

### Chapter Meetings

In past years, the Tampa Bay Chapter was able to book meeting space in local libraries for an entire year at a time. With the spaces becoming increasingly popular, the libraries have limited the advanced bookings to three months. Consequently, we are not always able to secure the meeting spaces we want and need to find alternative meeting places.

It is very important, therefore, that those who plan to attend any of our meetings verify the locations each month. The best way to accomplish this is to be certain you have your e-mail address in the local database. Then each month, approximately one week prior to the meetings, you will receive an e-mail confirmation of the meeting location, time, and agenda. We never share or sell our database with any other organization, so if you send us your e-dress, you may be assured it will go no further than our database.

Those lacking e-mail access may call the Atheists of Florida phone line at (813) 835-1500 or call Chairman Ed Golly direct at (813) 839-7567. We are always committed to holding the meetings on the second Sunday of each month.

### Outreach

Remember to come see our stand at the St. Petersburg Times Festival of Reading Saturday, October 27.

## Miscellany

### CLASSIFIEDS

Send your ad information to

[mhanvey7@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mhanvey7@tampabay.rr.com); or [AthAlFL@aol.com](mailto:AthAlFL@aol.com).

**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](http://www.godlessinamerica.com).

### St. Pete-Atheists // Free-Thought Group

IN REASON WE TRUST

GARY THOMPSON, Organizer  
Monthly Meetup Day, Third Tuesday @ 7:00 PM  
Contact: [easy@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:easy@tampabay.rr.com)  
<http://atheists.meetup.com/209>

Get together with other freethinkers at the St. Pete Atheist / Free-thought every third Tuesday of each month for good food, good drink, good conversation, and lotto tickets!

## 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**, various locations in Northwest Tampa area. Social dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias. Call or email for venue information.  
FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, [AthALFL@aol.com](mailto:AthALFL@aol.com).

### 2007 Atheist Alliance International

Convention in Washington, DC  
September 28 to 30, 2007

With a "get SAVED" (Secular Activist Voices to Educate Day) pre-convention event on Thursday, September 27, 2007 hosted by Lori Lipman Brown of the Secular Coalition!

- ◆ Early bird specials available
- ◆ Great events
- ◆ Some of greatest minds of Atheism will be presenting, signing books, and available for intimate chats

### Contact:

[Lori@secular.org](mailto:Lori@secular.org) (pre-convention event)  
[www.atheistalliance.org](http://www.atheistalliance.org) (online registration)  
1-866-HERETIC (call AAI for more info)

### Hotel information:

1480 Crystal Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22202  
Phone: (703) 416-1600 and (800) 465-4329  
Fax: (703) 416-1615  
Web: <http://events.ichotelsgroup.com/DPRD-6YSNJR/WASNA/website/>

A full schedule, additional hotel information, and more registration information will be provided in our August newsletter!

### Fine American-made, Hand-crafted jewelry (great gifts for any occasion)—Secular, Pagan or otherwise!

If you're looking for that special one-of-a-kind piece for yourself or that special someone, take a look at the Swarovski crystal, pearl, amethyst, turquoise, jade and other gorgeous gemstone bracelets, necklaces, and earrings available from TRACY'S TRES CHIC. Tracy Thomas, Jewelry Artist, 727-235-3220, [mschacha@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mschacha@tampabay.rr.com).

**Photography/Videography Services:** Artistry In Motion, Inc.—Specializes in wedding and event photography and videography - and we would LOVE to do a few weddings where no one blathered on about how their god would make the marriage better! Find out more at [www.aimzoom.com](http://www.aimzoom.com)

**CFI 2007 Florida conference still photos and videos!** Photos are available at [www.pictage.com/293552](http://www.pictage.com/293552) and can be ordered in various sizes via *Pictage*, one of the world's premier professional photo labs—payment can be made via Paypal or by sending a check/MO. Each video is \$10 plus tax or the entire set of 11 can be ordered for \$107 (including tax) on DVD or VHS. Individual videos (\$10.70 including tax) should be ordered by last name of the speaker. The original list is available at <http://www.cfiflorida.org/events/florida-conference-speaking-2007.pdf>

For additional information contact Brent:

Phone—352-217-3578

Email—[www.aimzoom.com](http://www.aimzoom.com)

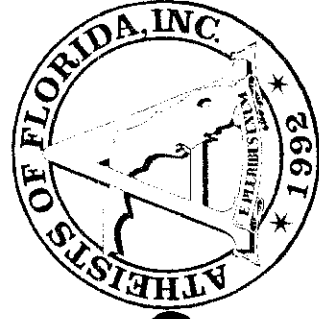
### Guitar / Music Lessons:

College-trained musician with many years performance experience in numerous styles of playing.  
Contact Michael at (813) 545-1071 or via email—[OjphesusObject@hotmail.com](mailto:OjphesusObject@hotmail.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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## Pride Festival

*Atheists have pride, too*

ST. PETERSBURG—FOR BUMPER STICKERS, PINS, OR MAGNETS expressing a freethought opinion or opposition to the attack on civil liberties, the Saint Petersburg Pride Festival was a plumb opportunity for sales.

Following last year's success with the Atheists of Florida kiosk, we found over 40,000 passersby thoroughly amused and generally impressed by our offerings.

They bought hundreds of dollars of merchandise, and about 75 people signed up for our offer of free membership in A of F through the end of this calendar year. Free newsletters were available for sign-ups.

The kiosk was staffed by Jim Young, Ed Golly and Joe Reinhardt for the full day. Three protestors stopped by to inundate us with insults, but otherwise everyone seemed to appreciate our offerings.



**Above: A of F member Pat MacKall sits at the kiosk on Central Avenue in St. Petersburg during the Pride Festival.**

**Right: Two unidentified uncommensurate passersby inspect the A of F kiosk.**



Our next scheduled event is the St. Petersburg Times Festival of Reading on October 27 from 10-5 p.m. The event will be held at the University of South Florida in downtown St. Petersburg. Member Steve Brown has donated a dozen copies of Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation* that we'll be selling, along with practically every title available by Richard Dawkins. We'll also have the usual assortment of pins, magnets and stickers that actually generate the income for these events. Stop by and see us. **A**

## Camp Quest

CLARKSVILLE, OHIO—THE ANNUAL OFFER BY ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA TO SPONSOR A camper each year at the original Camp Quest was grabbed this year by the parent of one of our own members, Julia Scott. Ten-year-old son Sheridan was off to a full week of fun and education at Camp Graham, a 4-H camp about 30 miles northeast of Cincinnati.

Billed as Camp Quest Classic due to the spawning of other Camp Quests in Michigan, Minnesota, California and Ontario, Canada, the camp drew the attention of Chicago Tribune staff reporter Ron Grossman, whose article appeared June 27. Grossman took an interest in Sheridan and was aware of Atheists of Florida members weekly outreach at Ybor City. Since Sheridan and his mother are frequently part of the Friday night group, Grossman pointed out the "hostility encountered on the front lines of atheist activism," and quoted Sheridan's explanation that he participates "as a hobby. But some people are so hostile, yelling at us: 'You will go to Hell.'"

Grossman observed that Camp Quest is a place to set down the burden of being different.

Children who grow up in Christian households have the emotional security of being in the nation's majority. Members of religious minorities have similarly minded friends and relatives. But coming from a family that does not believe in God often sets a child on a lonely road.

Twelve years ago, Helen and Edwin Kagin started Camp Quest as a means to accomplish something productive for the freethought movement. For its inaugural season, Camp Quest drew 20 campers. This year, it enrolled 47 young people, ranging from 8 to 17 years old.

Campers are challenged each year with a hypothetical situation they must respond to in the form of a skit. They are also asked to disprove Kagin's assertion that a pair of invisible unicorns inhabit the camp.

For the concluding act, Edwin Kagin stood in front of the crackling flames, pounding an oversized walking stick worthy of a biblical prophet. He broadly impersonated an evangelical preacher, exhorting his congregation to believe in the unseen.

"Who needs proof, if we have faith?" he asked.

All around the campfire, young hands went up.

For more information on Camp Quest, visit their Web site at [www.camp-quest.com](http://www.camp-quest.com).

Humanity has the stars in its future, and that future is too important to be lost under the burden of juvenile folly and ignorant superstition.

—Isaac Asimov

This was a great story when it was first reported in the early 1970's, but it appears that it was proven to be false.

The dodo did not have any natural enemies and had not ever seen a human. Apparently the birds were killed for food by thousands. They didn't become extinct only by hunting, but also by the pigs, rats, dogs and cats, who were brought to the island by the first inhabitants. Dodo's laid their eggs on the ground and young dodo's were an

easy prey for these introduced animals.

Evolutionist, perhaps more than other scientists need to make sure of facts. Creationists love to catch us in an error. There are many excellent examples of co-evolution because the successful survived. The story of the dodo and the tree is a great example of the complexity of evolution, but we need to be careful as to what we accept as fact and as spin.



*This month, we are proud to feature an up and coming writer- Nathan Miller. Nathan manages Information Technology for Evans Library at Florida Tech University, where he is currently pursuing his M.S. in Chemical Engineering and also advises the Center For Inquiry (CFI) campus affiliate. When he's not busy with school and demolishing the claims of theists and paranormal frauds, he also enjoys performing magic tricks and sardonically responding to hate mail from believers of various stripes. To read more of his work navigate to <http://my.fit.edu/~nmiller>.*

is tragic and unnecessary. Their actions six years ago were also heartbreaking and needless. But promoting more violence and disregard for life (even one's own) is not the solution.

For reasons foreign to most rational citizens, martyrdom and persecution are very popular credos, even in many mainstream American religious groups. Many Christian groups tell their followers that they must be prepared to die (and even allow others to die) for their own beliefs.

One personal example stands out for me. I was conversing with a friend about this issue and inquired about the notion of self-sacrifice for his faith, and he explained that if a man came in and pressed a gun to his head, ordering him to verbally renounce his faith, he would refuse, knowing that the man would shoot. While impressed with his courage, I asked concernedly what he would do if this hypothetical shooter had put the gun to my (an atheist's) head, and made the same demand of him. Would he act to spare my life, or would he let the man fire, knowing that I would then meet with an eternal fiery destination in accordance with his mythology? I never did get a straight answer, but perhaps the eerie silence that followed was all the answer he needed to give; I'd better duck.

Violent religious conflicts worldwide are enabled by two enabling components. The first, intolerance, is present in most fundamentalist religions around the globe. It is the resistance to ideas other than one's own and the suppression of said ideas, with force if necessary. The second is provided even by progressive religious groups: the mandate to "spread the word" or proselytize. This is demonstrated when, for example, an Islamic Fundamentalist encounters even a moderate Christian evangelist, causing an annihilation reaction that could power the USS Enterprise. The revival or renewal of religious faith in the wake of these conflicts is a feel-good message, but it only feeds the vicious cycle and serves to escalate the violence in the long run.

If we want to end religious violence, we eventually must cast off the shackles of superstition and unreason. Realistically, though, some of humanity may not yet be ready for the responsibility which would come with that liberty. But in the meantime, we can remember that our right to free exercise of religion comes with the responsibility to practice it for *ourselves*, not on other people.

*Note: The 3-part series on religious sexual abuse will resume with part 2, in the August newsletter. —MRH*



## The Price Of Unreason

— Nathan Miller

Three Christian militants were executed by firing squad Friday, September 22, 2006 in Indonesia as much of the western world watched in dismay. The men had been convicted of leading attacks on Muslims six years ago, leaving at least 70 people dead, according to police. According to an Associated Press news bulletin, upon hearing of the deaths early Friday morning, mobs of enraged Christians torched cars and police posts, also setting fire to a prison, freeing some 200 prisoners. On the island of Flores, the mobs wielded machetes, sending panic running through the streets.

The European Union sharply criticized the planned executions. Finland, who holds the EU presidency currently, issued a statement Friday: "The presidency of the European Union has learned with disappointment that despite numerous expressions of concern by the EU to the Indonesian authorities, Indonesia has carried out executions in Central Sulawesi." Capital punishment is banned in the 25-member bloc. Even Joseph Ratzinger, known to his followers as Pope Benedict XVI, had issued pleas to spare the men.

As can be expected, tensions surrounding the extent of the role that religion has played in these proceedings were especially heightened. Some undoubtedly see these men as martyrs. Others will canonize their May 2000 victims. However, it is important to note that this entire string of events serves as an instructional example of the outcome when people of mutually incompatible dogmas attempt to force their theology onto one another. Yes, the execution of these three men and the effect that it had on the community

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