Idaho  
P.O. Box 44913  
Boise, ID 83711-0913

**Sunday, August 19<sup>th</sup> – 10:00 AM – Voices of Humanism**  
**Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City,**

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**Kopper Kitchen, 2661 Airport Way, Boise**

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6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club, 7:30 PM Program

***Note New Time***

**11:00!!** Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup> – 11:00 AM – BUUF Humanist Group  
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**Friday – Sunday, September 14 -16<sup>th</sup> - Hyde Park Street Fair**  
We need volunteers to help man a booth for HOI/Idaho Atheists