

See Darwin's clever quotes below and celebrate his day Feb 12

February 2018

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Jefferson Humanists

Jefferson County Colorado Chapter of The American Humanists Association www.jeffersonhumanists.org

CURRENT PROGRAMS

February Program

February 25, 2018, January Jefferson Unitarian Church, 14350 W. 32nd Ave., Golden, CO 80401

Media, society, and the fight for reality

Dr. Erika Polson, PhD

This presentation will give an overview of today's news media landscape in the context of understanding where we are and how we got here. She will provide some thoughts on how to improve one's own media literacy, and will open up discussion about what is at stake and what we might do to foster change.

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The current climate around political news has thrown into question basic assumptions about the value of fact-based evidence, the power of truth versus lies, and the ability of media audiences to know—or care about—the difference. Whether it’s fake news distributed via Facebook (increasingly a main source of news for US Americans), accusations of “Fake News!” thrown at journalists by a president who cannot stomach critical coverage, or the frustrations of nonpartisan fact checkers as they see hard proof brushed aside when it is incongruent with peoples’ previously held beliefs, it seems we are living in a society where reality is increasingly considered to be a matter of opinion. This presentation will give an overview of today’s news media landscape in the context of understanding where we are and how we got here, will provide some thoughts on how to improve one’s own media literacy, and will open up discussion about what is at stake and what we might do to foster change.

Erika Polson is Associate Professor in the department of Media, Film, and Journalism Studies at the University of Denver, where she is also director of the graduate program in International and Intercultural Communication. She is the author of *Privileged Mobilities: Geo-Social Media, Professional Migration, and a New Global Middle Class* (2016), and is co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Media and Class* (forthcoming in 2019). Her work is published in journals such as *New Media and Society*; *Media, Culture, and Society*; *International Journal of Communication*; *European Journal of Cultural Studies*; and more. Dr. Polson completed her PhD in Mass Communications at Penn State University in 2009.



IMPORTANT REMINDER

Starting with the January, 2018 program Jefferson Humanists had, and will continue to have, a slightly different Sunday program schedule. Still the 4th Sunday, but we will meet at 4:30pm. The program will include a brief Humanist Moment before the program begins. So we hope to see you at 4:30pm, on Sunday, February 25, at Jefferson Unitarian Church. RSVP only for dinner at JH Meet-up, or RSVP@jeffersonhumanist.org or call 303 432 8694.

March Program Preview

Citizen’s Climate Lobby: Organization and Activities

by Dr. David Kline, PhD

David Kline is a retired energy policy analyst who now spends much of his time as a volunteer citizen lobbyist with Citizens’ Climate Lobby. During his 22 years at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, he consulted with the U.S. and overseas governments on energy and climate policy and has published a number of related papers. David holds Ph.D. in Management Science and Engineering from Stanford.



Opening with a brief description of climate change as the problem of our age, this talk will focus primarily on the second half of its title: what we can do about it. Dr. Kline will discuss a proposed national climate policy that significantly reduces greenhouse gas emission, maintains economic growth, and protects our poorest citizens from the effects of increasing energy prices.

He will also consider the practical politics of climate change, the state of discussions in Congress, and how we can effectively, and respectfully, communicate with those who hold differing views on climate change and climate policy.

“Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge: it is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert that this or that problem will never be solved by science.”

Charles Darwin

Origin of the Dog: A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing?

Dr. Robin Starr, DVM, MEd

January Chapter Program

Robin talked about three major themes related to the evolution of dogs: where did they come from; what is the behavior difference between dogs and wolves; and tips on training dogs.

There is still some controversy about the origin of both dogs and wolves. There seems to be a distant relative from which both evolved. Darwin observed and identified major differences between dogs and wolves as early as 1859 when he said that dogs, as domesticated mammals had:

- Increased docility and were less fearful
- More frequent estrus
- Decreased tooth size
- Smaller skull and brain
- Coat color changes (spotted)
- Floppy ears and curled tail
- Prolonged juvenile behavior

In a contemporary time period, Russia scientist Belyayev’s bred silver foxes for least fear of humans and in 10 generations to have the same characteristics as Darwin observed.

While there is still controversy about where dogs evolved into domesticated friends of humans, the leading contenders are Asia and Europe. As to when, it is difficult to be certain but the 12,000 year old tomb of a woman contained her pet dog and there are cave paintings of dogs in prehistoric rock art. The current consensus is the hunter-gathers domesticated dogs in the Stone Age in Asia and Europe.

Robin said that wolf behavior has been misunderstood for decade because they had been studied in zoos, where members of different wolf packs were all thrown together. They fought and researchers concluded that wolfs always fought to be dominant. In reality, when studied in their natural habitat, wolfs exist in a multi-generational family pack with parents, pups, and older siblings. Most packs don’t exceed about 20 animals and



their behavior is loving towards all members of the family and hostile to members of other packs. Because of this, Robin said, it is not surprising that wolves in zoos fight.

Robin said that this misinterpretation of wolf behavior had led to training behaviors espoused by the “dog whisperer” Cesar Millan and Bark Busters that emphasize that dogs need to be “taught who is the boss – the owner.” This belief has led to severe punishments of dog during the training which Robin says is cruel and non-productive. Several veterinary and humans groups have asked National Geographic to cease sponsoring Millan but so far this has not happened.

Robin went on to summarize the major differences between dogs and wolves:

Wolves	Dogs
Kill for dinner	Bite inhibition for herding dogs
Large hunting packs in a nuclear family, share food, parents regurgitate food for pups	Small (2-3) non-ranked groups. Do not share food. Scavenge separately for food.
Estrus one a year and are monogamous. Mate for life	Estrus twice a year. Younger and have multiple suiters.
Fierce predator	Sleeps with the kids. Human’s best friend.
Furtive, avoid humans	Outgoing, friendly
Hostile to non-pack wolves	Friendly to other dogs
Highly intelligent	Intelligent
Non-trainable	Highly trainable
Howl	Bark
Carnivorous	Omnivorous

Robin ended her presentation with tips on training your dogs. Dogs should be trained to:

- House rules
- Basic manners in the house and on the street
- Using minimum control

The two most important tips is to praise or correct within seconds. If you come home and your dog has destroyed something in the house, punishing the animal at that point in time does not correct the behavior. The dog has no idea why you are upset, is only confused, and can become afraid of you. Basically, catch the dog in the act.

Robin also said the carrots work a lot better than sticks. She suggested luring the dog where you wanted him to go and rewarding the dog when he/she complies. Be very consistent in your message, using body language whenever possible. For dogs, English is a second language. She also suggested you ignore unwanted behavior by distracting the dog. She abhors unnecessary use of physical punishment; again it is both cruel and unproductive. Robin’s presentation was followed by a lively question and answer period.

Look for Robin’s power point on the JH Website.

A Humanist Moment

Nancy Bolt

Nancy Bolt presented “A Humanist Moment” prior to Dr. Starr’s presentation. This will now be scheduled as part of every Chapter Program.

Bolt focused her presentation on definitions of Humanism and the way these are implemented by the American Humanist Association and Jefferson Humanists, a chapter of AHA. Bolt presented two definitions of Humanism, one by AHA and one by Jefferson Humanists.

Humanism is a progressive lifestance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity.
American Humanist Association

To expand an ethical and life-affirming Humanist community devoted to science, reason, inclusion, and social responsibility. Jefferson Humanists Mission Statement

Bolt said that these statements can be summarized into three main purposes of Humanist groups:

- A philosophy of life
- A call to action
- A coming together of people to support each other and take action

Supporting a Humanist philosophy, AHA advocated for the national acceptance of Darwin Day and a National Day of Reason to combat the National Day of Prayer. They also provide a Speaker’s Bureau and train Humanist Celebrants to help Humanists celebrate the important events in their lives. Jefferson Humanists supports a Humanist philosophy through its monthly chapter programs, its Humanists Perspectives presentations, the FROG reading club, and movies and plays.

Both AHA and JH take action in support of protecting Humanist values and creating a better world. AHA sponsors the Appignani Humanist Legal Center that defends the separate of church and state and civil rights. They also lobby Congress, keep a scorecard on how Congressional members vote. JH has an active social action program including the Jeffco Political Action Taskforce and volunteering at the JUC Family Promise weekends for families who are homeless, donating toiletries every month, and packing groceries for the Action Center. They also participate in public events such as the Gay Pride Parade, the Women’s March, and the March for Science.

Finally, Both AHA and JH help people come together to support each other, have fun, and take action. AHA provides help in getting local groups started and hold an annual conference. JH sponsors the Heathen Humanist Happy Hour, a monthly hike, movies and plays, and is suggestion that all groups and events schedule an opportunity to get together and socialize after the meetings.

Bolt concluded by indicating the key issues of AHA which currently are keeping government secular, scientific integrity, promoting peace, reproductive freedom, women’s rights, LGBTQ rights, civil rights, and human rights for all.

Finally, Bolt listed the current priorities of Jefferson Humanists: intellectual stimulation; commune with like-minded people; a chance to make a difference through social action and social responsibility; and making JH stronger.

Look for Nancy's complete power point presentation on the JUC Website.

Message from the President (no, not that president, thank Darwin)

By Matthew Elisha

I am a humanist and am happy to be part of the Jefferson Humanists and of the American Humanist Association. As our chapters new President, I see great challenges in the coming year, but also see a world of opportunities. My goal is to strengthen our chapter by growing our membership and continuing to build an organizational structure that will allow it to continue far into the future (hopefully, even when I am long gone from this world). I ask your help in this endeavor.

Invite your friends to come to our monthly meetings or one of many other monthly events. Though they may not call themselves humanists, they might appreciate our message and what we are doing. As they learn more, they could be surprised to find that they are drawn to our community and that we share similar values.

Volunteer to help when chapter leaders put out the call. As we build our social responsibility committee and expand the philanthropic work we do in our community, for example, we will need extra hands. We also can always use help with our monthly dinners, a popular event that gives us the chance to get to know each other better, but one that takes time and effort to prepare. Even if you aren't asked to volunteer, consider asking a JH leader what you can do to help. We value our member's varied sets of skills and welcome the chance to put them to use.

Give leaders your feedback on how we can make our chapter better. We don't have all the answers and appreciate ideas from our members. Your ideas might not be acted on immediately, depending on the resources we have available, but can help us build a database of plans for the future.

I am looking forward to 2018 and to the challenges and opportunities to come. *Je suis humaniste.*

"The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better." ~ Robert F. Kennedy

Humanists Helping Humanity

By Carole Hughes

Donate Toiletry Items and Eyeglasses at Monthly JH Chapter Meetings

Please keep bringing personal hygiene necessities (shampoo, conditioner, soap, toothpaste, floss, toothbrushes, lotion etc.) to Chapter Meetings and we'll see that they are donated to The Action Center, a local non-profit organization that provides basic human needs and pathways to self-sufficiency for residents of Jefferson County and the homeless. Any size toiletries will be appreciated....travel sizes are great for individual clients, and larger families find the larger sizes useful. Bathroom tissue and disposable razors are also helpful. Consider donating your old eyeglasses or maybe pick up some "readers" at the Dollar Store. Look for the donations box at the Chapter Meetings.

JH to assist Jefferson Unitarian Church with Family Promise on March 31, 2018

Jefferson Humanists will provide assistance to Jefferson Unitarian Church's social action project, Family Promise.. JUC hosts four homeless families, a maximum of 20 adults and children, every three months, Jefferson Humanists will provide meals and support for these families from 7:30 AM Saturday, March 31 through 7:30 AM Sunday, April 1. This project will require twelve volunteers, who will work, for the most part in shifts that are from two to four hours in duration. We'll need volunteers to prepare and serve breakfast and dinner, and some to support the families by providing simple activities for children. We will also need a couple of volunteers to serve as overnight hosts. Do you have some time to spend with these families? Please call Pat Nickel at 303-670-0145 to let her know you're interested in participating in Family Promise with the Jefferson Humanists.

Humanists Helping Humanity

Five Jefferson Humanists met on January 18 to discuss our Chapter's social responsibility focus for 2018. The first order of business was agreeing on a name which captures the mission of the JH Social Responsibility Committee: Humanists Helping Humanity.

We discussed a number of possible directions for projects, and settled on a few parameters for projects we'll undertake in 2018:

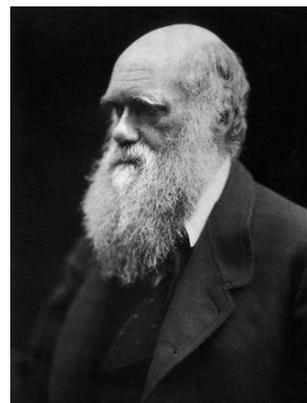
- We'll focus on Jefferson County
- We'll help with projects assisting in relief for the homeless and indigent
- We'll help with projects aiding youth
- We'll join in social action projects organized by other, larger groups (rather than initiating a project)

In addition to our ongoing project - collecting personal hygiene items and eyeglasses for the Action Center - we've also planned three specific 2018 projects:

- February 3 Grocery Packing at the Action Center
- March 31 Family Promise hosting at Jefferson Unitarian Church
- Stuffed animal and/or activity book drive for Children's Hospital (date uncertain)

More projects will be scheduled. Do you have ideas? Please contact Carole Hughes at cathug51@yahoo.com or 303 234-1304 with any comments about Humanists Helping Humanity.

“Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.” Charles Darwin from *The Origin of Species*





Jefferson Humanist Book Discussion Group
(FROG: Freethinkers Reading Opportunity Group)



Join the reading group in February for our discussion of *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal* by Christopher Moore. The bible tells about Jesus as a child and then later as a grown man of thirty. Moore imagines what happened during the time in between told through the eyes of Biff, Christ's best friend. Both thoughtful and funny at the same time, *Lamb* is reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut and Douglas Adams. After reading Moore's book, you'll ask, "Was Jesus a humanist?" Find out more and RSVP at www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/246065348/.

You can find details about our upcoming books and topics on Meetup at www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists and on our website at www.jeffersonhumanists.org/frog-book-group. If you'd like to join the group and be added to our email list, contact FROG leaders Helena Goldstein (hjdenver@gmail.com, 303.503.7509) or Matthew Elisha (mrelisha@msn.com, 303.432.8694).

Date: Saturday, February 10th

Time: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Reading Assignment: *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal* by Christopher Moore

Facilitator: Traci Bickell

Location: Lakewood Library, 20th & Miller, Lakewood

Date: Saturday, March 10th

Time: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Reading Assignment: *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain* by George Lakoff

Facilitator: Ralph Hughes

Location: Lakewood Library, 20th & Miller, Lakewood

We are also happy to announce that Helena Goldstein, a long-time member of our book group, has agreed to be co-leader of the FROG group. You will be hearing more from Helena in coming months.

Report of January FROG Meeting

Topic: The Enlightenment

By David Smith

The discussion drew on a wide variety of books/essays/videos:

- *Infidel and the Professor* by Rasmussen about the long friendship between Hume and Adam Smith
- *The Roads to Modernity: the British, French and American Enlightenments* by Gertrude Himmelfarb

- Book about how the Enlightenment in England, France, and the United States (newly formed at the end of the Enlightenment) emphasized different qualities: Reason (France), Caring and Compassion (England), and Liberty (U.S.)
- Ted talks, on-line essays
- *Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World* by James MacGregor Burns
- *Ben Franklin: Citizen of the World*, PBS biography
- *The Swerve* by Stephen Greenblatt and *On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius
- *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley, Called the first truly science fiction story written after Shelley traveled through Germany and Switzerland where she encountered alchemy, galvanism, and the occult in action
- *Olympe de Gouges*, a biography by Mary De Gouges, a French playwright and political activist whose feminist and abolitionist writings were very influential. She demanded that French women receive the same rights as men. She was guillotined during the Reign of Terror
- *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Present Itself as a Science* and misc. essays by Emanuel Kant. The German philosopher was a dominant figure in the Enlightenment and even wrote an essay “What Is Enlightenment?”
- *Age of Enlightenment: History from Beginning to End*, an Hourly History video, and *Founding Brothers* by Joseph Ellis and *Evening in the Palace of Reason* by James R Gaines. This book about a brief historical encounter between Johann Sebastian Bach and Frederick the Great compares and contrasts the values and motivations two great figures: elderly Bach, the devout Lutheran who imbues his old-style music with mystery and passion; and the young new fashioned philosopher-king of Prussia and patron of the arts and the Enlightenment. The story is cast as an allegorical clash between faith versus reason
- A partial reading of a book by Hume, and *The Enlightenment, a Beginner’s Guide* by Kieron O’Hara. Critics say that this book brings to life the history, politics, science, religion arts, and social life of the Enlightenment, and shows how it spawned some of the brightest thinkers in history, from the radical Rousseau to the conservative Burke
- *Leonardo da Vinci* by Walter Isaacson. From Goodreads: “The author of the acclaimed bestsellers Steve Jobs, Einstein, and Benjamin Franklin brings Leonardo da Vinci to life in this exciting new biography. Based on thousands of pages from Leonardo’s astonishing notebooks and new discoveries about his life and work, Walter Isaacson weaves a narrative that connects his art to his science....”
- *Dark Side of the Enlightenment* by John V. Fleming. Book by a scholar of medieval history about the strong influence of mysticism, alchemy, and the occult, which were continued over from the Renaissance and amplified by such great minds as Isaac Newton.

The subject of the Enlightenment has many facets: political, classical, radical, scientific, occult, arcane... and our discussion touched on many positive and negative aspects of the Enlightenment. It came as a surprise that the entry in the 1958 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (which itself is a product of the Enlightenment) consists merely of three sentences! Sixty years of scholarly research and popularization in public media (e.g., ‘Civilization’ by Kenneth Clark), have given us much to think about and discuss.

In the Renaissance, improvements in navigation technology opened direct trade routes to Asia, and contacts with native peoples of north, central, and South America. Exposure to different peoples and philosophies challenged understanding derived from writers of classical Rome and Greece. Epicurus and Lucretius deeply influenced many of the leading intellects of the day. Meeting places, secret organizations, salons – acted as nexus of

communication. Cheap paper and ink facilitated vast amounts of correspondences, newspapers, and leaflets which passed through efficient postal delivery services. Humanism was born at the end of the Enlightenment, when the word began to refer to an ethical philosophy centered on humankind, without attention to the transcendent or supernatural. The Enlightenment was a success in some regards because it gave people freedom to think outside of religious dogma and scholasticism.

Some critics say that the Enlightenment was a failure because it didn't prevent Europeans from embracing Nazism or Bolshevism. Others say that this calamitous history is a logical consequence of the Enlightenment, which culminated with the French Revolution and Reign of Terror. One can say that there remains much "unfinished business" in order for the ideals of the Enlightenment and humanism to prevail in the modern world.

We identified some developments since the old Enlightenment that will challenge thinkers in a new stage of Enlightenment: Darwinian theory of evolution through natural selection; physics of electromagnetism, relativity, quantum theory, Big Bang, and cosmological mysteries; understanding and the manipulating genomes, bioengineering; human mind as understood through brain chemistry and neuropsychology, perhaps scientific challenges to the philosophical notion of "free will"; and machine learning, artificial intelligence, and robotics: what implications for human existence?

The discussion was lively because so many different books, articles, and films had been viewed.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." Charles Darwin

JPAT SETS GOALS FOR 2018

By Ralph Hughes

JH's Jeffco Political Action Taskforce (JPAT) met mid-January and settled upon some mid-level details for its 2018 plan. As December's newsletter mentioned, we signed up to be the Jefferson County chapter of Represent.Us, and have thus become the local spearhead of the American Anti-Corruption Campaign (AACC). Our goal for 2018 will be to garner enough signatures on petitions to start negotiating the language for anti-corruption resolutions for five major cities in Jefferson County.

The AACC is a non-partisan, nationwide, grassroots movement focused upon passing anti-corruption resolutions by cities and countries across the U.S. The campaign's legal scholars have drafted an extensive boilerplate language for these resolutions. It's up to the local groups to approach their city council and county commissions to "negotiate" a specific resolution for each municipality.

The number of signatures we need for Jefferson Country is quite doable: 3% of the number that voted in the last mayoral election of each city. For the cities we've targeted this translates to the following targets:

- Arvada (pop. 34,391): 1032
- Lakewood (pop. 40,877): 1226
- Littleton (pop. 26,826): 804
- Golden (pop. 8,779): 263
- Wheat Ridge (pop. 7,995): 240
- Edgewater (pop. 855): 26

November 2017: JPAT help organize a tax-heist protest in downtown Denver where 400 attended

At our meeting, we started looking at the civic calendars for each of these cities. We'll be identifying events where we can request space to put up petition tables. After we get those events planned, we'll begin approaching civic groups such as Lions and Rotary to request opportunities to present the AACC, after which we'll wait in the event's lobby to gather petition signatures from attendees.



We certainly could use some help. The six of us who have powered JPAT so far are wearing a bit thin. We've gotten the process of

mounting an effective resistance to the insanity coming out of the White House down to a science. We just need another dozen people or so to start pulling on the oars. If you have the time just to approach your city government to request permissions to set up a table at an upcoming event, you would take a large load off our shoulders. We'd also love to hear from you about the civic groups you belong to where we could introduce citizens to the AACC. And, of course, join us at the petitioning tables to gather signatures. Contact us at info@actiontaskforce.org or text "Letsgo" to 345-345.

"If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin"

Charles Darwin

Humanist Perspective

Humanists Perspectives asks tough questions regarding the concentration of wealth & power in the U.S.

At January 20th session of Humanist Perspectives, we reviewed whether one can rationally believe that the U.S. has fallen into the clutches of the wealthiest families and corporations. During a presentation by Ralph Hughes (current chair of JH's political action taskforce), we considered several bad omens for the future of the middle class, such as:

- The wealth of the top 1 percent increased by an average of \$4.9M per person over the past decade, while the average holdings of the bottom 99 percent declined by about \$4,500.
- The price of toys, computers, and televisions have fallen 60 to 90% in the past 15 years while goods needed to launch your children (health care, child care, and college) have gone up 15 to 40%.
- The U.S. place on the "Great Gatsby Curve" has deteriorated since 1985 so that we have the fewest people climbing into the next social tier of any major country (Denmark is in fact the new "land of opportunity")

Given the evidence, it is abundantly clear the American privileged class has arrived at a self-reinforcing combination of advantages which they will cultivate to gain a growing share of the economy's benefits until the system breaks catastrophically. During our morning together, the Humanist Perspectives group looked at how the U.S. and the world has seen oligarchic takeovers many times in the past—ancient Greece, industrializing England, and American during the Gilded Age. After considering the abysmal living conditions that anti-union

industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and Pullman were happy to relegate their workers to at the turn of the last century, we considered one author's warning that when wealth reaches such extremes historically it only gets redistributed by "the four horsemen of violence": war, revolution, the collapse of states, and natural disasters.

With that back drop we asked ourselves several tough questions:

- How should the U.S. feel that it no longer provides social mobility for the bulk of its citizens?
- Is *permanent* disadvantage for an entire class of citizens un-American?
- What do humanist owe to a group that's losing out to history?
- Can we objectively assert that the system needs to be fixed?

During the February 17th session, we'll continue looking at oligarchy in the U.S. by considering the mechanisms the rich have used to take control of the economy and the political system. We'll review the history of the 20th C. Progressive Movement—the last time an American oligarchy was defeated (by a grassroots movement that eventually gained national momentum). We'll finish the session by introducing a few of the many practical ideas that academics and pundits have suggested over the decades for keeping the distribution of wealth within reasonable bounds so that capitalism can function properly and all classes can prosper. Perhaps we'll even carve out enough time to make some torches and pitchforks, to fulfill the prediction made in a TED talk by Nick Hannah (the first non-family investor in Amazon): "The rich are not paying their fair share, and I want us plutocrats to wake up and correct this, before an angry mob shows up at our doorsteps."

Please attend: February 17th from 10am to noon at the JUC Mills Building

"The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference"

Charles Darwin

Report from December Humanist Perspective Secular Community Building in Colorado

by Tom Kellogg

Tom Kellogg, who has been around the Colorado secular movement for some time, talked about the thriving secular community in Colorado, which has a rich but short history going back only to 1982, with the founding of the Humanists of Colorado. Tom compared all the major groups in Colorado and talked about how each one is unique with its own style and vision, along with similarities. The Denver Secular Hub stands out from all the other groups. Organizational structure of groups varies from loose and casual to structured and rigid, with variations in between. Each type has advantages and disadvantages.

The real roots of secular community building go back to human evolution when primitive people had to work closely together just to survive. The need for community is instinctual and embedded in our DNA. Churches learned to exploit this need by offering community in return for obedience and control. Now that we humanists and heathens no longer go to church, we still need a community free from religion where we feel safe to be ourselves around similar minded people.

The nuts and bolts of building a community starts with organizing groups, which takes an acute attention to detail and a passionate vision. Finding volunteers to help with events and details is vital to the success of a secular organization. A group needs to have a meaningful brand with a clear message so people know what to expect.

Events are the basic building block of a group, starting with a regular meeting, usually once per month, then adding other regular activities that appeal to members. Social events are the most popular. Educational and activism events should to be added so that the group can diversify, although it is important to stay focused on the group's mission. Family-friendly events should always be encouraged along with special events. Bringing in well-known speakers is a good way to help build a group. Meetup.com is an essential tool for managing events.

The group should have a positive message and always be welcoming to new members and visitors. Building community means being a good and moral member of society in general and contributing to the global community. Try not to dwell too much on the problems of religion. We should focus on science and reason, along with Humanist values such as caring for each other, protecting our basic rights, saving our planet and celebrating diversity.

Networking with other local secular groups along with National organizations such as the American Humanist Association is an important way to stay informed and share ideas. Services should be made available, such as access to secular celebrants to perform non-religious weddings and other life events.

Tom talked about each of the main secular organizations in Colorado, in order by founding date, including the Jefferson Humanists. Finally, the Denver Secular Hub was talked about, a very unique community center that is thriving and growing. The Hub offers many diverse events and activities. It also hosts other local group's events. The Hub is one of just a very few succeeding secular community centers in the country.

"We can allow satellites, planets, suns, universe, nay whole systems of universes, to be governed by laws, but the smallest insect, we wish to be created at once by special act." Charles Darwin

JH Monthly Hike Season Opener
Hike the Coors Brewery Tour and explore Downtown Golden
Saturday, March 3rd, 10:00 am.
Hosted by Tom Kellogg

The first JH monthly hike of the season is going to be a walk through the Coors Brewery on their famous tour. Did you know that the Coors Brewery in Golden is the largest single brewery in the world? We'll meet in Downtown Golden at Parfet Park, near the corner of Washington and 10th Street at 10:00 am. From there, we'll walk to the brewery, take the tour at 10:15, then walk around Downtown Golden and have lunch somewhere. Oh, by the way, the tour is free.



Note: Reservation is for 20 persons max, so please RSVP to this meetup:

<https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/247143861/>

or contact Tom Kellogg at kellogg52@gmail.com or by cell at (720) 808-2825. If running late, the tour starts at 10:15 at 13th and Ford Street. Parking is available in the employee lot at 12th and Ford. Note also that strollers, backpacks and purses are not allowed on the tour. Wallets and cameras are OK.

Humanist Heathen Happy Hour Discovery Tap House followed by Real Thai

Wednesday, February 21, 2018, 6:00 to 8:30 pm

4990 Kipling St, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

Hosted by Tom Kellogg

There is quite a nice selection of brews on tap at Discovery Tap House from all over. Karen and Gary Thomas, the owners, are good hosts and greet you when you come in. I enjoyed an apricot cider on my first visit. They don't serve food, but you can bring in your own, or have pizza and Mexican food delivered as an option.



Two doors down is Real Thai, serving really amazing authentic Thai cuisine. The chicken coconut soup is delicious and the calamari fabulous. After hangin at Discovery for a little while, at 7 we'll walk over to Real Thai as a group.

January Board Report Based on notes by Edna Miller

During January the Jefferson Humanist Board took the following actions:

- Discussed appointing a committee to review the bylaws
- Decided to alternate regular Board meetings with a Coordinating Council that included committee chairs. Committee chairs are asked to provide a written report
- Discussed the annual budget and asked committee chairs to provide input
- Finalized the Member Directory that will be sent only to paid members. Commercial advertising is strictly prohibited and publicizing personal causes is discouraged
- Approved a social responsibility project to help JUC serve homeless families through Family Promise
- Conducted a planning session (see report elsewhere in this Newsletter)

JH Leadership Planning Meeting Notes by Carole Hughes

A JH leadership planning meeting took place on January 13th at Carmel Oaks in Lakewood. The planning group developed a "Vision Box": a way to present the major benefits, features, and investment of JH members in the Jefferson Humanist Chapter. Below is a summary of the discussion.

The full report is available on our website at: www.jeffersonhumanists.org

The three major member benefits are:

- Intellectual stimulation
- Commune with like-minded people
- A chance to make a difference – social action and responsibility

The three major features (the way we accomplish the benefits) are:

- Social action projects
- Education on major issues of the day
- Socializing

The four major investments what we have to do to accomplish the benefits and conduct the features:

- Participation of members in JH activities and commitment to JH and what it is trying to accomplish
- Financial commitment to support all that JH is trying to do
- A space of our own to have programs, meetings, and to socialize
- Leadership to guide how all of the above occurs.

If you are interested in working on any of these efforts, email JH President, Matthew Elisha at mrelisha@msn.com.

“The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an agnostic” Charles Darwin

It’s a New Year.....

By Mari Cowley

Right after the church shooting in Texas I wrote about what we can do as a group to make the place where we meet safer. Since that time I’ve read several more articles on the topic and would like to share with you some of the comments from churches across the country.

We’ve recently experienced a new tipping point for church and secular group security. A tipping point is the critical juncture in evolving developments that lead to a new and, often, irreversible state. We call that new state “the new normal.”

In church and secular group security we have witnessed two major tipping points. Though child sex abuse in churches was not new, it reached a new level of awareness and response when Pope John Paul II called an emergency meeting with U. S. cardinals in 2002. We knew then the issue was both serious and pervasive.

We reached a second major tipping point in November 2017 with the church shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Among the twenty-six (26) people killed were nine (9) members of one family. Church leaders, lay leaders, and members across the nation have begun to realize that if it can happen in Sutherland Springs, it can happen anywhere. And not just churches. Secular groups are also at risk.

A short time ago, a survey on social media asked church leaders and members to share what their churches were doing for church security. Here are some of the results and these answers reflect the reality of a new normal as articulated by these respondents. Such measures are relevant for Humanists groups as well.

Church security measures have shifted dramatically. While church security measures are not new, there has been a noticeable change since the November 2017 shootings. Many churches instituted church security measures for the first time. Even more implemented additional security measures after the 2017 shootings.

As in all things, there is a resistance to church security measures by a vocal minority. This perspective holds that the measures are an overreaction, or that it goes counter to the biblical direction to trust in God. There was a similar reaction in the early 2000s when churches started requiring background checks for those who worked with

children. The latter protest is almost non-existent today. The resistance to implementing church security for shooters will likely dissipate as well, especially if there are further incidents.

One of the most common responses by churches and secular groups is partnerships with local law enforcement. Many churches have hired off-duty police officers to be vigilant and visible when church is in session. Others have sought the law enforcement community to educate and train their members about this issue.

Many churches are using their members to assist in church security. Churches and secular groups are now offering security training sessions to their members. Others are using members to patrol the grounds or to become volunteer security guards. I was really surprised to learn that many congregations have a number of members carrying concealed weapons. Churches are using technology to enhance their security. For example, even some of the smaller churches are using advanced video security systems, especially now that the technology has become more affordable.

More guests are asking questions about church and secular group security. When the sex abuse scandals became pervasively known, many church guests would not visit a church unless this issue was clearly addressed. The same is now true for security toward church shootings. If churches do not provide clear and visible protection for those gathered, many guests simply will not come.

There is a general sadness among churchgoers and secular groups that we have come to this point. Church and secular members as a whole would like their meetings to be wide open and welcoming. They don't like locked doors, security cameras, and gun-carrying members. But they realize this reality is here to stay. For that reason, they are sadly resigned and accepting. This is the new normal.

Pretending that security measures aren't needed is not only naive but foolish. I'm sure the folks in Sutherland Springs never expected the nightmare that came their way. When we welcome folks into our church or group we take on the responsibility to provide for them. Not only do we provide interesting programs, fellowship and good food, we are responsible for providing a safe environment.

This article isn't about fear, it's about stewardship. Our job is to provide a measure of care for all of those who share our interests by attending our meetings. It is not good stewardship nor is it wise leadership to pretend that the walls of a church or secular group can block out anger, mental illness or random acts of violence.

Me Too # 2

Background for My Experiences

By Darlene

After the men returned from the war in the forties, women were pushed out of jobs and into the home. They were told that women didn't belong in the workforce, and thereafter the impression was given that they had never even been there, except for single women working as secretaries or teachers temporarily while waiting to get married. Throughout my childhood and young adulthood I was brainwashed into believing these lies. I was made to feel that it would be impossible for me to get any job except one of the traditional jobs for women. And even those were often closed to me when I was married, because I was married. All this really handicapped me in trying to make my way in life and no doubt impacted the lives of many others as well.

One day I took a trip to Hearst Castle in northern California. I was astonished to learn that Julia Morgan, a woman, had designed all the buildings at Hearst Castle! This woman had an office in San Francisco in 1904, with several men on her staff. When she tried to get training as an architect, she wasn't allowed to register at Ecole des Beaux-

Arts in Paris because she was a woman. She attended classes anyway, and she entered and won one competition after another, to the point where they were finally sufficiently embarrassed that they were forced to admit her. William Randolph Hearst's mother Phoebe liked Julia and hired her for various projects, and this resulted in Hearst himself hiring her not only for Hearst Castle but also for other projects of his.

Later in life I saw the PBS documentary about the female pilots who flew military aircraft in WWII in the program called Women Air Force Service Pilots. Several were killed in the line of duty. They were not given the same benefits as the men, though they performed the same service and made it possible for the men to be freed up for more missions.

Once it was argued to me that if women were equal to men, then why were there no great artists among women as there were among men? At the time, I believed that there were none, because I had never heard of any. I answered that women were not only not encouraged to pursue outside the home but they were actively discouraged and beaten down, so how can you excel at something when you're not allowed to enter the field? Then later I saw a brochure from a museum in Los Angeles that was showing an exhibit of all female artists of excellence. They did exist after all.

But all these things were hidden from us. We didn't know that there had been great artists, architects, doctors, lawyers, judges, pilots, or members of many other so-called "male" occupations that were women. Certainly school didn't teach us about this. When the feminist movement broke out in the sixties, I read a lot of feminist literature, and I discovered that people had been having the same feminist ideas for hundreds of years. The arguments I read were still totally applicable, which shows how far women had not come in all that time.

It was the feminist movement that started in the sixties that made it possible for the changes that have occurred, so that now women are doctors and lawyers and all the other things that they were not able to be before that time. Now it's considered normal for women to go into whatever field that their talents and interests dictate. I doubt that young women today even understand how it was before and how they have benefitted from the sacrifices of previous generations. Women today don't have to be exposed to a male person in her drafting class asking her why women would want to intrude into "men's" jobs, when, after all, men weren't trying to get into "women's" jobs. I replied that the jobs that men had designated as men's jobs were the good jobs that they wanted for themselves and that men, not women, had assigned the crappy jobs to women. Women had not agreed to that.

Young women today are lucky to have choices for which they don't have to fight an uphill battle, and they are not belittled or thought strange for wanting a career outside the realm dictated to them by an oppressor.

Have you noticed, though, that we still do not have an Equal Rights Amendment?

T-Shirt Bags for the Action Center **by Darlene**

The Action Center gives clients these very cool bags made of T-shirts in which to carry away clothing or groceries. They are made by people who wish to help the Action Center by sewing T-shirts into bags and then donating the bags to the Action Center.

I created some of these bags out of my own T-shirts that I had on hand. I have made quite a few and have taken them over to the clothing room and given them to the people there, who were very glad to get them. In fact, on the days when I delivered my T-shirt bags, coincidentally, their stack was very low before I got there.

So I'm thinking maybe some of our members might want to contribute to this effort by making bags out of their own T-shirts that they don't need. It's very simple. Here are the directions:

- 1) Use only large, extra-large, or bigger T-shirts. They can be plain or they can have a logo or a design or words on them.
- 2) Cut the sleeves off, leaving the small round seam on the shirt, not on the sleeve.
- 3) Lay the T-shirt flat on the table. Cut out the neck, going about two inches out on either side from the existing neck and about an inch or two lower than the existing neck. The idea is to make the hole big enough to easily stuff the bag with clothes or other items.
- 4) Sew the front and the back together with a seam across the bottom of the shirt. That's all there is to it! Now you have a very handy and sturdy bag. See the attached photos for examples.

Take your T-shirt bags to the Action Center at 8755 W. 14th Avenue, Lakewood 80215 (303-237-7704). From Colfax, go south at Garrison one block, then left (east) at 14th Avenue. Go a short distance to Estes Street. There is a building on the northeast corner at 14th Avenue and Estes Street. Go into the building just east of that building. Give your bags to whoever is on duty greeting people as they enter. Your bags will be used in the clothing bank and in the food bank.

The Action Center will greatly appreciate these efforts, plus you can get rid of some extra things that have piled up around the house and see them put to good use.



"We stopped looking for monsters under our bed when we realized that they were inside us." Charles Darwin

Membership Question

Last month's question was:

Who is your favorite Humanist or atheist, living or dead, and why.

We had one response naming David Hume, now widely regarded as the most important philosopher ever to write in English but during his lifetime he was attacked as "the great infidel" for his skeptical religious views and deemed unfit to teach the young. Religion was one of Hume's primary preoccupations. Nearly everything he wrote touched on the topic in one way or another: the credibility of the arguments in its favor, its psychological origins and consequences, its history, its effects on morality and politics. He was neither a believer or an out-of-the-closet atheist, but rather an agnostic, or what in the 18th century was called simply a skeptic. He never denied outright the existence of a higher power, but he deemed the principal arguments on behalf of one highly implausible, and he considered the effects of religion to be mostly pernicious. He was twice denied professorships because of clergy influence, was maligned by the Church, and often called an atheist. Hume viewed "morality as an eminently practical and human phenomenon, rather than one based on any kind of sacred, mysterious, or otherworldly authority. The distinction between

right and wrong does not emanate from God's will, in his view, nor is it somehow written into the fabric of the cosmos; instead, it comes from us.”

From your editor: In looking at Humanists and atheists, I chose prominent real people and fictional characters that are on TV. I chose them because they give a prominent public voice to their beliefs. Here are some of them.

Shelton Leonard on *Big Bang Theory* and his young self on *Sheldon*. These are extremely popular TV shows, always in the top ten and watched by millennials. It gives a strong positive picture of a thinking person so that atheism isn't a hidden weakness.

Bill Maurer on HBO's *The Bill Maurer Show*. He regular makes fun of religion and engages Stephen Colbert, a strong catholic, often on Colbert's show.

Ricky Gervais, a comedian and a vocal atheist. *The Invention of Lying* dealt with how a belief in a god might have come about. In a recent appearance on the Stephen Colbert show, Colbert asked him if, as he grew older, Gervais thought more about the existence of a god. Gervais responded, “Yes, every day. There's not.”

Neil deGrasse Tyson, the famous astrophysicist. Again on Colbert's show, Tyson commented that belief in different gods come and go but a thousand years from now, scientific facts will still govern the way our world works.

We are taking a one month break from our Member Question to redesign how you might respond. We'll try and resume in March.

Next Jefferson Humanist Newsletter Deadline – February 22

Need a Celebrant?



Tim and Jennifer are a husband and wife team, creating ceremonies to match your lifestyles, philosophies and values. www.celebratingtimes.com

Jefferson Humanists Sweatshirts and T-shirts available from Tom Kellogg.

You too can have this attractive Sweatshirt! This is how it works. Buy your own sweat shirt or t-shirt and give it to Tom. For \$10, Tom will put the Jefferson Humanist logo on your piece of clothing. Truth in advertising, there is an 7% chance the logo might not work but take a chance and wear your JH logo proudly.



IMPORTANT: If you have a change of contact information or would like to be removed from this email list, please reply via the form in the body of the email to which this newsletter was attached.

Co: Editors: Nancy Bolt and Bob Hofmann



Loving Humanity

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