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to form "Fair Share for Florida" as an umbrella name intended to attract cooperation from a variety of sympathetic organizations and business interests.

Our Public Access TV show, *Atheist Forum*, was currently out of production. The Hillsborough County Public Access channel had been relocated from channel 20 to channel 950. Reinhardt estimated that we had drawn 25 to 30 new prospects to our Tampa chapter meetings as direct result of the TV show, but we had drawn no new prospects to the meetings since we had suspended production. We had a low rate of these attendees actually joining A of F, and Reinhardt concluded we should place more emphasis on encouraging attendees to become members. He suggested development a step-by-step program applicable to new attendees in order to encourage their eventual membership in A of F and find a means to follow up their attendance at meetings with an inquiry seeking their feedback.

Reinhardt also expressed an interest among himself and other members in development of an Internet video Web cast. He estimated the initial cost to construct a suitable studio would be \$15,000 to \$20,000. We would be able to determine from our server specifically how many viewers would actually be viewing and for how long. A committee had been formed from among the Board to investigate a location and report to the Board at a later date with their recommendation of procedure to instigate the project.

With receipt of the remainder of the Cossey estate and the Michael Zaccar annuity, we ended 2007 with a net worth of \$203,208.

Since we never used these bequests to fund the A of F Endowment Fund, none of the money was ever invested and has been held in a bank certificate of deposit. That means, following the recent market crash, we've lost none of the endowment money and still hold it all in the CD.

The board formed a committee to develop a pro-

posal for establishment of facilities to produce a Web cast for A of F. We have accomplished that goal with intent to begin Web casting *The Old Time Atheist Hour* any day, now, as an audio-only program. As we develop a following, we will next consider developing a video Web cast facility. Our studio was designed so we may easily convert it into a video studio with separate control room.

The board included a budget item of \$1,000 for grants to student atheist groups to be used for advertising those groups. To date, all grants have been applied to the University of South Florida student Atheist Group.

Although A of F has produced annual reports in the past, the board approved a hard copy report for 2008 intended to be a more sophisticated publication, covering all activities of A of F through the year. This can be used to show prospective members a more thorough account of the activities of Atheists of Florida. We may also be sending a copy to all active members of A of F, as well as all Member Societies of the Atheist Alliance. Finally, the board voted to participate in a 2009 Darwin Day celebration. Plans for this event are currently being developed in conjunction with other Freethought organizations in the Tampa Bay area.

The 2008 officers elected by the board were:

Chairman—Robert Curry
President—Ed Golly
Vice President—John Kieffer
Secretary—Julia Scott
Treasurer—Ed Golly

The remainder of the board is listed in the masthead on page 2.

The officers are debating whether to hold another membership banquet this year. Rent on our office is just under \$5,000 a year and we want to run a responsible budget as we know our benefactors would have expected. We anticipate our 2009 board meeting will be held January 18.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classified ads are published free for all active members of Atheists of Florida. Send your ad information to: ATHAIFLE@aol.com Subject line "CLASSIFIEDS."

Godless in America: conversations with an atheist by George A. Ricker is now available at most book retailers and online book sellers. For more information about the book and its author, go to www.godlessinamerica.com.

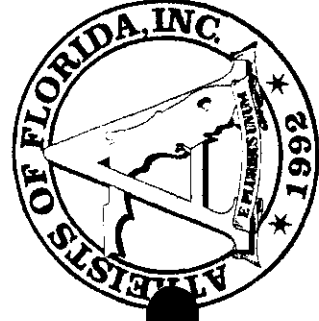
Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas Park Public Library—Second Sunday of each odd-numbered month (Jan., Mar., etc.), 1:30—4:30, 78th Ave North & 52nd Street.
Tampa—Second Sunday of each even-numbered month, 1:30—4:30, Atheists of Florida office, 3614 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa. Social dinners follow all meetings at nearby restaurants. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, ATHAIFLE@aol.com.

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

A Founding Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International
(The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies)



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Web cast, which we expect to be broadcasting over the Internet any week now.

Many of our members helped construct the space, including Rob Curry, Ed Golly, John Kieffer, and his wife, Diane, who installed the carpet. Jerry Moore located chairs and the refrigerator, and Jackie Jordan volunteers in the office one day every week.

Besides meetings and the Web cast, we will also utilize the office for planning meetings and all meetings of the Board of Directors.

One other idea we've developed is the Orientation Meetings. These are tailored for persons who want to learn more about atheism by talking directly with and questioning an actual atheist. Our regular meetings don't afford such opportunities to first-time visitors who may not be certain what atheism actually posits and want to learn more before actually joining an atheist group. At these meetings, a few of the members will offer a brief explanation of atheism, then open the floor to questions and dialogue. We anticipate about four such orientations a year, but will adjust depending on demand. In contrast to holding such meetings at public libraries, we can offer food, lots more literature, sell our merchandise, and accept immediate memberships in Atheists of Florida.

New office for A of F Commercial building now home to Atheists of Florida

TAMPA—SINCE THE INCEPTION OF ATHEISTS of Florida in 1992, it has been the dream of Founder Christos Tzanetakos for the organization to have its home in a commercial building. In mid-summer, it finally came into existence.

Our new office is located in a duplex only about a block north of the library where the Tampa chapter had been holding meetings every other month. With the space now completely built out, the entire library and archives of A of F have been relocated there and are being catalogued by volunteers.

With the demise of the Public Access TV show, the *Atheist Forum*, we also have constructed a facility we will use to resume our Web cast, *The Old Time Atheist Hour*. All this, plus a storage room, kitchenette with refrigerator, and an office desk in under 600 square feet.

We expect to name the office after our primary benefactor, Norma Cossey, and the Web studio after Michael Zaccar. These issues will be resolved at our next board meeting.

Our telephone line has been moved to that location so we can utilize it for the

Board Meeting 2008 is a progressive year

CLEARWATER—THE ANNUAL MEETING OF the Board of Directors was held in conjunction with a banquet at the Radisson Hotel Clearwater Central on February 24.

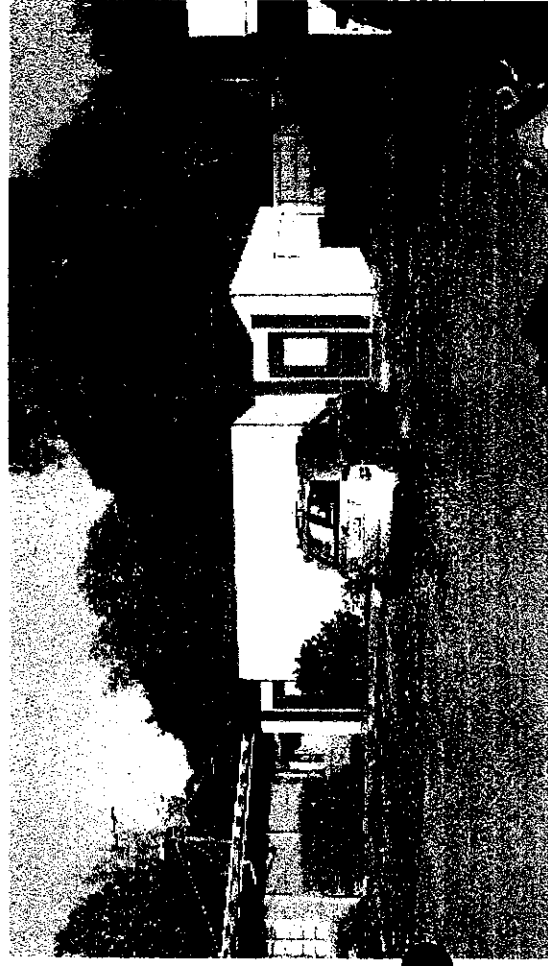
President Joe Reinhardt reported that we have lacked the manpower and money to carry out many of the ideas put forth at previous board meetings. He felt the most important effort A of F should pursue through the coming year should be to challenge the property tax exemptions enjoyed by religious organizations in Florida. Reinhardt pointed out that there are currently 17,643 Christian churches in Florida with over 2,300 in Pinellas County alone enjoying property tax exemptions running into some \$1.3 billion just for those Christian churches alone. This does not include additional tax exemptions of the churches of other denominations. He directly quoted Article I, Section 3 of the state Constitution which absolutely prohibits any revenue of the state to be given directly or indirectly to any religious organization. He and some other Board members had taken some initial steps toward generating interest by other organizations concerned about state/church separation in allying with us to pursue this agenda. A few months prior to the meeting, Reinhardt and Golly had met with Rebecca Steele who showed interest in the concept, and were also told by an attorney that we have a 'strong footing' to bring legal action against the state to require them to uphold the Constitution.

Reinhardt felt that there is nothing we can do that would be of more benefit to atheists than to accomplish this agenda. In that interest, we have tentatively begun

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"I'm like, okay, God, if there is an open door for me somewhere, this is what I always pray, I'm like, don't let me miss the open door."

—Sarah Palin



P MacKall / Wide World of Atheism

Atheists of Florida office at 3614 South Manhattan. Our entry is on the left side of the duplex.

**"following
the recent
market
crash,
we've lost
none of
the en-
dowment
money
and still
hold it all
in cash"**

IT TOOK OVER 15 YEARS, but the Atheists of Florida building is finally a reality.

And even though we don't actually own the building, it is our official home.

Message from the President

Founder's Dream comes true — Ed Golly



Now comes the logical next step — an executive director. The A of F bylaws already contain stipulation for an E. D., which state that and executive director may be appointed by and shall report to the president. Salary for the E. D. shall be subject to approval of the board. Duties shall include, but not be limited to, performing and/or supervising the administrative day-to-day functions of this organization and any other duties as defined by the president and/or the board. Compensation may be made in an amount not to exceed \$100 per month.

As the economy continues to deteriorate, we need to be especially budget-conscious in the ensuing years. Having made the offer to the board to assume this position for 2009, it may need to be unpaid position until we can build adequate membership to support reasonable compensation. But this will lay the foundation for a permanent exec director for A of F, which is seriously overdue. A decision is expected at the Jan. 18 board meeting, which we will announce immediately following.

Regrettably, our legal counsel, John MacKay, recently informed us that he is relocating to Georgia, and, although he will keep his practice here open, will be unavailable to serve us any longer. We appreciate all the help and counsel he has provided over the years, and wish him well. The search is under way for another counselor to assist us.

We anticipate 2009 will be our most productive year ever with or without an exec. director and hope all our members will continue to support Atheists of Florida.

Religiulous

—Brent Yaciv

Bill Maher's latest effort might seem familiar in style, and it should — one of the directors was the same guy who did Borat. The movie at times seems like Borat crossed with a slimmer version of Michael Moore, and that's not a bad thing from my POV.

A group of us free-thinkers went to see it here in Thumperland, (Indiana) so some of the thoughts I'll share are borrowed from others who shall remain nameless. For

example, one viewer said she was "underwhelmed," when asked for further clarification she said she was expecting more in-depth examination of things.

That's not what you'll get here. Maher seems to be walking something of a tightrope in his audience appeal: he's trying to include enough zingers and slaps (like putting titles over an interview telling us that,

despite the interviewee's request that he be referred to as "Doctor," the man has no doctorate of any sort) to satisfy those of us who already think religious and ridiculous are synonyms, while including enough basic freethought concepts (such as the reality that the Jesus myth is very, very similar to myths about Osiris, Horus, Mithra, etc.) to plant seeds of doubt in mainstream (that is, moderate religionist) viewers.

How well he succeeds is pretty subjective. I'll note that for a Sunday night showing the theater had a pretty good audience, so it's not just the local atheist pack going to see it — and judging by the applause at the end, it was well-received by most. If nothing else, Maher might give more people the courage to come out of the closet — something he strongly urges — and let the religious majority know we're tired of being treated as second class citizens, especially when religion has so little moral ground to stand on.

I definitely recommend seeing the movie, but even moreso, I recommend taking a friend or relative who is a believer. Let Maher plant a seed of doubt or two, and no telling what rational fruits may develop.

Outreach

ST. PETERSBURG— Again this year Atheists of Florida was present at the *Saint Petersburg Times* Festival of Reading. With our usual assortment of books, novel-

ties, bumper stickers and handouts, we enticed about 25 visitors to sign up for more information and be included in our database.

The event, held the last Saturday of October,

draws thousands of readers. The atheists' table draws scores of amused passersby and generates its share of "discussions" about religion.

Most significantly, it keeps atheism in the public eye. Surprisingly, the table draws a large portion of fairgoers, either curious about our literature, or laughing at our magnets, "Darwin fish" and lapel buttons. We even sold a few books.

Our annual picnic was held Nov. 22 at Picnic Island Park in South Tampa. Several members of the USF Student Atheists were on hand for a breezy but sunny afternoon on the edge of the bay.

This was followed a week later by our first Orientation Meeting in the A of F office. We welcomed about half a dozen new people, all atheists, who were interested in Atheists of Florida and discussing various concepts of atheism in our culture today. We may be holding these meetings as often as every other month. **A**

book & film review



J. Reinhardt / Wide World of Atheism

Ed Golly, left, and Rob Curry handle the A of F table, assisted by Joe Reinhardt and John Kieffer (not pictured).

Religion never hurts anyone?...

Parents select prayer over medicine

WESTON, Wis.—Police investigated an 11-year-old girl's death from an undiagnosed, treatable form of diabetes after her parents chose to pray for her rather than take her to a doctor.

An autopsy showed Madeline Neumann died of diabetic ketoacidosis, a condition that left too little insulin in her body, Everest Metro Police Chief Dan Vergin said.

She had probably been ill for about a month, suffering symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, excessive thirst, loss of appetite and weakness, the chief said, noting that he expected to complete an investigation and forward the results to the district attorney.

The girl's mother said that she and her family believe in the Bible and that healing comes from God, but that they do not belong to an organized religion or faith, are not fanatics and have nothing against doctors.

"We just noticed a tiredness within the past two weeks," she said. "And then just the day before and that day (she died), it suddenly just went to a more serious situation. We stayed fast in prayer then. We believed that she would recover. We saw signs that to

us, it looked like she was recovering."

The girl's father, a former police officer, said he started CPR "as soon as the breath of life left" his daughter's body.

Family members elsewhere called authorities to seek help for the girl and made a 911 call from the home. Police and paramedics arrived within minutes and immediately called for an ambulance that took her to a hospital. But less than an hour after authorities reached the home, Madeline—a bright student who left public school for home schooling this semester—was declared dead.

The mother said she and her husband are not worried about the investigation because "our lives are in God's hands. We know we did not do anything criminal. We know we did the best for our daughter we knew how to do."

On December 2, a judge ruled the reckless homicide charges stand against the parents. The decision is expected to be appealed.

Parents Dale and Leifani Neumann have pleaded not guilty to second-degree reckless homicide. Their attorneys wanted the charges dismissed on constitutional grounds. At the heart of the dispute is two Wisconsin laws. One says it is not child abuse to treat illness through prayer alone. The second is a homicide law that makes no exception for prayer.

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NEWSFILES

"Humanists have always understood that you don't need a god to be good."

Humanists Launch Godless Holiday Campaign

WASHINGTON, D.C.—"Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake," proclaims a new holiday ad from the American Humanist Association. Already appearing today in the New York Times and Washington Post, the message will soon be blazoned on the sides, taillights, and interiors of over 200 Washington DC Metro buses.

It's the first ad campaign of its kind in the United States, and the American Humanist Association predicts it will raise public awareness of humanism as

"So that's the point we're making with this advertising campaign. Morality doesn't come from religion. It's a set of values embraced by individuals and society based on empathy, fairness, and experience."

The exterior posters began appearing on buses in Northwest Washington starting Tuesday, November 18. The interior posters began December 1.

"We expect these bus signs to generate a lot of public interest," said Fred Edwards, director of communications for the American Humanist Association. "Some folks may be offended but that isn't our purpose. We just want to reach those open to this message but unaware how widespread their views are."

The "goodness' sake" ads and posters direct people to a special Web site at www.whybelieveinagod.org that helps people find others of like mind in the Washington, D.C., metro area and nationally. The site also informs the public about humanism and answers common objections to the slogan as well as to the appropriateness of running the campaign during the holidays.

Such high-profile promotion isn't new to the American Humanist Association. Throughout 2008, humanist advertising has become more visible across the nation. In particular, highway billboards have been erected just outside of New York City, Philadelphia, and other major cities. They read: "Don't believe in God? You are not alone."

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well as controversy over humanist ideas.

"Humanists have always understood that you don't need a god to be good," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association.