

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

Sunday, September 21st, 2 p.m. in the 8th floor Boardroom of the Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale. A three member panel will convene consisting of: John Xanthopoulos, Ph.D., Chairman, Atheists of Florida; Dr. Michael P. Brannon; and Jim Mullins, National Board Member of the ACLU, and member of the International Policy Association of the U.N. Some of the topics that will be discussed include the state of affairs in academic teaching, multiculturalism, influence of the social sciences, and psychological reflections. FMI: Atheist Hotline: (305) 936-0210.

MIAMI:

PALM BEACH:

Third Sunday of each month, 3:30 p.m. at the Herb Watt Rec. Bldg., just north of the North Palm Beach Library.

Saturday, September 27, 12:30 in meeting room B, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 E. Drew Street, Clearwater. We will view a video of a report on Amish child rearing done by the ABC news program 20/20.

TAMPA:

Our quarterly meeting with area freethought groups will be Saturday, October 18 from 1:00 to 4:00 in the Adler meeting room of the Clearwater Main Library, 100 N. Osceola Avenue in downtown Clearwater. Then our guest speaker will be Linda Bacon, president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association who will speak on "Our Public Schools Under Siege." Light refreshments will be served.

Letters

continued

keep up the good work. It is a good newsletter and good information.

Thank you for your interest. *Arlen G. Steinke*
Ft. Lauderdale

Arlen;

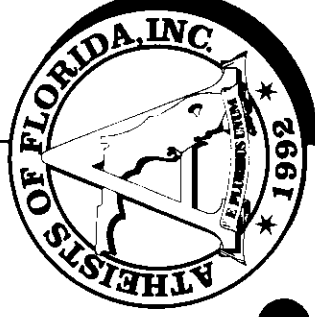
In their efforts to improve service, the Post Office has again enacted changes in their Bulk Mail system. It now requires over three weeks to get bulk mail from Tampa, where the newsletter is mailed, to South Florida instead of what was formerly two weeks.

We're accommodating that by sending postcards to announce the meetings via first class mail when we can't get a newsletter out far enough in advance. -Ed

Thanks for profile

Thank you for the profile feature in the previous newsletter. The article does describe me to some degree, even if not completely.

Christopher W. Jones
Tamarac, FL. **A**



Alliance Members:

Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin
Atheist Centre
Vijayawada, India
Atheist Coalition
San Diego, CA
Atheist Community of Austin, TX
Atheists of Colorado
Atheists of Florida
Atheists & Other Freethinkers
Sacramento, CA
Atheists of San Francisco Region
Atheists United
Los Angeles, CA
Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia
Metroplex Atheists
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
Minnesota Atheists
Rationalist Society of St. Louis
Society Against Religion
Commack, NY

Johnson foundation denies aid

AFTER WHAT APPEARED TO be encouraging news from Bonnie Lange, one of the principal members of the funds distribution committee of the James Hervey Johnson Foundation, Atheists of Florida president Christos Tzanetakos received word last month that our submission was denied.

A grant request of \$50,000 had been proposed to the foundation seeking the basis for a legal fund which Atheists of Florida could use to fight the proposed chapel at

the chapel does not injure any party. It is not until actual public monies are spent on the chapel that we may claim to have been injured by this violation of the state constitution and thus bring an action against the violators.

MacKay instigated a public records request for any and all documents related to the decision to create a chapel within Tampa International Airport and amassed a large file of documents. These include minutes of any official board meetings referring to the chapel, correspondence, plans, memos, e-mail, b-mail, and virtually anything else which has been sent to the Authority regarding the chapel. He then

State of Florida Constitution

Article I, Section 3 "Religious Freedom"

"No revenue of the state or any political subdivision or agency thereof shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution..."

8

July 1997

Atheists of Florida



P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681-0753

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

Tampa International Airport. In February, the airport authority board approved the expenditure of \$20,000 to build a chapel at the airport. This is a direct violation of the Florida State constitution which prohibits the expenditure of public monies for religious purposes.

Attorney for Atheists of Florida John MacKay has advised that we should wait until actual construction has begun before we may bring a suit. Otherwise, we would lack a basis for the suit. The mere decision to build

forwarded all material to Ed Golly, principal litigant representing Atheists of Florida, and copies of this are being sent to Andrew Kayton, Legal Director of the ACLU of Florida in Miami. We are asking that Kayton review the material and we hope to meet with him in October to discuss his final opinion concerning the involvement of ACLU of Florida in the suit. If they deny any backing, Golly will then proceed with the suit on his own.

We expect construction on the third floor of the airport, where the chapel is to be located, to begin sometime early next year. **A**

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume VI Number 5

July, 1997

JUST WHAT IS A lower form of life? It depends on the definition used. If the definition is one of structure and physiology then the lowest form would probably be bacteria. (Don't even think about asking me about virus.)

A lower form of life

this earth would not be possible without fungus among us. Just what would an eco-biologist classify as lower forms of life?

Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. He lives in Ormond By The Sea, FL

The best way to answer that is to ask, "What would an eco-biologist classify as the highest form of life?"

Hands down it is a Maple tree

(You may substitute any other tree that is wind-pollinated, but be careful). Maple trees overproduce leaves which fall to the ground and with the help of bacteria, become soil.

They carry on photosynthesis and over-produce sugar which is the building block for all forms of life (Without sugar there would be no higher forms of life. You are basically sugar and don't forget it!) Through this same process they over-produce oxygen.

They use some, but the rest is snapped up by the environment and makes a suitable environment for you-know-who. This process also takes ground water and releases it into the atmosphere, helping to make rain clouds. The Maple tree also overproduces seeds, billions of them. The extras serve as a great source of nourishment for a multitude of critters. While this is going on, the tree is an ecosystem for hundreds of living things.

And, get this, they give off enough warm moisture, through transpiration, to cause air currents. You ask, what good is that? I'll tell you. The Maple tree produces very tiny male plants called pollen. This pollen travels with these air currents to other trees where they meet a female plant, the ovary. The little pollen grain then grows a tube to unite with the ovary. It then produces a sperm which swims through this tube and fertilizes the egg pro-

duced by the ovary. See, it even makes its own delivery system for sex.

I tell you this story to let you know that the Maple tree is completely self sufficient.

Let's add this up. Maple trees make their own soil, which others use. They make their own food, which others use. They make their own oxygen, which others use. They make rain clouds, which others use. They produce seeds, which others use. They furnish habitat for others. They do not count on other living things for reproduction. (Tell that to your significant other.)

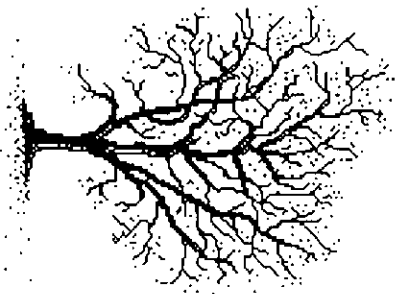
So if the Maple tree is the highest form of life, what is the lowest?

Let's see, is there a form of life that uses the sugars and oxygen produced by photosynthesis, but rakes up leaves so it will not become soil, cuts down the maple trees to make something to sit on, pollutes the air by burning the tree and oil which were Maple trees millions of years ago, destroys the habitat to raise ap-

ples, sprays, kills, steals, cheats and creates tree-men-dous problems to get sex.....

An Alien from a far distant planet in the universe observing these two forms of life fell off of its wazprrdy with laughter when he heard the lower form of life say, "I am superior because God created me in his image."

— Jim Strayer



Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

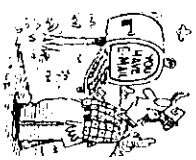
P. O. Box 39561
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33389-9561
800/849-9349
954/563-7386

MARY BENNETT HUDSON

True Gideon
Ed sent this to the Tampa Tribune. Perhaps we should get this printed "bible size" to slip into offending hotel room accessories.

Maybe the students should study the history of the Gideon fellow of biblical fame. Here are some of his accomplishments:

Letters



- * Gideon slaughtered thousands in battle by plotting with the "Lord" to use treachery
- * Gideon murdered thousands more for worshipping "false Gods"
- * Gideon tortured and killed still more for daring to taunt him
- * Gideon plundered the bodies of his victims (to fashion a jeweled priestly vestment)
- * Gideon fathered an offspring who killed 69 of his stepbrothers

Read the bible for yourself. You will find the story of Gideon in Judges Chapters 6-9. There are other interesting stories overlooked by the priests. For example:

What did Lot do after his wife supposedly turned to a pillar of salt? He impregnated his two daughters who begat two sons. Not even *Hustler* magazine condones incest but the bible justifies it. Also that Mary claiming to be a virgin had seven children and we have no idea where Jesus came in the sequence. Talk about a cover up. And gool "ole" Moses, the murderer on the lam as well as thief and plagiarist. Read those bibles, every word, and if you have a questioning mind you may also become a free thinker.

Edwin Corl
St. Pete

Women's right to "No"

Printed in the May 15 St. Petersburg Times as a response to another letter

Re: "Why not give women the facts on abortion," May 13

I'm afraid I must question the letter writer's dedication to "furnishing of factual information" and "merely to tell the truth," not to mention the supposedly similar dedication of the legislators pushing the "Women's Right to Know Act."

Until the law includes furnishing all the factual information to those contemplating giving birth as well as to those contemplating abortion, I see no dedication to information, merely a dedication to an anti-abortion agen-

da. When the letter writer and our legislators are as insistent that every woman knows abortion is legal, safe, and available (and safe from fanatics), that every woman knows the hazards and drawbacks of giving birth and raising children, then I will believe otherwise. *Brent Yacur*
Tampa

David and Bathsheba and Bill

I am constantly amazed at how the multitudes of supposedly intelligent people in this country continue to blindly follow the pontifications of their church and religiously guided political leaders. The July 8, 1997 front page article in the *St. Petersburg Times* about the minister's wife being arrested for arson would certainly make me think twice (or more) if I were a religious person. But, instead, it only fortifies my disbelief in the greatest story ever sold.

Do the sheep merely follow? Do they just listen and not read and investigate for themselves that which is fed to them daily by their religious and political leaders?

Bill Clinton entered into his presidency with a "covenant". Dr. Lyons preaches to his lambs about the pitfalls of violating the ten commandments. Then we are treated to a picture, in the same edition of the *Times* of these two prominent leaders and adulterers rubbing shoulders at the national Baptist convention. How gullible can people be?

The good Dr. Lyons has evidently used about \$1-million of the hard-earned (tax-free) money of his sheep to purchase two homes that, I dare say, 99.12% of them could never afford in a lifetime and in neighborhoods where their presence would be somewhat less than welcomed by their Godly inhabitants.

Dr. Lyons and Bill Clinton should return to their bibles and read Samuel 11:2-4, Exodus 20:14, and Proverbs 6:20-29. Then they should stand in shame for helping to perpetrate such a tremendous hoax as they repeat those words passed down from generation to generation, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." *Edward J. McDougall, Sr.*

Spring Hill
E-mail: Sunshine@fiber-net.com

Unlucky atheist

Dear Friends at the Atheists,
Received your newsletter today and the meeting was yesterday. Received an April issue in June and my mailman is mad at me for reading "trash like that."

I'm so unlucky I get the old newsletters late. I'm so unlucky I meet the women who used to have money. Looking forward to your next notice and (turn page)



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Ft. Pierce, FL 34948-3893
E-mail: AthAI.FL.C@aol.com
Contact Phone: (305) 936-0210

Membership dues

Life Member \$ 500.00
Sustaining 50.00
Couple 40.00
Individual 30.00
Student (under 25 yrs) 10.00
Send newsletter correspondence to:
Tampa Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681
E-mail: AthAI.FL.E@aol.com

The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from members are published on a space-available basis. Articles may be edited for clarity or length.

Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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Newsletter Editor: Ed Golly

Diocese caught with its skirts up

After being the law for so many generations, the church must now begin to comply with it

Dallas — In the largest verdict of its kind, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas was ordered to pay nearly \$120 million in July for allowing a priest to molest altar boys and then conspiring to cover it up.

Ten men the clergyman was accused of molesting and the family of an 11th victim who committed suicide brought the lawsuit.

Their lawyers contended that the diocese had ignored evidence that the reverend was molesting the boys. The diocese did not dispute the molestation, but denied it was negligent.

The judge read a statement from the jurors directed to the diocese asking church officials to change the way they investigate child abuse by priests. That's like appointing Charles Keating chief investigator of bank fraud.

Sherman's son sues Scouts

Chicago — The July 4 *Chicago Tribune* ran a story with definite state/church separation content. Rob Sherman's son, Ricky, now 15, was denied membership in the Buffalo Grove [IL] Police Explorer Program, which is aimed at youth interested in law-enforcement

careers. The program was started by the Buffalo Grove Police Department more than two decades ago, but has been affiliated with the Boy Scouts only for the last five years.

Sherman, when submitting his application, crossed out the words "trust in God" and "be faithful to my religious duties." The police department accepted the form and gave Sherman a 60-day temporary membership, but the Boy Scouts later denied his request for membership.

Since the program is run by the police department, Sherman maintains that they can't legally discriminate against atheists. He has filed suit against the Boy Scouts of America in U.S. District Court in Chicago, seeking the teen's acceptance into the club and \$10-million in damages.

Rob Sherman said he is not asking the police department to drop their affiliation with the Boy Scouts, but he wants to stop the Boy Scouts from making the government discriminate.

"The court has said the Boy Scouts are a private group and can exclude atheists," Sherman said. "But the law is clear on governmental agencies. They cannot exclude atheists."

Because the program is run by police officers and meetings are held at the police department, requiring members to sign the Scout oath violates state and federal laws, the suit contends.

"I am not asking these government agencies to drop their Explorer programs," Sherman said, "but the Boy Scouts must stop making government agencies discriminate."

Sherman seems to have a good case. What may happen is that the police department will defuse the issue by dropping its affiliation with the Boy Scouts, leaving Richard Sherman in the program but depriving Sherman of a case.

Private enterprise must be devil's work

From the Dayton Daily News, Aug 3:

Columbus, OH — Matthew Peterson (a Presbyterian minister) and the ACLU have filed a suit challenging the inscription of the state motto, "With God, all things are possible," in front of the statehouse. Governor Voinovich said he got the idea from a public building in India that bore the statement, "Government work is God's work."

Tax Commissioner Roger Tracy, who has the motto inscribed on state tax forms, said he has long expected such a legal challenge and was glad it finally arrived. "I've been waiting for these First Amendment banana-heads to sue. In America, we believe God exists." **A**

Newt credits coalition

Atlanta — House Speaker Newt Gingrich urged the Xian Coalition's 1.9-million members to help him ban abortion. With his biggest applause coming when he said abortion is morally wrong, he told the coalition's annual conference that a balanced budget and welfare reform would not have been possible without the group's support.

The group's new leader, former Rep. Randy Tate, who replaced executive director Ralph Reed in June, said, "We want people in office to share our vision and to love God. We need to do a better job of recruiting people of faith to our movement." He said most Americans worry about... "whether an education system will undermine the faith of children taught by their parents."

Founder Pat Robertson said, "Our nation is in crisis... The religious values that we hold so dear are under attack. I think it is time to clean house at the top or our nation."

Louis E. Medow

Louis Medow was an old timer. His association with our organization goes back to when we were a chapter of American Atheists of which he was a member. When we formed Atheists of Florida, he became one of the 53 charter members and signed the December, 1991 Chapter Resolution.

Chapter Resolution

The undersigned, Louis E. Medow, member of the "South Florida Chapter of American Atheists" certifies that after receiving the report of the November 9th, 1991 meeting and after careful examination of the causes given, does hereby:

Vote: That the "South Florida Chapter of American Atheists" declare its independence from the Society of Separationists, Inc. (American Atheists)

Further vote: That the name of the independent group be "Florida Atheists."

Further vote: That Florida Atheists be incorporated and its bylaws be consistent with the Florida not-for-profit Corporation Act.

Further vote: That Florida Atheists apply for tax exemption under the IRS 501(c)(3) status and disclose its finances to the members annually and/or on request as mandated by the IRS rules.

Further vote: That Florida Atheists demand the immediate return of the \$6,146.04 of the building and the Scholarship Funds.

Further vote: That Florida Atheists act as a watch dog for the implementation of the not-for-profit Corporation Act by all Atheistic not-for-profit membership organizations.

Signed this 06 Day of December 1991.

Signature: Louis E. Medow

Remarks: All the best for our embryonic organization.

Well, I think we have passed the embryonic stage and since January 1997, we have brought in 29 new members.

A heartfelt farewell from the board of directors of Atheists of Florida, Inc.

— C. Tzanetakos

MARK ANDREW TROP Attorney at Law

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Miami Shores, FL 33138

(305) 759-5727

A of F in book fair

THE MIAMI BOOK FAIR INTERNATIONAL is scheduled for the week of November 17th to 23rd with the book sales event during the weekend of Friday, the 21st, to Sunday, the 23rd.

Atheists of Florida has registered as a participant in the event and we need volunteers to distribute our literature and books.

Statistics: More than 250 authors participate every year; Nearly 300 national and international exhibitors display and sell books; Over 500,000 visitors attend Book Fair events; Miami Book Fair International touches the lives of more than 150,000 children through its children's programs; Book Fair involves close to 1,000 volunteers from the community.

We need a few ourselves. If you are available to help, please contact Christos Tzanetakos at (561) 489-5505; by mail at Atheists of Florida / P. O. Box 3893 / Ft. Pierce, FL 34948; or e-mail at AthAFLC@aol.com.

Christian Analogies

— Barry Rowe

THE ORIGINS OF DEITIES have very interesting similarities. Let's look at Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, and Jesus.

The angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and told her that she would conceive by the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus. When Herod the Great tried to kill the baby Jesus, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.

When Mohammed, Arabian prophet and founder of the Moslem religion was born, a mighty light shone from his mother's breast all the way to Syria, 800 miles away.

Buddha was born about 600 BC of the Virgin Maya, or Mary. His incarnation was accomplished by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Virgin Maya. When he was born, a burst of light shone throughout the world, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, and the lame walked.

Krishna (the Hindu Christ) was born of a virgin, Devaki, in a cave about 1200 BC. An angelic voice from heaven announced to her: "In thy delivery, O favored among women, all nations shall have cause to rejoice." Wise men came to worship him, and brought him valuable presents. And the ruling tyrant ordered all children born that night to be slain, but Krishna's father, being warned in a dream, fled with the child. Krishna was crucified.

Why should Christianity be more credible than Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or the countless thousands of other world religions?

Atheists of Florida member Barry Rowe lives in Melbourne, FL **A**

NEWS
FILES

From Dan Bridges, Atheists of Colorado
Co-President E-mail: DBrid41775

I know some of you don't care for Barry Lynn the director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, because he is a bit too religious to suit your taste. However, at this point in time, because the atheist community has no spokesperson in the Washington, DC area, I think we have to rely on Americans United to represent us in the fight against the Religious Freedom Amendment.

The more I see of RFA, the more convinced I become that AAI needs to restructure along the lines of Americans United, which is a nonprofit, has a central mailing list, and has many chapters around the country.

Religious Freedom Amendment

State/church watchdog group decries 'unnecessary' and 'tremendously hazardous' religion amendment

"In Alabama, the 'people' could have a referendum to declare the state to be a Christian state...."

Istook proposal would Balkanize America and lead to religious coercion, says AU's Barry Lynn

July 22, 1997
Washington, D.C. — IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE House Constitution Subcommittee today, Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, expressed strong opposition to H.J.Res. 78, the so-called "Religious Freedom Amendment."

"Simply put, the proposed amendment to the Constitution is not only unnecessary, it is also tremendously hazardous," Lynn said. "Religion is a deeply personal issue. Any effort to create a religion amendment to the

Dan Bridges was instrumental in the Amendment 11 fight and is an AAI board member.

Constitution will undoubtedly upset the delicate balance between church and state

that has enabled religion to flourish in our nation for over 200 years."

Lynn, a United Church of Christ minister and veteran civil liberties attorney, charged that the amendment, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Okla.), would provide for official recognition of majority faiths, result in public funding of religious institutions and lead to coercive public school prayer. He insisted that the amendment would allow for local or state government to officially recognize the predominant religion, thus branding many Americans as outsiders in their own communities and Balkanizing America.

"Do we really want Dane County, Wisconsin, declaring itself a Catholic county, while the town next door in Dodge County declares itself a Lutheran community?" Lynn asked. "In Utah, the 'people' could vote to declare the state officially Mormon. And in Alabama, the 'people' could have a referendum to declare the state to be a Christian state...."

In addition, Lynn noted that the amendment would result in religious institutions receiving public funds. He pointed out that the amendment's language would create a right for religious groups or institutions to demand any "benefit" that public groups may receive. As a result, for every activity being funded by the government, an entitlement is created for religious groups to receive the same benefits.

For example, Lynn explained, if a public school received taxpayer funds, then this amendment would allow for religious schools to be entitled to the same funds.

"Any religion, all religions, and anyone who wants to call his organization a religion can set up child care centers, schools, and prisons with public grants," Lynn said. "The organizations could then use taxpayer funds for their religious exercises and worship. This is either an unfunded mandate of biblical proportions, or an invitation to interreligious strife on an unprecedented level."

In his testimony, Lynn also criticized the amendment's effect on school prayer and other religious expression in public school. The Americans United official explained that students in public schools already have the right to pray and read religious literature privately, say grace before meals, distribute reli-

Religious Freedom Amendment

(as now proposed in Congress)

To secure the people's right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: The people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. The government shall not require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, initiate or designate school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.

gious materials to classmates and even form religious clubs during noninstructional times.

With this in mind, Lynn called into question why this amendment was necessary to extend rights to students that they already have. In fact, Lynn insisted that the effect of the amendment would be the opposite of the intended one, with the religious rights of students actually being endangered.

Noted Lynn, "Because the proposed amendment will authorize prayers in captive audience situations, it will interfere with the right of parents to raise their children according to their own religious faith.

"If a public school teacher can lead her students in a prayer before a test, that's coercion," Lynn said. "If a football player feels pressure to join in a team prayer in order to play, that's coercion. If a judge can lead a courtroom of defendants in prayer before sentencing, that's coercion. Yet all of these activities are authorized by this amendment. Thus, this amendment authorizes the very coercive practices it disclaims."

Lynn concluded his remarks by asking the subcommittee to leave the Constitution intact. He said, "I ask that this committee reject this proposal and leave the First Amendment as James Madison intended: religious freedom and equality for all."

Americans United is a 50,000-member public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., that works to defend religious liberty by supporting the separation of state and church. Founded in 1947, the group this year celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Child evangelizing

From Carol Smith
somewhere just north of Milwaukee, WI
E-mail: csmith@omnifestivum.edu

THE ASPECT OF THE Religious Freedom/Liberty (?) Amendment open-

ing the door to child evangelizing is interesting, and gives me an opportunity to pass on some information. This is not an "out in left field" concern.

If anyone would like to see for themselves a very slick publication devoted to child evangelizing, they can get it for free. It is called *Today's Child*, and I just received a copy of the May/June 1997 edition.

This magazine is packed with ideas on how an xian family can evangelize its religion on unsuspecting playmates and

schoolmates of their children by training the kids in evangelism, having organized, structured after school play times (called five day clubs as their object is to be held regularly five days a week), etc.

I got my copy by calling an 800 number and leaving a message on a special recording set up specifically for this purpose.

In the magazine itself there is an 800 number, but I don't know if it is the same one. Contact information: (not for the faint of heart, as this is really scary stuff!) 1-800-748-7710

Evangelizing Today's Child published bi-monthly by Child Evangelism Fellowship, Inc.

2300 E. Highway M.
Warrenton, MO 63383-3420

Child Evangelism Fellowship is a Bible-centered, worldwide organization composed of born-again believers whose purpose is to evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to establish (disciple) them in the Word of God and in a local church for Christian living. While the editors are responsible for the contents of *ETC*, viewpoints of the authors are not necessarily those of CEF, Inc. The publisher does not endorse the entire contents of all publications referred to in this magazine.