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In this Issue

Summer Picnics! 1
President's Column 2
Cryptogram 2
News and Notes 3
Treasury Report 4
Convergence 2023 5
Twin Cities Pride Festival 5
Upcoming Monthly Events 6
Upcoming Annual Events 6
The "Nones" That You
Know 7

Summer Picnics!

Join us for the first Freethought Picnic of the summer, Sunday, June 18, hosted by Minnesota Atheists. All are welcome. Feel free to make this one a family affair and celebrate Father's Day!

New Location: Jaycees Shelter, 2540 Lexington Ave N, Roseville.

Park in the parking lot off Lexington Ave N (it's in line with Oakcrest Ave). Follow the trails eastward (away from Lexington) to the shelter, you can't miss it.

We are doing a potluck picnic, so bring food to share! There's always plenty. (If you don't feel comfortable partaking in a potluck feel free to bring food just for yourself or just come for conversation.) You are even welcome to arrive early if you want to fire up one of the two charcoal grills that are available, we have the shelter reserved from 9AM–3PM.

The atmosphere of this event is very social and energetic, rain or shine. Please feel free to bring yard games or table games. There's a playground close by.

About the Picnic:

- This is typically a Potluck Picnic, so bring some food to share if you can. You may also bring your own if you choose not to potluck or opt out of the meal.
- Bringing your own beverage, plate, and utensils helps out. We will have utensils available.
- The picnic takes place in a shelter so it will occur rain or shine.
- The shelter area has electrical outlets, a sink, and bathrooms.

There will be:

- Lots of friendly people!
- Lively discussion
- A playground for the kids
- Plenty of room for Frisbee, Ladder Ball, etc.

July Picnic hosted by HumanistsMN.

Humanist Families and Friends Potluck Picnic Palooza!

Sunday, July 16 at Noon.

Jaycees Shelter, 2540 Lexington Ave N, Roseville.





President's Column Summer Breeze Makes Me Feel Fine

By Ben Blanchard

Dear fellow members of Minnesota Atheists,

I hope this message finds you well.

As President of Minnesota Atheists, I am happy to share some updates on our recent community outreach and visibility efforts. We continue to make strides in our of building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

One event that has become a cornerstone of our efforts is the Day of Reason. Year after year since 2006, we have come together on this im-

portant occasion to celebrate reason — a concept all Minnesotans can support — and to raise public awareness about the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the private sphere of worship. Our participation in the Day of Reason is a persistent reminder that secular values are important and contribute to the well-being of our society as a whole.

In addition to our advocacy work, we have continued to engage and educate the community, focusing on younger generations. The program I am most excited about is The Magic School Party Room that we host at Convergence. Through this initiative, we captivate young minds with the wonders of the natural world and promote secular values (and Minnesota Atheists as an organization). By promoting critical thinking and scientific exploration, we promote the tools that help

Continued on page 4

Cryptogram

By George Francis Kane

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lcyhbe.

Xwvznby Ewjq Lshbp, nr zey uybnvnqr qi Yfycvqr f

Lqhcu qi Yuwbhznqr.



News and Notes Defending the Educational Wall of Separation

By *George Francis Kane*

In 1985, the Minnesota Legislature instituted a program for high school students to take classes at accredited colleges to receive both college and high school credit. This Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program provided funds to pay to the postsecondary institution (PSI) the cost of enrollment in the classes.

This program has worked, apparently successfully, for nearly 40 years. This session, however, legislators have taken notice that it has provided state funding for several PSIs that require all student applicants to sign a statement of faith. They have proposed an insertion into the Education Funding bill that “An eligible institution must not require a faith statement during the application process.”

The requirement for statements of faith from the students clearly discriminates against students of other faiths who are denied the opportunity to take these classes. This violates the Minnesota Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination in education based on religion or creed. The PSIs claim a religious exemption from this law based upon the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

Fair enough. Bethel and Northwestern are religious schools, with an expressive mission to promote Christianity, so no one disputes their right to exclude students who do not accept the statement of faith that they require. This is a recognition of their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religious exercise. They are not, however, entitled to a subsidy from the State of Minnesota to undermine its Human Rights Act.

I came across an article on the intellectual-takeout.org website, under the headline “Minnesota Legislature Targets Religious Higher Education,” excoriating the denial of this state benefit as official anti-religious bias. It states:

Secular universities, just like religious ones, do

promote a worldview; they just do not always do so as overtly or transparently as religious institutions. Under Minnesota’s proposed regulation, colleges that carefully and intentionally lay out their worldview (i.e., religious institutions) will be penalized, while state and non-religious institutions will be rewarded with more students and, from that, greater ideological power.

Does the option to attend religious colleges via government funding mean that the government is promoting a religious worldview? And, if it does, doesn’t the option to attend secular colleges also promote another worldview?

The state is not providing public funding for a worldview, but for something that directly benefits the public, such as education in mathematics or engineering. Not all worldviews are of equivalent interest to government. Like universities, the state has its own worldview, important tenets of which are religious freedom and opposition to discrimination. The citizenry can have religious

freedom only if the government has none. Government is forbidden by the Establishment Clause to favor any religion over any other, or over non-re-

ligion. This should prohibit the state from providing public funding for an institution with an educational mission to promote a specific form of conservative Christianity. These institutions also are claiming exemption from laws forbidding religious discrimination in public accommodations. This extends their demand beyond mere religious freedom, to a privileged claim to government funding because of their religious nature. It turns the meaning of the Establishment Clause on its head.

The article continues:

As any PSEO student knows, there’s no obligation for students to choose a religious college: High schoolers who don’t want to commit to a set of stated beliefs have plenty of secular educational options to choose from. While we shouldn’t force a worldview upon students, some high schoolers genuinely want a college experi-

[S]chools must bring their application process into compliance with Minnesota’s Human Rights Act.

Continued on page 4

4 The Minnesota Atheist

President's Message continued from page 2
people question, explore, and form their own opinions based on evidence. This year Convergence is Jul 6–9, 2023, and we are always looking for more volunteers.

Summer picnics have always been a delightful way for us to strengthen our sense of community while enjoying the great outdoors. These gatherings offer us an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, build new friendships, and reinforce our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Our summer picnics are a testament to the vibrant and united community we have built, providing a space where we can celebrate our shared values. Our first picnic this year will be June 18th, at the Jaycees Shelter in Roseville's Central Park.

I should also take a moment to remind everyone that Twin Cities Pride is coming up, and we will be tabling again at the festival. This year we will be in booth P04 (a little north west from where we have been in previous years). Unfortunately, we won't be marching this year, as Twin Cities Pride is refocusing its parade, but I would still encourage people to enjoy the festivities. TC Pride is Jun 24th and 25th.

It is essential to recognize the collective effort that makes Minnesota Atheists possible. Our dedicated volunteers have been working tirelessly for years, and I want to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your time, energy, and commitment to our cause. I want to extend this gratitude also to our members, who stand up and proudly say who they are. Our strength lies in our unity and persistence, and together, we can continue to make a lasting impact in Minnesota. I encourage you all to stay involved, contribute your ideas, and join us at events. By standing together, we are creating future where reason and secular values are respected and celebrated.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to Minnesota Atheists.

Ben Blanchard
President, Minnesota Atheists

Treasury Report

[Look for an update in the next issue]



Education continued from page 3

ence at a religious institution. The least we can do is give them the choice.

The state is not denying any student the right to take a class at a religious school, nor is it denying any college the right to insist on a statement of faith from student applicants. The student will just have to pay for it. The PSEO program provides an opportunity to participating students and schools, not an entitlement. To be eligible for state funding, the schools must bring their application process into compliance with Minnesota's Human Rights Act.

Convergence 2023

All Dressed Up

By *Ben Blanchard*

Convergence is coming up soon, and Minnesota Atheists is once again hosting the Magic School Party Room. This annual multi-genre convention has thousands of dedicated attendees every year and is a great opportunity for us to interact with a broader audience, who are still generally aligned with our mission and values.

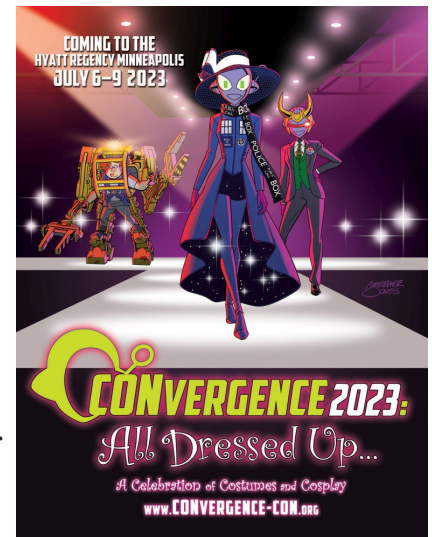
Over the past six years, we have found a good balance of programming and are prepared to have another great year, but we are missing one thing: more volunteers. As is often the case, this program has been run almost entirely by a small group of volunteers, which has been a joy, but is not very sustainable. Beyond the fact that if one of our six dedicated staff were unable to attend, we would have major difficulties, we want to spread our responsibilities so that it is an easier and more enjoyable role for everyone involved.

The Magic School Party Room is an exploration of the natural world allowing children and adults alike to revel in the experience of our favorite School Bus. Free family-friendly ex-

periments during the day, and scientific joy and discussions over refreshments in the evening make the Magic School Party Room a fantastic way for Minnesota Atheists to interface with the greater public in a positive way while promoting science education.

We are currently looking for help in finishing the development of our programming (creating guides for the volunteers who will be hosting at the room), as well as volunteers to help curate our decorations and room design. Beyond that, during the convention, we will be looking for volunteers to help set up the room (including hauling supplies across the venue), hosting the room (especially volunteers with STEM outreach experience or crowd management), and help in dismantling the room.

If you are interested in helping with this event, email us at Convergence@mnatheists.org or me at Ben@MNAtheists.org.



Twin Cities Pride Festival

By *Chris Matthews*

Minnesota Atheists invites you to join us in our booth at Loring Park, Minneapolis, on Saturday and Sunday June 24 and 25 as part of this year's Twin Cities Pride Festival. Pride is one of our major membership recruiting efforts of the year, and we will ask for volunteers to staff the booth and welcome anyone to stop by and spend time with us. This year, we will be located west of the bridge walkway along the south edge of the west pond. We are not participating in this year's Pride March on Sunday, but will have a constant presence in our park booth before, during, and after the march. Watch our Meetup event page for additional information on volunteer sign up and general activities.



Upcoming Monthly Events

Hybrid Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30–8 PM
Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul.
freethought.toastmastersclubs.org.

Hybrid Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting email chair@mnatheists.org for the meeting link.
September Public Meeting — September 17, location and guest speaker to be announced

Freethinking Females

Online 2nd Monday of every month at 7 PM

In Person Last Monday of every month at 5:30 PM, Sweeney's Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul.
Shattering the myth that atheist groups are male dominated with a females-only event.

Online Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 AM

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at noon,
(usually) at Flaherty's Arden Bowl, 1273 West County Road E, Arden Hills

In-person Trivia Night Every Sunday from 5:30–8 PM
Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St
Suite 140, Minneapolis

Online M.A.S.H! (MN Atheists Social Hour!) Every Tuesday (**note the day change**) from 5:30–6:30 PM
RSVP in Meetup and a Zoom link appears in the announcement.

Online In Depth — Discussion and Debate Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 3–4 PM

Upcoming Annual Events

Freethought Summer Picnics

3rd Sunday of June, July, and August
June and July — Jaycees Shelter, 2540 Lexington Ave N, Roseville.
August to be announced

Twin Cities Pride Festival and Parade

June 24–25
Loring Park, Minneapolis

Convergence

July 6–9,
Hyatt Regency, 1300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Details on all Annual Events are subject to change. Watch future newsletters and/or Minnesota Atheists' Meetup event page for updates.

For more events and instructions for connecting to online events, visit:

www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists



The “Nones” That You Know

Hugh Laurie

By *Milo Grika*

James Hugh Calum Laurie (born 11 June 1959) is an English actor, comedian, writer, and musician. Perhaps most famous (on this side of the pond) for starring as Dr. Gregory House on the Fox medical drama series *House*, for which he received two Golden Globe Awards.

“I don’t believe in God, but I have this idea that if there were a God, or destiny of some kind looking down on us, that if he saw you taking anything for granted, he’d take it away.”

— Hugh Laurie

Cryptogram Answer

The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.

Justice Hugo Black, in the decision of *Everson v. Board of Education*.

Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

Membership Levels

- ☐ One-year student membership \$10
- ☐ One-year individual membership \$35
- ☐ Three-year individual membership \$90
- ☐ One-year household membership \$45
- ☐ Three-year household membership \$115
- ☐ One-year sustaining membership \$75
- ☐ Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- ☐ Life membership \$600

Donation Funds

General Fund \$ _____

Building Fund \$ _____

Atheists Talk Fund \$ _____

I would like my donation(s) to be

- ☐ private
- ☐ public
- ☐ attributed by my name only

for reporting in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter and on the website. (By default, each donation will be considered private.)

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

☐ Just email newsletter Email address _____
(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. All other memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

Please make checks payable to:

Minnesota Atheists.

Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112

8 The Minnesota Atheist

Minnesota Atheists

Positive Atheism in action since 1991

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

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NOTE: The numbers for “Regular memberships” and “Life members” are now based on financial data. These membership numbers undercount actual members, since one household membership could represent more than one member. Future numbers reported in the newsletter will continue to be based on financial data.

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Atheist Alliance
of America
Atheist Alliance
International
American Atheists
The American
Humanist Association
Council for Secular
Humanism
The International
Humanist and
Ethical Union
Secular Coalition
for America

Minnesota Atheists Membership (as of Dec. 31, 2022)

Regular memberships:
53
Life members:
55
Meetup members:
3,936

Minnesota Atheists Goals

Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educate the public about atheism, and promote separation of state and church.



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