



Humanist Society of New Mexico



July 2007

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

President's Message

Several of us were at the AHA Annual Conference last week: Ron Herman, Carolyn Kaye, Kristin Cram, Salem Smith, and Kathryn and Art Eaton of Silver City. It was an outstanding event, one that can have significant benefits for our chapter. The following bullets are my comments about the Conference that I provided to AHA leadership.

- AHA leadership rolled out its Strategic Plan at the conference that is practical and can motivate our membership to be active in helping achieve it.
- The awards to Welton C. Gaddy (a Baptist leader) and the Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy demonstrated that the AHA defines "humanist" in the philosophically inclusive sense of the term. This may be the single most important element in ensuring the success of the Strategic Plan.
- The conference itself was a powerful demonstration of leadership skills in communicating AHA strategic concerns using all media and communication styles including humor, irony, the arts, philosophy, and most important - tangible public advocacy, legal action, and lobbying.
- The hospitality suite communicated the eagerness of the leadership to dialogue with chapter members.
- The program was inspiring and excited the imagination by dealing with core humanist issues including church-state separation, non-discrimination of citizens by virtue or race, religion, gender or sexual preference, and the variety of humanist opinion on the meanings of religion and science.

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, July 14, 2007

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

Saturday, July 21, 2007

Topical Discussion

Discussion of AHA Strategic Plan and Potential Opportunities for HSNM

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE
(NW corner Edith and Central - parking on the street.)

Saturday, July 28, 2007

Highlights of the 2007 AHA Conference

Fred March, Ron Herman, Carolyn Kaye,
Salem Smith, Kristin Cram, Tom
Lockwood

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

HSNM Book Club

The Book Club will be on hiatus for the summer and will resume in September.

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, July 7, 10:30 am

Inspiration

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

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.

In the last five years the AHA has grown from about 2500 to 8700 members and now has an annual budget of \$1,000,000. Here is the outline of AHA's Strategic Plan for the next five years.

A. INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. Mass Media & Public Relations
2. Advocacy and Lobbying (Currently lobbying congress, public and legal advocacy)

B. STRENGTHEN THE AHA

1. Relations with Local and Regional Chapters
2. Expanding AHA Membership
3. Coalition Building

C. DEVELOP SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH, AND ACADEMIC OUTREACH

I am planning to engage our Board and other interested members in developing an HSNM Strategic Plan that aligns with that of the AHA. With respect to **Increase Public Awareness**, there were some remarkable communication tools including very short creative videos on core humanist principles on YouTube, a wonderful play that we may be able to present here, and dynamic speakers. We need to activate our Publicity Committee to figure out ways to tap into these assets.

The Strategic Plan offers the following on **Relations with Local and Region Chapters**:

- Obtain alignment of Chapters with the AHA Strategic Plan
- Promote cooperation between chapters.
- Foster Chapter level coalitions on humanist issues

I sent AHA the following ideas on actions respecting local chapters.

- Solicit chapter input with a questionnaire.
- Create a Chapters Web Page for communication that fosters alignment with AHA Strategic Plan
- Create a Chapters Data Base with vital information relevant to strategic plan elements.
- Schedule focused phone discussions (small group conference call) with chapter leadership to motivate commitment.

I also suggested a Questionnaire for chapters to capture

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: Phil Smith

Director of Classes: Ron Herman

Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxx

Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall

Website: Phil Smith

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.

their ideas about how the AHA can help them achieve their own goals and how they can support the AHA Strategic Plan.

I will be asking AHA for an electronic copy of the Strategic Plan for our website. As we move the HSNM forward I invite all members to e-mail me with their comments and suggestions regarding the elements of the Strategic Plan. In the short term Phil Smith, Ron Herman, Salem Smith, and I will draft a Publicity Plan to include references to all media that can provide free and paid publicity. We will then need volunteers to carry out the plan. If you are willing and able to volunteer please contact me.

Fred March

FOUND: Teal zippered jacket left at the home of Fred March after last month's picnic. If this is your jacket please contact Fred to pick it up or he can bring it to the next meeting you attend.

Humanism on TV: Numb3rs

Guest Column by Jennifer Hancock
HumanistNetworkNews.org

June 13, 2007

I am not an academic, but it seems to me that the main value of the humanities is that they help inform us of what it means to be human. We are moved by the arts specifically because they talk to us about human morality. Great art doesn't just inspire us to adhere to any old morality, but specifically to the compassion-based morality of humanism.

Even though humanism infuses many great works of art, the artists rarely appeal to humanism explicitly or even implicitly in their work, preferring to allow their subjects to demonstrate their humanist morality through their actions, showing the very real struggle we all have to put our compassion into action.

So imagine my surprise while watching the "Burn Rate" episode of Numb3rs and seeing characters explicitly talking about how humanism applies to a situation in the show! That simply doesn't happen that often. And it was a good conversation.

Clearly, the writers understand what humanism is, that a college professor would be susceptible to an explicit humanist argument, and that it would absolutely be

relevant to a moral discussion about what the right and moral course of action would be in a given situation. More importantly, humanism was used to appeal to a character's better sense of self. It was awesome.

In "Burn Rate," there are a series of mail bombings and the prime suspect is a former professor who was suspected in some bombings a few years ago. As it turns out, he is innocent, and now the Numb3rs team needs his help to solve the current crime and prevent more deaths. However, because the government ruined his life several years ago and keeps suspecting him of doing things he never did, he is not keen to assist. So, the character Charlie Epps, our math geek, is sent to talk to him.

As a former college professor, Charlie argues that a humanist, regardless of how badly he/she had been treated, should step forward and help solve this crime in order to prevent more people from being killed. Being capable of preventing people from dying and not acting is contrary to humanist ideals. We all have the ability and therefore the responsibility to make things better and prevent suffering. Humanists must act on our values or they are meaningless.

For the sake of the story, this argument works, and the former professor agrees to help, by giving Charlie a clue that helps jog his thinking to solve the crime.

What I really liked about this was that the writers used humanism, by name, to appeal to a character to do the right thing, even though he was bitter. As a humanist myself, I really think we should be appealing to people to do the right thing more often. Most people want to be good, and they basically know what the right thing to do is; we just need to encourage each other to act on our highest ideals and not just on our petty self interests.

Charlie has to make the humanist argument again towards the end of the show to prompt our reluctant hero to quite literally save his antagonist's life. He doesn't like her, she doesn't want his help, but his humanism dictates that he has no choice. He either saves her life or he isn't a good human being. No humanist could live with himself if he failed to act on his values in such a situation.

I thought it was an excellent use and exhibition of applied humanism. I was thrilled it was on a major network and that for once we weren't being portrayed as being evil people bent of destroying Christian America.

If we pay attention, the humanist philosophy is all around us, reflected in our popular culture. Granted, while explicit discussions of humanism are rare, they do occur. If we want to see more explicit references to humanism in our popular culture, we should start having explicit discussions ourselves about its applicability to our daily lives and the moral decisions we all must make.

Jennifer Hancock is a writer, songwriter and humanist activist living in Ellenton, Florida. Visit her www.sumogirl.com to read her other columns.

Anti-Marriage Amendment Defeated in Massachusetts in Victory for Equality

Press Release from People for the American Way
www.pfaw.org
June 14, 2007

The Massachusetts legislature today voted down a discriminatory constitutional amendment that would have halted marriage equality in the Commonwealth. Same sex couples have been allowed to marry in Massachusetts since May 2004.

People For the American Way President Ralph G. Neas issued the following statement:

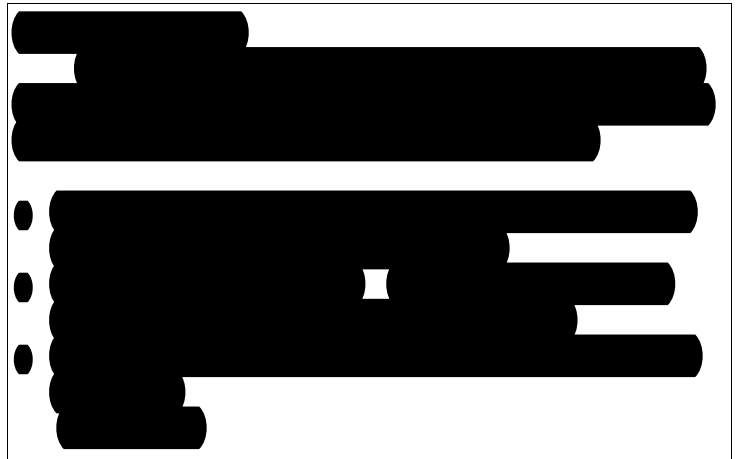
“Today’s vote is a victory for Massachusetts families and for all Americans who value equality. The legislature, the elected representatives of the people of Massachusetts, defeated this initiative in accordance with the state Constitution. They made a wise judgment not to subject Massachusetts to a divisive and discriminatory ballot initiative designed to strip away the rights of thousands of citizens.

“Same-sex couples have been getting married in Massachusetts for three years now, and, despite a wave of hysterical predictions from the far right, the sky hasn’t fallen. Instead, more people who love each other have equality under the law, and more families have the basic protections they need and deserve. Churches remain, and will always remain, free to preach whatever they believe on the subject, and to make their own decisions about which marriages to bless religiously, but the government has lived up to its promise of equal rights under

law.

“The fact that opponents of marriage equality couldn’t muster the support of even 50 out of 200 legislators is a clear sign that the people of Massachusetts have embraced marriage equality. They are leading America toward full equality.

“We congratulate GLAD, MassEquality, other local, state, and national equality advocates, and the thousands of individuals who worked so tirelessly to achieve this victory.”



Friendly Philosophers

Monday, July 2, 2007

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, July 16, 2007

Downtown Revitalization: Building a Community Gathering Place

Brian B. Morris

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>

Business Meeting on first Sunday, 9am,
Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202
Harvard SE

Social Meeting on third Tuesday at 7pm at Mimi's
Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

