

# AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

December 2006

## Sunday, December 10 Caring for Our Community

### Special Points of Interest

- AOF Elections (page 1)
- Olive Schreiner, forgotten free-thinker (page 4)
- Joint AOF-HAGSA Winter Solstice Potluck/HumanLight (page 5)
- Adopt-A-Highway clean-up all washed up? (page 5)
- New Online Local Events Calendar for Freethinkers (page 5)
- Sierra 2 storage space update (page 7)
- Humanists of Sun City invite AOFers to their winter potluck party (page 7)

This winter season join us for a glimpse into the Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento (<http://www.crhkids.org>) via Director Claire Spear. CRH is the safety net for the area's abused and neglected children between the ages of 1 and 17. As the only emergency shelter of its kind in Sacramento County, CRH acts as the "front door" of the child protective system.

When children are brought to the Home they are frightened and upset because their world has been turned upside down. But soon they show a smile because they're welcomed with a personal tote full of clothing, personal hygiene products and toys, good food and a safe, warm bed to sleep in. And most importantly, they are shown respect and listened to. With understanding counselors, accredited teachers and other children going through similar ordeals, children soon discover that they're surrounded with a healing network of friends.

The Children's Receiving Home was established in 1944, through a joint effort of the Junior League of Sacramento and the Sacramento Rotary Club. Following several

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Standard Fare

Next Meeting	1
AOF Line	2
Meeting Recap	3
Coming Social Event	5
Membership Form	6

Ask not what your AOF can do for you...

## AOF Elections 2007 by Ken Nahigian

AOF wants *you*. Could you serve the Sacramento Community of Reason as an AOF Director? Duties include one meeting a month, usually one week after the general meeting. Perks include a chance to let us bask in your wisdom, activism opportunities, new friendships within our community, and the satisfaction of helping define the direction, growth and mission of AOF over the next year. The sole requirement is to be a current member.

If so, step forward, speak up, let us hear. AOF Board elections will be at the January general meeting, so the time to volunteer is now. Just call or post the current president, Don Kuntson, at 916-447-2169 or <[vegdon@macnexus.org](mailto:vegdon@macnexus.org)>, by mid December. We will require one brief candidate statement (100 words max) about yourself and your vision for AOF.

## Resisting Sexual Harassment But Not A Deity

### AOF Line

By Don Knutson

Suzanne Swift, an Army Specialist who is being court-martialed for going AWOL when her unit was being redeployed to Iraq, was a guest of Amy Goodman on her Pacifica program, Democracy Now!, in late September. Swift was a 19-year-old recruit in 2003 when she and her platoon were initially deployed to Iraq. Shortly after arriving, she was exposed to constant sexual harassment by several leaders of her platoon and ultimately, yielded to having sexual relations with her Platoon commander on several occasions. When she finally refused to consent any longer and complained about her treatment, she was punished in a variety of ways including being required to carry a wall clock with her wherever she went. Then when her platoon was re-deployed to Iraq earlier this year, she expected to see more of the same abuse and went AWOL.

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

Given her exposure to the military way-of-life (at least for attractive young women), Goodman asked her if she would recommend military service to other women and she hurriedly said, "No way". But when asked if she regretted enlisting into the Army, she replied, "No", saying in so many words that everything that happens has a reason and a purpose. I was, of course, incredulous to hear her apparent rationalization that some supposedly benevolent deity had put her through this experience! Now, she is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as she is confined at Fort Lewis, WA awaiting trial.

She showed such strength and courage in resisting the military's modus operandi and yet she still evidently accepts the traditional shy, modest God (an oxymoron, isn't it?) of her endemic culture.

### Dude, Where's My Newsletter?

AOF regrets the interruption of newsletter delivery for the months of October and November. Every month, the AOF News and Views production process moves through a pipeline, step-by-step, until it arrives in your hands via the postal service or the internet. The steps include content submission (everyone), layout editing (in state of flux), delivery to the printer (Ken Nahigian), and finally, retrieval from the printer, labeling, folding, and mailing (Tom Nicolette and Tina Burgess (e-mail)).

Board members have filled the layout editor position on an interim basis since July while looking for someone willing and able to commit to a semi-permanent role. This month, board member Kevin Schultz has agreed to take over the layout editor position for a three month trial basis beginning with this issue. Many thanks to interim editors Bev Church, Annette Daniels, and Pat Kelley for giving it their best. Please share your thoughts, ideas, or nominations with us at the News and Views.

### AOF Board (2005-6)

**President:** Don Knutson

**Vice President:** Mynga Futrell

**Secretary:** Kevin Schultz

**Treasurer:** Ken Nahigian

**Directors at large:**

Carla Corbett, Beverly Church

Dave Flanders

### AOF Committees

**Newsletter:** Kevin Schultz (Editor)

Kay Dickey (Submissions Editor)

Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

**Freethought Day, Oct. 7, 2007**

Beverly Church, Mynga Futrell, Carla Corbett, Kay Dickey, Jerry Sloan, Tom Ikelman, Kevin Schultz, Brian Krofchok

**Darwin Day, Feb. 11, 2007:**

Bronda Silva, Mynga Futrell, Dave Henderson, Ed McConnell, Kay Dickey, Ken Nahigian,

**Ad Hoc Committees:**

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 (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)

Kevin Schultz (AA)

Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

**Community Service Projects:**

Don Knutson

**Internet Website:** Kevin Schultz

**Meetings:** Dave Flanders, Ken Nahigian

Jerry Sloan, Betty Simonsma

**Membership Database:**

Ken Nahigian

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**

## Meeting Recap Media Panel Informs, Enlightens By Kevin Schultz

AOF's November general meeting addressed the importance of maintaining a dynamic local independent media. Greater and greater centralization in newspapers and the electronic media nationwide has imperiled objective discourse. Today, multi-national corporations control or at least sponsor just about all national programming and written literature which emphasizes the need to preserve local independent voices. A panel of distinguished local media representatives discussed the challenges of their work. Dorothy Wake, author of "Mother Jones: Revolutionary Leader of Labor and Social Reform" and a former editor of Because People Matter, the longtime local bimonthly newspaper, discussed her views on what constitu-



From left to right: Dorothy Wake, Ken Adams, and Daniel Bacher

tions independent media - including controversial forms of protest such as freeway blogging and placing stickers on public property. Ken Adams, cohost of "Soapbox", a weekly political interview program on cable's Access Sacramento, shared with AOFers his views on the future of Public Access in Sacramento and his sources of information on the Internet. Finally, Daniel Bacher, a freelance journalist who is widely published locally and on the internet, shared his views on local activism in the Sacramento and Bay Area regions. It seemed apparent from the speakers' presentations that in order for citizens to make decisions in their own best interest they must have reliable access to information from a variety of viewpoints.

### December AOF Program

*(Continued from page 1)*

downtown locations in the early years, CRH relocated in 1965 to their permanent six acre campus at 3555 Auburn Boulevard in Sacramento at the corner of Watt and Auburn. They have built a state of the art campus and expanded their capacity through the generous community support they received on their capital campaigns. From a small volunteer effort they have grown into a well respected nonprofit organization employing 175 staff and 75 volunteers.

As a refuge, children stay for an average of 25 days and can heal from the abuse they have suffered. While their future living arrangements are being determined, children receive a comprehensive level of services including shelter, meals, clothing, medical and dental attention, education at our on-site school, counseling, social work, case management services, a full scale assessment and diagnosis and the opportunity to process what they are experiencing.

Ms. Spear will give an overview of the Home and explain what they have in store for the future. Q & A and light refreshments to follow. All attendees invited to post-meeting informal dinner.

This event is free and open to the public. Sierra 2 Center, Community Room 10, 2791 24th Street, Sacramento. Email [info@aofonline.org](mailto:info@aofonline.org) or phone 916.447.3589 for more information.

### 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 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 © 2006 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.

# Olive Schreiner, a Forgotten Freethinker

By Ken Nahigian

Modern feminists and freethinkers barely recall Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner, aka Scheiner (Mar 24, 1855 – Dec 11, 1920). That's our loss.

Born in Wittebergen, South Africa, ninth child in a missionary family, Olive was willful, assertive and precocious from the start, often challenging her parents' rigid Calvinism. The family broke up after a string of failures in business and mission work. Aged 12, Olive took three years of formal school, then worked as a governess for eleven, meanwhile reading works of Victorian intellectuals. She also began to write—first an autobiographical novel, *The Story of an African Farm*, eventually published under a pseudonym, and still regarded as one of the first and best feminist novels; then short stories, allegories, vignettes and dream-fantasies, soft in tone, but with a deep vein of sadness or anger.

In London she studied medicine. Then she returned to South Africa, married, and continued to write and speak as a suffragist, pacifist and political rebel, making friends and enemies. In 1920, dying quite suddenly, she was buried without religious ceremony next to her daughter at Bufels Kop.

Dry details; I should like to know more of the woman behind them. Long before my own rebel days, I discovered Olive Schreiner courtesy of a "Little Blue Book" from publisher E. Haldeman-Julius. She seemed to write as if in a fever or trance—tales of obvious and subtle mysticism, contrived and natural symbolism, prose poems, parables,

epiphanies and fables—the kind you read and re-read, and they continue to haunt you, not just as stories but experiences, rich and strange, dream-like and disturbing. They



Olive Schreiner

are not about ideas; they are singular ideas. They are songs of despair for what we are, and of longing for what we might be. And long after I put down the book, the tales would return to me at odd moments, in little strobes and flashes, leaving an eerie music, and a residue of grief.

Today I commend the writings of Olive Schreiner. She is worth remembering.

## The Artist's Secret

*There was an artist once, and he painted a picture. Other artists had colors richer and rarer, and painted more notable pictures. He painted his with one color, there was a wonderful red glow on it; and the people went up and down, saying, "We like the picture, we like the glow."*

*The other artists came and said, "Where does he get his color from?" They asked him; and he smiled and said, "I cannot tell you;" and worked on with his head bent low.*

*And one went to the far East and bought costly pigments, and made a rare color and painted, but after a time the picture faded. Another read in the old books, and made a color rich and rare, but when he had put it on the picture it was dead.*

*But the artist painted on. Always the work got redder and redder, and the artist grew whiter and whiter. At last one day they found him dead before his picture, and they took him up to bury him. The other men looked about in all the pots and crucibles, but they found nothing they had not.*

*And when they undressed him to put his grave-clothes on him, they found above his left breast the mark of a wound -- it was an old, old wound, that must have been there all his life, for the edges were old and hardened; but Death, who seals all things, had drawn the edges together, and closed it up.*

*And they buried him. And still the people went about saying, "Where did he find his color from?"*

*And it came to pass that after a while the artist was forgotten. But the work lived.*

[from *Dreams* by Olive Schreiner (Chicago: Donohue, Henneberry & Co., undated)]

## 3rd Annual Joint AOF-HAGSA Winter Solstice Potluck Celebration—Dec 23, 3-6PM

By Kevin Schultz

Winter cheer to relieve sun-deprived blues and cold-induced aches and pains? *Yes!* This year's winter solstice potluck celebrates another revolution around the sun, and with it, the shortening of the days and the lengthening of the nights. After the solstice, everything becomes brighter. This year marks the first year that AOF and the Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area partake in the created holiday of **HumanLight** (<http://humanlight.org>). The HumanLight web site reads: "In Western societies, late December is a season of good cheer and a time for gatherings of friends and families. During the winter holiday season, where the word "holiday" has taken on a more secular meaning, many events are observed. This tradition of celebrations, however, is grounded in su-

pernatural religious beliefs that many people in modern society cannot accept. HumanLight presents an alternative reason to celebrate: a Humanist's vision of a good future. It is a future in which all people can identify with each other, behave with the highest moral standards, and work together toward a happy, just and peaceful world." Agree or disagree with AOF participating in such an event? Let us know your thoughts here at the News and Views.

The potluck is to be held at the **Common House of the Sacramento Co-Housing community, at T St. & 5th St., Sacramento, on Saturday, December 23, from 3-6PM.** Please bring a dish but if you can't *come anyway*. Leave your blues and the cold at the door.

## New "Sacramento Events Calendar for Freethinkers" Online Resource By Kevin Schultz



Area freethinkers can now turn to the Internet to find out the latest events in the Sacramento area.

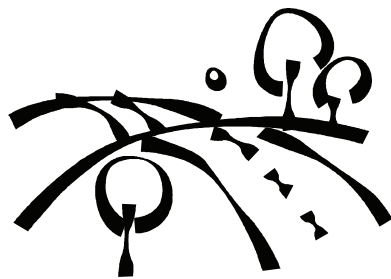
Published at

<http://sacportal.humanists.net/calendar>, the calendar collects the event information from various groups, including local freethought organizations such as AOF, the Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA), the First Amendmist

(Continued on page 7)

## Highway Clean-up Washed Up? By Don Knutson

A perfectly clear day greeted the rugged AOF Highway Cleanup Crew last September as we participated in California's annual Coastal Cleanup Week-end. Dave Flanders, Mynga Futrell, Don Knutson, Ken Nahigian and Kevin Schultz pitched in. names sound familiar--they are all members. For our organized involvement in cleanups, we need members to show and then. Other-debris surrounding each side of Highway 99 will suggest nothing organization upholds its respon-



AOF's stretch of highway

been recognized several times recently for its dogged 12 years of dedicatedly cleaning up that stretch of highway but that **may end soon without more members stepping forward.** Our next cleanup will be Sunday, December 17@ 8 a.m. and we meet at the Park & Ride lot west of Highway 99 on Elkhorn Blvd. for a leisurely couple of hours of worthwhile work. Join us!

## AOF on Deck for Davis Community Meals

### Volunteers Wanted!

AOFers will be cleaning up on **Tuesday, December 26** at the meal for the needy in Davis, and we need some volunteers for the **6 PM (to 7)** event. Carpooling is offered, along with a fantastic hot meal. This is one of the ways that AOF contributes to the community, and we depend on our members to help. It is so worthwhile. If you haven't done it before, give it a try. You will be glad you did! Please phone the voice mail at 447-3589 to volunteer, or sign up at the January meeting. If you have any questions whatsoever, ask Ken (via voice mail or in person).

# 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.

We can arrange to deliver your monthly newsletter electronically via the e-mail address you print above. Please check the mode you prefer.     E-mail     Postal mail

## Call for AOF Volunteers

By Kevin Schultz

AOF really, really, really, really, really, really needs volunteers. While attendance at general meetings remains constant, volunteerism in AOF governance and the Adopt-A-Highway program does not currently meet board expectations for long-term success. Therefore, the AOF board requests your time and energy in helping the organization continue into the future.

There is a saying that it takes but a single candle to light the darkness. AOF is comprised of not one but a multitude of candles, each growing the flame and the strength of the organization.

The AOF board of directors currently has three open seats for the January 14 election. Therefore, we request participation from the general membership to lighten the load -- at least three volunteer candidates for the AOF board. Many hands make short work, the more the merrier.

Similarly, AOF's level of participa-

tion in the CalTrans Adopt-A-Highway project currently meets ~50% of board expectations. Having 10+ volunteers show up helps make the event enjoyable for everyone, as people can partner-up instead of walking alone and make it a social event. In September, five board members volunteered. When one considers board members currently plan as well as form the core execution team for the event, you might see how this becomes unsustainable in the long-term. AOF benefits as an organization through two prominent signs announcing our organization to millions of vehicles each year that pass the two-mile stretch of Highway 99 between Elkhorn Boulevard and Elverta Road.

I think Robert Ingersoll's quote, "The hands that help are far better than the lips that pray," fits this appeal. I hope you please consider a small personal commitment to ensure long-term organizational health.

## AOF - HAGSA Joint Movie Night: Friday, December 8, 7PM

### *A Beautiful Mind*

Russell Crowe stars in this Academy Award-winning drama (Best Picture, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay) about the brilliant but troubled mathematician, John Nash. The supporting cast includes Jennifer Connelly, as Nash's devoted wife Alicia, and Ed Harris as the mysterious Parcher.

If you've seen this movie before, you already know it's worth seeing again.

Technical: Widescreen, 5.1 surround sound, 136 minutes.

As usual for the even-month movie nights, this will be at Bill and Elaine Potts' house at 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville.

## Correction: Ballad of Silver Jack

By Ken Nahigian

*Note:* Due to publishing error, we omitted the *last and most important verse* in the September issue of News and Views. We republish the last verse here.

The roots of this long-favorite bit of Freethought Folk Americana are a mystery—author, original tune, date of composition all unknown. In fact about all we know are the words, which first appeared in *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* by John A. Lomax (1910). Dr. Fred Whitehead, freethought historian, recited it at the Freethinkers United Conference in Orlando, 1997.

*Then the fierce encounter ended  
And they riz up from the ground  
And some one brought a bottle out  
And kindly passed it round.  
And we drank to Bob's religion  
In a cheerful sort o' way,  
But the spread of infidelity  
Was checked in camp that day.*

### Newsletter Submissions

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

[frethnkr@mindspring.com](mailto: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.

## Storage Space Update at Sierra 2

By Kevin Schultz

In July, the Sierra 2 Community Center informed AOF that two cabinets used for storage in Room 10 will require a monthly rental fee, effective immediately. Sierra 2 discovered AOF's usage of the storage cabinets during remodeling of Community Room 10. AOF began using the two cabinets sometime between 1995 and 2000, without fee.

After reviewing Sierra 2's proposed rental fee of \$25 per cabinet, per month (\$300-\$600/year), the AOF board judged this expense as an unreasonable use of AOF funds.

As a temporary work-around, AOF board members Ken Nahigian and Kevin Schultz volunteered to store the AOF inventory contained within the cabinet and transport it to and from general meetings each month as needed.

Two other AOFers transport materials to general meetings each month: Betty Simonsma brings nametags and refreshment table items

(including her trusty coffee pot) and Mynga Futrell brings literature table information and new visitor packets. Next time you see them please let them know how much you appreciate their contributions to AOF. AOF depends on our volunteers to help make every month a valuable use of member dues.

## Humanists of Sun City Potluck, Dec 9, 3PM

The Humanists of Sun City invite members of AOF to their December potluck, held at the home of Rena Lowry in Rocklin, 2811 Catalina Drive, Rocklin, CA 95765. Please bring a dish, join the fun. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, contact Rena: 916-632-2376 (home), 916-207-1890 (cell), or send an e-mail: [doosiebaha@starstream.net](mailto:doosiebaha@starstream.net)

*(Continued from page 5)*

Church of True Science (FACTS), and the Humanists of Sun City; local organizations supporting church-state separation such as the Sacramento Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Interfaith Religious Liberty Foundation; and local camaraderie and contacts such as the Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT), the Progressive Freethought Exchange (PFX), the Sacramento Atheists and Independent Thinkers Alliance (SAITA), the Sacramento Freethought Website (SFW), and the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento (UUSS).

### 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!*  
**aofonline.org**

## December Calendar of Events

**AOF General Meeting**    **Sunday, December 10, 2:30 - 5 PM**

AOF's Highway Cleanup    Sunday, December 17, 8 - 10 AM

Next AOF Board meeting    Monday, December 18, 6:30 PM

AOF-HAGSA HumanLight/Winter Solstice Potluck    Sunday, December 23, 3 - 6 PM

Davis Community Meal    Tuesday, December 26, 6 - 7 PM

**Save the Date!** - Darwin Birthday Educational Gala    Sunday, February 11, 2 - 4:30 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 fair in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (10-14-07), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2-11-07). 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.

