



The Idaho Humanist

Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a non-profit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education, and community involvement.

May-Jun 2002

<http://go.to/hoi>

humanist@email.com

(208) 429-1866

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of super-naturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the American
Humanist Association

New Officers

At our May membership meeting, Humanists of Idaho held its annual elections. The new officers are as follows: Chris Struble (President), Daniel Foster (Vice President), Nicolle Foster (Secretary), and LeAnne Struble (Treasurer). All votes were unanimous. Paul Rolig continues as treasurer for the Permanent Building Fund. Chris Struble will continue to write the newsletter and maintain the web site.

Oregon Secular Symposium

The Fifth Annual Oregon Secular Symposium will be held on June 22 at the Portland Conference Center in Portland, Oregon.

The main speakers are Frank Zindler, editor of *American Atheist Press* and the *American Atheist Magazine*, who will talk on “Sending God into the Ranks of the Unemployed: What Science is Doing to Religion”; and Margaret Downey, Founder of the *Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia* and the *Anti-Discrimination Support Network*.

Ms. Downey has been an atheist activist for fifteen years, and is considered one of only a few national spokespersons for the secular community. Recent efforts include arguing on behalf of non-believers prohibited from attaining membership in the *Boy Scouts of America*. She is a former *AHA* board member, and a current board member of *The Atheist Alliance*, *The Humanist Institute*, and the *Freedom From Religion Foundation*. Ms. Downey has spoken on behalf of the secular community at several *United Nations* forums on religious freedom.

The conference will also include breakfast, lunch, and concurrent workshops on various topics. The cost is \$50. More information is available at <http://css.peak.org/symposium/>

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Biologist Stephen Jay Gould dies at 60

Stephen Jay Gould, the Harvard evolutionary theorist whose lectures, research and prolific output of essays helped to reinvigorate the field of paleontology, died on May 20 of cancer at his home in Manhattan.

Perhaps the most influential and best known evolutionary biologist since Charles Darwin, Dr. Gould touched off numerous debates by challenging scientists to rethink evolutionary patterns and processes. He is credited with bringing a forsaken paleontological perspective to the evolutionary mainstream.

Within the evolutionary field, Gould was perhaps most famous for his theory of "punctuated equilibria", first proposed in 1972 to explain the appearance of relatively rapid periods of change in the fossil record followed by periods of relative stability. The theory was seen by some as a challenge to Darwinian theory, and is still hotly debated in scientific circles today.

Gould was often quoted out of context by creationists as an example of a scientist opposed to evolution. But Gould was an opponent of creationists and a staunch supporter of teaching evolution in the public schools. He was a leading advocate of the successful fight to restore teaching of evolution in Kansas. He often said that his theory was about fine-tuning Darwin, not attacking Darwin.

Gould seemed to regret the battle between science and religion, however, and in one book attempted to argue that they could peacefully co-exist as "non-overlapping magisteria". That is, science deals with facts, and religion with morality. Many in the humanist movement rejected this argument, noting that many religious claims are existence claims, and that moral questions could also be addressed by science and reason, not only by revelation.

Most people knew Dr. Gould as an entertaining essayist and popularizer of evolutionary ideas. His works included a regular column in *Natural History* magazine that ran

uninterrupted for 27 years. Many of his essays were collected into books with such whimsical titles as "Bully for Brontosaurus".

Gould was the closest thing to a household name in the field of evolution, even becoming part of popular culture when he was depicted in cartoon form on "The Simpsons." Gould was one of many evolutionary scientists featured on the 2001 PBS series "Evolution".

He once wrote, "I love the wry motto of the Paleontological Society (meant both literally and figuratively, for hammers are the main tool of our trade): *Frango ut patefaciam* - I break in order to reveal."

Steve Allen theater

The Council for Secular Humanism has announced that the theater in its new Hollywood media center will be named for for comedian and humanist Steve Allen.

The ceremony was attended by Steve's son Bill Allen and his widow Jayne Meadows. Funds are still being raised for the project.

Shaikh update

A recent article in the Washington Post has taken up the cause of Dr. Younas Shaikh, the medical professor who was imprisoned for blasphemy in Pakistan last October. The article explains much of the history of Pakistan's blasphemy law and argues for his release. It is at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A36108-2002May17.html>

Web site updated

The Humanists of Idaho web site has been updated with new articles and updated links and contact information. Selected newsletters from the past few years are now available for download in PDF (Adobe Acrobat Reader) format.

Last meeting

At our May 2 meeting we were visited by HoI member Rick Boyd and three other Green party candidates for local offices. The Green party does not have ballot access in Idaho so its candidates must run as independents. The candidates answered a number of questions from HoI members on education, transportation issues, and other issues.

Annual officer elections were held. See page 1 for a list of the new officers.

Meeting Change

The HoI board would like your feedback on several changes we are considering for membership meetings in the near future.

Because of the conflict between our meeting date and the First Thursday events in downtown, we would like to change the meeting date. Meeting slots are available for the first Monday or first Wednesday of each month, and we would like to switch to one of them if possible. We would continue to meet at the Flicks at 7:30 PM on the new evening. We believe this change would make it easier for prospective new members to attend our meetings.

We would appreciate it if each member in the Boise area would let us know if either of these dates will NOT work for

Next Meeting

The next membership meeting will be on Thursday, June 6 at 7:00 PM, at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton, Boise. NOTE THE EARLY TIME.

We will have a brief update on HoI business then adjourn about 7:30 to head into downtown to enjoy First Thursday activities.

What is First Thursday? It is a monthly event where merchants in downtown Boise stay open late during the summer.

There will be no membership meeting in July because First Thursday falls on July 4th, and we plan to march in the parade in downtown Boise the same evening.

you, or which works best. Please call LeAnne Struble at 887-6427 with your preference. If the board decides to change the meeting date, it will be for the August meeting at the earliest. We will call the members to let you know about the change as well as mention it prominently in the newsletter.

We are also considering moving more business to the board meetings to free up more time for speakers, book reviews and general discussions of humanism in our membership meetings. This is something we have tried in the past, and which is being requested by

Member News

Nancy Hendricks of Pocatello was offered a position by the United Nations in Afghanistan for three months. She left in May and is expected to return to Idaho by about the end of August. We are presently out of contact with her, but believe she is Kabul, the Afghan capital where she is helping with relief efforts there. Nancy spent several years as a UN relief worker in south Asia until 1999.

Two new members joined HoI at the May meeting: Bob Marshall of Council and Quinn Stone of Boise. Welcome!

Nicolle Foster's birthday was May 14th. A get-together was held at Unity, her new shop at Orchard and Overland.

Some time ago Paul Rolig made a donation for two books for the humanist library program. We ordered the books and they have arrived. Thanks, Paul.

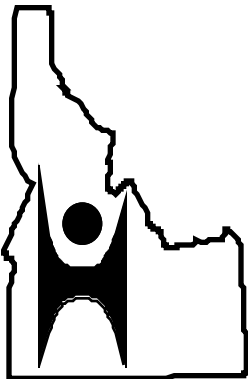
some of our new members.

In particular, it has been requested that we spend more meeting time discussing humanist ideas and philosophy. This can be especially import for newer members, who need to understand more about humanism's ethical and rational foundations and applications to current issues.

Members are encouraged to bring in books or magazine articles to discuss at meetings.

Upcoming Events

- May 28, 2002 Primary elections for Idaho state and federal political offices
- June 6, 2002 Meeting/Humanists Night Out
Meet at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton
7:00 PM (details inside)
- June 22, 2002 Fifth Annual Oregon Secular Symposium
Portland (details inside)
- July 4, 2002 Independence Day Parade, Downtown Boise
Volunteers needed



Humanists of Idaho
P.O. Box 44913
Boise, ID 83711-0913