



Humanist Society of New Mexico



April 2011

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> zelda@amadorbooks.com

Quote of the Month

He is a hypocrite who professes what he does not believe; not he who does not practice all he wishes or approves.

William Hazlitt

HSNM Family Co-Op Alternative Children's Sunday School

First and third Sundays, 3 PM
First Unitarian Church

Call 505-292-4375 for more information
or go to www.Meetup.com.

Santa Fe Humanists Saturday, April 2nd, 10:30am

*Human Gene Modification:
New Improved Frankenfolk?*

Community Room, La Farge Branch of the
Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988-1343

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and run from 10:00 to noon
(except where noted)

Saturday, April 9th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion starts at 10:10am

Restricted to Members and their Guests Only. For
invitation please contact Zelda Gatuskin at 505-
344-6102 for details or questions.

Refreshments: Janet Johnson

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, April 16th

Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

*What is Your Pursuit of Happiness?
Daffodils?*

Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

Saturday, April 23rd

Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

*The Golden Age of Propaganda:
Understanding and Reforming Today's
Media*

By Bob McCannon

Humanist Minute: Fred March

Refreshments: Jerry Gilbert

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

**The Humanist Society of New Mexico
(HSNM)**

A Membership chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officers/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President [Public Information]

Roy Moody: Vice President

[Education/Programs]

Fred March: Past President

[Special Projects]

Leland Franks: Treasurer [By-laws]

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary [Membership]

Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, Director of Classes

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Phil Smith, Webmaster

Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. Local membership (HSNM only) is \$15/year (\$20 for two adults in the same household); AHA membership is \$35 for the first year, \$45 thereafter. Send local subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, paragon2012@comcast.net or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

President's Message

By Zelda Gatuskin

There is a new addition to our household -- a spunky terrier mutt named Beau. I took Beau off Janet J's hands in January. He was stirring up trouble with the other dogs (her own and rescues). Once I had I plucked Beau out of the pack of seven squabbling dachschunds Janet's life improved immediately. Our household, on the other hand, went into an uproar -- two humans not so well disciplined ourselves, two cats terrorized by this frisky little guy not much bigger than they, and Millie -- the only one who took things in stride. Millie is also a terrier mutt, but twice Beau's size. She proudly demonstrated how to be a "good dog."

Beau arrived at likely his fifth home in as many years with some understandable anxieties and bad behaviors that spring from fear. He got into more trouble out of excess energy and enthusiasm. We were on his case constantly: No barking, no whining, no scratching, NO CAT, no taking Millie's toy, no getting underfoot, no begging in the kitchen... Scientific and anecdotal evidence indicates that dogs are able to acquire extensive vocabularies, but there is a limit. After a couple of weeks I found myself, in exasperation, condensing my commands to a mere two: "Chill out!" and "Shape up!"

It occurred to me that I also live my life between these two directives. Chill out. Don't jump on every bandwagon, don't fret and obsess, don't make so much work for yourself and others, don't allow emotion or ambition to stir up undue stress and anxiety. Cool it with the self-righteousness and self-importance. At the other extreme of the pendulum: Shape up. Get on with it, stop procrastinating, don't skip any steps, try harder, live by your principles and ideals. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right.

How exhausting even to write this! I've given up expecting that my inner pendulum will ever come to rest lightly in the middle, balanced between overdoing and underachieving. I can only try to make its arc less extreme, its movement more gentle, and to be honest and aware when it comes to my personal foibles, fears and fantasies.

Eight weeks in, Beau and the big cat (they are nearly the same size) have touched noses and made friends.

The little cat is still frightened by Beau's overtures, though he's done an admirable job of toning down his doggy come-on. We don't try to protect her anymore, or keep the two separated for safety -- the displays are becoming more like play and keep us laughing.

Humans, like dogs and cats, can be conditioned to accept new situations and to behave contrary to our natural instincts. In principle the methods are not much different than a bop on the nose with a rolled up newspaper, but in practice they have become highly sophisticated and costly to the point that we should suspect the motives of those footing the bill.

HSNM is fortunate to have Bob McCannon for our April speaker. As co-founder and president of the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) Bob has been a leader in critiquing mass media and challenging its unhealthy influences on society. Who is trying to manipulate us and why? Bob will show us how to pull aside the curtain to reveal the devices of our contemporary media wizards.

Humanism is not an exercise in finding a position and then standing stubbornly on it. It is a sometimes slow, sometimes lively dance on a shifting stage. Occasionally we may find ourselves climbing the walls or in the doghouse. What matters is that we have the capacity and the will to learn new tricks. And if that doesn't get you to our next meeting, how about a cookie?

HSNM Governance Notebook

by Zelda Gatuskin

The Governing Board met on March 12. We discussed the Treasurer's Report, AHA Chapter Program changes, our by-laws, and my pending trip to Boston to attend the AHA National Conference. Most significantly, we accepted the resignations of two of our GB members for health and other personal reasons. Ted Cloak's resignation was effective immediately, and I immediately appointed Randy Wall to fill the Member at Large position, with unanimous approval of the other GB members in attendance. Leland Franks will continue on as Treasurer until we find a replacement for him. Please study the description of duties and qualifications below and help us find a new Treasurer. My thanks to Leland and Ted for their service to HSNM over the years, and my thanks to Randy for stepping up, again, when we need him. Full minutes are available from Jerry Gilbert upon request, Treasurer's Report from Leland Franks. Those interested in reading a history of HSNM written by Laverne Rison in 2004 should send that request to me.

Duties and Qualifications for HSNM Treasurer

From our current bylaws: "The treasurer will keep a record of all income, disbursements, and account balances of the Chapter, and will be prepared to report on these as asked, and will publish an annual report in the newsletter. The treasurer will retain all pertinent records for the period of time defined by IRS regulations." Practical requirements: The treasurer holds a key to the HSNM post office box (now located at the main branch on Broadway and Mountain), collects the mail, manages our bank account with NMEFCU, writes and mails checks for approved expenses, attends GB meetings (held every other month), and conveys information on dues receipts to the Membership Committee Chairman. Anyone serving in this position should have a computer with working e-mail account and spreadsheet program. If you think you can do it or have a recommendation for another HSNM member who might serve, please speak to a board member.

AHA Changes Chapter Program, Update

We understand that AHA is sending out renewal notices without any announcement or clarification concerning the end of dues-sharing with local chapters. Please be advised that effective March 1, 2011 AHA will retain all of the dues they collect, and separate HSNM dues should be paid directly to HSNM. Our Membership Committee has recommended that we make October renewal month and will help the GB figure out how to make the transition. If you would like to join the Membership Committee or provide input to their discussions on dues, renewals, lifetime memberships and donor levels, please contact Jerry Gilbert. The Committee will provide a detailed proposal to the Board for final approval.

Humanist Lives Project

by Zelda Gatuskin

With the help of my Amador Publishers intern, Ashley Jordan, I am trying to connect UNM students of writing, history and media with HSNM senior members in order to gather oral histories and create multi-media presentations about Humanist Lives. If you have a story to tell, or are interested in working as an advisor or liaison to the students, please contact me at 344-6102 or e-mail zelda@amadorbooks.com.

Next Speaker Meeting Bio and Introduction

Bob McCannon, Co-Founder and President of the Action Coalition for Media Education and the American Academy of Pediatrics' 2008 Media Educator of the Year, has done dozens of workshops for AAP chapters

and thousands worldwide at conferences, in public and private schools, and for many other organizations.

Bob taught high school and graduate school for 30 years, and has authored over 40 texts, videos and DVDs. Bob's pioneering programs and methods are found in many states and countries. They cover a wide range of media issues.

After building the country's most successful state media literacy non-profit, Bob founded the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME – www.acmecoalition.org), the only national media literacy / media education group which is completely independent of Big Media's influence.

In 2008 Bob published the first review of me/ml research in *Children Adolescents and Media*, 2nd edition - college text. Its interesting data shed much needed new light on the field.

Bob writes this about his topic for April, **The Golden Age of Propaganda: Understanding and Reforming Today's Media:**

Our bottom-line dominated media system is a virtual monopoly, which is the opposite of democracy. By creating ever more biased and self-serving information, it is doing a terrible job of creating citizens.

The corporate media barrage censors knowledge, simplifies culture and influences kids' curiosity toward games, violence, sports, consumerism, celebrities and poor role models.

As noted scholar, Bob McChesney puts it, "A solution is real media education that doesn't just make people more informed consumers, but active citizens who understand how it all works and work to reform the system."

This presentation utilizes humor, scholarship and video examples to make the point that whatever your "issue" is, you need media reform, and only media education can create media reformers.

Come and enjoy saving the world.

The Humanist Minute

Given at the February 26th HSNM Speakers Meeting
By Jerry Gilbert

Before I begin the Humanist Minute, I would like to take a minute for us to express together, our support for those people who have overthrown or are trying to overthrow despotic leaders & bring about a Democracy:

TUNISIA, EGYPT, BAHRAIN, LIBYA, YEMEN, and WISCONSIN! POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Instead of calling this the "Humanist Minute," for today I will call it the "Mensch Minute." By Mensch, I mean a mature person who says and does the right thing. Zelda uses the term in her President's message in the

March Newsletter. Now, I want to focus on saying the right thing by giving examples of compliments.

Virtually everyone pays other people compliments every day. A group like ours is probably above average in doing this. However, some compliments are rather superficial, overly general or vague, glib, and show little imagination. For example:

1. "You look very nice."
2. "That's a pretty outfit."
3. "You're really smart."
4. "I like your new car."
5. "Thanks for paying my HSNM dues."

Although these are positive strokes, and are usually welcome by the recipient, we can do better, and provide other people with compliments or strokes which reflect deeper perceptiveness, more intelligence, and greater creative effort. It is also important to compliment specific actions in the present. For example:

1. "I noticed that you went out of your way to help that man pick up his groceries."
2. "I can tell that you have worked very hard to lose weight."
3. "I think the way you touch people, when they are upset, adds to their feeling the support you give them."
4. "I'm sure it wasn't easy for you, to trust me enough, to tell me about your difficult childhood."
5. "Your believing in me from the start, made it easier for me to keep trying to accomplish my goal."
6. Zelda, your article reads like poetry to me.

Then you will have the satisfaction of knowing you went out of your way to say something really meaningful. And it might end up being something the other person will always remember. And when they say "Thank you," you can just say: "Don't Mensch-in it."

There Is Time for Rain

A Poem by Jean O'Hara, April 2, 1994

If one walks down the street in the rain
And one is on the right side to gain,
How come everyone guns front wise left?
As is there is no forward space cleft?
Then sidewalks have no right or left sides,
Only you walking like a disguise.
Come gently rain and from sky do fall
Fire, water, earth and air, no squall.
Ships at sea or rowboats in a lake,
The wet air cannot brook a fast shake.
Is there knowledge for knowledge's sake?
Or must any case be a cash break?
No, too much vulgarity, friends,
To respond to all of it, one ends.

First LGBT Humanist Pride Award to Candace Gingrich-Jones

by Michael Friedman

Humanist Network News

The American Humanist Association is proud to award its first LGBT Humanist Pride Award to Candace Gingrich-Jones. Mrs. Gingrich-Jones is an outspoken LGBT activist with a long history of supporting queer equality. She's also well-known for being an outspoken opponent to some of the views espoused by her brother, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, said, "Candace Gingrich-Jones is a tireless advocate for one of the most important issues for the humanist community: full rights for LGBT Americans. The American Humanist Association is pleased to honor her vital work in the fight for equality."

Gingrich-Jones has received much attention as an author and influential LGBT activists. Gingrich-Jones is the author of "Accidental Activist: A Personal and Political Memoir," her 1996 biography which was a best-seller in the LGBT community. She is also frequently blogs for the Human Rights campaign, is a guest-blogger on the Huffington Post, and has appeared as a guest on *Good Morning America* and *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*. She also guest-starred as the minister in a groundbreaking episode of the popular sitcom *Friends* titled, "The One with the Lesbian Wedding."

She currently serves as the Youth and Campus Outreach Senior Manager at the Human Rights Campaign, the largest organization working for LGBT equal rights. In this position, she travels all around America to promote the importance of coming out, the power of the vote, and the important role of community dialogue in changing minds. She lives with her wife Rebecca in Hyattsville, Maryland.

Gingrich-Jones will be awarded the 2011 LGBT Humanist Pride award from the American Humanist Association during the Saturday Luncheon on April 9 at the 70th Anniversary Conference in Boston, Massachusetts.

What's Wrong with School Choice? Plenty.

By Clayton Witt

Humanist Network News

With the House of Representatives making a push to revive the dormant school voucher program in the District of Columbia, now is a good time to revisit why

so-called "school choice" would have a pernicious effect on both separation of church and state and American public education. School voucher proponents like to present their position as one that maximizes choice and improves the educational experience of some students by providing the opportunity to opt out of the public education system while still having taxpayers foot the bill. But the truth is that vouchers divert resources from public schools, impact a limited number of students and don't always improve their educational experiences, and in many cases direct public money to religious schools in contravention of the First Amendment

There is no doubt that many school districts across the United States face great challenges, but while school voucher advocates point to certain failing schools as evidence for the need for voucher programs, diverting money away from public schools and to parochial ones represents an even greater threat to the quality of public education. Across the United States, public schools are the great cornerstone of democracy: they must accept all students living within the school district and must provide them with a free education. Since state governments have only a limited amount of money to spend on education, voucher programs—even if they are administered fairly—will inevitably divert resources away from open, democratic public schools and towards private ones that are not required to accept all students and may not be as accommodating for students with special needs.

It is far from clear that students who do take advantage of vouchers will, in fact, benefit from an improved education over what they would have had at their local public schools. A 2010 study by the U.S. Department of Education rigorously examined the federal school voucher program implemented in Washington, DC, and found that, while there was some improvement in graduation rates, overall participation in the program had no measurable effect on student achievement either in the broader group or for students who came from the most under-performing public schools in the city.

Finally, let's not forget what students will be learning, at taxpayer's expense, in private religious schools. While some do provide an excellent and broad education, others espouse narrow and even completely inaccurate views rooted in religion on science and other subjects. What if your tax dollars went to support students at schools that teach with creationist textbooks? Private schools are not subject to the same standards as public schools, and disinformation in the classroom can often flourish in these institutions. Of what use is it that a child's grades improve if he or she is learning in school that the Earth is less than 10,000 years old? Supporting

such teaching with tax money is a violation of the First Amendment.

Vouchers are bad policy, but attempts to implement them persist around the nation. A school voucher bill is currently moving through the state legislature in Pennsylvania and may be headed for passage. And controversial Wisconsin governor Scott Walker has proposed in his latest budget to reduce funding for nearly every segment of public education but still increase money for the state's school voucher program. Now it is as important as ever for humanists to speak out against these efforts to transfer public resources to private and often religious educational institutions. Where public education needs improvement, let us make the investments needed to strengthen it, rather than paying for students to opt out of this cornerstone of our nation's democracy.

Help Oppose Divisive "In God We Trust" Resolution

Press Release from Center for Inquiry, Office of Public Policy

As you may have heard, religious conservatives in the U.S. House of Representatives have introduced a divisive and disrespectful resolution "reaffirming" In God We Trust as the national motto. The non-binding resolution, H. Con. Res. 13, would also promote the display of "In God We Trust" in public schools and other public buildings.

This obvious ploy to divide the nation along religious lines is utterly shameful. It excludes the millions of American non-believers, as well as the millions of Americans of minority religions that do not believe in a monotheistic god. The resolution also distracts Congress's attention from the many pressing national issues confronting it.

Congress only adopted "In God We Trust" as the national motto in 1956, when American leaders sought to distinguish the United States from the communist Soviet Union. By invoking belief in a monotheistic divinity, however, Congress divided the American populace along religious lines by reinforcing the outsider status of the nation's many nonbelievers, as well as members of minority religions that do not recognize a monotheistic god (including, for example, Buddhists and Hindus). Polls show that 16% of Americans have no religious identity, while over 40 million Americans do not identify with the motto's monotheistic God.

A far better motto for the nation is the Latin motto adopted in 1782 as part of the national seal: "E Pluribus

Unum," or "Out of many, one." America's original motto accurately describes the nation as a unity comprising people from many religious perspectives.

Tell your Representative to oppose this divisive and unnecessary symbolic gesture, which distracts Congress's attention from important national issues.

Letter to the Editor

On beauty and mystery. We live in an extremely beautiful world in spite of the destructiveness of human habitation here. We live in an extremely mysterious world in spite of human ignorance. Job, in Stephen Mitchell's translation of "The Book of Job," gained a greater sense of beauty and mystery, of wonder, when he realized that his old beliefs were false.

Dale L. Berry

The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Sunday, April 3rd, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202
Harvard SE

Tuesday, April 19th, 6:30pm

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316
The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

Wednesday, April 13th, 7pm

*Chasing Water: Climate Change, Drought and the
Implications of the Disappearing Lake Mead*

John Fleck

UNM Law Building, Room 2405
1117 Stanford NE

Albuquerque Philosophy Meetup Group

Thursdays at 7pm

Varied Topics

For location see: www.meetup.com/philosophy-229