

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

March 2010

Sunday, March 14, 1:30-4:00 p.m. Perspectives on Druidism: April Hollon & Jennifer Jaffe

Special Points of Interest

AOF's 2009 Financial Health Report, by Ken Nahigian (page 4)

Supporters of the Sacramento Coalition of Reason Gather to Support Billboards by Rachael Harrington (pages 1, 5, 7)

Our featured speaker at the AOF membership meeting on March 14th will be April "Sleepyhollow" Hollon, an atheist Druid. She will be joined by Jennifer Jaffe. Both April and Jennifer are members of the Board of Directors of Sacramento Grove of the Oak. As we draw closer to Earth Day in April it would seem appropriate that we hear from members of our community that center their lives around a strong respect for, and connection with Earth.

April and Jennifer will discuss Druidry, the Sacramento Grove of the Oak and their perspectives on living in a predominantly non-pagan society. In her communications, April has referred to this event as a workshop and indicated a desire for

(Continued on page 3)



April Hollon, March AOF co-presenter

Standard Fare

AOF Family News	2
Darwin Day Write-Up	3
Letters to the Editor	6
Membership Form	6
AOF Upcoming Events	8



Billboards like the one above are up in Sacramento. See pages five and seven for complete details.

A Poem

A Belated Valentine

By Phil Appleman

This Year's Valentine

They could
 pump frenzy into air ducts
 and rage into reservoirs,
 dynamite dams
 and drown the cities,
 cry fire in theaters
 as the victims are burning,
 but
 I will find my way through blackened streets
 and kneel down at your side.

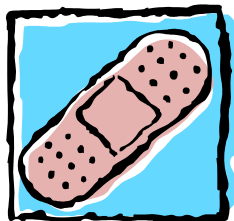
They could
 jump the median, head-on,
 and obliterate the future,
 fit .45's to the hands of kids
 and skate them off to school,
 flip live butts into tinderbox forests
 and hellfire half the heavens,
 but
 in the rubble of smoking cottages
 I will hold you in my arms.

They could
 send kidnapers to kindergartens
 and pedophiles to playgrounds,
 wrap themselves in Old Glory
 and gut the Bill of Rights,
 pound at the door with holy screed
 and put an end to reason,
 but
 I will cut through their curtains of cunning
 and find you somewhere in moonlight.

Whatever they do with their anthrax or car bombs,
 however they strip-search or brainwash or blackmail,
 they cannot prevent me from sending you robins,
 all of them singing: I'll be there.

Special Recovery Wishes to Mynga Futrell

AOF Family News



AOF vice-president Mynga Futrell received a breast cancer diagnosis leading to surgery on March 2. Husband Paul Geisert writes: "[This] will restrict her activities for a period of time, but only briefly, she hopes! Paul promises to convey any "Best Wishes" that arrive at the-brights@the-brights.net with MYNGA in the subject line." All of us at AOF wish her a speedy recovery. ♦

AOF Board (2010)

President: Beverly Church

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jillian Stanley

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large: David Flanders, Paul Geisert,
 Brian Jones, Ken Nahigian, Mario Sandri

AOF Standing Committees

All AOF members are urged to volunteer in the organization. There are openings in every committee listed here. Please contact the chair or coordinator of any area of interest to you to learn details of getting involved. We would love to have your participation! Phone AOF 916-447-3589 or e-mail aofboard@aofonline.org for direct contact to relevant personnel.

Programs and Events Committee

Program Planning (Team Coordinator, Brian Jones)
 Meeting Matters / Logistics (Team Coordinator, *Open*)
 Social Activities (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Membership Committee

Members Tracking (Team Coordinator, Ken Nahigian)
 "Freethought Friends" (Team Coordinator, Jillian Stanley)
 Outreach / Recruiting (Team Coordinator, Steve Campbell)

Communications Committee

Beverly Church, Chair
 AOF News Team (newsletter editor, events editor, public editor, postmaster, webmaster)

Education, Activism and Service Committee

Service Projects Coordinator: Don Knutson
 Education/Action Coordinator: Mynga Futrell

Freethought Day 2010: Date to be announced

Beverly Church, Chair. (Save the date! – It's a celebration of reason and church/state separation)

Darwin Day 2010: Sunday, February 7

Mynga Futrell and Bronda Silva, Co-Chairs
 (Save the date! – It's a celebration of science and humanity)

AOF Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons

Mynga Futrell (AAI)
 Kevin Schultz (AA)
 Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)
 Hank Kocol (CSH)

AOF News Team

Newsletter Editor: Kevin Schultz
 Postmaster: Jerry Sloan
 Webpeoples: Pat Kelley, Robert Poeschel, Kevin Schultz
 (Openings for Events Editor and Public Editor)

ISSN: 1936-4229

AOF BloodSource ID#: 4857

AOF Federal Tax ID#: 68-0325762

AOF Voice Mail: 916-447-3589

Dr. Andrew Marshall of UC-Davis Educated, Delighted Darwin Day Gala Celebration Recap

By Mynga Futrell

Sacramento's 13th annual Darwin Day Educational Gala was downright delightful, and educational, too!

There was the usual gala atmosphere, with some live music ("Charlie") at the beginning and the traditional "Happy Birthday, Charlie" song followed by cake and refreshments afterward. The Darwin cartoons along the walls and the array of literature tables provided by several community organizations were also part of the atmosphere. But, of course, it is the speaker that makes or breaks any Darwin Day.

This year the audience benefited from an excellent presentation by Dr. Andrew Marshall of the University of California-Davis. Using examples from his 14 years of research in the rain forests of Borneo, with primates and other creatures, Dr. Marshall gave a superbly organized presentation on the topic: "How conservation depends on evolutionary biology."

His talk, illustrated and accented with an array of colorful slides, beautifully exemplified conservation science in action. Borneo is faced with extensive deforestation through logging and other destruc-

tive human activity, and the research is generally focused on the desire to preserve the array of organisms in the rain forest from consequential decline and even extinction. For his talk, Dr. Marshall drew upon three specific research activities, structuring his presentation around these three straightforward questions:

- 1) Should we focus solely on pristine forests?
- 2) Are all forest species affected equally?
- 3) Are all forests "created equal"?

Much of the focus of research was on the diminishing orangutan population. The second question, obviously, examined a variety of species, and the last compared forests at different elevations and rainfall patterns (lowlands and uplands).

He then described how each question was approached in turn, how data was gathered, and how the data pointed so clearly to a specific conclusion:

- 1) We should not focus solely on pristine forests (degraded forests can retain high conservation value)
- 2) Forest species are affected differently (some, but not all, vertebrate

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 1)

extensive two-way communication, so come with questions and an open mind.

The Sacramento Grove of the Oak, according to their website, was founded in 1998 and "is an eclectic group of Druids, Wiccans, and other Pagans who gather...[for] Celtic seasonal festivals, to share community, perform ritual, create magic, and support each other in [their] chosen earth-honoring pagan paths." The Grove is also recognized as a seed group of the international community known as the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids.

To see how similar our communities are, compare these two statements on AOF's and Sacramento Grove of the Oak's websites:

aofonline.org: On the local scene, AOFers meet and greet, have programs, do activities and service projects, and try to be visible. We'd like to improve how atheists are viewed and treated in an America that lags behind in its Constitutional ideals concerning "freedom of conscience" for all citizens and "separation of religion and government."

groveoftheoak.org: We participate in many of Sacramento's public Pagan events because we believe that if we Pagans do not define ourselves to the rest of our culture, those who fear and hate us will be more than willing to do so.

It seems clear that although there are differences between our organizations, we have a lot in common too. ◇

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 maintains 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 of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

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Print subscription \$12 per year, e-mail subscription free to all on request.

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.

Yearly 501(c)(3) Recap

AOF 2009 Financial Summary

By Ken Nahigian, AOF Treasurer

For all faithful members and supporters, AOF presents its financial report for calendar year 2009. Despite some attrition in membership, the slow market recovery had a positive impact on our financial stand. AOF voting membership was 102 as of this date a year ago, 92 by the most recent tally. However the General Fund grew from \$54,534.90 to \$54,878.14 (comparing the year-end totals for 2008 & 2009) – not a huge increase, but progress! Donors continue to be generous; we extend special thanks to several who remember AOF in their annual United Way giving program. AOF directors continue to focus on the long term goal of acquiring our own meeting hall. The “Reason Hall Committee” has reviewed several attractive properties, and is always open to suggestions. If you would like to help AOF with this, please contact our president, Beverly Church, at <president@aofonline.org>, or call 916-447-3589 (AOF voicemail).

AOF General Financial Report for Calendar Year 2009
[superscripts refer to charts at right]

Beginning Bank Balance (1 Jan 2009): \$1,571.42

Revenue/Income:

Memberships & Subscriptions: \$2,082.12 ^[1]
 Donations to General Fund: \$1,427.47 ^[2]
 Auction Revenue: \$1.00 ^[3]
 Admissions: \$25.55 ^[4]
 Sales Revenue: \$181.00 ^[5]
Total Revenue: \$3,717.14

Expense/Outgo:

Newsletter Expense: \$1,548.41 ^[1]
 Telephone/Voicemail Expense: \$358.00 ^[2]
 Speaker Expense & Gifts: \$205.30 ^[3]
 Charitable Donations & Grants: \$328.95 ^[4]
 Merchandise for Sales: \$153.60 ^[5]
 Meeting Room Rent: \$1,400.00 ^[6]
 Post Office Box Rent: \$54.00 ^[7]
 Administrative Costs: \$19.45 ^[8]
 Taxes & fees: \$49.00 ^[9]
Total Expense: \$4,116.71

Ending Bank Balance (31 Dec 2009): \$612.65

Scudder Money Market Account:

Beginning Balance: \$6,664.84
 Dividends: \$23.11
Ending Balance: \$6,687.95

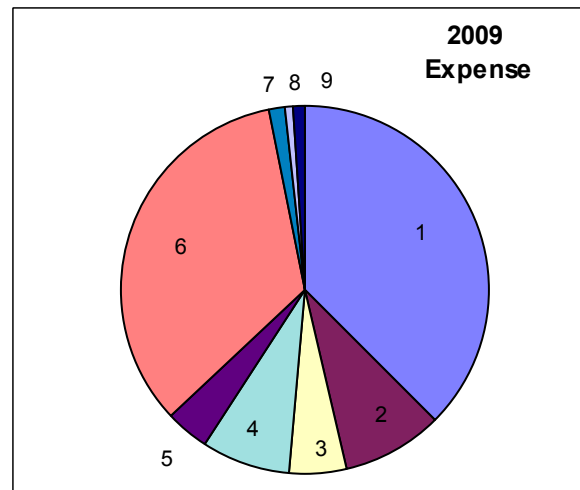
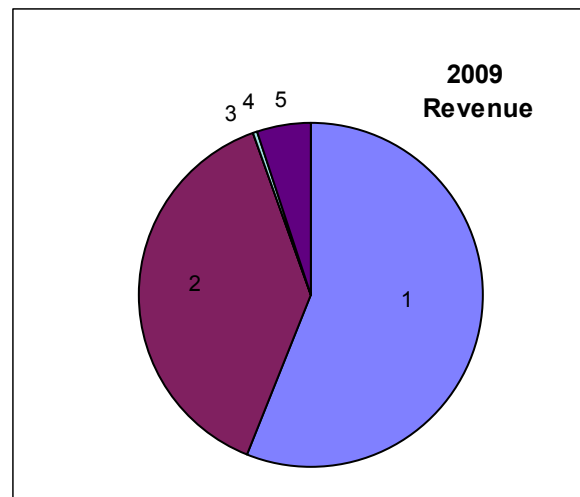
Investment Account:

Beginning Balance: \$46,857.94
 Interest & Dividends: \$779.60
 Management fees: (\$60.00)
Ending Balance: \$47,577.54

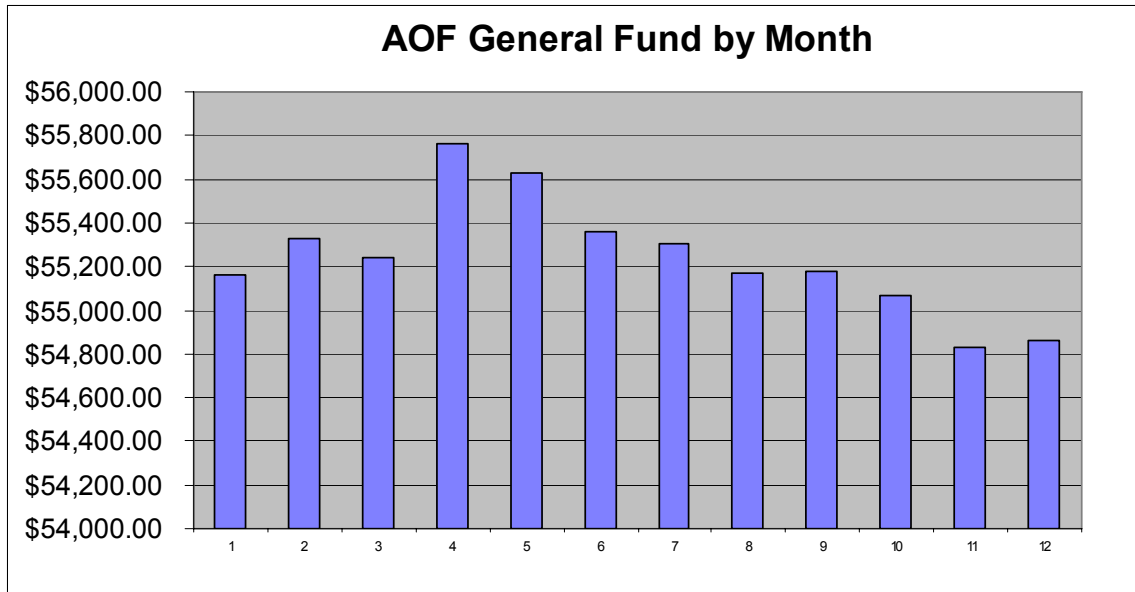
Total, all accounts: \$54,878.14 (Total on Hand)
Allocated Funds: \$13.05
AOF General Fund: \$54,865.09 (Available at end of 2009)

(Revenue/Expense pie charts refer to Bank Account only.)

Note: Pie chart numbers correspond to line-item numbers in the first column.



(General Fund comprises all accounts)



*See any familiar faces? Supporters of the Sacramento Coalition of Reason gathered on Saturday, February 27 near the billboard southeast of 65th and Q St, near the light rail/bus station, across the street from SMUD. For additional details, please see page seven. **Photo credit:** Brian Jones*

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

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

Name(s) _____ Phone: _____

Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

E-mail address (please print!) _____

Membership Level (please circle one):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Note: Membership does not include a newsletter subscription

Newsletter subscription:

___ Send my printed newsletter by postal mail (\$12 extra)

___ Send my newsletter by email (*Free!*) – my email address is above

Additional Donation: \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association – Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as

permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter (same rate - \$12 printed, free via email).

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

Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

E-mail letters to: newsletter@aofonline.org

Letters to the Editor



Re: Paul Geisert's "Leave 'Lumping' Behind", February 2010

The article in the February 2010 AOF newsletter was greatly appreciated. AOF is not alone; building coalitions with organizations who are like minded re science and evolution is in our best interest. Humanists and Atheists must know their allies. Perhaps the AOF Statement of Purpose should be revamped to read:....Through ...projects and publications.....AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think **clearly** and speak freely **and accurately** on these perspectives. — Karla LaZier

(Continued from page 3)

species can persist in degraded habitats)

3) Forests differ in important ways (species occupy habitats that cannot support them in the long term).

Along the way, the audience learned about several components of these studies and terminology, such as habitats for gibbon populations that are "sources" and habitats that are "sinks". They learned about some sources of bias that may be inadvertently introduced through short-term studies typically performed by students operating on academic time-lines.

Some of the broader implications for conservation research:

- 1) It is important to preserve the full complement of habitats that a species occupies (not just pristine).
- 2) Rapid surveys may be misleading!
- 3) Beware of studies that are conducted in high quality habitats.

All in all, Dr. Marshall provided an excellent scientific presentation, well matched to the audience, and one of his many colorful slides was quite memorable. It showed such a huge variety of beetles in stunningly vibrant colors that it drew audible gasps from the audience.

Mentioning the fact that there are many more types of beetles than any other form of insect, he then used that slide to inject a bit of humor into the presentation by way of the possibly apocryphal reply of British geneticist and evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane to some theologians who inquired if there was anything that could be concluded about the Creator from his study of creation. Supposedly Haldane said something along the lines of this: "He has an inordinate fondness for beetles." ◇

Location, Location, Location

Sacramento Coalition Of Reason Billboards Project

By Rachael Harrington, Sacramento CoR Local Coordinator

The week of February 8, 10 billboards were posted around the Sacramento area that read, "Are you good without God? Millions are."

Sponsoring Organizations

These billboards were sponsored by the Sacramento-area Coalition of Reason (SCoR), which is composed of 10 nonbeliever and skeptic groups in our area, including AOF.

Funding

The website hosting and billboards were paid for by United Coalition of Reason (United CoR). United CoR is a national group that is working to "raise the visibility of local groups in the community of reason." They have provided support for and paid for 18 similar campaigns across the U.S. in 2009.

Vandalism

The billboards caused some commotion in the media, especially after the billboard along highway 80 in Davis was vandalized less than four days after being posted. The words "also lost?" were added to the end of the message, changing it to: "Are you good with God? Millions are also lost?" Billboard #3 (see column two) had the words "Christ Loves U" written on it, and #9 was torn practically all the way off. Pictures are available at <http://picasaweb.google.com/sacramentocor/VandalismPhotos#>

Media Attention

Our billboards have been featured

in newspapers, TV news, and radio shows as well as blogs in the Sacramento area and beyond.

Campaign Duration

The billboards will be posted for a month.

For More Information

You can view a map of the locations and get more information at our website: <http://SacramentoCoR.org>

10 Billboard Locations:

- (1) 16th St., east side, 200 ft. north of North C St., facing south;
- (2) 65th St., east side, 45 ft. south of Q St., facing north;
- (3) Auburn Blvd., west side, 385 ft. south of Myrtle, facing north;
- (4) Broadway, north side, 100 ft. west of 16th St., facing west;
- (5) Franklin Blvd., west side, 214 ft. south of Fruitridge Rd., facing south;
- (6) I-80, north side, 8 ft. west of Sacto Cl., facing east;
- (7) I-80, south side, 1 mi. east of Taylor Rd., facing east;
- (8) Marconi Ave., south side, 218 ft. east of Darwin St., facing west;
- (9) Roseville Rd., west side, 0.1 mi. north of Longview, facing north;
- (10) Sutterville Rd., south side, 225 ft. east of 21st St., facing west

Sacramento Coalition of Reason Statement of Purpose

The Sacramento Area Coalition of Reason works together to increase awareness of secular-minded groups throughout the Sacramento area. We invite you to visit our various websites and to feel free to attend the public gatherings of any of our organizations. ◇

Newsletter Submissions

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

newsletter@aofonline.org

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

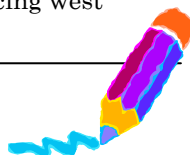
Preference is given to material in a PC-compatible word processing format such as *Word*, *Wordpad*, or *Note-pad*. (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

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.

Newsletter Freebie Policy

This newsletter is free by e-mail to everyone. Just send your e-mail address. If you prefer printed copy by postal mail, AOF will send one free issue on your request; after that, please subscribe at \$12 per year. For details, see the signup form on page six.

Want to send a letter to the Editor?
E-mail newsletter@aofonline.org





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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

March/April Calendar of Events

AOF March General Meeting	Sunday, March 14, 1:30-4:00 p.m.
AOF Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Event	Sunday, March 21, 8:00-10:00 a.m.
AOF Davis Community Meals Event	Tuesday, March 30, 4:00-7:00 p.m.
AOF Dinner Social; Ma Jong's Asian Diner, 1431 L Street. Contact: 419-2105 or shasta-seer@sbcglobal.net	Thursday, April 1, 6:30 p.m.
AOF April General Meeting	Details to-be-announced

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 1:30 - 4 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 fair in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (Oct 2010), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (Feb 2011). 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 (repeat for clarity) and someone will phone back to answer your questions about AOF.

