This is a “Catch-Up” Issue

by The Freethought Society News Editorial Team

Many readers of The Freethought Society News ezine have contacted us wondering why the July/August 2017 publication was not available. The editorial team found it impossible to meet a July/August deadline this year. We are, therefore, combining the July/August issue with the September/October and the November/December 2017 publications, creating an “End of the Year Wrap-Up” issue.

At times, life changes and unforeseen difficulties will get in the way of meeting publication deadlines. To all our readers, thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to volunteer our time and strive to serve the nontheist community.

While some of the articles in this issue highlight events that took place earlier than September, we think it is important to capture them and establish an historical record of many ground-breaking and important freethought events. In this issue you will see photos and read first-hand accounts of the events that are shaping the future of freethought.

In this six-month overview publication, we are also proud to have submissions from many readers offering opinions/commentary, journey stories, event announcements, reports, photos and much more. The editorial team encourages submissions such as those in this issue, as well as book reviews, film critiques and poetry from readers that will help convey and promote the mission, vision and goals of the Freethought Society (FS). Submissions help us meet publication deadlines. The all-volunteer editorial team has developed the following publication submission guidelines:

1. All articles submitted must be the author’s original work and not previously published, giving FS full first-time publication rights.

2. Authors of articles submitted for publication have “veto power” over most editorial changes that are made to their article. While there is no obligation that any edited version of articles are shared with the author prior to publication, the editorial team leader may review edits with the author prior to printing to guarantee complete satisfaction.

3. Authors are requested to submit a word count of their articles. The editorial team is suggesting a maximum of 5,000 words. Special consideration for a more lengthy article will be given for excellent subject matters and interesting articles found worthy of extended space allotments.

4. Authors must send a short bio and photo of themselves. Bios and photos will not necessarily be published, and are subject to editing/cropping at the discretion of the editorial team. Head and shoulder photographs are appreciated. All photos must be high resolution and good lighting is a must.

5. Authors are encouraged to submit photos with “journey stories” and may suggest clip art. The editorial team leader retains the authority to add clip art or other illustrations/photos to any article.

6. Please title your article. Title assistance is available through the editorial team.

7. Authors are encouraged to use a Times New Roman 11 point font. Please only use one space between sentences.

Interested writers can send submissions to: Ezine@FtSociety.org. Thank you in advance for considering participating in the publishing effort.
Clarence Darrow Statue Unveiled in Tennessee
by Margaret Downey

I first learned about Pennsylvania-based sculptor Zenos Frudakis almost three years ago when an article about his work appeared in the American Humanist Association’s magazine, The Humanist (July/August 2014). In that article, Frudakis highlighted the fact that he considers himself a “humanist first” and that sculpting is simply his medium. I was impressed with that declaration, but also with the full size photo of his work, “Knowledge is Power.” The piece was installed at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, later that year.

During several meetings and phone conversations, Frudakis and I decided that we should work together on getting humanism and freethought into art projects that were of mutual interest to us. We knew immediately that a statue of Thomas Paine would be one goal, but Frudakis had already started a statue of Clarence Darrow. The Darrow project would take priority, of course, so I volunteered to help with this effort. I joined his public relations and fundraising team.

A statue of Darrow could promote the values that are of interest to the Freethought Society (FS). Darrow’s legacy of equality under the law, critical thinking, and the promotion of scientific advancements made him worthy of having a statue created in his honor. A public display at the very courthouse where the famous “Scopes Monkey Trial” took place was also an educational opportunity. There is no better example of Darrow’s legendary work than can be found in the 1925 legal case, The State of Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes. Scopes was a high school substitute teacher who was accused of violating Tennessee’s Butler Act. The Butler Act, by law, prohibited public school teachers from denying the Biblical account of man’s origin.

Scopes deliberately incriminated himself so that the case could have a defendant. Two well-known lawyers agreed to represent each side. Three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan argued for the prosecution. Darrow spoke for Scopes. The case soon became a theological trial and brought to question whether “modern science” should be taught in public schools violating the in-place Butler Act.

Scopes was found guilty and fined $100. The verdict, however, was overturned on a technicality. The trial and verdict drew intense national publicity to the small town of Dayton, Tennessee. The proceedings highlighted the religious fervor of the time.

When the Darrow statue project was announced, a minority of overtly religious residents attempted to stop the installation even though the full story of the trial was never fully represented at the Rhea County Courthouse. A statue of Bryan had been gracing the lawn of the Rhea County Courthouse since 2010. It was commissioned by The Bryan College Board of Trustees, with Chattanooga artist Cessna Decosimo selected as the sculptor.

Many Dayton residents agreed that a statue of Darrow would help create a balanced representation of what had occurred at the site of the trial. In spite of that, one woman in town, June Griffin, took it as a personal challenge to wage an anti-Darrow statue “war.” She contacted as many people as possible to stop the process and even conducted a last-ditch effort in the form of an Anti-Statue Rally a few weeks before the announced installation date. When interviewed by The Philadelphia Inquirer, Griffin said the following about the Clarence Darrow statue:

“It doesn’t belong here! Darrow was basically an atheist and in my estimation, a communist, too. Tennessee is definitely a God-fearing state, based on the Bible.”

During that newspaper interview, Griffin indicated that she wanted to engage sponsors of the statue in a debate. At the time, she thought the only sponsors were humanists. She said, “the humanists should have to defend themselves in court, without lawyers.” Then Griffin suggested that the American Humanist Association form its own militia, because “If worst comes to worst, I will challenge them to meet us in their uniforms at King’s Mountain, just like John Sevier did, and we’ll settle it over there. This is a battle between good and evil.”

Griffin’s suggestion of a public militia face-off at King’s Mountain was already disturbing; she then actually called the American Humanist Association (AHA) to arrange for the battle! AHA Communications Director Maggie Ardiente received the call and was shocked at the notion. I, too, was shocked, but after the Virginia shooting of Republican politicians as they practiced for an upcoming baseball game, I thought we should take such declarations very seriously.

I began an online search for more Griffin commentary and found a shocking photo of her at her Tennessee Ten Commandments Facebook page. In the photo Griffin is proudly holding a shotgun. Along with that disturbing photo I discovered her rants about doing battle with the atheists and calling herself a “Christian saint, for God and Country.” Under her shotgun picture she wrote:

“Christians don’t kowtow to the enemies of God. The God of David, Oliver Cromwell, George Washington and William Gannaway Brownlow lives. You will get a nice surprise when you dare to step on sacred grounds of OUR Courthouse. You might bully your way around with our County’s advisor, the historical society, the DA, and the Commission who are afraid of you, but I am not afraid of you. You are worse than devils; the ‘devils fear and tremble,’ but you have no fear of God. You come with your high-minded corruption and your boasted freedom but you will be brought to nothing when we get through with you. You come to us in the name of theatrical equality lawyers, but we come to you in the Name of the LORD OF HOSTS. The County property owners control this House — not you. Our God will bring upon your worst fear. This is
Psalm 149 calls on God’s faithful to destroy his enemies. The shotgun photo and Griffin’s Facebook rants were so concerning that Ro Frudakis and Annie Laurie Gaylor contacted the FBI, Tennessee State Troopers and local police authorities.

I contacted my friend Hemant Mehta and asked him to do an expose about Griffin in order to shine a light on her antics. Mehta had previously written three articles about the statue and was aware that she was a local fundamentalist, but he did not know how threatening and potentially dangerous she had become.

Mehta started writing a comprehensive article about Griffin for his website, the “Friendly Atheist.” Mehta spoke directly to Griffin and she conveyed her unhappiness with the Rhea County Commissioners, saying that they had “betrayed the people.” Then she said that she knew “people who live on the outskirts who “just do things,” and “there’s always spray paint.”

Mehta’s article included that quote, of course, as it revealed Griffin would be very likely to condone vandalism should the statue be installed. During his 30-minute phone call with her she refused to say that violence was out of the question.

When Mehta asked Griffin, point blank, if she planned to bring weapons to the July 14th unveiling, she responded, “It wouldn’t be a surprise if I told you.” Then she said, “I’m like George Washington. I don’t make plans. When the time comes, we’ll see what happens.”

Mehta pressed Griffin again, asking if she intended to be violent on the installation date. Griffin responded by saying, “I am not gonna tell you what I’m gonna do. I don’t know for sure what I’m gonna do. But it’ll be revealed at the last minute.”

After reading Mehta’s report, our concerns were elevated. We made a few more calls. Government officials visited Griffin and spoke to her concerning her threats of violence, forming a militia and attempting to incite hatred in the community. After several more visits by police, local officials felt that Griffin was simply a harmless, overly conservative, religious nut. Griffin changed her Facebook photo on June 28, 2017. She called it her “Granny Photo” as she was pictured surrounded by toys as she sat in a rocking chair with a book of nursery rhymes in her hand. It would appear from the replacement photo that June has had a change of heart and decided to be a sweet and welcoming southern woman. But, no! This is what she wrote under that photo:

“New profile picture to appease all the atheists who feared the last one. This profile picture depicts June Griffin’s loving and nurturing side. She’s really just a granny at heart with her Bible in one apron pocket and her side arm in the other. But don’t worry neither are pictured.”

So there she was telling every Facebook page visitor that she has a concealed weapon! She also posted:

"Knowing the terror of the LORD we persuade men. The atheists said they don’t fear God, but they fear our weapons!!! Showing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

Well, I found all this very disturbing. I called the Tennessee Pastors Network and talked to the president of the organization, Pastor Dale Walker. Several months earlier he was quoted in The Wall Street Journal declaring that, “This monument spits in the face of our Christian heritage.”

In another article he said, “The citizens need to rise up,” so I wondered if he also considered Griffin harmless or if he held the same violent sentiments as she. During our conversations, Pastor Walker contended that he considered Griffin a person “who just doesn’t know when to shut up” and that I should not worry about her or any other Christian citizens in Dayton, Tennessee.

Griffin and Pastor Walker held their anti-statue rally on July 1st. Only about twenty anti-statue people showed up. There were twenty pro-statue people in attendance and they held signs supporting the upcoming July 14th installation. Even with that show of support and the guarantee that local police were scheduled to be on hand for the unveiling, a sense of concern still prevailed. A generous donor, who requested to remain anonymous, paid for a plain-clothes security officer to be at the site.

The installation went well with only a few difficulties not related to security concerns. When we arrived at the location for the unveiling, a large banner with the words “Read Your Bible,” had been placed on the facade of the Rhea County Courthouse directly behind the stage we planned to use for the dedication ceremony. I found out that the banner was there to advertise the annual play and Scopes Trial Festival. The banner is considered a prop of sorts in that it is a recreation of the one that was on display in 1925 during the trial.

When Gaylor arrived, she and I talked and decided to pursue getting the banner removed prior to the ceremony. We discovered that Tom Davis was the person in charge and we needed to approach him. We did so and presented our case for the removal of the banner. After saying “no” several times, we continued with more reasons why the banner must be removed. Finally, after delaying the ceremony for about ten minutes, Davis approved the removal of the top screws of the banner. The words were instantly hidden behind the folded material.

The ceremony proceeded well. I was very honored to be the emcee introducing speakers and acknowledging important people in the audience, including the Bryant sculptor who was there to show his support of giving the public the complete trial story through the use of sculpture.

Actor John de Lancie delivered a moving speech about the importance of the project and he saved the day when, after the cover on the statue could not be easily removed, he took matters into his hands. He was the tallest person in attendance so I handed him one of four parasols I had brought for the ladies involved to have some shade cover that hot July day. Speakers Dan Barker and Frudakis also helped to remove the cover which was stuck on the little bit of hair that extended from the Darrow forehead.

Please see the next two pages of photos for more about the pre-statue installation ceremony dinner that was held on Thursday, July 13th and the event itself.
Above is a photo those who played a major role at the Thursday, July 13, 2017 dinner in honor of Clarence Darrow and the installation of a statue of him scheduled for Friday, July 14, 2017.

The names and a description about what they did at the dinner are as follows (left to right beginning with the back row):

**John de Lancie**: This famous and talented actor talked about the time he portrayed Darrow and how much he appreciated the efforts that were made to promote science during the trial.

**Margaret Downey**: Told the June Griffin story and imitated her when revealing her antics.

**Rosalie Frudakis**: Worked the PowerPoint slide show to coordinate with Downey’s presentation.

**Zenos Frudakis**: Spoke about the creation of the Darrow statue and showed how it was fabricated through a well-documented slide show.

**Annie Laurie Gaylor**: As the dinner emcee, she guided the program with grace and poise. She also talked about the role that the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) played in getting the Darrow statue project done.

**William Dusenberry**: Talked about how he spearheaded the project after visiting the Rhea County Courthouse and realized that not all sides were represented. He is an attorney who is passionate about the law and historic trial procedures.

**Andrew Kersten**: Disclosed many bits of trivia about Darrow that can be found in his book *Clarence Darrow: American Iconoclast.*

**Fred Edwards**: Represented the American Humanist Association and related how the project developed.

**Dan Barker**: Provided music before, during and after the dinner. He also spoke about FFRF’s involvement in the project.
1. Sculptor Zenos Frudakis delivers a dedication speech at the unveiling ceremony of the Clarence Darrow statue.

2. Margaret Downey (left) and Jenn Taylor are pictured at the Darrow statue. Standing behind Downey is John de Lancie.

3. Dan Barker is trying to help remove the statue cover by whipping the opposite end of the shroud as de Lancie uses a parasol to assist with the task.

4. Annie Laurie Gaylor is pictured with de Lancie as they proudly pose next to the Darrow statue.
2017 SCA Lobby Day and Secular Summit
by Margaret Downey

Each year, the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) sponsors a Lobby Day and Secular Summit that allows concerned citizens an opportunity to speak, socialize, learn about important issues and to meet with legislators about secular community concerns.

SCA prepares citizen lobbyists to speak about issues face-to-face with legislators. Registering as a Lobby Day participant enables SCA to schedule a time slots for meetings with either the legislators or their legislative assistants.

During the June 16th training session of Lobby Day, we were instructed on how to successfully interact with whomever we were meeting. Training stressed that confidence and knowledge are keys to respect. Leaders learned everything possible about issues that were to be discussed and the point was driven home with experts talking about details and groups practicing presentation styles.

Encouraging us to be the best representatives possible were the following speakers:

**Gayle Jordan**
Executive Director, Recovering from Religion

**Dan Diaz**
Advocate for End of Life Options

**Rabbi Jace Moline**
President, Interfaith Alliance

**Nick Little**
Legal Director, Center for Inquiry

**Mark Dann**
Regional Campaign Manager and Aging Organizations Liaison, Compassion & Choices

**Marci Hamilton**
Chief Executive Officer and Academic Director, CHILD USA

**Tiffany Gourley**
State Policy Counsel, National Council of Nonprofits

**Sarah Levin**
Senior Legislative Representative, SCA

**Representative Jamie Raskin**
U.S. Representative for Maryland’s 8th Congressional District

**Kyrsten Sinema**
U.S. Representative from Arizona’s 9th Congressional District

**Tulsi Gabbard**
U.S. Representative for Hawaii’s 2nd Congressional District

In my opinion, one of the most important points to convey from the moment a lobby session starts, is that per current data, 23.8 percent of Americans now consider themselves as **not affiliated** with a religion. Conveying that fact opens the ears of legislators as that translates to voter numbers.

The 2017 Lobby Day focused on two major issues.

1. Stopping the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, a tax law provision that prohibits 501(c)3 charities (including churches) from supporting or opposing candidates for office. The Johnson Amendment makes it difficult for charitable donations to be used for political campaigns. While 501(c)3 organizations such as The Freethought Society must file a Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service each year, churches are not required to report any financial information. The Johnson Amendment is one of very few, and very important safeguards to make sure that churches were not operating as a political entity. Without it, churches can filter money to candidates and actually entangle themselves in the electoral process. Secularists lobbied to keep The Johnson Amendment fully in place and not weakened in any way.

**Update since the June 16, 2017 Lobby Day effort:**

A provision in the House Republican tax bill unveiled on Thursday, November 2, 2017, would significantly weaken The Johnson Amendment. If section 5201 of the GOP tax bill is adopted, pastors would be able to endorse candidates from the pulpit without fear of losing their tax exemptions.

2. Secular lobbyists advocated for House Bill 5272, which is entitled “The Do No Harm Act.” This Bill is in response to the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which says no law can impede someone’s right to practice their First Amendment religious freedoms, even if a law wasn’t deliberately or intentionally designed to single out a specific religion or religious belief. The proposed law states, “Government shall not substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability.” The question is what is a “substantial burden” to religious freedom? The Do No Harm Act is a Democrat-crafted bill that would change how the law answers that question. If passed, it could...
potentially affect the health of millions of children and women as religion is often used as a tool of abuse and subjugation. Secularists support this Bill as it guarantees that American laws apply equally to the religious and nonreligious. “RFRA has become a vehicle for those seeking to impose their beliefs on others or claim that the tenets of their faith justify discrimination,” said sponsor Joe Kennedy (Democratic Congressman, 4th District of Massachusetts) in a press release. “The Do No Harm Act will restore the balance between our right to religious freedom and our promise of equal protection under law.”

Update since the June 16, 2017 Lobby Day effort:

The Bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee and the Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice.

SCA made the pre-Lobby Day celebration fun and educational with a dinner that was held at the Newseum on June 15.

The Reverend Nathan C. Walker, Executive Director of the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum, welcomed the participants. Mandisa Thomas was the emcee for the evening. She is the founder and president of Black Nonbelievers. The evening program included the following speakers:

Larry T. Decker
Executive Director, Secular Coalition for America

Brian K. Sims
State Representative for Pennsylvania’s 182nd Legislative District

Athena Salman
State Representative for Arizona’s 26th Legislative District

Kimberly Winston
National Correspondent, Religion News Service

Herb Silverman
President, Secular Coalition for America

I have participated in four SCA sponsored Lobby Days. Each time I’ve returned to my nonprofit work feeling rejuvenated and enthusiastic. I return proud to have acted as a representative and as a citizen lobbyist.

SCA events are always well-organized. It is a credit to the organizers that these efforts are held with a very reasonable registration fee. I highly recommend that readers sign up for the next SCA Lobby Day. Mark your calendars now for the first week of June in 2018 and sign up to keep up to date on other SCA activities. Visit the SCA website at: https://www.secular.org

2017 Secular Coalition for America Lobby Day Photos

Pictured right is Freethought Society board member Alan Gold getting a pat on the back from U.S. Senator Al Franken. Gold ran into Franken between his Secular Coalition for America (SCA) Lobby Day appointments and was pleased to get a photograph with one of his favorite politicians. Gold said the following about his experience in Washington, D.C.:

Lobby Day is a great event I look forward to every year. It is a chance to meet like-minded individuals from around the country and leaders of component organizations under the umbrella of SCA.

The banquet on the previous evening was well worth the time and money. The speeches that night were pithy and enlightening. I loved participating in the entire 2017 SCA Lobby Day event.
American Atheists 2017 Convention – Atheists Out of the Shadows
by Glen Loev

American Atheists (AA) conventions are usually scheduled for Easter weekend, but this year’s event was held mid-August, timed and located to coincide with the path of the long-awaited 2017 total eclipse of the sun.

The convention took place at the North Charleston Marriott hotel, located near Charleston, South Carolina. Events began on Thursday evening, August 17th with a pre-convention debate featuring Dr. Ed Buckner, former President of AA, and Dr. Wallace Marshall, Charleston Director, Reasonable Faith, with Dr. Herb Silverman, Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, moderating. I was not able to arrive until Friday, so I missed the debate. I heard from many that that the debate was lively, yet respectfully conducted, on the topic of whether America is, ever was, or ever should be a Christian nation. The correct answer to all three questions is a resounding “NO!”

Most convention attendees arrived on Friday, and two fun events were scheduled for that evening. The first was a “Pub Quiz” where attendees were divided into teams and would collectively answer questions asked by the moderator. Many of the questions were obscure, and at least obliquely related to eclipses, the moon, shadows, and the like. I’m happy to report that out of a dozen or so teams, the one including most of the “Philadelphia contingent” (Greg White, Scott Pleume, and me) took first place, in the end thanks to Greg’s prodigious knowledge of songs from a classic Pink Floyd album. Our prize was a large basket of candies, including Eclipse gum, which was in keeping with the convention’s overall theme.

The second event on Friday evening was a charity Cards Against Humanity event, with all proceeds benefitting Foundation Beyond Belief. It seemed everyone found it a unique and fun experience to play that game with people they didn’t know beforehand.

Saturday and Sunday were filled with speakers on many varied topics, including Matt Dillahunty on religious indoctrination; James Randi on magic, illusion and the paranormal; Shirley Rivera on atheist activism in Puerto Rico; Herb Silverman on adventures in atheism in the Bible Belt; Marsha Botzer on the importance of atheists and LGBTQ communities working towards common goals; civil rights activist Annie Pearl Avery on her experiences during the early civil rights era; Zerin Feroz on her difficult journey from Islam to atheism in Bangladesh and struggles to flee persecution in her homeland, and a sobering presentation by Eddie Tabash on the very real dangers of a “religious right” majority in the Supreme Court, effectively abolishing secular government in the United States for decades to come.

On Saturday evening there was a panel discussion about the Netflix film The Most Hated Woman in America, including the film’s writer/director Tommy O’Haver and people who knew Madelyn Murray O’Hair, the film’s subject, very well. Selected scenes from the movie were screened as part of the presentation. While generally well done (I would recommend watching the movie), there was one important inference that O’Hair, and by extension AA, stashed money away illegally in bank accounts in New Zealand.

The writer/director actually apologized for including that inference, in spite of his “defense” that the film was “based on true events” and not a documentary. O’Haver explained that it was included for dramatic effect, based on faulty information.

Sunday night offered a VIP reception, awards dinner, and Comedy Night. Among the many honorees, Brian Fields won the Activist of the Year award. Ian Harris gave a great stand-up comedy routine, and Frank Conniff and Trace Beaulieu of Mystery Science Theater 3000 gave hilarious running commentaries while the god-awful (pun intended) film “God’s Not Dead 2” was screened.

On Monday morning, the convention drew towards a close with more speakers, including a rousing keynote speech by AA President David Silverman, followed by a talk by Aron Ra about his current political race, running for a senate seat in the Texas state legislature — as a Democrat in an extremely conservative Republican majority district.

One of Silverman’s points would be of particular interest for Freethought Society (FS) supporters. He talked about the importance of using the term “atheist” to describe ourselves rather than the other monikers such as “secularist,” “humanist,” “freethinker” and the like (especially the dreaded term “agnostic”).

I think on this Silverman is generally correct; people know what “atheist” means but not the alternative terms. Just as other communities have reclaimed terms that were previously considered slurs, now using them proudly (eg., “queer”), we should hold our heads high and call ourselves what we, bottom line, are — atheists. I do not think Silverman is correct in his “absolutist” position. It’s true, many/most people may not understand what those other words mean. When already in conversation with someone on the topic of religious belief, using the term “atheist” to refer to ourselves usually makes the most sense. However, I think the other terms can be useful as conversation starters, and can pique interest.

Calling ourselves “Freethinkers” can give us a potential “foot in the door” to open conversations with people who might have prejudiced, incorrect ideas about atheists or atheism. We should therefore feel comfortable using the term “Freethinker” as appropriate in conversation. FS purposely embraces the word “Freethought” to convey our welcoming philosophical approach, and I think the word Freethought
works well on promotional materials, T-shirts, etc. We should have a big tent, big enough to welcome those who for whatever reason aren’t comfortable (at least to start!) referring to themselves “atheists.”

Monday afternoon offered the event we had all been waiting for with guarded excitement — The Total Solar Eclipse of the Sun. Anticipation was tentative, because weather forecasts kept shifting between partly cloudy, cloudy, and thunderstorms for the time of the eclipse, with many people checking obsessively all through the weekend. As it turned out, when the eclipse began skies were partly cloudy and so it was possible to see the sun become increasingly blocked by the moon.

Geology professor Sian Proctor guided us through the event, with interesting information about astronomy and the eclipse, and offered attendees a look at the sun through a properly shielded telescope. Just before totality, however, big dark clouds blocked our view. Even so, it was an amazing experience — in the middle of a hot, bright day, very quickly at totality, to see the sky become very dark, and to feel the temperature drop about 10 degrees F.

The convention ended with Silverman announcing that the location of next year’s convention, on Easter Weekend 2018, will be in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Besides American Atheists conventions, many other organizations hold wonderful conventions throughout the year. There are conferences sponsored by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, American Humanist Association and many more.

I’ve attended several AA conventions, and at the conclusion of one, always look forward to the next. Every one that I have attended has been interesting and informative as well as lots of fun. They, like other conventions for atheists, are great opportunities to meet like-minded individuals from around the country, and to hear from and speak with leaders in the atheist community. I would highly recommend that readers give an atheist-type convention a try…you will be glad you did!

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2017 DragonCon Parade Report
by Margaret Downey

For the seventh year in a row, I was pleased to be invited back to attend DragonCon as a guest. DragonCon is the world’s largest science fiction and fantasy gathering and is always held in Atlanta, Georgia. The date is always Labor Day weekend and includes a huge Saturday morning parade. Each year, the parade is viewed by more and more people. In 2017, convention organizers estimated that the number of DragonCon parade onlookers was over 90,000. When you add the number of people who watched the live television CW broadcast, viewers can be estimated in the millions. These numbers inspire me and I see a tremendous opportunity to promote the purpose and mission of the Freethought Society (FS) and the Skeptic speaker track at DragonCon (also known as “The DragonCon Skeptrack”).

The importance of applying reason and critical thinking skills into life is conveyed with the use of costuming and signage. Each character we develop has a message that encourages skepticism, activism, and the power of thinking critically. Financial support is sought to continue developing costumes and signs. Please consider donating to the DragonCon effort so that FS can sponsor the two very popular parade entries entitled “Punny Skeptic Characters” and “Skeptics in History.”

DragonCon parade organizers have told me that our group is considered “the most educational” entry of the parade. This is the main reason we participate!

Please see the next two pages for more photos of our parade characters.

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Pictured above at the American Atheist (AA) conference (left to right) are Greg White, Glen Loev and David Silverman.

White is a longtime Freethought Society (FS) board member and Loev is the Vice-President of FS.

Silverman is the president of AA.

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This year my custom parade costume was a “Skeptic Cheerleader” (pictured right). I used the opportunity to shout, “Think, people, think!” The old-fashion megaphone was helpful in my organizing efforts as well.

Pictured left is Emily Byrne. She is a professional artist so her parade costume and perfectly conveys her real-life skeptic sentiments. Byrne made custom T-shirts, hats and capes for six Skeptrack banner carriers. She also donated her time to create complimentary silhouettes at the conference.
Pictured right are **Stephen Ball** (as Galileo), **Heidi Lange** (as Hypatia), and **Timothy Edward Dawson** (as Diogenes).

Ball is a Life Member of DragonCon and enjoys attending gaming events, dance parties and Skeptrack speeches.

**Heidi Lange** quickly learned as much as she could about Hypatia when she decided to wear the Greek costume available for the portrayal. She enjoyed representing her heroine.

Dawson was disappointed that there was nobody in the Skeptic parade entry to portray Plato as he wanted to use the rubber chicken as a prop to chase his nemesis around the parade route. Maybe next year! A Plato sign and costume are available for use. Dawson was also a speaker at a Skeptrack session and his presentation was a huge hit.

Pictured in the left photo are **Cathy Miller** (as Madame Marie Curie), **Ben Radford** (as Clarence Darrow), and **Leighann Lord** (as Ida B. Wells).

Miller has portrayed Madame Curie for four years and enjoys interacting with the children that line the parade route.

This is the first time Radford has portrayed Darrow. He was inspired to do so when a statue of Darrow was unveiled earlier this year in Dayton, Tennessee.

Lord is a professional comedian who enjoys bringing her “nerdy-self” to DragonCon. She has performed to standing-room only audiences for several years. The Wells portrayal brings many cheers and shouts of appreciation along the parade route. Lord feels wonderful about that!
Punny Skeptic Characters at the 2017 DragonCon Parade

In the left photo Dayma Dawson is portraying Jane Goodall. Cory Jones is wearing a costume and holding a sign designed to create conversations about a career in Geology. Shana Pedroncelli is hoping to inspire children to pursue a career in Paleontology.

In the below photo Nick Lee (left) is a chef and Neil Carter (right) is a restaurant server. Each had a punny skeptic message to convey with their signs.

Pictured above dressed as “Mr. Question” is Chuck Miller. He is running for Senate in the state of Alabama.

Next to Miller is Celestia Ward. She is an artist who specializing in caricatures and cartooning.

Pictured right are Jessica Sahagian and Robert Dent.

Not pictured are the Skeptic banner carriers. Special thanks to Elisabeth Sheff, Bill Creasy, Teresa Ducuara, German Ducuara, and Phyllis Sargent for doing this important job.
Two years ago, the Thomas Paine Foundation/Memorial Committee (TPFMC) received an allowance to honor the life and work of Thomas Paine. TPFMC is a project of the Freethought Society (FS). The committee immediately began to plan, organize and implement walking tours in the three countries where Paine had once lived (United States, England and France).

In 2014, before there was available funding to work with, the TPFMC committee conducted a “Thomas Paine Walking Tour” in Philadelphia on behalf of the American Humanist Association (AHA). There are, however, many other locations in the United States that can be explored related to Paine’s life and work. The AHA coordination was done to provide a 2014 post-national conference activity. The event worked so well that the TPFMC committee started outreaching to other organizations to propose the possibility of co-organizing tours as part of conferencing experiences. TPFMC imagined tour possibilities in not only the United States, but also in England and France.

Soon information reached the committee about an international freethought conference being planned for the dates of September 21, 22, 23 and 24, 2017 in Paris, France. The Institute for Research and Studies of Freethought/International Association of Freethought/2017 conference seemed the perfect fit for a Thomas Paine themed tour of Paris. I proposed the Thomas Paine Themed Tour suggesting that a financial agreement could include an equitable split of hotel and travel expenses for the people needed to conduct the tour. The theme of the conference was “Freethought and Freethinkers, Yesterday and Nowadays,” so our proposal was a perfect fit. Three people would be needed to successfully conduct the Paris tour. The plan included hosting Gary Berton, (a historian, teacher and Thomas Paine expert), Julien Musolino (professor, author and Paine look alike), and me (to portray Paine’s longtime French friend, Madame Marguerite Brazier Bonneville). The photo of us below was taken at a Paris park as we waited for the taxi to bring us to the tour starting point.

Berton was pleased to inform the committee that his travel expenses would be fully covered by a research grant. Travel and $50 per day expenses for myself and Musolino were then approved by the FS board of directors. The Paris conference organizers agreed to pay for the hotel charges. Special thanks to Roger Lepeix and Phillipe Besson for their long-distance and detailed assistance.

After months of researching, script writing and planning, Musolino and I met with Berton for a timed rehearsal. We were pleased when the 1.5 hours of script time would likely work out exactly right for the three-hour time slot the French conference planners had allotted to us.

Besson and Lepeix arranged for van rentals, drivers, translators, and other volunteers to be of assistance during the tour.

When Musolino and I arrived in Paris on Wednesday, September 20th we immediately hired an Uber driver to take us to each of the planned stops so that the travel time could be calculated into the program plans. The 1.5 hours of travel time worked perfectly with the script and we felt confident that the tour would flow well.

On the day of the tour, we discovered that many of the streets in Paris were scheduled to be closed due to a raised terrorism threat level. The van drivers were scrambling to refigure routes and destination alternatives. Due to a few more unexpected delays, the tour finally started almost 30 minutes later than originally planned. We were on the road by 3:30 PM. Below is the list of the stops and why they played an important part in the Paine story. Imagine, as you read the list of stops below, that Berton provided historical facts, Musolino spoke the words of Paine as they related to the location, and I conveyed trivia as only Madame Bonneville could:

Stop #1
144 rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis
Paine stayed at a hotel on this site.

Madame Pompadour also resided there.

Stop #2
Hôtel Cusset (Mercure), 95 rue de Richelieu
This address was once the James Monroe residence.
Paine stayed with them until 1797.

Stop #3
White’s Hotel, 1 rue des Petits-Pères puis 7 passage des Petits-Pères
This is also the spot where Paine would eventually be arrested and sent to the Luxembourg prison.

Stop #4
Tuileries, place of the Palais des Tuileries, vers la place du Carrousel
Paine visited this location in 1781 when he arrived in Paris for the first time with John Laurens.

Stop #5
Hôtel de la Monnaie, 11 Quai de Conti
Paine visited the Hotel de la Monnaie frequently during 1788 and 1789 to meet with the Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson.

Stop #6
Luxembourg, prison of Luxembourg
15 rue de Vaugirard
This is where the prisoners of the French Revolution were detained and where many were marched to the guillotine.
Paine was detained in Luxembourg from December 1793 to November 1794.
Stop #7
10 rue de l’Odéon
Paine moved in with printer and writer Nicholas de Bonneville in the spring of 1797.
Paine lived at this location for five years, until 1802 and became an important part of the Bonneville family.

Stop #8
Parc Montsouris, Boulevard Jourdan
The Paine statue located at this spot was sculpted by Gutzon Borglum. It was created when Joseph Lewis lobbied the French government to commission it.

The Friday afternoon traffic was extremely heavy on the day of the tour, complicated by more than elevated terrorist threat levels. Apparently, many Parisians escape the city while tourists invade the many museums and memorable sites. The tour was shortened at the fifth stop when the three-hour time allowance approached. The rental van contract did not allow for extending the time. With the printed brochure in hand, some people on the tour decided to visit the next three locations on their own at a later time.

The experience was exciting for Berton, Musolino and myself. We were thrilled to be walking the streets that our hero also roamed. We learned, however, that tours such as this can be unpredictable and even with the best laid plans circumstances can impact time allowances. For events like these, flexibility is key.

Upon returning to the United States, Berton, Musolino and I began working on creating a virtual tour of the city that could be placed on the FS website — easily accessible to anyone with an interest in visiting the Paris locations on their own. This plan is a work in progress and an announcement will be made as soon as the web page is created.

We are also working on a week-long Thomas Paine Themed Trip to England that will start in London where there are many sites to see. Tour stops would also include overnight stays in Thetford (Paine’s place of birth), Lewis (where he lived for six years), and Margate (a location of significance in Paine’s work).

Discussions are underway for a future “Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine” walking tour in Philadelphia as well as one-day van tours in New Jersey (Morristown and Bordentown) and in New York (New York City and New Rochelle). Please watch this publication, the FS Meetup page, and the FS website for announcements of future tours and events. Paine’s life was filled with interesting circumstances and TPFMC members are eager to continue sharing his ideals.

Donations can help guarantee that these types of activities will continue. Please consider earmarking a donation to the TPFMC and help us bring Paine “back to life” by honoring his life and work.

TPFMC also sponsors public school assemblies and educational seminars about this great patriot. An assembly application can be found at: https://www.ft society.org/menu/thomas-paine-memorial-committee/

Julien Musolino not only brilliantly portrayed Thomas Paine during the International Association of Freethought (IAFT) conference, he also delivered a speech at the closing session.

Paine-themed complimentary souvenirs were made available to all and are pictured right.

Pictured below are United States citizens Steve Lowe (right) and Rob Boston (left) having lunch in Paris during the IAFT conference.
The Freethought Society’s (FS) East Coast Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center opened on Friday, October 13, 2017, in the ballroom of the Embassy Suites located at 9000 Bartram Avenue in Philadelphia. The Friday-the-Thirteenth party kicked off the Pennsylvania State Atheist/Humanist conference which took place on the Saturday and Sunday after the party.

Margaret Downey was the emcee and the Lead Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center Nurse. Throughout the night, her staff of doctors and nurses took party attendees through an anti-superstition obstacle course and certified them for a “Clean Bill of Mental Health” souvenir certificate.

This Friday-the-Thirteenth event was made even more special with West Chester resident Aimee Streeter performing three superstition-themed Frank Sinatra songs. Additional songs that inspired a lot of dancing were brought to the party by DJ Dominic. The play list included line dancing and superstition-themed selections.

The onsite T-shirt sales table was staffed by volunteer Janice Rael.

To capture the festivities, Patti Butcheck volunteered to be the official event photographer. Her photos are featured on the following page.

Heather Henderson played the role of Miss Fortune Teller. Her cards of the worse predictions possible were a huge hit and those who dared pick one got a big laugh out of their joke fortune.

Silhouette artist Emily Byrne worked at the Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center’s Surgical Cutting Station creating unique and beautiful souvenirs for the event.

Nurses and doctors on hand included volunteers and FS board members. FS thanks the following people who made the evening so much fun:

Bill Creasy
Emery Emery
Peter Hance
Christine Jones
Tom Schottmiller
Jenn Taylor
Greg White

FS thanks Creasy, Michael Cluff, and Phil Ferguson for helping to set up the room, which included creating a superstition museum, staging, game center, centerpieces, balloons, and much more.

The party ended at 11:00 PM with a fun closing dance performed by Downey and Jones. Lip synching to the Secret Sisters song Good Luck, Good Night, Good Bye, they threw souvenir “lucky” (fake) rabbit feet key chains to the audience.

The 2018 Friday-the-Thirteenth dates will take place in April and July. Get a unique T-shirt and other items to recognize the special day by ordering items through the FS website or at the link in the below advertisement. Join the fun and help end silly superstitions by dressing the part.

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**Anti-Superstition merchandise is now available. Proudly proclaim every Friday the 13th that you are not a superstitious person!**

**Support the efforts of the Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center by wearing or displaying our merchandise.**

**Complete your Friday the 13th outfit with your Friggatriskaidekaphobia accessories!**

- **Double-sided T-Shirt** is available in white with black lettering or black with white lettering: $28
- **Double-sided Tote bag**: $16
- **Mug**: $12
- **Water Bottle**: $11
- **Glass**: $10

Use the link below to see more products and to order today! Sales Tax added for Colorado addresses. Buyer pays shipping.

Pictured above is the Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center staff. From left to right are Christine Jones, Margaret Downey, Emily Byrne, Emery Emery, Tom Schottmiller, Greg White, Peter Hance, Bill Creasy, and Jenn Taylor.

Above right is Heather Henderson. She was the official Miss Fortune Teller for the night.

Below is Janice Real. She sold Anti-Superstition T-shirts which were designed by Freethought Society supporter Celestia Ward. The mannequin in the photo is decked out in a white version of the T-shirt.

Below right is Zenos Frudakis peeking out from Downey’s “No Fear Gear” umbrella. Party attendees enjoyed dancing (fast and slow) with umbrellas open in defiance of old-fashion superstitions.
Ladder Limbo is not an easy game to play. The participants were so original and unique in the way they danced under the ladder, six people were selected for prizes.

Below (left to right) are John Korbow, Alisha Koch, Madelyn Smith, Molly Smith, Amanda Smith and Kirsten Schneider.

Prizes were two Ouija Board beverage cups, a black cat refrigerator magnet, Ouija Board themed-mints, a black cat neck pillow, and a voodoo doll key ring.
Above left is Shannon Fields taking a swing at the ghost piñata. Looking on are Greg White and Bill Creasy. Holding the piñata from the top of the ladder is Emery Emery.

Emery had a great view of the party and in his role as the official “Ladder Monitor.” Emery made sure that every person at the party broke the superstition that decrees “never walk under a ladder.”

The “lucky person” whose name was drawn to participate in the Mirror Breaking Ceremony was Butch Frei.

Below are photos of the many talented and happy superstition-free dancers.
When I was a younger man, I once found myself in the beginning of a short relationship with a girl whose family lived only a couple of hours away. One holiday season, she invited me to join her to celebrate Christmas with the family. As a member of the military (we both were), I relished the opportunity to spend time with family, anyone’s family, during the holidays because I lived so far from my own. She never struck me as particularly religious, and she almost apologized with the offer, telling me that her family always went to church service on Christmas Eve. She assured me that it was a huge church and it was more like a concert than a sermon.

So I thought I would extend polite gratitude for the invitation and accompany the family during their Christmas tradition.

She was right, the church was a huge mega-church, with a rock band and big screens. There had to be over a thousand people filed neatly into the pews. One of my friend’s relatives, her aunt, was a particularly pious woman. She seemed to be an active member of the church and we were led to the “good seats” due to her high influences within the church. As we filed in we were each handed a small white candle with a paper wax guard.

The minister masterfully delivered a powerful, emotional sermon that awed the entire congregation, myself included. At the appropriate cue, the candles at the ends of each pew were lit, and the flame passed to the next person in symbolic community. My candle initially seemed no different than the hundreds of others around the church, but suddenly, and seemingly perfectly timed with the pinnacle of the sermon (the part where we all rejoice at Christ’s birth), my candle’s flame grew twice as large. Thinking back, I seem to remember the wick was doubled at that point, but at the time I only noticed that my flame was larger than everyone else’s around me. Everyone else seemed to notice and they all seemed to be looking at me (in this place where I was really just trying to blend in). The minister, all the way up on stage, was looking directly at me, delivering his sermon directly at me, even pointed at me at one point — in the way you point to a group of people as collective “you,” but his finger was aimed at me. I felt like I was under a microscope.

At the time I had an overwhelming feeling of shame, like my whole life I had said that there was no god, but that I was looking over my shoulder as I said it. I felt an immediately crushing low, but there was hope. The minister was offering it to me like a rope at the bottom of a deep well, and I gratefully grabbed that rope and opened my heart to the idea of redemption by the hand of god.

It was an extremely emotional moment. I was trying very, very hard not to burst into tears. In fact, the whole way back to the family house, I sat in quiet frustration, trying not to wail and let out a big emotional sob. I didn’t want to embarrass myself in front of this girl or her family. I didn’t know how to be a Christian, but certainly crying all over the place after a Christmas service wasn’t the way to go, as could plainly be seen by the example shown by every other person there.

My friend’s aunt was busy gathering all the children together at the house in an effort to continue the joyous and celebratory “Christ in Christmas” experience. I was right there with her — soaking it all up.

Later, she pulled me aside to talk and I admitted to her that I had “found God.” By this point, because of my unusual behavior, I’m sure that it had become clear to her and to everyone else. She then gave me a small Bible to take home.

The public outpouring of emotion was too embarrassing for me to continue any relationship with this girl. That connection fizzled out pretty quickly. I tried to attend regular church at that point, and even went to some Bible study groups. I even listened to some sermons on tape with one of my bosses at work.

Eventually, however, the usual skepticism broke through. I had important questions which were greeted with inadequate answers. Rational thinking kept surfacing, and my faith in god, too, fizzled out pretty quickly. I concluded that I really have been an “atheist” all my life.

So goes my brief brush with god. When I think back on this time in my life, I feel betrayal and anger. I feel duped. It is apparent to me that I was a victim of some cute game that these people play. The aunt had me pegged as a nonbeliever from the very beginning, and employed some devilry with the church to try and “Shanghai” me into the flock. I was, apparently, an easy target. Looking back, I can see the entire incident now like a movie plot. Aunt leads us all through the candle line, giving a knowing wink and a nod to the ministry candle-distributor, then a special (extra thick wick) candle gets slipped into the hand of a targeted person. Sort of like a poisoned wine glass — all part of the spy’s secret plot.

This isn’t a harrowed story of how I escaped the Church, but more of how I failed to escape when I got too close. I wasted only a small amount of my time, reaffirming what I always knew — deep in my heart and brain. Atheism is my lifestance.
I was raised Roman Catholic during the 1960s/70s in mostly white suburban areas of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. In 2nd grade I went through my 1st Holy Communion, and in 4th grade, Confirmation at St. Christopher’s in the Somerton section of northeast Philadelphia. Sometime before 5th grade I recall being taken with all the girls in my class to the Sisters of Mercy Mother House to hear about “the calling” to be a nun. I was also exposed to diversity early on, attending many Quaker services and events into my teens because I lived in Concord Park — the country’s first intentionally integrated community established by Quakers — until I was 10 years old; the local neighborhood church there was Methodist. In 1969 we moved to a block in Warminster with many Jewish neighbors.

As a teen, I transferred to public high school where a group of born-again/saved Christians tried fervently to rescue me from what they saw as a Catholic-ruined spirit. Hanging out with them was actually the worst spiritual time for me...ever. I didn’t experience the “southern gospel” styled (usually Baptist) service so familiar to many blacks until I attended a historically black college in the late 1970s. My exposure to southern style gospel wasn’t due to my relatives — my maternal grandparents were Episcopalian and the Catholic legacy came from my dad’s side. My fellow students took me on that journey.

About 20 plus years ago, while in a couple of relationships — one with a Nigerian, another with a Navajoan — both asked me the same question. They asked how can black Americans cling to a belief that was used to abuse, exploit and manipulate them? I’ve heard this question before many times, but for some reason during my mid-30s hearing it asked within two personal relationships (with whom I shared some common ancestry) suddenly clicked something inside of me. I asked myself, why do I still believe? The only answer I could come up with was because my parents had reared me that way.

I’d read about Pantheism (native spirituality for the indigenous) while exploring discussions in the growing online forums of the mid to late ’90s and it described what I’ve always felt — that the “greater power” is nature and it is within all of us too because we are a part of nature. I identify as atheist because I believe in nothing supernatural. Scientific (or secular) Pantheism is about experiencing “spirituality” as emotions and feelings that result from interacting with, appreciating and understanding the symbiotic connection between various natural elements on Earth and in the Universe.

I’ve noticed that it is not unusual for atheists to ridicule, disparage or demean a nonbeliever who also feels “spirituality” and I’ve frequently observed rude criticism of those who consider themselves to be “spiritual but not religious.”

It simply does not make sense to me to ostracize others like that. They are just on a journey and they are moving closer to atheism. Please don’t send them back to belief by shunning the notion of spirituality. It is better to let people identify with nonbelief in their own way.

I think I actually first questioned the concept of a supernatural deity as a very young child when my older sister and brother tried to explain how “God” was real — even though you couldn’t see, feel, hear or touch him. I think I first figured out that God could not be real when I began taking Holy Communion and my mom along with my older sister corrected me when I said the host only represents Christ’s body. They, however, insisted that the communion wafer actually becomes the flesh of Christ once blessed. No, I never believed it and I wondered how they possibly could.

It has been so liberating to get rid of it all! Sometimes I really resent my religious upbringing for the way it warped my thinking, especially when establishing my own values and morals while transitioning from teen to adult on my own.

Sometimes the resentment I have pushes me towards being more of an anti-theist, but I try to be respectful because I do believe that some people get positive value from their religious inclinations. I’m all for happy people, not telling them exactly how to get there.

Lauren Swann is a self-employed nutritionist specializing in marketing communications for product or campaign messaging. She is involved in food labeling regulations. Swann also does advisory work for food manufacturers and dietary supplement companies along with onsite training, public speaking, webinars, and social media. She is also a published freelance writer. Swann does consulting in cultural/ethnic/religious food practices and has co-authored the country’s first healthy soul food cookbook.

Swann currently resides in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. She was born in Trevose, Pennsylvania and has also lived in Warminster, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, Boston, Massachusetts, and Chicago, Illinois.

Swann has a Bachelor’s Degree in Medical Dietetics from Howard University and a Master’s Degree in Nutrition Communications from Boston University. She has been a Registered/Licensed Dietitian and Nutritionist since 1981.
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Decorating Event

Hugh Taft-Morales will speak
Sunday, December 3, 11:00 AM

“Tell Me a Story: Nurturing our Lives through Narratives”

Story-telling has been a hallmark of human civilization since our species learned to communicate. For children in particular, stories help make sense of an often-chaotic present, the fading past, and the indeterminate future. Ethical messages are often best translated through story. What children’s stories helped shape your life, your sense of self, and your conception of right and wrong? In honor of our annual Tree of Knowledge program, please bring in two color copies of the cover of a children’s book that helped create meaning in your life.

Margaret Downey
President of The Freethought Society
will lead The Tree of Knowledge decorating at noon.

Coffee time from 12:15-12:45
Discussion of morning talk 12:45-1:30PM
Light snacks during coffee time - donations of food or money is encouraged.

The Philadelphia Ethical Society
1906 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103
The Freethought Society (FS) promotes freedom of thought, expression, and choice. FS also advocates separation of religion and government. FS publishes The Freethought Society News every other month. The publication is delivered as an ezine via email and is complimentary to supporters, donors, like-minded individuals and those who are interested in learning more about freedom of thought.

Monthly events take place in many locations across the United States, with emphasis in the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey as well as Southern California. FS activities and services depend on financial contributions from supporters. Funds may be sent using this form or via the FS website (www.FtSociety.org/donate/). All contributions to FS are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID Number: 23-2738574). Please donate generously.

Yes! I want to:

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   $30 Individual Supporter       $40 Family Supporter       $20 Student       $1,000 Supporter for a Lifetime

( ) become a “Freethought Star” by setting up an automatic monthly donation to FS from my bank or through
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Mail this form to: Freethought Society, P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366
This form can be scanned and emailed to: Ezine@FtSociety.org

Volunteer Opportunities Through the Freethought Society

Supporters of the Freethought Society (FS) often want to do more than just donate. Listed below are various committees
organized by FS. The committees are designed to fulfill the mission, goals and vision of FS. We seek to be of assistance to
nontheists, educate the public about nontheism, and provide social opportunities where like-minded individuals can meet,
socialize and share ideas. Please see the FS website or contact FS to volunteer at: volunteers@FtSociety.org.

Ant-Discrimination Educational Committee
(nontheism explained in classroom settings)

Anti-Discrimination Support Network
(assist Secular Coalition for America gathering reports)

Community Outreach
(locate tabling opportunities)

Diversity Outreach Committee
(brainstorming about and developing programs
to appeal to minorities)

Free Speech Zone Committee
(research and implement displays in public venues)

Helping Hands
(provides helpers to seniors and in emergency situations)

Jump Into the Jean Pool
(collection of jeans for the homeless)

Meetup Committee
(social events and improving online communications)

Monthly Meeting Coordinators
(schedule and manage speakers and venues)

Secular Celebrations
(develop, organize, and implement
new nontheist celebrations)

Speakers Bureau
(provide FS a resume, photo and speech subjects/titles)

Special Events
(coordinate interesting and unique nontheist events)

Sole Searching
(collection of athletic shoes for donating to the homeless)

Thomas Paine Memorial Committee
(assist with assemblies, city proclamations, and
work on themed events)

Tree of Knowledge/Winter Display Committee
(make ornaments, find venues, write articles,
and support the winter symbol concept nationwide)