

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

May 2005

Sunday, May 8

Freethought Frivolity for Fun and Funding

Special Points of Interest

- AOF's Selects Charity to Benefit from Auction (page 1)
- AOF's President Decides to Step Down" (page 2)
- Candidates for AOF Board - Their Statements (page 4)
- Movie Night (page 5)
- AOFers at AAI, at KVIE, and out on the Highway (pages 6-7)

Sold! At this this May's general meeting, we will be taking our Spring Freethought Potpourri even one step further. Along with our annual elections and our popular "open mic" session (which allows AOF members the opportunity to share their thoughts with others), we will be holding *our first-ever* live auction. (auction details on page 5)

As a special added attraction, local singer/songwriter, Roberta Chevrette, will be entertaining with a few of her songs. Roberta is reason enough for members to make plans to attend this meeting. She was very popular at last October's Freethought Day event. Bring family and friends to hear her play and sing (and to bid on a few items!).

We will still have our silent auction for *most* of the items that our members donate, but the live auction will be held for a select number of enticing articles brought to the meeting and should prove to be a treat! It will certainly make for a more lively and jolly event. (Our volunteer live-auctioneer promises as much.)

(Continued on page 5)

AOF's Auction Is Also to Help Others Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento

Standard Fare

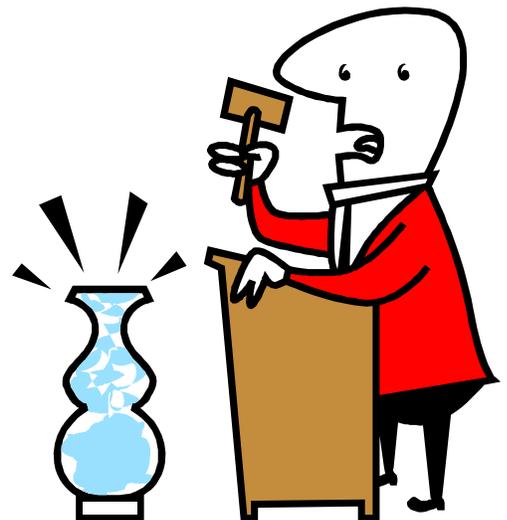
Next Meeting	1
AOF Line	2
Meeting Recap	3
Looking Ahead	5
Membership Form	6
Highway Cleanup	7

Traditionally, all moneys garnered from the May auction go into the AOF treasury. However, at its March meeting, the AOF Board decided this year to instead raise funds for a worthy cause in our community and make visible that it's not only religious people who care about charity. We wanted to give *as atheists*.

At its April meeting, the Board selected as the recipient organization for our effort the Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento. In keeping with the visibility purpose, we submitted our event announcement to the *Sacramento Bee* for possible publication in its "Helping Others" column. (Our blurb is reprinted on page 3.)

Whether or not our announcement is acknowledged, we are very pleased

(Continued on page 6)



AOF's volunteer live auctioneer at the meeting is Paul Geisert. Paul is charged with the task of creating loads of fun and the highest possible bid!

The AOF Line

By Kevin Schultz

This is the final publication of AOF's 2004-2005 calendar year. At our May meeting, members in attendance will select nine new members to serve as stewards of AOF's twelfth consecutive year of operation here in the Central Valley.

I would like to thank everyone on the 2004-2005 AOF board for sharing their activism, vision, hearts, and homes over the past twelve months. As President, I have learned a lot in running an organization. Like anything else, it has ups and downs, yet overall I feel better for the journey.

Therefore, it is with some sadness that I am announcing my plans to step down as AOF president. I need a break to focus on long-term career plans and to relax from this past year of over-work and over-extension with extra-curricular activities. This summer, I plan to work with other members of the community to enhance the web presence with cutting-edge technology. Stay tuned for news in these pages.

I would like to leave you all with a quote from the March Movie Night event, where AOF members got together to watch Stanley Kramer's 1960 movie, "Inherit the Wind." In it, Spencer Tracy (portraying Clarence Darrow), states this passage:

The purpose of the organization, AOF, is to promote the civic understanding and acceptance of atheism in our community.

"Fanaticism and ignorance are forever busy and need feeding. And soon, with banners flying and with drums beating we'll be marching backward. Backward! Through the glorious ages of that 16th century when bigots burned a man who dared bring enlightenment and intelligence to the human mind."

There is an inverse relationship between religious authoritarianism and personal liberty. Margaret Sanger once used, "No Gods - No Masters" as the credo of her publication, "Woman Rebel." If I had to sum up my worldview in one sentence, that is what I would choose.

We are all non-conformists when it comes to accepting religious authoritarianism. We unite behind AOF and its support of church-state separation in our own self-interest as well as in the interests of supporting freedom of conscience for all of our fellow brothers and sisters.

As I understand just how conservative my upbringing was, I feel more and more thankful for all of the friends I have made these past years at AOF. As Betty Simonsma says, "We need to be here."

As an organization, as friends, and as activists, AOFers help non-conformists find a support network in an overwhelmingly conformist society. Best wishes and continued success to AOF in the upcoming year.

AOF Helps Youth To Attend 2005 AAI Convention in L.A.

Our organization was mentioned in "Bright Beginnings," a column published by the Secular Student Alliance, as

one of two local groups aiding younger people to become active in freethought groups. Quoting from the column: "The Secular Student Alliance, *Atheists and Other Freethinkers* (a local chapter in Sacramento), *Heartland Humanists* (a local chapter in Kansas), and AAI all contributed to individual and group transportation expenses to help maximize the number of students able to attend."

AOF Board

President: Kevin Schultz
 Vice President: Kay Dickey
 Secretary: Dave Flanders
 Treasurer: Ken Nahigian
 Directors at large:
 Tina Burgess, Beverly Church
 Mynga Futrell, Don Knutson
 Betty Simonsma

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Mynga Futrell (Editor)
 Kay Dickey (Submissions Editor)
 Jerry Sloan (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 9, 2005:
 Beverly Church, Mynga Futrell,
 Ken Nahigian, Kay Dickey, Jerry Sloan,
 Tom Ikelman, Kevin Schultz

Darwin Day, Feb. 12, 2006:
 Bronda Silva, Mynga Futrell,
 Dave Henderson, Ed McConnell, Kay
 Dickey, Ken Nahigian,

Ad Hoc:

Web Portal (Kevin Schultz, Richard Langley); Alternate Meeting Place/ Time (Jerry Sloan, Ken Nahigian, Kevin Schultz); Youth Outreach (Jerry Sloan, Tina Burgess, Mynga Futrell); Connections (Kevin Schultz, Betty Simonsma); Growing AOF Membership (Tina Burgess, Jerry Sloan, Kevin Schultz)

Archive: Jody Craig, Kay Dickey,
 Mynga Futrell, Ken Nahigian,
 Betty Simonsma

AOF's Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons:

Mynga Futrell, Kay Dickey (AAI),
 Hank Kocol (CSH),
 Ed McConnell (AA),
 Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

Community Service Projects:

Don Knutson

Internet Website: Pat Kelley

Meetings: Dave Flanders, Ken Nahigian
 Jerry Sloan, Betty Simonsma

Membership Database:

Betty Simonsma

We welcome additional involvement from AOF members. Right now we need volunteers to perform very small tasks at our meetings. Just phone the voice mail at 447-3589 if you can help us out. Or, send an e-mail to us at

aofboard@aofonline.org

Singing and Speech

Darien De Lu Presents W.I.L.F.

By Dave Flanders

Darien De Lu of the Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was AOF's April speaker. Darien said WILPF has been around for 90 years and has endeavored to spread peace around the world. The organization got started mostly by woman in an effort to prevent World War One. During the Viet Nam War, membership increased dramatically. It has proved endurance over time.

Darien began her presentation singing a peace activist song to set the mood and to illustrate what it is like to be a peace advocate. Dance and art are also important to WILPF.

The Women's International League," as she phrased it many times, has creative ways of focusing people on the reality of war and militarism. For example, April 15, WILPF is having a bake sale. "Each muffin will cost one half of a million dollars to help subsidize George Dubyas' war effort."

WILPF is against money thrown down the toilet on star wars--a missile defense system that top scientists say can't work and never will

work. Billions of dollars could be spent more wisely. WILPF is committed to dismantling the current "war economy," which is based on the national and international manufacture and sale of nuclear weapons and conventional arms.

Through education and public awareness, WILPF works to expose the domination of weapons manufacturers over Washington legislators, the misuse of the federal budget, and the vested interests of US foreign policy. Rapidly growing corporations, whose primary goal is the increase shareholder wealth, are undermining democracy.

WILPF's campaign has two equally important goals to combat this usurpation of power: (1) to return economic institutions to their proper role working for the good of society and (2) to reclaim democracy by exploring its meaning, examining our interactions, and practicing truly democratic behavior in our communities.

www.wilpf.org is WILPF's website. Darien interspersed in her presentation several peace activist songs to the delight of the audience.

This is the announcement AOF sent to the *Sacramento Bee's* "Helping Others" calendar:



Atheists and Other Freethinkers will hold its annual Mother's Day "Freethought Potpourri and Not-So-Silent Auction" on Sunday, May 8 from 2:30 - 5 PM (Location: Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10, 2791 24th Street). This is the fourth year for AOF's fun and funding event. Proceeds from the live auction will benefit the Sacramento Children's Receiving Home. Volunteer auctioneer is Paul Geisert, Co-Director of The Brights' Network. AOF president Kevin Schultz will emcee and coordinate the program of oratory, poetry and song. Local singer-songwriter Roberta Chevrette is the featured performer. Light refreshments will be served. Admission is free, but a donated item for the auction portion of the potpourri will be most welcome. (916-447-3589)

Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. It is one of 50 member societies of the Atheist Alliance International ("a positive voice for atheism"). AOF also main-

tains affiliations with the Council for Secular Humanism, American Atheists, and the American Humanist Association.

AOF's Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the association, Atheists and Other Freethinkers, is to promote the civic understanding and acceptance of atheism in our community. To accomplish this purpose, AOF will, through educational programs, projects, and publications, extend atheistic perspectives concerning the separation of church and state and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

AOF News & Views: Copyright © 2005 by Atheists and Other Freethinkers, PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. The contents of News & Views are informational and educational. Views expressed via the articles in this publication are not necessarily those of Atheists and Other Freethinkers.

Subscription \$12 per year (free to members).

Reprinting of original material in this newsletter is granted to atheist, freethought, rationalist, skeptical, and secular humanist groups as long as acknowledgment is given. Exchange of newsletters with aforementioned organizations is solicited.

AOF Board Nominees — Candidate Statements

Beverly Church [incumbent]

Last year I headed the committee that planned for and brought off the 2004 Freethought Day celebration. This year I will also be chairing the event. Additionally, I host an AOF movie series. I am currently Vice President of HAGSA, and I'd like to continue on the AOF board and play an active role in both organizations as an enthusiastic freethinker.

Carla Corbett

AOF is an indispensable resource for freethinkers and atheists, both through its local programs and activities and its website. Tolerance is key, and I wholeheartedly support AOF's purpose to promote "civic understanding and acceptance of atheism" through education and discourse. AOF is a group to which I would be proud to lend my energy, my analytical organizational skills, and my ability to be adaptable and invent creative solutions, by serving as a board member.

Dave Flanders [incumbent]

As a long time member, former board member and one-time president of AOF (two years) and most recently board secretary, I would like to return to the board and contribute to the positive evolution occurring at AOF. Please elect me to be director-at-large.

Mynga Futrell [incumbent]

I am a founding member and the immediate past president. I serve AOF in a wide variety of capacities, including editor of *AOF News & Views*, and I hope to build on what we have going. I'm very dedicated to helping people better understand us as a legitimate part of the fabric of their/our society. I'd like to help work to make AOF more vibrant as an organization, and also to better serve members' needs.

Don Knutson [incumbent]

I joined AOF in 1997 and soon thereafter began coordinating our Adopt-A-Highway program. I joined the Board in 1999 and have been on it since (one year as secretary). I introduced AOF to Davis Community Meals program, which we joined to assist St. Martin's church in the effort for the past four years.

Phil Lazier

I'm a Counselor and Celebrant of the American Humanist Association, and available as a Humanist Counselor. I have been active in several local organizations. I am also retired USAF and retired elementary teacher (still volunteer teaching in 4th grade science). As Board Member I would suggest a partial unification of HAGSA and AOF (e.g., unified presentations). Two program committees for a 50% overlap population seems redundant. Otherwise, I'll try not to make too much trouble!

Ken Nahigian [incumbent]

I was a charter member of AOF and instigated the first food fight. I was pulling in fairly good bucks when kindly AOF members found me in a shack shaving edges from dimes and carried me off a few years back to serve as AOF treasurer. I tremendously enjoy being of service to the freethought community, and I hope to continue.

Kevin Schultz [incumbent]

I'm the current President and I enjoy helping make AOF a valuable resource to its membership. In the past year, I captained one Davis Dinner event, participated in the Freethought Day event committee, and presided over AOF's day-to-day business. I look forward to working with old friends and new in the coming year.

Vincent M. Wales

I am a long-standing freethought activist, founder of the Freethought Society of Northern Utah, and the man responsible for The Atheist Attic, a web site featuring over 200 freethought essays updated regularly since 1998. Also online, I was the original guide for About.com's Agnosticism/Atheism site, and now a volunteer artisan at AllExperts.com on atheism and other topics. I authored two award-winning novels and serve on the Board of Directors of Northern California Publishers and Authors.

Rena Lowry

(no statement at press time)

Paul Storey

(no statement at press time)

Note to Members

According to the by-laws of AOF, it is the members of the organization who elect the directors to serve on the AOF Board of Directors. It is the task of the board of directors itself to select the organization's officers.

There are 9 openings for directors, and at the election on May 8, there will be more candidates than that number on the printed ballot. Any member whose dues are paid up may vote for from one to 9 of the candidates. You must attend the meeting to vote in the annual election.

May 8's "Not So Silent" Auction Plan for Both Fun and Fund(\$)

As we promised in last month's *AOF News & Views*, the May 8 meeting will be quite *different* and very likely one of the most enjoyable events of the year for the members who attend. We will combine charity with fun - and we are planning for lots of both!!

For the auction, we encourage all members to bring *at least three items* to donate. More will surely be welcomed, but this is *not* a garage sale, so please keep in mind the concepts of quality, aesthetics and/or likely usefulness to others.

Possibilities: books, music, artwork, collector's items, and gift certificates to local eateries or museums. A donor may assign a minimum bid to an item of value. In previous years, freethought items have proved quite popular. This year, for example, we will auction off a postage stamp that features a noted atheist reformer in India. (Just imagine a

U.S. stamp with an atheist on it! Don't hold your breath.)

One reminder for the auction -- if you bring something, you must be prepared to bring it home if it does not get sold.



If you are unable to attend the meeting, please think about mailing a gift certificate or similar easily mailed item to AOF at its post office box (PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851). Mark: *Attention Auction*. Someone will pick up these items on Saturday, May 7.

Do not mail large items, please.

The volunteer auctioneer will be using about a dozen of the items to generate initial bidder interest and (we hope) boost that final bid!

Freethought Frivolity

(Continued from page 1)

First off, we will be electing this upcoming year's board of directors, so arrive on time if you can. This is your chance to come out and vote for who you think should be on the board (please see *this newsletter's special section on page 4 for the candidate statements*.)

During the "open mic" time, members will be given precisely 3 minutes to share their poetic or musical creations, their planned oration, or just to speak "off the cuff" on whatever happens to be on their minds (as long as they can express themselves within the strict three-minute limit, of course).

We are happy to announce that this year AOF will be donating a portion of the auction's profits to a worthy cause (see story, page 1).

So do a little spring cleaning for the auction and come on down, exercise your right to vote, and share your opinions with your fellow community non-conformists at AOF.

—KS



AOF in Action! — Get in on it!

Freethought Day 2005 Planning Committee

The Freethought Day Committee kicks off planning for Sacramento's Fourth Annual Freethought Day with its first meeting: Sunday, May 22, 1:30 PM.

Last year's committee members all had a great time preparing for what turned out to be an outstanding event. Now, others have an opportunity to get in on the fun! It's still not too late to join if you have interest (and energy!). Call Beverly Church, Committee Chair, at 916-359-5423, to let her know what you'd like to do, or if you know already where she lives, just show up at the first planning meeting at her house.



Friday Night Movie - Fun!

What: *Contact*—This superb 1997 film is based on the novel by Carl Sagan (directed by Robert Zemeckis)

Who: Jody Foster and Matthew McConaughey are the stars (but Larry King plays himself in there somewhere)

When: Friday, May 13th - 7:00 PM

Where: Beverly Church's place, 24 Adkinson Ct., Sacramento, 95835 (Call Bev at 916-359-5423 to let her know you'll be attending)

Why: It's an opportunity to get together in a social setting, watch a great movie (for atheists and everyone!), and have some fun and lively conversation. Bring your favorite microwaveable popcorn.

—MF

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, P O Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s) _____ Phone () _____

Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address (print legibly!) _____

Check your preference:

Newsletter Subscriber Only (\$12) Family Membership (\$30)

Low-income Member (\$10) Patron (\$50)

Single Membership (\$20) Donation (\$ _____)

Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to organizations similar to AOF.

Please check here if you DO want to be on our AOF activist list.

Please check your preference. We can deliver your monthly newsletter via an attached pdf file to your e-mail address above. E-mail newsletter Postal mail

Childrens Receiving Home

(Continued from page 1)

about where the money (all above the day's room rent) will be going.

Sacramento's receiving home is run by a nonprofit organization and provides "a safety net for the area's abused and neglected children between the ages of 2 and 17." The website of the organization (<http://crhkids.org>) is well worth a visit. There, among the varied information offered, you will be able to read the following about the services:

We are the shelter for abused and neglected children in Sacramento County . We are the *only* facility of our kind in the County.

We are a short-term emergency shelter that provides a proven early intervention strategy that stabilizes, normalizes, and produces improved long term outcomes for children.

Our kids are between the ages of 2 and 17 and all come to us having suffered some form of abuse or neglect, often severe. *Neglect* involves lack of care, no food in the home, absent parents, filthy conditions. *Abuse* involves hitting, beating, burning, or sexual trauma.

75% of our children arrive here via law enforcement; city police or sheriffs department. The average length of stay is

25-30 days.

Kids come from all parts of Sacramento County. They tend to come from communities characterized as pockets of poverty but they come from all zip codes. We track this data.

For many traumatized and brutalized children taken from abusive parents, the Children's Receiving Home is their first stop and best hope for a brighter future. In this friendly haven, staffed with counselors, teachers, social workers, and nurses, children experience basic screenings that include medical, dental, and educational assessments before the children are placed in a foster care home.

Licensed annually by the State Depart-

ment of Social Services, the Children's Receiving Home is available twenty-four hours each day, seven days per week, for the admission of children. It provides comprehensive services to children while they are staying at the facility including medical and dental care, mental health assessments, on-site teachers provided by the San Juan Unified School District for daily classes and educational evaluations.

We were established in 1944 and have been at our current facility at Watt and Auburn since 1965.

AOF is hopeful that members will support this May 8 event and provide aid to this organization.



Bob Bolger (left), who is from Long Beach, dropped in on the Atheist Alliance Convention to see what was happening there and ended up spending the pre-dinner social hour in the company of some AOFers (left to right: Beverly Church, Kay Dickey, and Don Knutson). Bob was drawn to "this crew" because he is deaf and learned that Mynga Futrell, who took this picture, was apparently the only person attending the conference able to communicate via signing. Bob teaches American Sign Language in a middle school in Long Beach.

AOF at KVIE (Partial Crew)



"Workers at their leisure" are shown clockwise, beginning with AOF President Kevin Schultz in the "6 o'clock" position:

Ute Yates
Kay Dickey,
Ken Nahigian,
and
Jerry Bachman

These five are among the nine folks representing the Sacramento Community of Reason at the KVIE spring fund drive last month. This snapshot catches our AOFers at a time when no calls were coming in.

Newsletter Submissions

Submit your newsletter items to the N&V submissions editor, Kay Dickey, at this e-mail address:

frethnkr@mindspring.com
or mail item to the AOF mailbox: PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182.

Preference is given to material submitted online in a PC-compatible word processing format such as *Word*, *Wordpad*, or *Notepad*. (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

AOF also welcomes succinct and substantive letters to the editor. Note: All letters are prioritized by AOF 's publishing criteria deriving from the organization's Statement of Purpose.

Highway Cleanup Report

By Don Knutson

On Saturday, April 16, seven AOF members made the trek to our Adopt-A-Highway two-mile stretch of Highway 99 to do a good cleaning after a couple of rain-outs.

Newcomer Ben Cornforth was joined by grizzled veterans Dave Flanders, Mynga Futrell, Mike House, Don Knutson, Kevin Schultz and Lydia Sheridan.

We were greeted by dense overgrowth on both sides of the highway and brisk but perfect climatic conditions.

Ben maintained a somewhat proud tradition of the cleanup when he found a pornographic DVD with a couple of topless

buxom Latinas gracing the front of the disc. In the nearly ten-year history of AOF's cleanup, we have found on at least four occasions erotic underwear or smut of some sort along this highway.



Ben entrusted me with the disc and, predictably, it mysteriously disappeared during the AOF Board meeting the following day! (*Editor's note: "Uh Oh!"*)

We will return to the former porn scene a

week after AOF's June meeting on Sunday the 19th at 8 a.m. at the Park & Ride west of 99 on Elkhorn Blvd.

By the way, plans continue regarding the observation of the 10th anniversary of AOF's participation in highway cleanup in October, so stay tuned!

A Zeitgeist Snippet

A recent want ad posted by a taxpayer-financed vocational program for inmates in a Pennsylvania jail titled, Firm Foundation, stipulated that a job seeker must be "a believer in Christ and Christian Life today" and that the workday "will start with a short prayer." A major portion of inmates' time is spent on religious lectures and prayer, according to a lawsuit filed by two civil liberties groups.

[bold emphasis above - added by N&V]

— from "The Disappearing Wall"
(editorial on the status of church/state separation by the *New York Times* published Tuesday, April 26, 2005)

Newsletter Freebie Policy

We'll be pleased to send one free newsletter to any person upon request, but after that time, please subscribe to AOF's newsletter for only \$12 per year. Or, better yet, why not become a member? That way, you'll get our newsletter FREE as part of your membership!



P.O. Box 15182
Sacramento, CA 95851-0182

We're on the Web!
www.rthoughtsrfree.org/aof.htm

May Calendar of Events

AOF "Freethought Potpourri" Meeting	Sunday May 8, 2:30 PM
Popcorn and Movie Social (see page 5)	Friday May 13, 7 PM
AOF Board Meeting (open to members)	Sunday, May 15, 9:30 AM
Freethought Day 2005 Planning Committee	Sunday May 22, 1:30 PM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, June 12, 2:30 PM

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 2:30 - 5 PM at the Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10. Note: The months of February and October are exceptions, since AOF co-produces two public education events: (1) an outdoor faire in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (10/9/05), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2/12/06). Watch the newsletter for details.

Directions to AOF's General Meetings

The Sierra 2 Center is located at 2791 24th Street in Sacramento, just south of Broadway and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Visitors are welcome. Parking is available on the street or in the rear, off 4th Avenue. AOF Board meetings are held at alternating sites, so please inquire about the location. For AOF's 24-hour recorder, call 447-3589. Leave your name and a number (please repeat for clarity) and someone will phone back to answer your questions about AOF.

