

# AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

April 2011

*Sunday, April 10, 1:30-4:00 p.m.*

## Special Points of Interest

AOF in May: Speaker Raji Al Munir on "Analysis of Islam" (pages 1, 7)

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## Andrea Griffith— Social Intelligence and Atheism

What should you say when someone offers to "bless you" after a sneeze? How should you respond when a theist argues we are a Christian nation? When a family member tries to push their beliefs on your children, how can you keep the peace? Is there a polite way to tell someone they're wrong? How should you respond when asked to say grace at someone else's home?

Andrea Griffith, the Social I.Q. Lady (<http://bit.ly/cCcQjk>), teaches us to use Social Intelligence to manage our relationships with believers. Whether those relationships are personal, business or political one can learn how to combat superstition, religion and ignorance with grace, style and information.



*Andrea Griffith, the self-described "Social IQ Lady"*

*(Continued on page 3)*

## AOF in May Speaker Raji Al Munir— Analysis of Islam

Who is the mystery man who will bravely deconstruct Islam and its history at the AOF May general meeting? Raji Al Munir (not his real name) asked us not to display a photo, for obvious reasons. A native expatriate from an undisclosed Islamic country, a secular humanist, he is the author of the new book, Islam, God, and the New Enlightenment. Being a former Muslim who lost his faith in Islam, he is at risk, and cannot safely return to his home.

Raji will speak on the history of Islam, its roots, and the need to examine religion in general from a scientific perspective. Because of Islam's particular history, and the absence (as yet) of an Islamic Reformation, strongly Muslim cultures tend not to be open to freedom of inquiry or of scientific or social progress. Innovation today arises

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Finding Our Voice

### By Kevin Schultz

AOF's esteemed president, Jerry Sloan, is taking a respite this month. As he recovers from illness, I am assisting by filling in.

Here at Chez Kevin, my secret undisclosed location, I type this while looking out at leaden skies and wet earth. Spring reminds me of renewal and emergence. Though they look asleep, trees actually build their foundation for growth during the winter, pushing forward with bigger root systems. So too, AOF's board of directors have been busy over the winter, scheduling upcoming speakers and events, meeting and discussing opportunities.

AOF's primary purpose, since its inception in 1993, has been educating and promoting the *civic* understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community.

As ambassadors of atheism, each of us have our own perspectives on interacting with the community and furthering this goal. As AOFers, we come together and find a common, positive voice—and that discussion continues, today!

AOF as an organization needs *you* and *your* voice. Share your opinions, feedback, and thoughts by communicating with the AOF board ([aofboard@aofonline.org](mailto:aofboard@aofonline.org)), this newsletter ([newsletter@aofonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aofonline.org)) or by attending a meeting or event.

The world is what we make of it—hope to hear from you!

## Flying Spaghetti Monster Party

Sacramento Freethinkers Atheists & Nonbelievers (FAN) is hosting a **Flying Spaghetti Monster Party** on Easter Sunday, 4/24/11. You are all invited. It will be at **Roberto Leibman's house: 108 Lost Oak Ct, Roseville at 1:30 pm** and we ask for people to pitch in \$5 for food costs. Of course, we encourage everyone to **wear pirate regalia** (there will be **contests** for kids and adults). The house is in a gated community, **look for 'Leibman' in the gate's directory** and the FSM will open the gate for you. The house lies at the bottom of a steep driveway, if you need help walking down the driveway we'd be glad to help you, we'll keep the driveway open and a car available to transport those who may need it. More information: Please contact Rachael Harrington, [rachaelkharrington@gmail.com](mailto:rachaelkharrington@gmail.com).

## AOF Board (2011)

**President:** Jerry Sloan

**Vice President:** Mynga Futrell

**Secretary:** Jillian Stanley

**Treasurer:** Ken Nahigian

**Directors at large:** Kristi Craven, Mynga Futrell, Peggy Lucas, Mario Sandri, Jerry Sloan, Jillian Stanley, Vincent Wales

## 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](mailto:aofboard@aofonline.org) for direct contact to relevant personnel.

### Building / Reason House Committee

Beverly Church, Chair  
Paul Geisert, Mynga Futrell, Mario Sandri

### Freethought Day 2011: Date to-be-announced

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

### Darwin Day 2012: Date to-be-announced

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

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

## AOF Voluntariat

### Affiliation Liaisons

Mynga Futrell, Atheists Alliance International (AAI), <http://atheistalliance.org/>

Jerry Sloan, American Atheists (AA), <http://atheists.org/>

Jerry Sloan, American Humanist Association (AHA), <http://americanhumanist.org/>

Jerry Sloan, Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), <http://secularhumanism.org/>

### AOF News Team

Newsletter Editor: Kevin Schultz

Postmaster: Jerry Sloan

Webpeoples: Pat Kelley, (Openings for Events Editor and Public Editor)

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## WILPF

# Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - March Meeting Recap

By Ruth Rezos

In honor of International Women's Day, AOF welcomed Darien DeLu and Ellen Schwartz from Sac-WILPF, the Sacramento valley branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Darien and Ellen took turns speaking, recounting the history of women's suffrage and the "hidden history of corporate personhood."

First, Darien and Ellen gave us a brief history of the WILPF. The group was founded in 1915, when over a thousand women met in The Hague to strategize ways to bring World War I to an early close. In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson incorporated the resolutions from that 1915 meeting into "The Fourteen Points" speech that he delivered to a joint session of Congress. The address was intended to assure the country that the Great War was be-

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## AOF Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Rescheduled to Sat, April 16 @ 9:00

By Don Knutson

AOF Highway Cleanup Coordinator, Don Knutson, writes:

"From a decade of experience in cleaning up this 2-mile stretch of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd., sustained rainfall made the area too wet with standing water to carry out a meaningful cleanup, last time. I am rescheduling the cleanup for Saturday, April 16 @ 9:00 a.m."

*(Continued from page 1)*

Learn how Andrea went from die-hard Christian to staunch atheist. Be prepared to laugh, cry, and think as she tells her personal story of struggle, divorce, and rejection of a lie. Andrea will draw you in with her tale of hope and will help you discover your Socially Intelligent Atheist inside.

Andrea Griffith resides in Folsom with her husband and two of her sons, Sean and Ryan. Her oldest son Ben lives in the Los Angeles area and is a wonderful father to her grandson Owen. Her best-selling book, *The Fruits and Greens Diet* (<http://bit.ly/bV9GxJ>), is based on a naturalistic approach to dietary needs. Andrea's latest book on *Atheist Etiquette* is due out later this year. Meanwhile, you can read her brilliant blog at <http://blog.socialiqldady.com>.

## Briefly Noted...

By Ken Nahigian



Hi all. Some may remember, years ago, I raved about a speech delivered by author **Orson Scott Card** at a science fiction convention, called "*The Secular Humanist Revival Meeting*." It is now available, in two parts, on the AOF Website. Just click to the [Audio & Music sub-page](#), look for the 2nd & 3rd items down. It really is a fun & funny talk, well worth a listen. But the files are pretty large (about **25M** each), so be patient while they download.

### 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.

## ***National News***

# **First International Freethought Film Festival**

## **An Atheist Alliance International Press Release**

(Note: This event occurs in Brandon, FL) The weekend of May 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching, and we are asking our endorsers to help us get the word out about the event. Below is a list of links with information about the film festival. Just posting a link from your Facebook Page to ours would be a great help, but if you can send out an email, put up info on your Webpage, write a blog, announce it on a podcast, whatever...I would be eternally grateful. (Eternally is a stretch... grateful as long as I'm conscious. How's that?) Thank you endorsers (<http://bit.ly/dZ3FK2>).

FFFF Main Webpage: <http://freethoughtfilmfest.org/>

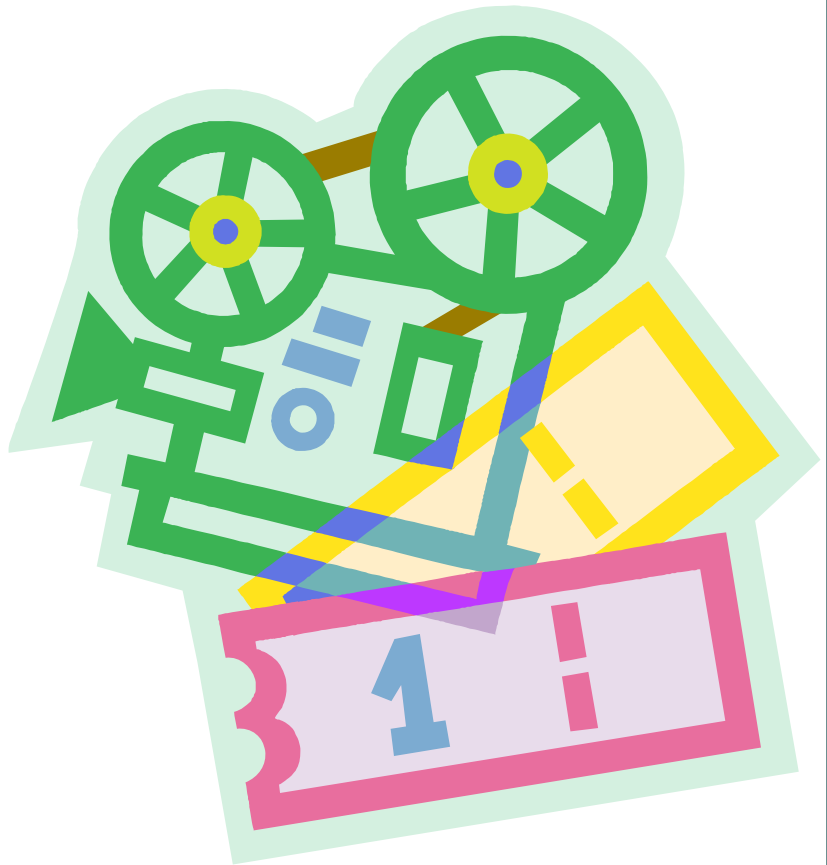
IFFF Event Info Page: <http://bit.ly/gBCeUr>

IFFF Trailers Page: <http://bit.ly/fUgK61>

FFFF Facebook Fan Page: <http://on.fb.me/dF79pa>

IFFF Facebook Event Invitation Page (invite at will!): <http://on.fb.me/etgbcX>

IFFF Openfilm.com Channel: <http://bit.ly/hRcwV1>



## ***International News***

# **World Atheist Convention—Dublin, Ireland**

## **An Atheist Alliance International Press Release**

You can now buy discounted early-bird tickets for the World Atheist Convention in the O'Callaghan Alexander Hotel in Dublin, Ireland, from 3-5 June 2011. The Convention, co-hosted by Atheist Ireland, will see the launch of the new Atheist Alliance International, the world umbrella group for atheist advocacy groups. If you buy an early-bird ticket now, you can attend all sessions of this important Convention for just €100, a discount of €40 on the full ticket price of €140. We will soon publish options and recommendations for purchasing travel, accommodation, food and entertainment during the weekend.

More information: <http://www.atheist.ie/world-atheist-convention-2011/>

## Regional News

# The Great Rock The Fort Swindle

## A Secular Coalition For America Action Alert

“Rock Beyond Belief,” a festival of nontheistic speakers and musicians that was going to be held at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on April 2, has been canceled after Fort Bragg’s garrison commander refused to provide adequate support for the event – even though Fort Bragg officials had made similar arrangements for a religious event just months ago.

Among those scheduled to appear at the festival were author Richard Dawkins; Dan Barker, copresident of the Freedom From Religion Foundation; “Friendly Atheist” blogger Hemant Mehta; Mikey Weinstein of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation; and musicians Spoonboy and Roy Zimmerman.

Rock Beyond Belief’s organizers had asked for lesser or equal amounts of support for their event than the Army and Fort Bragg officials provided for the Billy Graham Evangelical Association’s “Rock the Fort” celebration in 2010. You can see a complete comparison of the more than \$100,000 in government funds provided to the Rock the Fort event to the funds asked for by the Rock Beyond Belief organizers [here](#).

According to Rock Beyond Belief’s chief organizer, Sgt. Justin Griffith, service members without any religious affiliation compose the second-largest “religious” group at Fort Bragg, after Christians. Griffith also points out on the festival’s website, [rockbeyondbelief.com](http://rockbeyondbelief.com), that Fort Bragg officially cosponsored the evangelical concert event in 2010 despite calls for the Christian event to be canceled. He states on the website that Fort Bragg officials explained that “[Fort Bragg] would be willing and able to provide the same support to comparable events.”

Fort Bragg officials have offered no reasonable explanation for denying a nontheistic festival the same level of support and accommodation that was provided to a Christian festival just months ago. Fort Bragg’s actions give all the appearance of discrimination and religious privileging. The service members at Fort Bragg and all nontheistic service members need your help in being heard now.

Please send an email or letter to any or all of the following officials protesting the discriminatory actions of Fort Bragg garrison commander Colonel Stephen J. Sicinski, who has denied equal support and funding for this nonreligious event.

Col. Stephen J. Sicinski  
Garrison Commander  
XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg  
2175 Reilly Road, Stop A  
Fort Bragg, NC 28310  
Email: [stephen.sicinski@us.army.mil](mailto:stephen.sicinski@us.army.mil)

Lieutenant General Frank Helmick  
XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg  
2175 Reilly Road, Stop A  
Fort Bragg, NC 28310  
Email: [frank.helmick@us.army.mil](mailto:frank.helmick@us.army.mil)

Ben Abel  
Public Affairs Officer  
Fort Bragg  
Email: [benjamin.abel@us.army.mil](mailto:benjamin.abel@us.army.mil)

Honorable John McHugh  
Secretary of the Army  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1400

U.S. Congressman Larry Kissell  
8th District, North Carolina  
Member, Armed Forces Committee  
(202) 225-3715  
Email: <https://forms.house.gov/kissell/contact-form.shtml>

If you are so inclined, please send SCA a copy of your letter or BCC (blind copy) us on your emails. Thank you for your support of the nontheistic community and for all of our service members.

Follow the latest information on the Rock Beyond Belief web site: <http://rockbeyondbelief.com>

U.S. Senator Kay Hagan  
North Carolina  
1-877-852-9462  
Email: <http://hagan.senate.gov/contact/>

# 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).*

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ing fought for a moral cause and for postwar peace in Europe. Today, the WILPF holds national and international meetings every three years. Plans are also underway for a centennial meeting in The Hague in 2015.

Next, our presenters gave us a handout entitled “Timeline of Personhood Rights and Powers” that summarizes key legal decisions from 1772 to the present. According to the handout, “corporate personhood” - the legal phenomenon that provides constitutional protections to corporations - is a key component of corporate power and a great threat to democracy.

Here’s a sampling of interesting bits from the handout and talk:

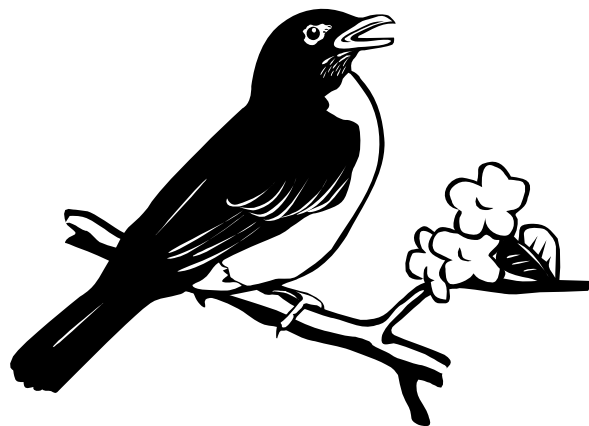
- When the U.S. Constitution was ratified, New Jersey women who met property and residency requirements could vote. However, only unmarried women could own property, so most women still couldn’t vote. (In 1807, the state revoked this right.)
- In 1868, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution declared that black males are now citizens of the USA. (The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment also includes the “due process” and “equal protection” clauses.)
- As early as 1886, the Supreme Court stated before a hearing that a corporation is a “person” and can claim equal protection under law (per the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment).
- Of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment cases brought before the Supreme Court between 1890 and 1910, only 19 dealt with African Americans, while 288 dealt with corporations.
- Since the 1970s, a series of Supreme Court decisions have continued to broaden corporate power.
- In 2001, the WILPF launched a campaign to abolish “corporate personhood” with a goal to “delegitimize the institution of the corporation as a political entity.”

Despite the rise of “corporate personhood,” Darien and Ellen encouraged us to continue voting and making our voices heard on political issues that matter to us. They reminded us that grassroots movements still have power, as evidenced by the groundswell of support for Barack Obama during the last presidential campaign.

For more information about Sacramento WILPF, check out their website at <http://sacwilpf.org> .

## One AOFer's Perspective Of Birders and Atheists

By David Flanders



Birders are those who sometimes go out on field trips to observe birds and sometimes photograph them.

Sometimes I observe various birds near where I live--so I suppose I am a "birder." I perceive birthers to be hatemongers who report president Obama was not born in America no matter what the evidence.

There appears to me that there are those in America who state atheist have no moral compass no matter what the evidence...Recently I watched two "Left Behind" movies at a Christian friend's house. Both movies portrayed atheists in the background continually raping and pillaging 24 hours a day during the "last days." I pointed out the hateful propaganda message of the movie to my Christian friend and she seemed puzzled that I observed that aspect in the movies.

Meanwhile, in Japan, a predominantly secular country, disaster has occurred, but I note water cannons (which can be used to control mobs in the street) are instead used to cool the nuclear reactors. Displaced Japanese patiently wait for food and other necessities. After World War II, state religion in Japan was outlawed--the monopoly no longer existed and the citizens quickly abandoned the state religion and shopped around for this and/or that religion, or no religion.

Secularism seems to be winning there as well as their moral compass. This appears to be another instance where secular people don't need a bully sky-god, nor water hoses to keep them in line when disaster occurs.

We humans were born from star dust long ago, but some birthers still seem to get in a tantrum about that and would rather remain being a re-born born-again Christians.

I would rather be a birder and an atheist.

### Newsletter Submissions

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

[newsletter@aofonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aofonline.org)

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

Preference is given to material in a word processing format. (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

AOF 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.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

from America, East Asia or Europe, not from Islamic countries. The answer, as Raj sees it, is for a general acceptance of what he calls the new enlightenment—including a scientific worldview, the decline of dogmatic religious belief and some form of secular humanism.

Come to AOF's May meeting to hear this courageous man who has put his life on the line to appeal for an honest enlightenment within Islamic culture. All jihads and fatwas to be checked at the door—and please, no baggy clothing.

Raji will bring extra copies of his book for sale and signing after his talk.

For more about him, and to read the book introduction and selected sections, please visit his websites, <http://rmunir.com> and <http://science-religion-morality.org>.

Want to send a letter to the Editor?  
E-mail [newsletter@aofonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aofonline.org)!





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

*We're on the Web!*  
**aofonline.org**

## April/May Calendar of Events

SacCOR Dinner Social: **Paesanos** (<http://paesanos.biz>), 1806 Capitol Avenue; Contact: Suzanne @ 419-2105 or [shastaseer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shastaseer@sbcglobal.net)

Thu, Apr 7, 6:30 p.m.

**AOF General Meeting in April:  
Andrea Griffith, "Social Intelligence and Atheism"**

**Sun, Apr 10, 1:30 p.m.**

**AOF Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Event**

**Sun, Apr 16, 9:00-11:00 a.m.**

AOF and SacCOR Tabling at the **Sacramento Earth Day Festival**

Sat, Apr 23, ~12:00-6:00 p.m.

**Flying Spaghetti Monster Party**; Home of Roberto Leibman, 108 Lost Oak Ct, Roseville; RSVP required: [rachaelkharrington@gmail.com](mailto:rachaelkharrington@gmail.com)

Sun, Apr 24, 1:30 p.m.

**AOF General Meeting in May:  
Raji Al Munir, "Analysis of Islam"**

**Sun, May 8, 1:30 p.m.**

*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 2011), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (Feb 2012). 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.

