



Humanist Society of New Mexico



May 2008

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

Parenting Seminar Starts School

Dale McGowan's freethinking parenting experiences provided provocative topics for his talk and seminar on March 22. Dale is the author of several articles in *Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion*. As editor of this book, McGowan brought together other noted authors, including Richard Dawkins, Dan Barker, Penn Jillette, Margaret Downey, Shannon and Matt Cherry, Annie Laurie Gaylor, David Koepsell, and even Mark Twain. Topics include sharing tricky questions with kids like salvation and religious holidays, and letting children find their own ways to talk about wonders and curious things, including myth and superstition.

Dale's seminar drew new parents to our children's school from the Albuquerque community. Thirteen people attended the seminar, including several who
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Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, May 3, 2008 9:30am

What's to Eat?

Southside Branch Library
6599 Jaguar Drive

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

Grants Humanists

Saturday, May 3, 10:00 to noon

Pilgrimage and Worlds In-between

For more information contact Henry Bulger
(505) 287-4465

NMSU, Grants Campus, Room 103

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, May 10, 2008

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Walt & Sheila Richter

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, May 17, 2008

Topical Discussion

Origins of the U.S. Constitution

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, May 24, 2008

Speaker Meeting

Meditation for Health, Healing and Stress Reduction

Michelle Duval

Refreshments: Janet Johnson

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Sunday, May 4th, 2008

HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

Parenting Beyond Belief

by Dale McGowan

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank 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.

registered after hearing our notices on KUNM or seeing them in the Albuquerque Journal. The Children's School Subcommittee will be meeting in April to set a date for the first classes. Jeff Cornelius, who designed two flyers for recent events, is leading the curriculum development.

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

President: Frederic March

Vice President/Programs: Harry Willson

Treasurer: Ed Root

Secretary: John Waldrop

Membership: Frederic March

Public Information: Salem Smith

Director of Classes: Ron Herman

Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxx

Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall

Website: Phil Smith

Ex Officio: Jerry Wesner

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

In one of several stories Dale told how his five-year-old girl, Delaney, handled a confrontation with a friend who said they couldn't play together anymore, because Delaney didn't believe in Jesus and salvation. Delaney confidently told her friend that people don't have to believe the same things, and "I might believe later, cuz I can change my mind 1,000 times, if I want to." In a tearful embrace, the two agreed they could play together, after all. Dale emphasized that with the confidence that there are many like us, we Humanists and freethinkers can raise children with an inherent courage for inquiry and views of life, death, and ethics that are respectful of religion, but not bound by it.

At the morning speaker meeting an anonymous donor offered to match any donations to the school up to \$2,500 before May 22. So, this is a great time to consider chipping in whatever you can to support publicity, curriculum development, and classroom materials for our adult and children's schools.

Ron Herman, Director of Classes

Grant To Help Children's School

The HSNM Children and Family Program has received a grant from the Committee of Trustees and Grants of the American Humanist Association. The fundraising team led by Jeff Cornelius submitted an application through the Internet on February 28, and we received a check for \$1,600 on April 12. This grant will be used over the next year to help teachers develop lesson plans and buy materials and for classroom space rental and event advertising and marketing. The children's program is starting with five couples and five children, all boys ranging in age from four to eight. Classes will be held on the second and fourth Sunday of each month at 11:00 AM. Class sites will rotate among the couples' homes until other arrangements can be made. HSNM President Fred March has appointed Jeff Cornelius chairperson of the Children's School Subcommittee. You can contact Jeff at 615-9751 for more information on the program.

Ron Herman, Director of Classes

Amador Publishers Semi-annual Book Bash!!

On Sunday, May 11 [Mothers' Day], from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Art Is OK Gallery and Sculpture Garden, will introduce the reprint of Adela Amador's MORE GIFTS, companion piece to TWELVE GIFTS: RECIPES FROM A SOUTHWEST KITCHEN.

Food, music, books...

Who Needs the Context?

The American public is allowing the media to make its points through the use of magic words and phrases. It brings to mind the old game of quoting Bible verses, out of context, to make a new point. Here's my favorite example:

"Judas went out and hanged himself."

"Go and do thou likewise."

"What thou doest do quickly."

The Bible doesn't really say that. All three verses do indeed appear in the Bible, in three different contexts, but they don't mean what the person quoting them is pretending.

The media is doing the same thing with old sermons from Barak Obama's pastor. In a somewhat lengthy context the pastor is talking about the idea of God as a God of justice. Slavery and lynching and segregation are offensive to that God, the pastor tells his black congregation. It doesn't matter if white folks sing, "God Bless America." The God of Justice is inclined the other way, the pastor reminds his congregation. In his lathered-up excitement the pastor cries out, "God bless America? No! God damn America!" He doesn't mean that God hates all of white America. He is mocking those who think that a God of justice would approve of slavery, lynching, segregation and unprovoked invasions of other countries, which America has done a lot of in the last half-century.

But out of context, "God damn America" sounds quite dreadful to many Americans, especially those who don't know much recent history and can't see things from the non-Americans' point of view. So the media attacks the pastor as un-American, and even blames Obama for not shutting up his pastor, as if he could.

I recall my own last days as a pastor, not in a black church, but in an integrated [chicano, native American, white] church, in the mid-1960s. I stated, "Americans had better be hoping that there is no just God. If there is a just God, America is in trouble." I was concerned then about the assassinations of world leaders like Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran and Patrice Lamumba of

the Congo, and the unprovoked bombing and invasion of Viet Nam. Since then I have ceased believing in any supernatural Entity at all. But I still try to believe in some kind of Undeviating Justice, and I can understand perfectly well Barak Obama's pastor, and his frustration.

Who needs the context? Some of the current problem is rooted in the refusal of most Americans to admit what the context is. Some observers have suggested that thoughtful residents of the Middle East, and other parts of the world, too, for that matter, hate America because of what America has done to them over the past fifty years. The suggestion infuriates some people. "Why do you hate America so?" they ask. They shout down the suggestion with words like "unpatriotic" and "pro-terrorist."

But we don't hate America. We do tremble for our country when we think of any kind of over-arching Justice. We're not surprised that the current administration has pulled out of the World Court. And then more magic words come up. They call us "defeatists" and say we are advocating "surrender." I don't think we should surrender. I think we should apologize, admit the war was and is a miserable mistake, stop it, stop the occupation, and make complete reparations for the damage done.

In order to think clearly about all this, we do need the context.

Harry Willson

Texas Board Agrees to Stop Teaching Unconstitutional Bible Class in Public Schools

Agreement with Ector County School Board Will Prevent Unconstitutional Curriculum From Being Taught

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The lawsuit challenged the school board's decision last year to teach a controversial Bible course created by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS), a private group that promotes its own particular interpretation of the Bible. The NCBCPS has been criticized by recognized biblical scholars for its religious bias and unsound scholarship.

Under the agreement, Ector County schools may not teach the current course after this school year. If the board decides to offer a different Bible course in the future, the course must follow strict legal standards for

objectivity and may not be based on the NCBCPS curriculum.

“Public schools may offer courses about the Bible if they do so in an objective and balanced way,” said Judith E. Schaeffer, Legal Director of People For the American Way Foundation. “But the evidence is overwhelming that these constitutional principles have been ignored in Ector County schools. Students have been taught one religious interpretation of the Bible. That’s not only violating the Constitution, it’s also giving students a bad education.”

The elective course was being taught in two high schools in Odessa, Texas — Permian High School and Odessa High School.

Among other things, the Bible course required students to give “true” or “false” answers to questions that should be a matter of religious faith. Public school teachers sought to promote religious life lessons by having students memorize biblical passages and then discuss how the passages affected their lives, the groups filing the lawsuit said. The course also presented an unbalanced view of American history that promoted specific religious beliefs that is in conflict with objective scholarly standards.

Douglas C. Hildebrand, an ordained elder and deacon at a local Presbyterian Church and one of the longtime Odessa residents who was a plaintiff in the lawsuit, said it is inappropriate for one set of religious beliefs to be promoted over others.

“Religion is an essential component of my life and the life of my family, but this course did nothing more than advocate certain religious views that are not shared by everyone,” Hildebrand said. “It seems as though a church had invaded the public school system — and it wasn’t my church.”

Lisa Graybill, Legal Director for the ACLU of Texas, said sound scholarship was never the primary objective of the course.

“This class was never about educating students, but rather the promotion of one particular set of religious beliefs to the exclusion of all others,” Graybill said. “There are a number of ways in which religion’s role in society, history and literature can be constitutionally taught to students, but that was clearly not the objective of this particular course.”

The NCBCPS course has been seriously criticized by Bible scholars for its lack of accuracy, ignorance of scholarly research, and biased promotion of a particular religious interpretation of the Bible. Although the NCBCPS defends its curriculum as being constitutional,

its own website at one time revealed a different agenda, urging people to contact NCBCPS as a “first step to get God back in your public school” — a designation that was removed after the lawsuit was filed.

According to Daniel Mach, the Director of Litigation of the ACLU’s Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Ector County school officials now have a much clearer understanding of what the Constitution does and does not allow.

“The agreement gives the school board a clear roadmap if it decides to adopt a new course,” Mach said. “We trust that any future curriculum will be appropriate for students of all faiths — including nonbelievers — and that it will respect the religious liberty of all Odessans.”

A copy of the original complaint is available online here.

Additional information about the case and the issue of teaching about religion in public schools can be found online at: www.aclu.org/bibleinpublicschools or www.pfaw.org/go/ReligiousFreedom

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, May 5, 2008

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, May 19, 2008

The Next U.S. President? Whom would you like to see elected and why? Who do you think will be elected, and why do you think so?

Discussion Lead by Jay Lee Evans

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room. Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

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

Sunday, May 4, 2008, 9am

The Atheist Tapes, Part 2

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

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