

## Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

**DADE&BROWARD:** Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 alternating between Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale, or Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables. Meeting notifications and activities available in *NEWSNOTES*, a monthly publication mailed to all active Dade&Broward chapter members.  
 FMI: Patrick Bens, 305-940-0442 or 954-929-0441.  
 e-mail: atheist1@bellsouth.net

**PALM BEACH:** Meetings are held the third Sunday of each month at 2:30pm in Jupiter. Members notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schisler 561/627-6340 or 561/624-9359.

*Indiana case latest to support state/church separation in religious symbol disputes*

## Federal Court of Appeals strikes down government display of Ten Commandments

THE U.S. 7TH CIRCUIT COURT of Appeals ruled in December last year that an Elkhardt, Ind., display of a Ten Commandments monument in front of a local government building is unconstitutional.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which filed a brief with the appellate court and monitors these controversies nationally, applauded the decision.

"The Ten Commandments have done pretty well for themselves for centuries," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "They don't need any help from politicians in Elkhardt, or anywhere else. I hope [the] decision will bring a screeching halt to the misguided crusade to

**TAMPA:** Last Saturday of each month except October, Noon - 1:30. Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room A.  
**Third Wednesday of each month, 7 - 8:30 pm,** Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa, Community Room.  
 FMI: Ed Golly, 813-839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.

**ORLANDO:** Meetings scheduled for the first Sunday of each month at the Orange County Public Library, 101 E Central Blvd, 3rd Floor, Downtown Orlando, 1:00pm. FMI: Jennifer Gallo, 407/281-6824, AOF\_Orlando@aol.com

display sacred religious texts at government buildings." Added Lynn. "The court has laid out a new commandment for government officials: 'Thou shalt not meddle in religion.'"

During the past year, several Religious Right groups aggressively promoted government display of the Ten Commandments in city halls, public schools and other public buildings. Bills promoting such displays were considered in 11 state legislatures last year.

Elkhardt officials argued the Commandments monument in front of the city's municipal building was permissible because it was among several historical monuments featured in and around the building. In December, 1999, U.S. District Judge Allen Sharp agreed and dismissed the lawsuit challenging the display. The appellate court ruling in *Bonks v. Elkhardt* overturns that decision.

"[T]his monument impermissibly suggests that, in this community, there are 'ins' and 'outs,'" the court said in its 2-1 ruling. The court added that constitutional principles "simply prevent government at any level from intruding into the religious life of our people by sponsoring or endorsing a particular perspective on religious matters."

The 7th Circuit's ruling is the latest in a long line of defeats for government endorsement of the religious document.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Stone v. Graham* (1980) that public schools cannot permissibly endorse the Ten Commandments. More recently, state and federal courts have struck down government-sponsored display of the Commandments in South Carolina, Kansas, Kentucky and just last November in a separate Indiana case.

8 January 2001



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*Atheists of Florida*

# Atheists of Florida

*Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church*

*Sponsoring the MARK TWAIN SOCIETY'S ATHEIST SOCIETY*  
 A Member Society of the ATHEIST ALLIANCE OF AMERICANS ATHEIST SOCIETIES

Volume IX No. 6  
 January, 2001



## Atheists of Florida participate in Miami Book Fair International 2000

*Patrick Bens*  
 Chapter Director Dade&Broward

**MIAMI**—While the sun was smiling on this year's Miami Book Fair International's three day street event over the weekend of November 17, 18 and 19, undoubtedly, many of our sympathizers were busy volunteering for the recount of the presidential ballots in our counties. Nevertheless, the beautiful weather brought a record number of inquiring minds to our booth. I should say "booths," yes, plural, because for the first time ever, atheism was represented by two organizations: ours and *Revista Peruviana de Filosofía Aplicada* (Peruvian Magazine of Applied Philosophy) headed and edited by philosophy professor **Manuel Abraham Paz** y Miño from the University of Lima. Peru's **Carlos Coronado** and I worked in close harmony with Professor Paz all year, exchanging books, texts, ideas and information. This amicable effort climaxed in a warm and friendly cooperation during the BookFair in between Mr. Paz and all of our members who manned our kiosk: **Cecil Glantz**, **Christos Tzanetakov**, **Ed Golly**, **Jim Young**, **Rex Curry** and **Joe Ables** (see photo, page 5). Result: half of our sign-ins this year were Hispanic.

**Luis Santander**, a brand new young and vigorous member and author of *La Cosmopolitización* was available to autograph his pleasant and witty literary work, which sold from both booths. This spurt in success for Atheists of Florida, Inc. can only be attributed to the yearlong dedication by Carlos to make last year's dream this year's accomplishment. Scout Carlos has plans to attend an atheist convention in Bogota, Colombia in January. His canvassing will give us another chance to expand further and penetrate deeper into the Christian stronghold south of the border.

For the first time also, we offered the public a translation in Spanish by our member **Leandro Perdomo** of Bertrand Russell's poignant classic *Why I'm not a Christian*. This endeavor was welcomed by strollers-by of the under-40 generations and encourages us to look for more similar productions by next year. The stapled booklet will continue to be for sale through **NEWSNOTES**, our chapter's e-page, and 305-940-0442. Initiated

at the Fair to help with advertising to the Hispanic community at large, our group now also sells Spanish atheist bumper stickers through all chapters. The color blue on white of the decal is similar to the design on our coffee mug. Our webmaster, **Jim Peterson**, has promised to add an e-catalog to our web page: [www.atheistalliance.org/florida](http://www.atheistalliance.org/florida). Thanks Jim!

One man bought the new Spanish bumper sticker for his office, no doubt as an antidote for the onslaught of offensive religious paraphernalia intruding in the workplace. Many children purchased the new familiar booby toys with the Pledge of Allegiance sporting *ONE VILLAIN WITHOUT GOD* instead of the illegal "under god." Jim Young's evangelical atheist *in Once or Reason* sold out!

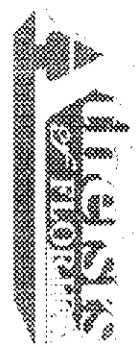
With its many bright posters of Percy B. Shelley, Bert Russell and Mark Twain, our booth was by far the most festively decorated of the fair, thanks to the colorful fluorescent paper you've come to know from **NEWSNOTES** and many of our pamphlets. Tons of gadgets with illustrated quotes are cleverly employed as decoys and magnets to lure the young (entire schools on Friday) and hold the skeptics just long enough to overcome suspicion and create confidence so they'll agree to sign in. After all, that's what we're at the BookFair for: recruit, recruit, recruit. Selling books, fees and decals at a minimal price becomes secondary.

To borrow from the wisdom of our most respected senior member, **Cecil Glantz**: "We can't make a profit, because we're a not-for-profit organization."

With a "fair" amount of pride I can end this report by repeating that this year our presence at the Miami Book Fair International was one of the greatest success stories in the history of our movement. Our younger members have shown a better and more efficient collaboration among themselves than I have ever witnessed and the sincerity of the public seems to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that atheism is a welcome force to reckon with from now on.

*"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute...where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference...where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials..."*

—JFK Campaign Speech, 1960



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- Couple 40.00 yr
- Individual 30.00 yr
- Student 10.00 yr
- Student (non-student) 10.00 yr
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- Young Adult (non-student) 10.00 yr

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If evolution is a fact, why are there some scientists who do not believe it?

# The Solution is Evolution

No. 5—Scientists and Evolution



IT IS TRUE, there are some scientists who do not accept evolution as a fact. But we must be careful to know who are scientists and who are not.

There is an organization. The Institute For Creation Research, which requires of it's members an oath. The oath states that if scientific evidence disagrees with the Christian Bible, the scientific evidence should be discarded. This is hardly a scientific approach, yet the members of this

**every major college and university in the world accepts the theory of evolution.**

There are other scientists who do not accept evolution and yet offer no theory to take its place. That is not the way science works. Proving a theory to be wrong does not make another theory right. As an example, when it was discovered that the Flu is not caused by bacteria, we still did not know what did cause it. It took more research to discover that it was caused by a virus.

If the theory of evolution is wrong, then there must be evidence to support another theory that would explain the diversity of life on the planet. No one has discovered such evidence.

Long before Charles Darwin wrote, *On The Origin of Species*, evidence was being gathered to support the theory of evolution. It should be apparent, even to the most uninformed, that advances have been made in gathering evidence to support the theory.

*This series will continue in the next two newsletters. Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea, Florida.*

Darwin did not have the benefit of computers, ultra-sound, the electron microscope, radioactive dating, X-ray, plate tectonics, DNA sequencing, or any other scientific advancement of the last one hundred and thirty years.

The scientific instruments that are used in the study of medicine, immunology, endocrinology and other health-related fields are the same instruments that are used to study evolution. The natural resources, develop agriculture, advance animal husbandry, investigate crimes, and further environmental studies are the same instruments that are used to study evolution. It would not be good science to accept all of the knowledge gained in these areas and ignore the knowledge acquired about evolution.

It is because of the vast amount of evidence that every major college and university in the world accepts the theory of evolution. There are some educational institutions that do not accept it. In the United States there are almost two hundred colleges that do not accept the theory of evolution. All of these colleges are religious institutions that disregard the scientific evidence and accept the Book of Genesis as fact.

These colleges offer science classes, but the instructors do not accept the evidence in support of evolution. These people often speak out against evolution. This is good. The evidence that supports evolution should be able to stand the test of reliability. That is what science is all about and why evolution is based on science.

The important thing to remember is that the scientists in all of the major research universities are gathering more evidence every day in support of the theory of evolution. This information is available to everyone who wants to read the books and journals. There will always be someone who does not accept this research. What science demands is that they show their evidence for the challenge and the evidence for their replacement theory.

There are many good sites on the internet, but this is one of the best. [www.onthenet.com.au/~steat/index.htm](http://www.onthenet.com.au/~steat/index.htm)

better "choice". Neither do schemes, such as Florida's, which claim to hold public schools accountable but give private schools a pass. For example, public schools must report FCAT scores and accept the grades that result, while, under Gov. Bush's rules, private schools can keep the grades of voucher students secret, thus escaping accountability.

## Education and Prayer Don't Mix!

The Jacksonville *Florida Times-Freem* noted that the U.S. Supreme Court began its new term by refusing to tackle several controversial social issues—most notably, Jacksonville's student-message policy. At issue is a policy that allows each graduating class to elect a senior to deliver a brief message during commencement. School officials cannot censor the speech, nor can they dictate the topic. In some instances, the speaker chooses to deliver a prayer. In others, he gives a secular speech.

A group of activists filed a lawsuit in 1993, arguing that the policy violated the First Amendment, which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech..." The claim was that the message, if a prayer, gave the appearance of religious endorsement by the school, and violated student's rights because they were captive audiences to religious expressions. However, religionists claim the students have a right to free exercise. A trial judge and appellate court both upheld the policy.

The Supreme Court didn't stop the messages. They can continue, pending further legal action. The court simply sent the case back to the appellate court, instructing it to consider the implications of a ruling that barred prayers at high school football games in Texas. Sounds like the Supremes are hinting!

However, some claim it's an apples-and-oranges comparison. In the Texas case, the school policy mandated that the outcome of the message be a prayer. In Jacksonville, students are allowed to deliver any message they choose. While the Texas policy shows overt favoritism toward religion, the one in Jacksonville does not. Also, the high court's ruling in the Texas case indicated students could spontaneously and voluntarily engage in prayer—another factor that seems to point toward a ruling to uphold student messages. On the other hand, commencement is a mandatory event, while football games are not (though many fans treat them as if they are!).

As always, students may pray individually at any time. Religion can't be banished from the school grounds, nor should it be, as I've always held that no one can really understand why atheism is such a positive philosophy without knowing why religion is so negative. However, understanding is not the same as endorsement, and it would seem that schools, as representatives of our government, should go above and beyond the norm to make certain any representations of religion are clearly identified as non-official.

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the Institute for First Amendment Studies

"If Al Gore met privately with a motley left-wing contingent—the Socialist Workers Party, radical civil-rights groups, or civil-liberties types—and then suppressed a tape of the discussion, imagine the reaction... Yet this fictional scenario isn't really much different (just reverse the extremes) from a session that GOP president-supposedly-elect Dumboya Bush had with far-right Christian political leaders. Intolerance and bigotry are pervasive in this crowd... This from Albert R. Hunt of *The Hill Street Journal*, hardly a bastion of liberalism.

George W. Bush's barnstorming appearance at ultriconservative Bob Jones University (Motto: "Don't you dare no darkeys, y'hear?") earlier this year was condemned by moderate Republicans who did not want anything to do with the fanatic religious fundamentalists who run the school. Bush's supporter immediately put out the word that their candidate was only "solidifying his voter base" to offset attacks from John McCain. But the fact is that George W. continues secretly to woo top leaders of the religious right, promising them his abiding faithfulness.

Here are some disturbing truths behind W.'s goofy "compassionate conservatism."

While Bush publicly screened the warm bodies who support education and health care, the GOP presidential candidate's various closed-door rendezvous with top leaders of the religious right, along with the fact that one of his most influential advisers embraces an extreme form of fundamentalist Christianity, should give any moderate Republican pause—and considering that he will almost certainly determine the future of the Supreme Court, Bush's hidden right-wing agenda should be of concern to all Americans.

On March 1, 1999, the Nashville-based Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission gathered in Austin, Texas for its annual conclave. These virtuous Baptists met at the Great Hills Baptist Church, in an exclusive section of north Austin. Gov. Bush dropped by to welcome the born-againers to the Texas capital. Mary O'Grady, a radio news editor and producer for WINGS (Women's International News Gathering Service, a public-affairs program syndicated on community and public radio stations) attended the day-long conference.

Bush's welcoming speech was scheduled to take place after the dinner break. During dinner, an alert functionary noticed O'Grady's press ID. (O'Grady recalls that she was apparently the only person there with press credentials.) She was promptly informed that the governor's talk was closed to the media, and that she had to vacate the premises. O'Grady tried unsuccessfully to sneak an associate into the meeting. Of course, we know what he has to hide, and with his immediate focus on meeting with so-called "faith-based" organization leaders, I can only say: "Be afraid. Be very afraid."

## Religion And Medicine Don't Mix!

Talk about your news that is no news to us. Cynthia L Cooper, WNews correspondent, published a story, October 31, 2000 regarding the mixture of Catholic theology and health care organizations. She noted that it results in a non-treatment plan for many women, especially the currently poor. However California, unlike Florida, now requires health care plans to disclose upfront whether they refer patients to doctors or hospitals that do not provide vital women's services. "At the very least, consumers need to know that restrictions are in place," said Susan Berke Fogel of the California Women's Law Center. Too bad Bayfront officials couldn't grasp this simple concept!



Catholic-affiliated institutions are often the only medical care providers in a region, thus leaving patients of all religious faiths (or none) unable to obtain basic reproductive health care services, regardless of their beliefs or preferences. The majority of Catholic-operated health maintenance plans do not provide contraceptive coverage, and abortion is excluded in nearly all of them, according to a report released by Catholics for Free Choice, a pro-choice advocacy group. Ninety-three percent of other health maintenance organizations provide contraceptive coverage.

Some Catholic HMOs with Medicaid contracts failed to make any referrals or arrangements for reproductive health care at all, affecting over 87,000 people. The rapid expansion of Catholic hospitals, thanks in part to the tax exemptions our government grants them, has resulted in these institutions now constituting the nation's largest single group of nonprofit hospitals. Fifty percent of the 20 largest nonprofit systems are Catholic.

California also enacted further legislation to protect women from the sudden elimination of services that can result when secular hospitals are purchased quietly by Catholic institutions. Such information is often kept secret, but the new California law calls for public hearings into how women's services would be affected by a potential hospital sale. In general, when communities grapple with religious control of their health

care, legal strategies have been hampered by a lack of laws to protect consumers. "You have a situation where medical decisions are being dictated by forces which have nothing to do with the standard of care," said Fogel. "If hospitals eliminated blood transfusions or required all boys to be circumcised, there would be an outcry. The fact that it's women's health has meant that some leaders have decided that it's okay."

One possible lever against religious discrimination is public funding. Catholic Healthcare West, for example, receives \$1.6 billion in California state-issued bonds. A follow-the-money approach might provide tools to loosen the grip of powerful religious zealots on women's reproductive health care.

**Religion And Education Don't Mix!**  
Gov. Jeb Bush keeps on a-pushing his controversial private school voucher plan. In October, an appeals court overturned a trial court judge who earlier found the program unconstitutional.

The 1st District Court of Appeal, in a display of reading skills that would appall a first grade teacher, decided that nothing in Florida's Constitution specifically prohibits the use of public money by private schools. Lt. Gov. Frank Brogan, Bush's chief lobbyist for the so-called "A-plus" education plan, applauded the decision, as did Governor Jeb the Redundant.

By now, voucher opponents have either returned to the courtroom of Circuit Judge Ralph Smith to argue other issues, such as whether the program violates the state/church separation principle, or appealed the ruling to the Florida Supreme Court. Both sides agree that the question would ultimately be decided by the state's high court, but Brogan said he would be surprised if the appellate court agreed to certify the case upward right now.

It may not matter. In December, a federal appeals court declared a Cleveland school voucher program unconstitutional upholding a lower court ruling that the use of public money to send thousands of children to parochial schools breaches the First Amendment's separation of state and church.

The decision sets the stage for a U. S. Supreme Court showdown, and came a month after voters in Michigan and California roundly rejected school voucher programs in ballot initiatives. As is usual in the case of vouchers, the Cleveland program did not present parents with a real set of options, because few nonreligious private schools and no suburban public schools had opened their doors. In 1999-2000, 96% of the 3.761 voucher students attended sectarian schools, receiving up to \$2,500 each. "There is no neutral aid when that aid principally flows to religious institutions," the decision said, "nor is there truly 'private choice' when the available choices resulting from the program are predominantly religious." The rise of nonsectarian voucher mills, which cut corners to make a profit on voucher payments, would not represent a

## Return to sender

Too bad they couldn't send it all the way back to the Dark Ages where it belongs. *St. Petersburg Times* Columnist Bill Maxwell reported that last year as Easter approached, Palm Beach County residents found J.C. in their mail box.

Maxwell wrote about it quite some time after the event to observe that the fallout from it has contaminated the national faith scene. Here's what happened.

A coalition of 100 local churches, members of an organization called the Jesus Video Project, mailed a video of the alleged life of Jesus to literally every single household in Palm Beach County, some 450,000 videos!

Maxwell saw the action as benign only if we forget that approximately 225,000 Jews, many of the observant, live in the region. To add insult to injury, the film was mailed during Passover, a high holy time for Jew.

The 83-minute film was produced in Britain in 1979 using British actors and depicts the life of J.C. from Bethlehem through death and the resurrection. The mailing effort cost \$1.2 million.

The effort mostly backfired when thousands of irate recipients

mounted a "return to sender" campaign. Many residents were so angry that they tied a brick to the tape and wrote "return to sender."

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Atheists of Florida members Ed Golly (left) and Jim Young occupy the kiosk at the Miami Book Fair International, November, 2000.

er" on the accompanying postcard hoping that the Jesus Video Project would have to pay additional shipping charges.

According to the *Palm Beach Post*, one man was so angry that he sarcastically thanked the project, saying he had used the tape to copy a porno movie.

Maxwell sees the mailing as a demonstration of arrogance and insensitivity of Christian evangelicals who believe that God is theirs and theirs alone, that only they will pass through the pearly gate and sit on the right-hand side of St. Peter. His points are salient regarding the arrogance of the Nians. We quote him directly.

"I have traveled to every continent and have studied, to some degree, all of the world's major living religions. Although I am not intellectually equipped to explicate each faith and explain its comparative validity, I know in my own crude way that Christianity is no better than, say, the different brands of Judaism I witnessed in Israel. Or the Islamic sects in Gaza, the West Bank and Northern Africa. Is Christianity holier than Zoroastrianism and Hinduism?"

"As far as I know, the Sikhs of India's Punjab region and the Jains have no reason to follow Christ. Are they all going to accompany me to hell?"

"Why do Christians think that they have a message for the Buddhists I have met in different parts of the world? The Chinese and the Japanese have practiced their religions for centuries and will continue to do so. Why should they listen to Christian proselytizers?"

"And if anything, some Christian groups should beg American Indians for forgiveness for the sins committed against them."

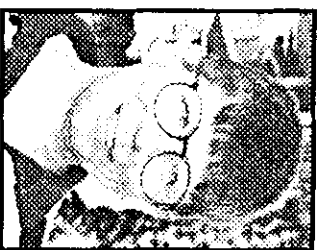
Maxwell goes on to point out that Christianity is just one of the world's living religions. He observes that the Navajo's belief in "holy people" and "earth-surface people" for example, makes as much sense as the Christian belief that a woman became pregnant without having intercourse. Or that a man survived in the belly of a whale. Or that a man, by raising a stick in the air, caused the Red Sea to part.

## Just get it from Uncle Sam

We spotted a curious item in the *Hill Street Journal*. Recall those superstition-based institutions which both candidates claimed they would pump billions of your tax dollars into during the campaign? In religious terms they are known as "benevolences," everything from soup kitchens to international relief to support for seminaries. According to a study of 29 Protestant denominations released by Empty Tomb Inc. ([www.emptytomb.org](http://www.emptytomb.org)), they might be having a little cash flow problem. Though these churches are taking in more dollars, their congregations are giving less today, as a percentage of disposable income, than they did in 1968. And the figures are worst for the 10 mainline Protestant denominations and the Southern Baptist Convention, whose percentage of giving is lower than in the midst of the Depression.

## RECRUITING: The supply side of

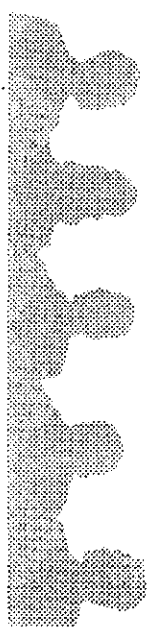
atheism —Patrick Bens



as kindergarten math: 1+1+1+1=recruiting members.

The best recruiting strategy starts with a vision from the leadership. Where do you want your organization to be in the next year, the next three years, or the next five years? Establishing a clear vision will make the difference in our group's growth and our overall membership base.

Some of us want to go after newcomers in the hope of grabbing fresh talented college graduates. Others seek to lure students who are still developing their life's goals. A percentage of members want only seniors to join, while still others want to try to recruit entire families by accessing the children.



In each case, successful recruiting begins with a ready initial strategy. Unless you know how many members or how many chapters you want, you won't know in which category to apply recruitment attacks. For instance, if you want just one small group of a few same-age members to meet in the same location under the same old circumstances, discussing the same issue meeting after meeting, or you want a series of chapters with a variety of age groups, a variety of interests and a variety of events, you must target recruitment drives in the area of your desire.

It may be that some group or individuals are already operating in that arena and by contacting these persons you encounter a chapter already bustling with activities. On the other hand, if you plan to double your membership base each year, you must recruit activist individuals who can run or start a chapter where needed.

Patrick Bens is director of the Dade&Broward chapter and publishes NEWSNOTES, the monthly chapter bulletin. A real estate investor and business man, he resides in North Dade.

finding customers for a commercial enterprise. Here are some tips, gathered from my conversation at the Miami Book Fair International, to put together a recruiting program.

**Establish a mission.** First things first, and that means deciding what types of members you want to recruit. Then build a game plan based on that. I recall these questions and answers from the exchange of ideas with passers-by:

1. "What is the core of your organization?" A wise approach in recruitment is establishing a core value of the organization, which can be appreciated and wanted by the future members. Surprisingly, the image of the organization was the first and most important value mentioned by people interviewed. Our group must show a professional dedication to high ethical standards, quality membership service and excellent, flawless public relations. (That means no eating inside the booth. Food wrappers littering the booth gives an impression of sloppiness and disrespect. Sweaty drinks and greasy, salty chips here and there do not mix with expensive books or other quality merchandise).

2. "What is the organization's purpose? Is it to sell books, to recruit, to litigate, to educate, to instigate, to protest, to manifest? Do you expect members to be passive or active? Is your organization capable of change? Is that change gradual or radical? Can a member take part in the organization process or is a member to be a silent partner?"

3. "Do recruits share your organization's goals?"  
4. "Can recruits help immediately after joining in the pursuit of the organization's goals or is there a seniority plan? What happens when some of the goals are met? How can new members propose new goals?" These questions need solid answers!

5. "What tasks is the recruit supposed to accomplish, if any?" If a prospect does not see a role in the organization for himself, (s)he may look for a group that offers responsibilities and tasks to accomplish a move towards the organization's vision. Some see joining an organization as a hobby, and are eager to fill, even create, a need for their talents. Examples of tasks were many: accountants, teachers and lawyers all are willing to offer some kind of assistance in helping with recruitment efforts by phone, the internet, video-shows, radio, and TV. Letter writing was suggested, even others anticipated participating in monthly fairs, art fairs, youth fairs.

**Use all available resources.** Once a group like ours has a clear game plan in place, we must start using all resources available to work that plan out. To attract dedicated members, we need to establish a relationship with these individuals. How do we do that? Here is more advice from the lady who sounded and looked and acted like a professional career recruitment consultant who had just given a seminar on the subject.

1 Organize regular luncheons, breakfasts or recruit-

ment evenings. New members in large metropolitan areas like Orlando, Miami and Tampa will want to meet not just with one—the director—but with a variety of seasoned members in their neighborhood. These events need to be advertised in a local community paper, through direct mail and through an existing local member base. Advertising more than one phone number allows prospects to talk to the nearest or to all on a casual basis.

2 Take full advantage of technology. Recruiting savvy young people assumes the need to speak their technology language. A website must be updated and modernized. Members must have their letters to the editor posted on the web to show the intent of the organization to be involved in current matters. E-mail addresses must be posted. E-mails must not go unanswered.

3 Throwing a Winter Solstice Party is a minimum. At this party, active and activist members are to receive awards, no matter how minute. Volunteers need to be shown respect. It's a token of appreciation by the entire group. It shows and offers pride to the recipient, sets an example

Americans support First Amendment principles but often not practices; First Amendment Center releases State of the First Amendment 2000

## State of the First Amendment

Source: The Freedom Forum

NEW YORK—A POLL RELEASED by the First Amendment Center last year revealed some curious attitudes of Americans regarding

**"Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon thee, and we beg thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country."**

—Prescribed school prayer used in New York State public schools in 1962.

On June 17, 1963, the US Supreme Court handed down an 8-1 ruling which found that opening Bible reading and prayer exercises in public schools were unconstitutional. The majority opinion said in part:

"... We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade (the) citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and God, the state is firmly committed to a position of neutrality."

for the group and publishes who is a specialist and in what field so recruits can contact those with their own expertise.

4 Establish a grassroots letter campaign. We must target different ethnic areas in different ways. Letters must be written about specific subjects pertinent to one targeted background. A phone call must follow up.

5 Make that call! Once someone receives a letter, a phone call is needed to urge consideration of the importance of state/church separation as our main goal. Explain the importance of acting in unison through technology and for our children. We have to emphasize that prospective members need us.

Conclusion. It is vital for a group like ours to start by keeping our goals in perspective. Our values and goals must be well established. They must be presented to the recruit as a tool (s)he cannot live without. When we have what the recruit needs, both the individual and the group will benefit and grow.

unchanged since their adoption, unchanged does not mean unchallenged," said Kenneth A. Paulson, executive director of the First Amendment Center. "Responses to the State of the First Amendment 2000 survey suggest that Americans respect the First Amendment as an ideal but are ambivalent when it protects offensive ideas or troubling speech."

**Some alarming findings** from the survey. An increasing number of Americans believe there is too little religious freedom in the United States and a majority of those surveyed believe that teachers or other public school officials should be able to lead prayers in school. From 1997 to 2000, the percentage of people who agreed teachers and public school officials should lead prayers increased from 56% to 65%. In addition, a majority of respondents, 56%, said a public school teacher should be allowed to use the Bible as factual text in a history or social studies class. Freedom of the press is vulnerable. More than half (51%) of the respondents said the press in America has too much freedom to do what it wants, compared to 53% in 1999.

There is significant support for free speech on the Internet. Three-quarters (74%) of Americans surveyed say, "material on the Internet should have the same First Amendment protection as printed material, such as books and newspapers." However, 58% of respondents believe the government should be able to restrict the posting of sexually explicit material or information about how to make a bomb, even though such information is readily available in books.

The survey was based on telephone interviews conducted by The Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut with 1,015 adults, ages 18 or older, conducted April 13-26, 2000. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.