2018 Trees of Knowledge Around the United States

Pictured right is a Tree of Knowledge created by Krista Cox. She is a kindergarten teacher in Roanoke, Virginia. When she submitted the photo, she wrote the following:

“In 2016, I helped my friend Margaret Downey, set up and decorate The Tree of Knowledge for the Freethought Society’s booth at the Reason Rally. That was the year I became inspired to create my own version of The Tree of Knowledge for my classroom. This year, I created a Tree of Knowledge using many of my favorite children’s books from my classroom. I stayed late one evening after school to put the tree together. I couldn’t wait to see the excitement on my students’ faces when they arrived the next day. It was a very chilly morning, so I projected a video of a fireplace with a burning fire on the whiteboard. Instrumental holiday music also greeted the children. The Tree of Knowledge was lit with colorful lights. The smiles on their faces as they entered the classroom were priceless. The children couldn’t wait to get closer to the tree to look at every little detail. I received many positive reactions from my coworkers, friends and parents about the tree. This has been a wonderful way to celebrate the holiday season and our love of learning in an inclusive way for all students.”

The photo at left was sent to the Freethought Society by Tony Hudson. He wrote:

“For several years in a row, a cooperative of several secular groups has installed multiple displays in the Rhode Island Statehouse. This was done in response to an invasion of nativity scenes. Among these displays has been a Tree of Knowledge. The 6’ tree that has adorned the Statehouse year after year was inspired by the Freethought Society. My own 3’ tabletop version is constructed like the one at the Statehouse, but with the lower branch section removed. After installing the Statehouse Tree, we just had to have one of our own at home.”

Pictured right is a Tree of Knowledge displayed at the West Chester, Pennsylvania home of Freethought Society president Margaret Downey.

During the day, The Tree of Knowledge reflects the sunlight, making the colorful ornaments both interesting and beautiful. At night, the book cover ornaments look radiant as they shimmer in the path of a spotlight. The laminated ornaments reflect the light well and the entire tree is glowing with enlightenment.

Members of The Tree of Knowledge Winter Display Committee hand make all the ornaments. The ornaments are for sale through the Freethought Society website. For more details, please see The Tree of Knowledge section at:


Californian, Sheldon Helms sent the above photo with the following message:

“I have watched for many years as my friend Margaret Downey battles local government over the right to erect a Tree of Knowledge in a public setting to represent nontheist citizens and to counter-balance the many religious symbols allowed.

Each winter holiday season, I create my own version, in silent solidarity, choosing a few books from my collection that have assisted me in my ongoing attempt to become a better freethinker.”