

## Upcoming Events

AOF dates in black

- **Sat Nov 3 6:00 pm**  
View Dawkins show
- **Tue Nov 6** Vote
- **Wed Nov 7** Plan local  
Atheist TV Show
- **Fri Nov 9** Observe Carl  
Sagan Day
- **Sun Nov 11** Potluck &  
Politics Open Mic
- **Thu Nov 15 6:15** Free-  
thought Dinner Social at  
Thai Spice
- **Thu Nov 15 7:00pm**  
Open Board Meeting  
Hoppy Brewing Co.
- **Sat Nov 17 9:00 am**  
Adopt-a-Highway
- **Sat Nov 17 6:00 pm**  
Potluck Game Night
- **Sun Nov 18 12:00 pm**  
Ancient Christian Study
- **Sat Nov 24—28**  
Church/State Separation  
Week
- **Mon Dec 10** Interna-  
tional Human Rights Day
- **Thu Dec 20** Solstice
- **Sun Dec 23 11:30 am**  
HumanLight Party



AOF Calendar:  
[aofonline.org/calendar-of-events](http://aofonline.org/calendar-of-events)

SacFAN Calendar:  
[meetup.com/SacFAN/  
#calendar](http://meetup.com/SacFAN/#calendar)

Sac Coalition of Reason  
Calendar: [sacramen-  
to.unitedcor.org/  
sacramento/page/events](http://sacramen-<br/>to.unitedcor.org/<br/>sacramento/page/events)

# AOF News & Views

November 2012

## Freethought Day Festival a Success! *By Dave Diskin*



Freethinkers from across California enjoyed the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Sacramento Freethought Day this October, under perfect weather and its largest venue yet.

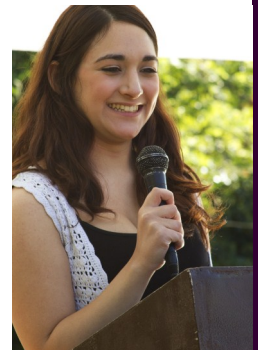
Drawing a crowd of over 300 to the Ben Ali Shrine Center, including representatives of over two dozen com-

munity and national organizations, attendees listened to inspiring speeches from nationally recognized heroes.



The event's theme was to "Vote For Reason" – a nod to the upcoming political elections and the rise of secularism. Keynote speaker Michael Werner – past president of the American Humanist Association – spoke of the importance of being involved in the secular community while lobbyist Chris Lombardi, of the Secular Coalition of America, spoke of the organization's recent success in creating a California chapter.

Other speakers that captivated the audience included student activist Jessica Ahlquist (right), community organizer A.J. Johnson, and educational supporter Steve Newton. Ahlquist spoke of her experience fighting her school district over a religious prayer banner in her high school gym, and the ordeal of the classmates who turned on her while the freethought community showed their support.



New to the event was the inclusion of the Authors' Panel, kicked off with nationally recognized authors including Cleo Kocol, Richard Carrier, and David Fitzgerald. Minister-turned-atheist AmyJo Matthias spoke of her just-released book, *Religion Made me Fat*, while the artist behind *The Brick Testament* introduced his new graphic novel featuring *The Bible* recreated all-too-faithfully in LEGO bricks.



Between speakers, the Freethought Day Committee threw in a wide variety of entertainment acts this year ranging from a cappella to hip hop with poetry and comedy in between.

*(Cont'd on pg. 5)*





## Facebook.com ..... search for 'Sacramento AOF'

AOF maintains a Facebook page where you will find a daily variety of news, humor, insights and tools for every atheist. Last month we added about 190 posts. Our readers represent 20 countries, 40% in Sacto. Sign up to follow what's happening. ([Click Here](#)) or go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sacramento-AOF/376151155788191>.



## Blessings

\*SNEEZE\* is followed by "God Bless You". It's such a tradition no one would dream of being so impolite as to keep quiet. However, why does the sneeze get you blessed? Why not a cough? Or a skin itch? Why not a fart? All can be signs of ill health. Perhaps you've heard tales of making sure the devil doesn't enter through your nose before your soul can return after such a forceful blast. Maybe. It certainly started as a superstition. How do you respond when someone blesses you? Send us your answer to the Survey on the next page. We will publish your answers next month.

## Serving the Hungry

Davis Community Meals prepares the food. St. Martin's Episcopal Church loans facilities. And atheists help serve,



November 2012

## AAA Convention "Ascent of Atheism" by Kay Dickey

AOF member Mynga Futrell and myself attended the [Atheist Alliance of America](#) convention in Denver.

Victor Stenger, speaking on the topic of "Gods, Atoms and the Higgs Boson, concluded by saying, "The ancient picture of a purely material universe composed of elementary particles and nothing else continues to be our best description of reality."

Greta Christina spoke about what the Atheist movement could learn from the LGBT movement which, is 35 years ahead of the atheist movement. She said "coming out" is the single most important action atheists can take. However, we need to make atheism a better place to come out to. Many times we need to create a support system. Online communities do this, but real communities do not do a very good job of it. Student groups have done a better job. We need to have community groups and work with student groups, such as by sponsoring events. We need to let firebrands be firebrands, diplomats be diplomats. Both methods together are better than one or the other. These actions can move the moderate position. (An example of this is that conservative politicians are now talking about "civil unions" as opposed to gay marriage, whereas twenty years ago, this would have been unheard of). Atheists need to work now to welcome all groups. The LGBT movement did not do this well; it marginalized women and minorities. She also stated that the feminist movement didn't deal with race issues. Greta went on to say that atheists really need to reach out to women and minorities, and listen when someone brings up a criticism or a suggestion.

Tony Pinn talked about the history of the civil rights movement. He said in order to create a more reasonable world we need to move, think and speak in a way that limits the damage done by religion. Our vocabulary is borrowed from religion. We need to stop bashing religion. A few determined people can make a difference.

Richard Haynes spoke about the lessons he has learned from fundamentalist religion. Atheists should focus more on class issues. We need to focus on community and embrace the "A" word ("Atheist", of course).

## ATHEISTS INVADE DENVER LABOR DAY WEEKEND!





## Potluck and Politics, Nov. 11, 1:30—4:00

Come hear strident words as AOF friends and members look back at the November election results, raging, raving, venting, laughing. You may weep in your beer or dance on the tables, depending on your own leanings. No chair-throwing please. But do prepare a small speech or comment, story or poem or even song, to suit the day, if you can. This will be an "open mike" event. Sierra 2 Center, Room 10, 2791 24th St, Sacramento. Contact: (916) 447-3589.



## Visible Atheist

Regular Feature

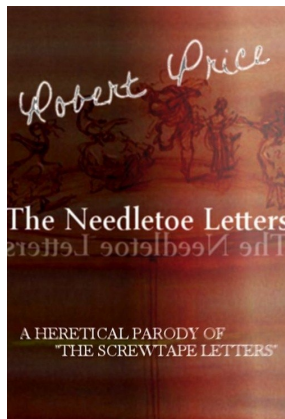
### *Good without God*

#### **"Good Without God"**

**Buy this car magnet, \$7.** It's time for America to realize atheists are good, moral people by making ourselves visible within our communities.

Buy this 10 x 3 inch car magnet from [cafepress.com](http://cafepress.com)

## Atheist Book Pick



[The Needletoe Letters](#) by [Dr. Robert M. Price](#) is a reply to (and fun parody of) *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. Price delicately deconstructs Lewis while mimicking Lewis's style, keeping the same subtle, left-handed wit.

[Read here for FREE](#), or help support the author by ordering through our Amazon link on page 5. (Thanks, Ken)

## November 2012

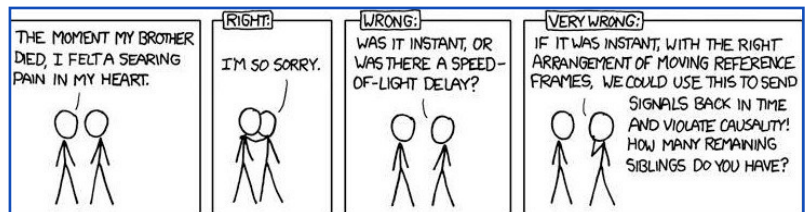
### **SURVEY—"How do you handle 'Bless You' when you sneeze, and do you say anything when someone else sneezes?"** Regular Feature [SEND YOUR ANSWER TO US FOR NEXT MONTH!](#)

#### ANSWERS TO LAST SURVEY—"How Do You Live Without Hope?"

I have the hope that people will treat each other with respect and therefore grow through combining knowledge into a greater whole and our world will grow better for it. As an NCO I give my airman the opportunity to grow in knowledge and experience and guide them to be better human beings through direct action and by setting the example. I am polite and cheerful to civilians so that they have a better day and may pass on that positive feeling to others through their actions. *By G Black*

My life is all the more hopeful and wonderful because I am not a believer. I don't need promises to feel the awe of a sunset or the humbling inspiration of the ocean. Atheists feel all those things believers claim to feel, and of course we do because those are natural human expressions of emotion and love that we have for our world, our cosmos. Death does not bother me,

and certainly lends nothing to my love of life. Besides, looking that far ahead you might miss today. *By Judy Saint*



## **Richard Dawkins in Berkeley** *by Judy Saint*

Prof. Dawkins appears to be getting frisky with my leg, but he is resting on the arm of his chair. So, that is not why I have the goofy face. He was very solemn when I spoke about him (ie, thanks for the work he has done, etc.) but he totally lit up with his cheery British smile any time I spoke of myself (ie, I gained from reading his books, etc.) So nice, despite the rush put on him by his handlers. He spoke about how reality can be taught to children, using his new book, *The Magic of Reality*, as the basis for his talk. He has very soft hands.



## VOTE for your next AOF Board of Directors

Here are the candidate statements, in alphabetical order:

**Lindsey Campbell:** I bring to AOF my experience as an ex-Christian, my Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing from UC Davis, military experience with the United States Army and as a mother. I would like to build a circle of educated people where I can raise my child in an environment that is accepting of non-belief, an inclusive family-friendly environment for parents, kids & all generations.

**Mynga Futrell:** Since active in AOF's co-founding in 1993, I have enjoyed helping the organization in numerous capacities (as president, vice-president, newsletter layout, newsletter editor, on committees and projects, and as liaison to national and international organizations). I continue to serve as VP and to represent AOF as a member society of the Atheist Alliance of America. I consider AOF to be an indispensable resource for freethinkers in the Sacramento area. Still, I see a need for board re-commitment to the organizational mission for which AOF was established and exists. I will continue to be one voice pressing for more attention to infrastructure/programs directed at addressing the problem of civic acceptance of atheists in the broader community, since that is what AOF had set out to do. Although its structure remains immensely worthwhile, elements of AOF's programs and publications are often conducted without adequate view to the populace at large. In-group camaraderie and content founded on self-identity reinforcement have little to offer to improving "civic legitimacy" of atheists. They can also feed into unfavorable stereotypes, so I favor pursuing a modicum of substantial activities that have likely beneficial effect on public acceptance of atheists in our community and on public support for key issues of church/state separation. We should be ever cognizant of the public face of AOF as presented to the broader public and its relation to stated mission.

**Kathy Johnson:** Although my identification is more as a supportive Humanist, I firmly believe in separation of church and state and that each of us have a personal responsibility to help each other. I believe we are interdependent upon one another to take conscientious actions that promote our survival, our environment and that of all other living species on planet earth. I firmly believe that all minorities, such as LGBT and atheists, should be more welcomed into society, their rights protected by positive public opinion as well as law. I champion the two primary missions of AOF, which I intend to support as my time allows.

**Ken Nahigian** has done this before. He has served AOF as director, treasurer, registrar, web designer, hospitality officer and floor sweep. He has helped run Freethought Day, Darwin Day and other special events. Having joined us in December 1993, before AOF even had the name, Ken is almost a founding member. He became Treasurer in 1995, Registrar (keeper of the member database) in 2004. Before joining AOF, Ken ping-ponged between religious belief and doubt. The discovery of organized freethought in his mid-20's was like a first breath of sweet fresh air. Looking back with relief, Ken now styles himself not as an atheist, not an agnostic, but an apatheist—in other words, it all seems to be much ado about nothing. Ken's continued vision for AOF is to pinch pennies, sell merchandise, develop the website, and keep us solvent as best he can. As registrar he works to expand AOF's membership. He hopes to build bridges to the many other freethought and skeptical groups within the Sacramento area, creating a true Community of Reason. Ultimately, as a freethinker and humanist, he sees opportunity to join hands with the more open-minded believers. Freethought must escape the intellectual ghetto that held it for almost a century. The horizon is open if our hearts are open, and if we do not fear change.

**Judy Saint:** AOF's Mission is separation of church and state, and acceptance of atheists into society. I've focused on these two objectives as I create each month's Newsletter and as I daily enter items into our AOF Facebook page. My direction for AOF would emphasize additional cooperation among Sacramento's many atheist organizations, focus on the younger generation which is 1/3 non-religious, and pull the curtain back on religion. We must encourage fellow atheists to come out of the closet, be visible and be knowledgeable. We do this by role modeling, using humor, news, perspective, and especially by providing our members with tools to be able to handle what awaits them as out atheists. I bring this edgier style to the AOF Board.

**Jerry Sloan** is a charter member of AOF and as such has served on the board and various committees. He is a nationally recognized for his research on Religious extremists in California and the nation. He is also well known for his famous lawsuit against his former Baptist Bible College schoolmate, the late Rev. Jerry Falwell. With some of the proceeds from the lawsuit he co-founded the Gay & Lesbian Community Center.

## Freethought Dinner Social—Nov. 15, 6:15 pm

A fun dinner social for friends and members of the local community of reason. Feed your mind and feed your body, at Thai Spice Restaurant, 2721 Broadway, Sacramento.

Good Thai food, good drink and sparkling conversation about all things freethoughty! Phone (916) 480-0560



## Highway Cleanup Nov. 17

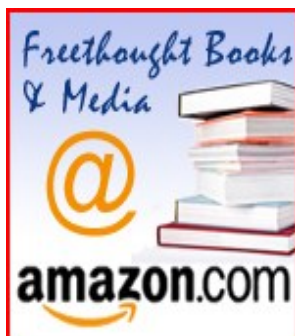
Pictured in the October 13 highway clean-up photo are:

Mashariki Lawson,  
Dylan McDonald,  
Bryan Schear,  
John Reiger,  
Michelle Baer,  
Daniel Watt and  
Kristen Bettega.

We collected about 20 bags of trash and plan to return to the site Saturday, November 17 @ 9a.m.

Of course, wet conditions cancel. .

Support AOF:  
Click here to buy  
your Amazon items:



## November 2012

**JOE VALARDE** husband of Carol Valarde died on the morning of September 26.

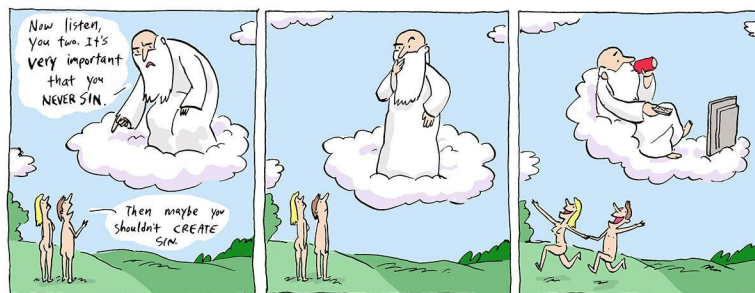
Joe accompanied Carol in many different Jewish organizations and chair of the local chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Joe was born into an immigrant Cuban family and as a boy and teen lived in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in New York City where he helped his Jewish neighbors on the Sabbath. His reward for this labor was being able to take home plates of the Sabbath meal and tasty Jewish desserts.

Joe enlisted in the US military, flying 60 combat missions over Italy and the Balkans. He always had a tale of his experiences in WW2 at hand which he could tell in minute detail. During the Korean War he was recalled to service and wound up spending the next 20 years in military service.

Joe & Carol moved to California in 1975. He became an advocate for migrant farm workers and authored a two volume book on *The Education of Adult Migrant Farm Workers*.

Joe will be missed by his family and his many friends. (submitted by Jerry Sloan)



## Freethought Day Festival (cont'd from page 1)

YouTube sensation Mr. Deity (Brian Keith Dalton) made the crowd laugh while poet Victor Harris impressed everyone with his creative works. And after performances on Rachel Maddow and off-Broadway, hip-hop artist Baba Brinkman (artist behind the Rap Guide to Evolution) brought rhymes and rhythm to an excited audience.

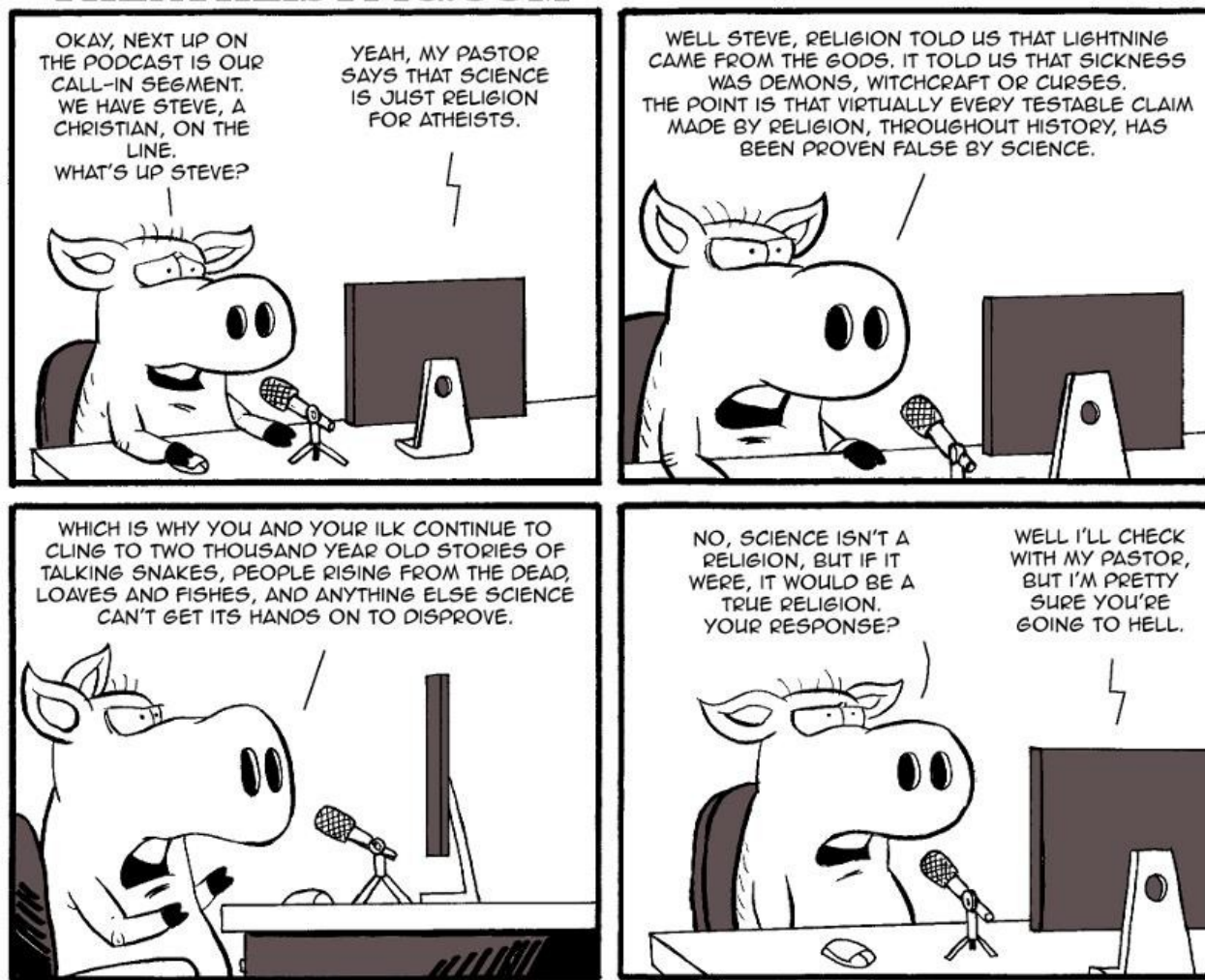
The day-long event was made possible by a number of supporters, most of whom attended a fundraising reception the evening before at the beautiful home of Susan Vergne. They rubbed elbows with most of the day's speakers, and even a few very special guests including comedian Keith Jensen and skeptic in the room, Eddie Scott.

Donors to the event included Applied Office, which provides corporate computer training services, and an anonymous donor which – for the second year in a row – has matched \$1000 in donations. The National Atheist Party and Paul Storey also contributed significantly to the event.

If you missed the event, you can still enjoy photos taken by guest photographer, from Reno Freethinkers, Carissa Snedeker. [See more photos](#) on Facebook and be sure to mark your calendar for October 12, 2013 so you can join us next year.



## THEATHEISTPIG.COM



www.aofonline.org

**AOF**

AOF  
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**Want a full color, interactive Newsletter?** Sign up for AOF Newsletters by email. Just let us know, and soon you'll be clicking away finding hidden content only online viewers can see! (Saves paper to boot!) To submit articles, news, or other content please send to [newsletter@aofonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aofonline.org).

AOF meetings are open to the public. Feel free to join us for a meal, join a Board Meeting, help us volunteer, or anything from the calendar on page 1. We'd love to see you.

AOF [Planning Meeting](#) Nov 15, open to the public, Hoppy Brewing Company, 6300 Folsom Bl, 7:00-8:30pm, 916-447-3589.

Membership Form: <http://www.aofonline.org/images/PDFs/aof-membership-app.pdf>

AOF website: <http://aofonline.org>

LIKE our Facebook Page "[Sacramento AOF](#)"

Audio of meetings can still be heard at: <http://aofonline.org/av-scrapbook.html>

AOF EIN for tax write-off: 68-0325762

**DONATE** with PayPal: [Click Here](#)

### AOF Board

**President:** Vincent Wales

**Vice President:** Mynga Futrell

**Secretary:** Jillian Stanley

**Treasurer:** Ken Nahigian

**Newsletter Editor:** Lindsey Campbell

**Newsletter Co-editor:** Judy Saint

**2012 AOF Board of Directors :** Kristi Craven, David Flanders, Mynga Futrell, Ken Nahigian, Mario Sandri, Jerry Sloan, Vincent Wales

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