

## Become a member of the Red River Freethinkers

All memberships to this 501(c)(3) organization are tax-deductible to the full extent as allowed by law.

Your contributions are the main source of income for this organization. Without your continued support, we would not be able to continue producing and distributing this newsletter.

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Individual Membership | \$30/year |
| Family Membership     | \$45/year |
| Student Membership    | \$15/year |
| Newsletter only       | \$10/year |

Send dues, along with name, address, phone number, and email address to: Red River Freethinkers, P.O. Box 405 Fargo, ND 58107-0405.

Your membership dues to the Red River Freethinkers for 2009 have been paid.

You are not yet a member of the Red River Freethinkers for 2009.

NOTE: If you received a complimentary copy of this newsletter and would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact any of the RRF officers or send an email to [info@redriverfreethinkers.org](mailto:info@redriverfreethinkers.org).

<http://www.redriverfreethinkers.org>

Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the ideas or opinions of the Red River Freethinkers organization.

The mission of the Red River Freethinkers is to advocate for a skeptical view of the role of religion in society and to promote critical examination of religious authority and dogma.

Items for this newsletter may be sent to 4330 47th Street S Unit K, Fargo, ND 58104.

Red River Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-prophet organization.

|                       |           |  |
|-----------------------|-----------|--|
| Family membership     | \$45/year | Membership includes a subscription to this newsletter. Send name, address, phone number, email address and dues to Red River Freethinkers, P.O. Box 405, Fargo, ND 58107-0405. |
| Individual membership | \$30/year |  |
| Student membership    | \$15/year |  |
| Newsletter only       | \$10/year |  |

Newsletter contents Copyright 2009 © Red River Freethinkers. All rights reserved.



### RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

President Jon Lindgren  
701-232-7868

[jon.lindgren@ndsu.edu](mailto:jon.lindgren@ndsu.edu)

Treasurer Carol Sawicki  
701-232-5676  
[csawicki@corpcomm.net](mailto:csawicki@corpcomm.net)

Secretary Lilie Schoenack  
701-306-0630  
[lilieann@msn.com](mailto:lilieann@msn.com)

Community Service Coordinator  
Lew Lubka  
701-232-2164  
[lubka@fargocity.com](mailto:lubka@fargocity.com)

Webmaster Eric Ashton  
701-306-0815  
[webmaster@redriverfreethinkers.org](mailto:webmaster@redriverfreethinkers.org)

Publicity and Outreach Director  
Mary Cochran  
701-293-7188  
[olliesmaga@msn.com](mailto:olliesmaga@msn.com)

Newsletter Jason Schoenack  
701-306-0815  
[jschoena@hotmail.com](mailto:jschoena@hotmail.com)

RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

# THE RED RIVER RATIONALIST

ISSUE 122 APRIL 2009

## OBAMA CONFIRMS U.S. IS NOT A CHRISTIAN NATION

At a press conference early this month in Turkey, President Barack Obama clarified for us that the United States is not a Christian nation.

"One of the great strengths of the United States," the President said, "we have a very large Christian population, we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation. We consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values."

Even though the Constitu-

tion technically established a secular government, without mentioning Jesus, Christianity, or any god(s), some members of Congress relentlessly attempt to inject false history into our culture and propagate the myth that America was founded as a Christian nation. These deplorable efforts are naturally driven by the worldviews of those who vote those members of Congress into office. Even so, the facts must be kept straight, the truth must be defended, and those who would attempt to transform

our secular state into a sectarian one must be called out on their self-serving, agenda-driven untruths about the origins of our country.

After a sincere and intellectually honest effort to understand the real intent of the Establishment Clause of the 1st Amendment, it is clear that the authors were deliberately creating a governing mechanism to strictly limit entanglement between the government and religion, including Christianity. ■

## SECULAR SUMMER CAMP FOR KIDS

Camp Quest is the first residential summer camp in the United States for the children of atheists, freethinkers, humanists, brights, or anyone who rejects a supernatural worldview.

The purpose of Camp Quest is to "provide children of freethinking parents a residential summer camp dedicated to improving the human condition through rational inquiry, critical and creative thinking, scientific method, self-respect, ethics, competency, democracy, free speech, and the separation of religion and government guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States."

Started in 1996, Camp Quest, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) educational non-profit organization consisting of six Camp Quest summer camps located across North America. The six Camp Quest locations currently are located in Minnesota, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, California, and Ontario.

Typical activities at Camp Quest include swimming, canoeing, archery, field games, and arts and crafts activities. Campers also learn about freethought, critical thinking, the scientific method, and religious and cultural tolerance.

Camp Quest of Minnesota is held near Mound, Minnesota

each year and will run this season from July 26 to August 1. Camp Quest accommodates children ages 8-15 and the cost per camper is \$395.

Camp Quest is hoping to get more and more kids every year, attract parents to volunteer, and asks for donations of any amount to help with costs such as supplies, scholarships, field trips, renting facilities, and keeping the cost of camp down for everyone.

To find out more about Camp Quest, please visit <http://www.Camp-Quest.org> ■

### POINTS OF INTEREST

• **David Johnson's** book about his loss of faith as a Marine medic in Vietnam entitled *Corpsman Up! A Marine Medic Struggles with War, God, and Patriotism* is now available through Amazon.com. Mr. Johnson is an active member of the Red River Freethinkers.

• **Why?** is a new philosophy radio show held on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 5pm, on Prairie Public Radio, KDSU 91.9 FM. June 14 will feature ND Senator Byron Dorgan.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Obama Confirms U.S. is not a Christian Nation 1

Secular Summer Camp for Kids 1

Watchdog Report 2

Become a member of the Red River Freethinkers 4

## WATCHDOG REPORT

### DON'T MESS WITH SCIENCE (IN TEXAS)

American's United for Separation of Church and State (AU) is urging the Texas school board to reject religious indoctrination in science classrooms.

The board has been deliberating the science curriculum for months now, and the science standards specifically are under review. Many feel that some members of the board are attempting to influence the student progress measure known as Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in order to promote religion.

"Texas can either have world-class science standards or allow fundamentalists to sneak religion into classrooms through the back door," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "It can't do both."

In a letter to the Texas school board, Americans United urged members to "uphold sound science and reject any schemes intended to advance religion in the classroom." ■



### FFRF SPREADING THE WORD

The Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) is working to put billboards up in every one of the 50 United States to push for keeping church and state separate. The FFRF is the nation's largest association of freethinkers, atheists, and agnostics. The state/church watchdog has over 14,000 members.

The Foundation has placed billboards in 15 states and more than 25 cities since launching its campaign in late 2007.

"We want to encourage everyone to think what our world could be like, if we did not have religion dividing us. More people have been killed in the name of religion than for any other reason," noted Annie Laurie Gaylor, Foundation co-president. ■

### AHA GETTING THE WORD OUT

The American Humanist Association (AHA), and others, are running highway billboard campaigns to raise the public profile of secularism. A billboard campaign that the AHA currently has underway features billboards with the words "Don't believe in God? You are not alone."

The executive director of the American Humanist Association, Roy Speckhardt, has explained "The point of the billboards is to let nontheistic people, such as atheists, agnostics, humanists and freethinkers, know they're not alone. Nontheists might not realize there's a community out there for them because they're inundated with religious messages on every corner. But now they'll have a message catered specifically to them."

Maggie Ardiente, director of development for the American Humanist Association, added, "We want people to know you can be good without God. There's a lot of misinformation out there about nontheists, so we want to educate people about our community and change those false perceptions". ■

### GOD HATES NORTH DAKOTA

The Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) of Topeka, Kansas recently issued a statement declaring that "God sent the flood waters to cover the evil people of Bismarck and Fargo, ND, where you flipped off God and raised your hands against His anointed by criminalizing the WBC's gospel preaching against gays and their supporters". Members of the WBC, who tour the country protesting at military funerals because they claim America is tolerant of homosexuality, are thanking God for record flooding in North Dakota.

The statement by the WBC refers to House Bill 1040, a North Dakota state law passed in January 2007 that bars protestors from getting within 300 feet of a funeral. That law was aimed at the WBC and its members, who protest because they believe soldiers' deaths are God's punishment for America's support of gays.

Similar state laws have been passed recently in other states including Indiana, South Dakota, and Illinois.

The WBC is monitored by the Anti-Defamation League and is classified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. ■

### MINNESOTA PROFESSOR NAMED HUMANIST OF THE YEAR FOR 2009

This year at the 68th annual American Humanist Association conference in Phoenix, Arizona, June 5-7, Paul "PZ" Meyers will be honored as the 2009 Humanist of the Year. The award is given each year to the individual who "exemplifies the humanist lifestance and works toward progressive change". Past Humanist of the Year awardees include Representative Fortney "Pete" Stark, Joyce Carol Oates, Steven Pinker, Lester Brown, Alice Walker, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Kurt Vonnegut.

PZ Myers is an associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota-Morris and author of the popular science blog, Pharyngula, which covers culture, politics, religion, and the evolution/intelligent design debate. PZ is an outspoken member of the scientific community against creationism and Intelligent Design. ■

### SOBRIETY WITHOUT SUPERSTITION

There is a new support group in Fargo for those struggling with addiction called SOS, or Secular Organizations for Sobriety. SOS is a national, nonprofit network of autonomous, nonprofessional local groups dedicated solely to helping individuals achieve and maintain sobriety. Started in 1985, SOS supports healthy skepticism and encourages the use of the scientific method to understand addiction.

For those who are uncomfortable with the spiritual content of widely-available, 12-step programs, an alternative is Secular Organizations for Sobriety. SOS offers a self-empowerment, secular approach to recovery, based on individual responsibility for one's own "sobriety priority".

The Fargo SOS group meets at 6pm on Wednesdays at 114 Broadway suite 517 in Fargo, ND. For info, contact Jon A at 701 412-1346. Anonymity is strictly guarded. ■

### PUTTING THE SIN IN WISCONSIN

Last month, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) launched its first exterior bus sign campaign advising "Sleep in on Sundays." The new campaign slogan will appear on 12 Metro Transit buses in Madison, Wisconsin for one month.

"The fact that secular groups around the world are taking their message to public transit systems has great symbolic import. Nonbelievers are not just relegated to the back of the bus anymore" said FFRF Foundation Co-President Dan Barker.

In February, the FFRF began advertising six different signs inside 50 Madison buses featuring famous freethinking quotes like Clarence Darrow's, "I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose." ■



### OUR FATHER WHO ART AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

iPhone and iPod Touch developer Bolt Creative has just the software application to help you understand the mind of God. It's Pocket God. Pocket God gives you an island full of tribesmen and god-powers to use in exploring multiple ways of tormenting them. You can choose the fate of an infinite number of tribesmen with the flick of a finger, feed them to sharks, fry them with lightning, squash them with hurricanes, annihilate them with a meteor, or just flick some into the volcano. If you manage to toss three islanders in the volcano, you are rewarded with an eruption that will rain molten lava onto the remaining inhabitants of the island so that you can watch them run around and leap into the ocean where they promptly drown. Alternatively, you can just tilt your iPhone and watch them slide helplessly off the island and into the water to die.

"If you run out of islanders, simply add some more and continue at will, you can bring new life, and then take it away just as quickly."

Pocket God is a deity app for the iPhone and iPod Touch that was created to "satisfy that sadistic side of you that wants to have your way with your own tribe of insignificant people".

Maybe god-powers like love, kindness, and forgiveness will be available in a future expansion pack. Or not. ■

### Did you know

that 14% of Americans are *nonreligious*?

Are you part of the growing number of Americans who are free from religion? Join the **Freedom From Religion Foundation**, a national association of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics) working to keep state and church separate.

FFRF, Inc. • PO Box 750 • Madison WI 53701



1-800-335-4021  
www.ffrf.org

