



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



January 2012

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

## Quote of the Month

Everybody does have a book in them, but in most cases that's where it should stay.

Christopher Hitchens

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

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**Saturday, January 14<sup>th</sup>**

### 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: Zelda Gatuskin

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

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**Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

### Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

*Doing the Right Thing*

**North Valley Library, 7704-B 2nd Street NW**  
Note new location!  
(Use entrance for First Choice Community Health)

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**Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>**

### Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

*The Social Determinants of Health*

Bill Kimbrough

Humanist Minute: TBD

Refreshments: Jerry Wesner

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

## HSNM Family Co-Op Alternative Children's Sunday School

3:00 p.m. first and third Sundays  
Unitarian Universalist Church (UUC)  
Comanche and Carlisle, NE  
Call 505-292-4375 for more information  
or go to [www.Meetup.com](http://www.Meetup.com).

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### Santa Fe Humanists

**Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am**

*Mathematical Existentialism:  
Getting Everything from Nothing*

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

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

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### Friendly Philosophers

**Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> - General Discussion**

**Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup>**

*My Favorite Philosopher*

each willing participant will discuss

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite  
Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.

Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

**H**umanism 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**

A 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*

*Roy Moody: Vice President*

*[Education/Programs]*

*Fred March: Past President*

*[Special Projects]*

*Leland Franks: Treasurer*

*Jerry Gilbert: Secretary [By-laws, Membership]*

*Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large*

*Randall Wall, Member-at-Large*

### **Ongoing Projects:**

*Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator*

*Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor*

*Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director*

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. HSNM membership is \$15/year (\$20 for two adults in the same household. Send 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](mailto:paragon2012@comcast.net) or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to [president@humanistsocietyofnm.org](mailto:president@humanistsocietyofnm.org). HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) for more information about the American Humanist Association.

## **President's Message, News and Notes for January**

I had a dream recently in which I was bringing some friends into my studio/office, where I had named my chair "Harry" after my late mentor, Harry Willson. I've been chuckling over it, and at the same time feeling sentimental, and puzzling over what it means. My chair might as well be named Harry. All around me are: boxes of Harry's literary papers; cartons of books; shipping supplies; new publishing projects; and a file cabinet full of records and correspondence covering the twenty-plus year existence of Amador Publishers. Mixed in, a fair amount of paperwork, reading material, and supplies related to HSNM. All of this, I "inherited" from Harry in one way or another.

The way this situation came about is, I think, at the heart of humanism. Both Harry and I had made personal choices about our life paths, in many ways contrary to what had been expected of us. In going our own ways, we found each other. Certainly serendipity was involved, but it wasn't fate. If anything, it was the opposite of fate.

All human beings share an inheritance broader than the specific, mostly accidental, circumstances of birth, to which the traditional social order gives precedence - "blood is thicker than water," and all that. For most of human history, children have been raised in allegiance to past generations' nationality, religion, political philosophy and, often, profession. Of course, for as long as this has been going on, the genetic code has been spitting out freethinkers to challenge the status quo, and people have bucked the system of the day, whatever that was.

We humanists come together not so much because we all think alike - we certainly don't - but because we all like to think. We find we share certain ideals and moral principals. More than that, we are moved to explore, to articulate, and to embody our life philosophies, toward bringing about a more free and just society in which everyone can thrive and fulfill their natural potential. This presents the challenge of building an organization and community from a loosely-knit group of anti-authoritarian freethinkers.

The longevity and growth of HSNM demonstrates that this is possible. We have become a family of our own choosing. Our combined membership represents an impressive repository of life experience, with all of the knowledge, skills, clear thinking, creativity and compassion that brings. Now, how are we going to harness our talents and energy? How are we going to "pass down" what we've learned from one generation to the next, sustain our "traditions" and continue to build up, and live up to, our "good name"?

Participants at our November 26 general membership meeting ranged from age 5 to age 90. We had a report from HSNM Family Co-op members about the children's humanist Sunday school, and a preview of video from our Humanist Lives project with clips from interviews with our senior members. I reported that we have added forty new members over the past year. The interest, input and enthusiasm expressed at that meeting carried over into our terrific HumanLight celebration on December 10, where in addition to having a great time and eating great food, we collected \$660 for Roadrunner Food Bank as well as a big box of packaged foods. I know we have a lot of work to do still, but I'm inspired by our progress in 2011, and I hope you are too. As Harry would say, "You're doing it!"

WE are doing it. I'm looking forward to helping HSNM accomplish more and to meeting more of you in 2012. This year's speaker program will kick off with our own Bill Kimbrough providing the presentation in January. Read on to see what else we have in store and how you can get involved.

### **What Next for HSNM?**

I hear an increasing call among the membership for action, for impact, for more ambitious and visible projects. I think our biggest hurdle is sheer logistics. Our meeting schedules and locations are not serving enough of our increasingly diverse and far-flung membership. Proposals are on the table for adding additional meeting times and locations to accommodate the needs of working members; for organizing car pools and transportation for members who would like to attend meetings but can't easily get to them; and - this is the big one - to bring together our members and those in related organizations from around the state for a full weekend Humanists of New Mexico conference at which we would provide social, planning, and educational sessions for ourselves and the wider community. Can we do it?

We will be using our meeting space at the Summit to brainstorm and organize for our 2012 activities. The

room is always reserved for additional time following the Informal Meeting, which is held on the second Saturday of every month. Even if you cannot attend the main meeting, drop in at noon to network and participate in HSNM business. We have a shiny new set of By-laws that defines our standing committees and procedures. Advancing the above and other ambitious new initiatives would sure be easier if we had our standing committees and committee chairs in place. A lot of the work can be done at home via e-mail and the Internet. Please consider making a New Year's Resolution to step up your involvement in HSNM.

### **NM Book Awards**

HSNM will again sponsor the Philosophy category for the NM Book Awards. This year, our awards will be combined with the Arizona Book Awards, which have temporarily lost their local organization. It's an added burden on the NM Book Coop which sponsors the awards but will bring added publicity to our NM authors, publishers and sponsors. If you are an avid and astute reader who would like to help out by volunteering to judge in one or more of the many categories, send an e-mail to Paul and Barbe at the NM Book Coop: LPDPress@q.com

### **KUNM Pledge Drive**

The next fundraiser for KUNM is still a few months away, but let's not leave it to the last minute. If you would like to be on an HSNM phone team, tell Zelda or sign up in the "Get Involved" notebook that circulates at our meetings.

### **Governing Board Meeting Set**

The HSNM Governing Board will meet Thursday evening January 12 at 8 pm, at the home of our Treasurer, Leland Franks. Please contact Zelda or Leland if you would like to attend the meeting or submit an item for the GB to consider.

### **Next Speaker Meeting Info**

Bill Kimbrough teaches college courses in Religion, Humanities, Philosophy, Ethics and Critical Thinking for Central New Mexico Community College; and has taught Geography, History of Islam and Western Civilization for Santa Fe Community College. He served as an instructor for the University of Phoenix, New Mexico for 18 years, and chaired the College of Arts and Sciences for over seven years before retiring in 2007; in addition to having taught at UNM and NMSU. Bill is co-author of a book on critical thinking and has written numerous essays on various religions and ethics.

He holds an MA in Philosophy from UNM (1997), an MDiv in Religious Studies from Denver Seminary (1961), a BBA from UNM (1956). Bill started teaching after a 40-year business career. Bill's wife Patricia Cohen has become an award winning ceramic artist since her retirement from teaching art for APS.

### **The Humanist Minute 11/26/11 - Compassionate Humanism**

by Jerry Gilbert

All of us have read & talked a great deal about Humanism. The literature is filled with definitions and examples of Humanism. There are many ways to categorize what Humanism is all about. Here is one way. The first category is:

#### **THINKING:**

Humanism consists of: philosophy, reason, logic, doubting, skepticism, questioning, inquiry, challenging etc...

The second category is:

#### **ACTION:**

There are discussions, speaker presentations, classes, groups, letters, newsletters, articles, books, pamphlets, etc.

But something is missing. Something seldom talked about. We are leaving something important out. WHAT'S missing?

FEELINGS! EMOTIONS! Why don't we have more thinking-talking-doing about FEELINGS?

Did you know that the definition of Humanism in our newsletter contains the phrase "...promotes democracy, **compassion**, and justice?" The AHA definition makes NO reference to compassion or any emotion.

Compassion is a key component of Humanism because it helps bind people together in couples, families, and groups. Compassion towards others comes from our ability to empathize with others. Not just to understand what is happening to other people, but to FEEL what they feel. When other people feel fear, hurt, sadness, anger, discouragement, and so forth; we can FEEL it, and that connection triggers a desire to engage in compassionate behavior; in other words, HUMANITARIAN ACTIVISM.

Considering how widespread, political insensitivity is these days, we need MORE COMPASSION! We understand AND we feel what those in the Occupy Movement are all about. We SUPPORT the Occupiers'

efforts to move this country in a more caring and compassionate direction! We SUPPORT their efforts to move this country in a more fair and just direction!

In September, at the North Valley Library, our topic WAS Compassion. We need more such discussions. Fred March has suggested we have a Committee on Compassion. Eric Nguyen, AHA Grassroots Coordinator, recently wrote an article about a trend of Humanist Societies establishing Caring Committees. Now that our Bylaws revision has been ratified, let's move on to action!

In addition to the classes that Fred, Ron, and Roy teach; How about our participating in community programs which feed the hungry & clothe the poor?

OR, visiting patients in hospitals?

OR, finding out if we can be of help to returning military?

OR, helping people register to vote and going to vote?

OR, joining the 99%ers who occupy the sidewalks in front of UNM?

How about all of you making suggestions for what kind of activities we can be involved in?

I would call these types of ACTION: "COMPASSIONATE HUMANISM."

SO, Spread the word! The COMPASSIONATE HUMANIST SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO is on the march!!!

### **Excerpt from Bart Ehrman's AHA 2011 Acceptance Speech**

Submitted by Fred March

Excerpted from Professor Bart Ehrman's address to the AHA upon the occasion of his receiving the AHA's Religious Liberty Award. Ehrman is the author of "Misquoting Jesus" and probably the world's leading New Testament historical scholar. Ehrman is a former fundamentalist who now calls himself an agnostic.

I'm trying to get people to think whether they're religious people or not. This is one of my goals as a scholar – to question what they believe, so that they can liberate themselves from whatever forms of ideology or religion may be preventing them from living life to the fullest and from showing love and concern for the well being of

others.

Let me also stress that I'm not opposed to religion and I don't think that all religion is oppressive - far from it. I also think that people should be free to embrace whatever religious or non-religious views they choose ...so long as they don't use their religious or non-religious views to silence, oppress, or harm others. Even though I'm not opposed to religion, I am opposed to strident ideology and to every kind of fundamentalism. I'm actually not interested in making everybody either an agnostic or an atheist. I am interested in getting people to think and become more intelligent about their views of the world, whatever their views are. And I'm interested in seeing people reject religion that is harmful and oppressive.

In my part of the world, in the South, humanists are largely known as negative opponents of all things religious, strident protesters against values that people in my world hold near and dear. So forgive me if I'm being overly obvious, but in my opinion, for humanism to strive and to succeed in these places, it's not enough to protest. Humanism must make a positive impact on people's lives and be looked upon, even by outsiders, as a good and healthy phenomenon.

### **Humanists Mourn Christopher Hitchens: Stalwart for Atheism**

[www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

(Washington, DC - December 16, 2011) -- Humanists and atheists are saddened by the death of the prolific writer and outspoken atheist Christopher Hitchens, who died Thursday at the age of 62 after battling esophageal cancer.

"Humanity has lost a powerful stalwart for atheism," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "Christopher Hitchens changed the discussion about religion and non-belief by championing public criticism of theology."

One of a group that became known as The Four Horsemen (which also includes Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris), he held a dual US-UK citizenship and was connected with several secular groups in the U.S., including the American Humanist Association—he was the keynote speaker at the 2008 World Humanist Congress in Washington, DC.

Hitchens became a prolific debater on the subject of religion and atheism especially since his *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* in 2007, developing into someone as well-known for those appearances as for his writing. His debating opponents included Tony Blair, David Wolpe, and Chris Hedges.

His blunt and forthright reputation in promoting atheism got another widespread boost after the publication of *The Portable Atheist*, which also came out in 2007, where he comments on the works of a many of the world's best thinkers.

"Hitchens' mastery of a logical argument along with his confident demeanor gave many the courage to come out of the atheist closet," Speckhardt said.

In *Letters to a Young Contrarian*, published in 2001, Hitchens identifies himself as "not even an atheist so much as I am an antitheist," adding, "the effect of religious belief is positively harmful."

In an interview published in 2010 with Unitarian minister Marilyn Sewell, Hitchens explained that humanism should be seen as worthy of producing a desirable set of moral values. "...show me what there is, ethically, in any religion that can't be duplicated by Humanism," he declared, adding later, "...any good action by a religious person could be duplicated or matched, if not surpassed, by someone who didn't believe in god."

Hitchens' writing career included wide-ranging cultural and political criticisms at places like *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and *Slate*. His work included many figures not usually targets of critics, including the Dalai Lama, Michael Moore, Ronald Reagan and Jerry Falwell. His rational and sharp wit affected all who encountered it, including the overall culture.

Examples of his famous and resolute condemnations of religion include these passages from *God is Not Great*:

*"If religious instruction were not allowed until the child had attained the age of reason, we would be living in a quite different world."*

*"Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience."*

*"Human decency is not derived from religion. It precedes it."*

Hitchens announced in 2010 that he had been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Some predicted Hitchens would abandon his non-belief after his diagnosis, but, instead,

he reiterated that his illness did not alter his critical views on religion and his positive views on life.

### **Bouleversement vs Hony – Or Ethics at The Bridge Table**

by Jean O'Hara, April 18, 1994

If you have a bridge partner, what's the lie,  
A forced bid? You are who you are, don't sigh.  
Do you rescue your partner, if so, how?  
Is a contract partnership game enow?  
What if your partner is broke, what then plays?  
It is the rules that are constant, no phrase  
Out on life's responsibilities, friend,  
With fluoroscopic vision, rules do mend.  
No peak is worth a finesse, the answer  
Does not come from a five foot shelf's chance. Sir,  
Answers are blowing sands of the desert  
To blot out questions that is from time hurt.  
If one runs a long suit with an entry,  
Try hony qui mal suit crickety.

### **More Quotes from Christopher Hitchens**

“Beware the irrational, however seductive. Shun the 'transcendent' and all who invite you to subordinate or annihilate yourself. Distrust compassion; prefer dignity for yourself and others. Don't be afraid to be thought arrogant or selfish. Picture all experts as if they were mammals. Never be a spectator of unfairness or stupidity. Seek out argument and disputation for their own sake; the grave will supply plenty of time for silence. Suspect your own motives, and all excuses. Do not live for others any more than you would expect others to live for you.”

“Many religions now come before us with ingratiating smirks and outspread hands, like an unctuous merchant in a bazaar. They offer consolation and solidarity and uplift, competing as they do in a marketplace. But we have a right to remember how barbarically they behaved when they were strong and were making an offer that people could not refuse.”

“The only position that leaves me with no cognitive dissonance is atheism. It is not a creed. Death is certain, replacing both the siren-song of Paradise and the dread of Hell. Life on this earth, with all its mystery and beauty and pain, is then to be lived far more intensely: we stumble and get up, we are sad, confident, insecure, feel loneliness and joy and love. There is nothing more; but I want nothing more.”

*The Portable Atheist*

“Literature, not scripture, sustains the mind and --since there is no other metaphor--also the soul.”

“And here is the point, about myself and my co-thinkers. Our belief is not a belief. Our principles are not a faith. We do not rely solely upon science and reason, because these are necessary rather than sufficient factors, but we distrust anything that contradicts science or outrages reason. We may differ on many things, but what we respect is free inquiry, openmindedness, and the pursuit of ideas for their own sake.”

*God is Not Great*

### **First Unitarian HUumanist Group**

**January 10<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

7pm to 8:30pm

Social Hall, First Unitarian Universalist Church,  
3701 Carlisle Blvd. NE

Open to both Religious and Secular Humanists

Meets the second Tuesday of each month

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### **The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico**

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

**Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 9am**

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice,  
202 Harvard SE

**Tuesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm**

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

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### **New Mexicans for Science and Reason**

**Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

*Energy and Water: What are the Issues?*

Mike Hightower