

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

DADE&BROWARD: Our next meeting, on June 16, 2002 at 2 pm is in our own new spacious private meeting room above the *Pelican Nest* 10442 SW 186 Street (Quail Roost Drive) Miami. (For directions please call Frank or Debbie: 786-512-1913 or 305-254-0108). Please come to offer your suggestions on how to make this new meeting room successfullest. FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441.

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Sunday of each even-numbered month (Feb., Apr., etc.), 1:00-3:30 at the Pinellas Park Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street.
Tampa—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month, 1:00-3:30, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa. Optional dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALF@aol.com.

faith-based terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 has been and is the loss of individual freedoms caused by McCarthy-esque policies of President Bush, Attorney General John Ashcroft and company.

Our government is currently dominated by men without appreciation and respect for the Bill of Rights. It's time for America to become "one nation under the Constitution."

We all need to heed the words of James Madison: "Strongly guarded as is the separation between religion and government in the Constitution of the United States the danger of encroachment by ecclesiastical bodies may be illustrated by precedents already furnished in their short history."
 —Larry Darby
 Montgomery, AL

Board of directors to meet

MIAMI—The Atheists of Florida 2002 Board of Directors meeting will be held here on Sunday, July 14. Any member wanting to include items on the agenda should contact Chairman Ed Golly at the Tampa Bay Chapter address indicated on the masthead on page 2.

This year we will be electing a new president since that office is limited to two terms. Our Mark Twain Scholarship Fund must elect five trustees which are drawn from the Board. The trustees serve for a three year term.

The Board will create advertising budgets for chapters and consider naming an executive director for Atheists of Florida.

Be a proud supporter of

ATHEIST ALLIANCE INT'L

All income goes to public outreach projects and helping our member societies grow in strength and numbers. We have no paid staff. This is a grassroots, coalition-building organization of volunteers. There is no hierarchy. Our members run the Atheist Alliance. Together, we make all the decisions and do all the work.

With your membership, you receive our quarterly magazine

SECULAR NATION

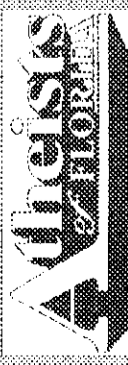
- and we help you realize your vision of a society where we are free to be religion-free by:
- Helping more local groups get started
 - Providing funds to help local groups grow
 - Providing funds for local outreach projects
- AND MORE!
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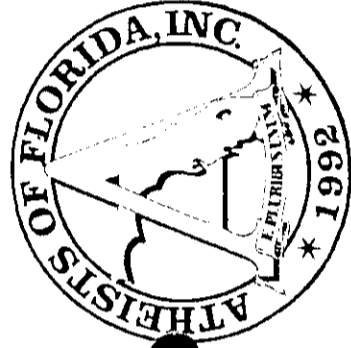


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Atheists of Florida

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 www.atheistalliance.org/florida
 Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated
 A Member Society of the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies

Atheist Alliance International Convention 2002

DALLAS—Atheist Alliance International (AAI) had its annual convention Easter Weekend in Irving, Texas. The event, hosted by Metroplex Atheists of Dallas, had 120 participants attending from a broad spectrum of member societies. Attendees came to enjoy the program and the camaraderie of fellow atheists. The topics and speakers were varied, and the enthusiasm level of attendees was high.

There were many excellent presenters. Key-note speaker, Dr. Faye Girsh of the Hemlock Society, outlined the issues of physician aid in dying and Attorney General John Ashcroft's opposition. Dan Barker and Steve Benson presented a "Toons 'n' Tunes" concert that combined Dan's music with Steve's cartoons on a wide range of topics of interest to freethinkers. Hilarious! One of the most entertaining and informative breakout sessions was Danny Barrett's humorous display of medical quackery and superstition. On the serious side, a more modern medical slant on "unreason" came from Dr. Tim Gorski, who enlightened those attending with how Americans are being systematically deceived in the health arena.

One person came from as far away as Germany on his first visit to the U. S. to represent his member society at the AAI annual board meeting, which is always held in conjunction with the convention. One important action taken at this year's meeting was the election of Marie Cas-

tle and Bobbie Kirkhart as co-presidents of AAI. This is both a step forward and a return to a previous time (the mid 90s),



Atheist Alliance Board of Directors. Notables: Second row from left, Marie Cas-tle, co president; Atheists of Florida members Jim Young, Secretary and AAI Assistant Secretary; Nan Owens, A of F President and AAI board representative; Steve Miles, holding "ATHEIST" license plate, A of F Vice President and AAI board representative; and AAI co president Bobbie Kirkhart, sixth from left. Back row, third from right, Ed Golly, Chairman and Treasurer of Atheists of Florida and AAI Secretary.

when the Atheist Alliance was headed by co-presidents who shared the work and powers equally. AAI bylaws permit either co-presidents or a sole president. When Lee Baker resigned the co president position, Marie Castle, who had served with Baker, took over the job alone. Today, with forty members in eight countries, the workload has become too great for the existing officers, and so the co presidency was revived. Kirkhart, now serving AAI along with Castle, is accustomed to the cooperative position, as she is co president of Atheists United in Los Angeles. Kirkhart hopes to be able to visit several local groups in the U.S. on invitation, and to devote much of her time to coalitions within the freethought community.

There will be a full convention report in the July-September *Secular Nation* (see below) magazine, which at the board meeting was voted an upgrade to a full-color cover.

Atheists of Florida is one of the charter member societies of the Atheist Alliance. We are also one of the largest, strongest and best-organized on the roster. At the board meeting, we were selected to host the 2003 convention. During the upcoming board of director's meeting we will form our planning committee and begin the task of determining the agenda and the location of the convention.

New office for A of F

TAMPA—This summer, A of F will be moving into an office on Manhattan Avenue in South Tampa. It will be home to our library and we will avail our books on loan to active members of A of F. We'll announce the street address when the office is complete.

What is Secular Nation?

It is the quarterly publication of the Atheist Alliance International. News, prose, poetry, book reviews and articles about the dilemmas that atheists encounter fill its pages. *Secular Nation* is available by subscription in several membership categories (see form, back page).

"Spirituality" is the modern, politically correct term for superstition.

Wide World of Atheism

Proposal would remove electioneering ban

WASHINGTON—Under the disguise of "returning free speech to churches," Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., has sponsored House Resolution 2357. Titled the "Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act," it would remove the prohibition that restricts churches from engaging in partisan politics while maintaining their tax-exempt status.

The proposal would allow churches to contribute a portion of their income to the campaigns of political candidates, using their parishioners' tax-exempt money. The only caveat is a vaguely worded limitation that political involvement cannot be a "substantial part" of the church's activities.

Although Jones introduced the bill last June, it has only recently begun to pick up steam. Thanks to a big push by the Religious Right, there are now 114 co-sponsors and it is tentatively scheduled for a hearing before the House Ways and Means Committee.

Written by attorneys at the American Center for Law and Justice, the legal think tank of Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson, the bill is intended to further insinuate religion into the political process.

Imagine the disproportionate influence religious organizations would wield on politics if this bill were to become law. Churches would become the only institutions in the country allowed to electioneer with tax-deductible donations, thereby being transformed into extensions of a candidate's campaign.

The religious right has spent more than 20 years chipping away at the wall of separation between state and church, trying in Taliban-like ways to inject religion into public schools and the operations of government. In former crusades the technique was "religion by the sword." For the religious right, it is "religion by the ballot box." The legislation under consideration by Congress would move that goal to within reach.

Business as usual

ROANOKE, VA.—In a lawsuit brought by the Rev. Jerry Falwell, a federal judge last month ruled that an 18th-century Virginia law banning the incorporation of churches unconstitutionally restricts the free exercise of religion.

U.S. District Judge Norman Moon ordered the State Corporation Commission to grant Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church a corporate charter. The ban stems from Thomas Jefferson's 1779 Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom. The General Assembly outlawed

corporate charters for churches in 1787 and included the ban in the state Constitution.

"Unlike other groups in Virginia, members of a church or religious denomination' are...denied the benefits of incorporation because of their religious status," Moon wrote in his opinion.

In addition to the incorporation ban, Virginia churches are not allowed to own more than 15 acres of property in a city or town and 250 acres in any one county. Only West Virginia has similar restrictions.

An SCC spokesman said he did not know whether the commission would appeal or grant Falwell a charter. A charter would give Falwell's church added protection from liability lawsuits, the ability to sue as an organization and the power to enter contracts. It also would allow Falwell to include his entire ministry under one corporate umbrella; currently, it is controlled by a dozen or so mini-corporations under separate charters and boards of directors.

Since opening Thomas Road 46 years ago, Falwell's ministry has grown into a 4,300-acre enterprise that includes a broadcasting network, Liberty University, a retirement village and a youth camp. The 5,200-seat church, however, hasn't expanded from its original plot of 29 acres of residential property.

Falwell, who wants to build a 6,000-seat sanctuary on 60 acres near his university, sued the state in November. Moon has yet to rule on a second lawsuit that challenges Virginia's property restriction.

Pennsylvania county appeals religious order

PHILADELPHIA—Lawyers have asked a federal judge to stay his order to remove the Ten Commandments from a courthouse wall, saying that taking the plaque down might damage the limestone on which it has hung for 82 years.

In a brief filed in March, attorney Thomas Abrahamson said Chester County would be "irreparably harmed if there is damage to the plaque or courthouse wall."

U.S. District Judge Stewart Dalzell ordered the plaque removed March 6 after ruling that its display violated the constitutional separation of church and state. The county, west of Philadelphia, has asked that the plaque be left alone while they appeal the decision. The American Civil Liberties Union said in a brief that the county could cover the plaque with a drape while the appeal is being heard. The ACLU has argued the case on behalf of the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia, a member society of the Atheist Alliance headed by Margaret Downey.

Dalzell has scheduled a hearing on the matter. In his initial decision, Dalzell ruled that the Ten Commandments are primarily a religious document and their admonition to honor no other God amounts to a government endorsement of one religion.

The county has argued that the plaque didn't amount to a government establishment of religion and was not genuinely offensive to Freethought Society members.

EVEN THE RELIGIOUS HAVE misgivings about religion. A man is quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying, "this isn't the best of times for organized religion, after all. We've got Islamic fanatics calling for the blood of infidels; Jewish scholars wrestling with new evidence that Abraham and

Misgivings about Religion —Admatha Israel

Moses never existed; and the Catholic Church telling every one to bend over and pull their pants down."

But when asked why do people believe anyway, the only logical response that was given was "because you *have* to believe!" Why? Why do you have to believe? Could it be that just because I believe, I am automatically a good person? Could it be that just because I don't believe that I'm automatically a bad person? Furthermore, just because I believe in any of these ideas, does that make the idea itself true? The real question to be pondered here is the cornerstone of all that religion entails: just because I believe; does that make it true?

After asking that question what do you say? Do you think that every thing that you believe is automatically true? Did you know that if a thing is true, it will be true regardless of whether or not it is believed, but the same can not be said of beliefs.

Upon testing this fact and verifying its claim, let me now ask you, why is it imperative that we believe, when

Admatha Israel is a member of Atheists of Florida and lives in Miami.

Mark Twain Scholarship Fund

Following are the names of additional donors to the Fund since our previous newsletter:

Therese Rockefeller	\$ 25.00
John Gorman	20.00
Nan Owens	70.00
Celia Glantz	60.00
Peter Rummel	15.00
Michael Zaccar	10.00
Angel Lopez	15.00
Daniel Roque	15.00

In Memoriam—Jerry Rosenthal

Jerry Rosenthal, beloved sister of our past Board Member Celia Glantz, has recently died. Although a resident of New York, Jerry was well known to Atheists of Florida and in particular to the Miami Chapter. She and her sister Freda were regular participants at the Miami meetings while visiting their sister, Celia. Celia's donation was made memory of Jerry who, like her sisters, was a dedicated atheist and member of our organi-

believing is such a flawed method for gathering truth? When a person, in seeking truths, gathers a bunch of extraneous religious information, it takes away from the value of the truth, just like the next statement that the 70 year-old man made.

You see, shortly after the 70-year-old man said you have to believe, he was also quoted as saying, "You have to have some moral guardrails. If you don't believe in an authority outside yourself, you've got problems."

The first statement is absolutely true. All people must have some moral guardrails for the betterment of our future. The latter portion of his statement, about not believing in an authority outside the self, is extraneous and unnecessary. The aforementioned statement is one that is common among adamant theists and it essentially assumes that man can not be moral without God, and even though we don't really perceive this being to exist, we should still believe in him. Sure he's invisible and works in mysterious ways, and has more in common with absolute nothingness than anything in reality; that doesn't matter. If you believe in him, you will be a good person.

It is by going against this belief that atheists present themselves a dual challenge: they prove that goodness in man is independent of a belief in a supernatural God, and that morality doesn't necessarily come from an imagined being who *must* be believed in to be effective. Second, it must do so in the face of criticism from those who revile atheism for no good reason at all. And many are they who revile atheism for no apparent reason:

zation. Samuel Butler's poem reflects our shaming in her loss with sisters Celia and Freda:
I fall asleep in the full and certain hope that my slumber shall not be broken; And that though I be all-forgotten, Yet shall I not be all-forgotten, But continue that life in the thoughts and deeds of those I loved.....

Star Jones said she would never vote an atheist into office. Yet it was European Christians who enslaved African-Americans and killed more than 15 million during the slave trade and forced them to learn a brand of Christianity that has resulted in Black Americans being the most poverty stricken group of individuals in our country. Abraham Lincoln, a president that had no religious affiliation at all, was responsible for slaves being freed today, but blacks would much rather call him a Christian doing God's will than an atheist doing what he thought was right. This is only one example of hundreds of evils done in the name of religion as recently as the 9/11 tragedy and as far back as when the Romans enslaved the Jews.

When has atheism ever wrought such turmoil? The old man was right: religion must be believed in. If religion were true, it truthfulness would be so readily apparent that it wouldn't need to be believed.

Atheism, based on principles of science which have always served to improve on our world, sits silently and takes the blame. While those that panhandle for god get physical donations from non-god-fearing people to help a sick child, Jesus gets all the credit, atheism gets a bad name, and science cures a child's illness. The child is then taught not to put as much stock in education and science as he would in god, so he can grow up in a seminary and chance getting his childhood taken by some pedophile priest. After all, we would much rather leave our children with pedophile priests who believe in god, than truly good people who don't.

(Continued from page 1)

tions Committee to keep oversight of the need for more Atheism in Spanish.

Not everyone in our chapter speaks English. Most Hispanic members are bilingual but many are not, nor are their relatives. Of these, most do not feel comfortable or capable of participating in debates, writing letters to the editor or simply reading in the English language. Yet they are fellow atheists and we must accommodate them.

The current Publications Committee, as is, is not schooled to fulfill the need to review Spanish publications.

NEWSNOTES

Up till now, NewsNotes has dedicated one page per issue to make Hispanic atheists feel welcomed. We have had several members discussing current affairs and we have had essays by classic authors (dead over 70 years—and out of the realm of copyright laws). In order to continue on this beaten path and report up-to-date material, we need to inject good Spanish atheist texts into the Hispanic community at large, and our group must support this. These texts will first appear in NewsNotes, so they can be judged by the membership, more than half Hispanic. A committee can then approve them to go on the website and too in pamphlet or stapled booklet form as an anthology, ready for distribution at fairs, libraries and meetings. Therefore will it be necessary that bi-linguals staff the Publications Committee, or that a separate Spanish Publications Committee is created. Language barriers make it much harder to convey trust.

As our distinguished senior translator Sergio Docal once remarked to me in a letter, living in Miami, you come to realize that Spanish speaking atheists with a limited amount of English, cling to paper literature more than their English speaking counterparts. We can criticize them for being too shy or too "monastic", but we must confront the fact that they are fellow atheists who need us, that they are part of the atheist voting block and we need them, and that their being atheists is counted during the census, or should be. The 2000 census noted 100 percent increase of Hispanics over the last decade.

GOD-TAINTED

As an educational entity we owe it to those who allow us to exist and those who benefit from our existence that we publish educational material, preferably in more than one language (at an ultra-low price). What is being used in the schools in Florida is Christ-tainted and we must educate the multi-lingual public about this violation. I don't see our publication committee, as is, address that problem. Many Hispanic parents have no clue that they can stand up and complain against faith-based discrimination. Their offspring may speak English, but not the parents. Our statements must spread the news in Spanish, French and Portuguese that the 10 C's are not welcome material in the public schools. Atheist literature must compare the fictions of natural order with the facts of natural selection, so people can choose between the wonderful world of science and the magic kingdom of religion.

Classic texts are another standard. These can be used in classrooms and we can make them available wholesale. The Miami chapter of ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. is the only sub-group in the nation with a team ready, "witty" and able to perform translations fast and furious and free. As long as the source is mentioned, authors often give the permission to reproduce their articles, especially once published on the Internet. Authors are elated when you email them that you translated their work or are going to. With wit whetted words we can torpedo the senseless censorship of the Apostolic Sec.

DO SOMETHING

Members with wonderful innovative ideas regret the fact that they cannot meet with the current Publication Committee. Hispanics, who see the ATHEISTS of FLORIDA organization as the only hope to counter the gargantuan power of the Church of Rome on their continent, view the opportunity of posting Hispanic texts—whether theirs or Classics—on our website as a reason to join our activism.

These observations are based on emotional pleas gathered from dozens of sign-ins at the MIAMI BOOKFAIR INTERNATIONAL. Over a period of four years, I have witnessed how Hispanics seek affiliation with an organization that would DO something for their rights as atheists.

In Miami-Dade, the population is about fifty percent Hispanic. Many live comfortably without the use of the English language. Many are born and reared with little or no religion. They are upset that their children are forced into reciting a religious pledge to a flag, which is to them a foreign flag. Many are working class and shun an elitist attitude. Confidentiality and privacy are lost when they want to have our English publications translated by neighbors or family. They are without representation to hear their complaints. They find us at the Book Fair and are overcome with amazement that a group like ours even exists. Can't we air a few shows of the Atheist Forum in Spanish and gauge their reaction?

It would be unwise to ignore the inclusion of these freethinkers and our influence on their offspring. With the right written propaganda posted in Spanish on the Internet, we can reach the alien atheist ready to immigrate. With the right written propaganda in hard copies we can show the Hispanic atheists already here that someone cares about them. With a few Spanish videos on TV we can penetrate their households. That is why we must publish bi-lingual material in print, online and on the air. If physicians fail to learn Spanish they'll have a harder time attracting patients, says Maureen Glabman. If ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. fails to publish in Spanish, we'll have a much harder time attracting recruits, influencing voters and integrating lawmakers, says I.

NEWSNOTES

MOOSENOTES
EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOME JUAN.

By Patrick Bens, Chapter Director

IT'S NO LONGER a phenomenon just for Miami. It's no longer just for Broward or Palm Beach counties either. The need for SPANISH SPOKEN HERE is fanning out across the country, according to a recent article by Maureen Glabman, (Writersgroupink@aol.com) the expert organizer of the January 14 meeting with Lou Appignani, our fellow member and philanthropist of the LOUIS APPIGNANI FOUNDATION (FOR THE PROMOTION OF ATHEISM).

With her April 2, 2002 article "Habla Español?" in the bi-weekly Florida Medical Business Newspaper, Florida's first and only health business newspaper, Maureen cautions American physicians of the necessity to become proficient in Spanish in the face of an increasing number of Hispanic patients, not just in large cities like Miami, Chicago or L.A. but in rural communities in Colorado, Arkansas and Indiana. Doctors have started to immerse South of the Border to learn to roll their Rs. Medical schools like Vanderbilt and others from San Antonio to Chicago urge doctors to become bi-lingual.

I told you so

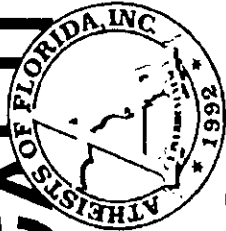
Since I took over the directorship of this chapter my efforts to post on the Internet quality atheist classics by Charles Darwin, Percy B. Shelley, Voltaire and others, translated by talented members or their congenial friends have been bucked by the Publications Committee for all these years. This has frustrated many members. To further delay these publications is like tearing open a healing wound.

In order to ride the wave into the new U.S.A., what our group needs is what our chapter can no longer live without: a Spanish literature Publication.

(Continued on page 3)

Monthly Bulletin for the members of
ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. Chapter DADE&BROWARD

Our next meeting is planned for



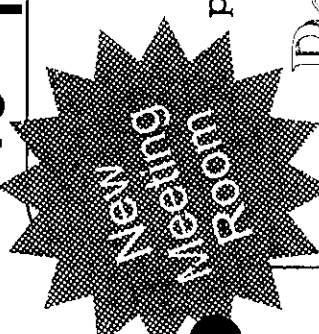
June 16, 2002

at 2pm in our own spacious new private meeting room above the

Pelican Nest

10442 SW 186 Street
(Quail Roost Drive)
Miami, Florida 33157

Please come to offer your suggestions on how to make this new meeting room successfullest.



EastEnders and Atheism

And you thought there was no atheism on TV? Since 1984, PBS has brought to Miami/Fort Lauderdale and the Palm Beaches Britain's most famous soap.

(I've watched every episode religiously, yes weekly—since 1984!) In it, the vicar's father is an atheist. One of the vicar's house guests is too: "It's all mumbo jumbo..." Ruth (daughter of another cleric) and Mark don't

marry in the church because "we don't believe in all that..." Jules tells his granddaughter: "We atheists don't have these problems..." He means superstition.

Who will be the next to keep up the good word? Watch PBS this Sunday!

Science example?