

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

June 2007

Special Points of Interest

Honoring the Founding Fathers on Father's Day (page 1)

AOF's Inaugural Blood Drive a Success (page 2)

A Eulogy (page 3)

Who Was The Wickedest Man In the World? (page 4)

Anatole Lubovich's *A Vision and Golden Calf* (page 5)

Joint AOF/HAGSA Movie Night—"Bobby" (page 5)

Cleo Kocol's *Don't Stick Your Religion In My Womb* (page 6)

AOF Members Invited to Annual HAGSA Solstice Potluck (page 7)

Sunday, June 10 Author Gordy Slack: "The Battle Over the Meaning of Everything"

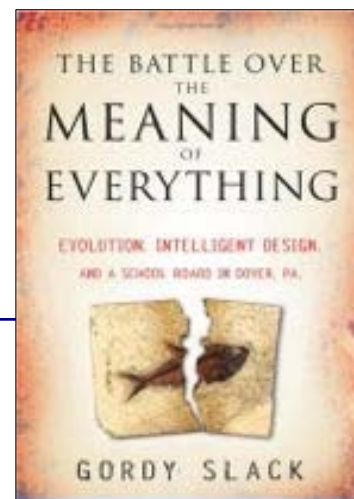
Those who attend the next AOF meeting will receive perspective on the "culture wars" through the eyes of an experienced journalist who has been reporting on the evolution vs. intelligent design debate.

Gordy Slack is the invited speaker for the June 10 meeting, and according to him, that evolution/ID debate rarely rises above cultural and political caricature.

Slack discovered in covering the ID case in Dover, PA in 2005, that the matter is much more nuanced and interesting than a Punch and Judy Show.

Across America, families are pitted against each other, towns are split in two, and the ideological battle being waged has consequences far beyond what's taught in high school science classes or even its political fallout.

(Continued on page 3)



Standard Fare

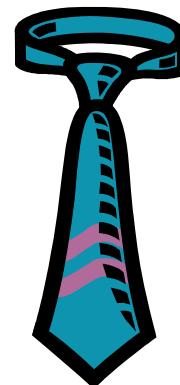
| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Next Meeting | 1 |
| AOF Line | 2 |
| Letters to the Editor | 2 |
| AOF/HAGSA Movie Night | 5 |
| Membership Form | 6 |
| AOF Volunteer Opportunities Board | 7 |

Honoring Our "Founding" Fathers on Father's Day

Freethought Day 2007

By Kevin Schultz

Fireworks—mention them to Beverly Church, Freethought Day Committee chairperson, and you'll see her eyes sparkle with the vision of colored rockets exploding above the shore of the Sacramento River. It takes a lot of activism and financial support to produce the annual Freethought Day celebration in Waterfront Park—with your help we make it happen! So this Father's Day, buy your dad a cheaper tie and cut a check to the Freethought Day Committee—it's tax deductible! Or volunteer your time and energy by attending the next committee meeting. For more info, call 916-447-3589, or visit <http://freethoughtday.org>.



AOF's Inaugural Blood Drive

AOF Line

By Don Knutson

For the first time in our history, on May 3 AOF responded to the Congressionally-mandated "National Day of Prayer" (which originated in 1988) in a meaningful way with our own blood drive. In doing so, we have joined with secular groups nationwide in participating in a tradition begun by New York City Atheists a couple of years ago to roll up our sleeves and make a valuable contribution while the religious are on their knees. Six AOF members underwent the needle and donated whole blood including three AOF Board Members, Kay Dickey, Don Knutson and Ken Nahigian. They were joined by Jerry Bachman, Tom Nicolette and Ellen Schwartz.



Left to Right: **Kay Dickey, Don Knutson, Jerry Bachman, and Ken Nahigian.** Not shown: **Ellen Schwartz, Tom Nicolette.**

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

Letters to the Editor

Inappropriate inclusions

This is regarding inclusion in the May AOF "News and Views" of improper personal political opinion, which was included under cover of being a separation of church/state issue.

The proper purpose of the AOF Bulletin is *not* for the promulgation of individual political opinions. This applies to the jeremiad of Don Knutson (beginning on page 2 and going to page 7, and which is surely, de-facto, the leading article in the May Bulletin. The author's ploy of casting this screed under the banner of *church-state separation* seems a clever twisting of what seems its pre-determined actual intent; namely classical Israel bashing. Karl Rove would be proud of the SPIN which is applied to the laudable stated thesis. It is therefore now appropriate for the Bulletin Editors and the Board to formally withdraw the article, and to apologize to the readers for its (inappropriate) inclusion.

—Merv Ezray, Sacramento

(Continued on page 7)

AOF Board (2007)

President: Don Knutson

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jerry Sloan

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Beverly Church, Kay Dickey, Kevin Schultz, Paul Storey, Susan Vergne

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Kevin Schultz (Editor)

Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 7, 2007

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

Darwin Day, Feb. 10, 2008:

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

A Eulogy Clark Adams (1969-2007)

By Paul Storey

Editors note: All of us at AOF felt shock and sadness when we learned that Clark Adams took his life on Sunday, May 20 in Las Vegas, just one week after his AOF presentation.

Friends have created a web page with information on memorials and expressing condolences: <http://www.lvfs.org/clarkadams>.



Clark Adams pulled no punches in his last presentation. (Photo: Kevin Schultz)

Even though I met you for only two hours, I felt you to be one of my closest friends. Your thoughts and mine were one.

You were a role model for all of us—a bright, quick, insightful mind, filled with shared realization of life's finiteness, a fellow freethinker who had risen in mind and thoughts to see through the delusion of religion, and openly scoffed at it in such a delightful and humorous way.

I didn't even need to tell you that you were the person I wanted to emulate, although my admiration had to pervade our five minute con-

versation.

I felt a deep blow upon hearing of your death, the kind that does not go away.

I am sorry I didn't reach out to you more strongly, to show the feelings of identity you brought forth in me by your talk, to tell you I'd help you

if you ever needed it. I wish I had that opportunity again.

My heart is saddened by your departure. We have lost a great mind and a dignity within our ranks.

Everyone has more than one side to their life.

Attending your lecture, we saw the outer, happy, ana-

lytical, intelligent, witty, public side. Now we can see another side also. We mourn the loss of such a worthy comrade.

It is up to all of us to fill his shoes, to continue the work Clark so nobly set in motion.

AOF Program Continuation

(Continued from page 1)

The real battle, Slack has found, is over the questions of what being a person is all about, what being an American is all about, and what life on earth is all about. In short, it is a battle over the meaning of, well, everything.

Slack will be bringing copies of his just-released book to sign (price \$20). It should be of interest to anyone concerned with the "culture wars." He will shortly be embarking on a book tour.

Gordy Slack is an Oakland-based science writer specializing in evolution and the environment. His work appears in *California Wild*, *Wired*, *Mother Jones*, *Bay Nature*, and *Sierra*. He is a frequent contributor to *Forefront*, a journal published by the College of Engineering at UC Berkeley.

Slack is also a director of Free-Agents International, a news agency based in Oakland, California. He has worked as a staff reporter for the *Oakland Tribune* and *InfoWorld* magazine.

— Mynga Futrell and Bill Potts

Sacramento Community Events Calendar for Freethinkers



<http://sacportal.humanists.net/calendar>

Subscribe to all the local happenings online!

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 © 2007 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.

Historical Figures Series

The Wickedest Man in the World

By Ken Nahigian

Edward Alexander Crowley was not a pleasant man, and this is not a pleasant story. Born October 12, 1875, in Warwickshire, he claimed to be “remarkable from the moment of birth,” with “the three most important distinguishing marks of a Buddha.” As devout Plymouth Brethren, his parents treated him to daily Bible study and preaching. He “spent the rest of his life violently reacting against this view,” a biographer wrote, “. . . practicing the gospel of total sexual freedom.”

For his wild behavior, his mother often called him “The Beast.” After his father died, he latched onto the label, even using “666” in his signature. Because Edward was his father’s name, he began calling himself Aleister.

Crowley thrived on his reputation, so a haze of rumor floats over his life, fogging and conflating details. One thing is certain: he liked sex, much to his family’s horror. At public school, age 17 on, he had homosexual experiences, caught gonorrhea, and developed a fascination with esoteric literature and the occult. Living on inheritance, he studied briefly at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1898 he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a popular “white magical” cabal which fused Kabbala, spiritualism, and ceremonial magic with ties to Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and British politics. Members included poet W.B. Yeats, writers Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood, and famed occultists Arthur Edward Waite and S.L. MacGregor Mathers. Crowley rose to the inner conclave, but after quarrels the group expelled him. He went on to found his own “magickal” order, the *Argentum Astrum* (Silver Star), which was never successful. But riven by schism, the Golden Dawn never quite recovered.

If Crowley had any magic, it was a kind of magnetic draw for dysfunctional women (and men). In 1903, he married his first legal wife, but kept a string of mistresses. In 1904, in Egypt, he

claimed to have a mystic vision and to have met his “Guardian Angel,” which he later identified with Satan. In 1905, his attempt to climb Mt. Kangchenjunga (Himalaya) ended disastrously. He sired a daughter; she died of typhus during his travels. He established “black magic temples” in Italy and England. He wrote prolifically—self-published volumes of poetry (bad), magical treatises



Aleister Crowley's magickal motto: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.” Image: Wikipedia, public domain (c. 1910).

(obscure), novels with mythological or mystical themes (lavish and disturbing). In 1909, he divorced and had a relationship with the poet Victor Neuberg. In 1912, he joined the *Ordo Templi Orientis* (O.T.O.), the Order of Eastern Templars, another mystic cabal. Heading its British branch, Crowley took the name Baphomet. In 1913 he developed a system of “sexual magick,” using sex as an occult method, which stirred up more of the scandal he adored.

From 1915 to 1919 Crowley lived in the United States. Meeting his “Scarlet Woman of Babylon,” he had another daughter, whose death was a blow to him. He then moved to Sicily, to a villa that he tried to make a world center for occult study. One disciple, a young Oxford student, died there from drink-

ing a cat’s blood (or polluted water perhaps); in the aftermath, Mussolini expelled him. Full of his deeds, rituals and erotic adventures, English papers called him the world’s “wickedest man.” Crowley was in his glory.

But then he declined, shadowed by illness, drug addiction, depression, and poverty. When British printers rejected his works, he published them in Paris; but soon France deported him also.

A drug-addicted alcoholic, Crowley spent his last years in a boarding house in Hastings. He died on Dec 1, 1947, cursing the doctor who refused to give him more heroin. His reported last words: “I am perplexed.” His funeral included parts of the Mass of the “Gnostic Catholic Church” and one of Crowley’s stranger poems, generating more scandal. He was cremated in Brighton, with his ashes sent to followers in the United States.

To Crowley fans, he was a “white magus,” but Crowley was less sure—in the 1920s he wrote: “I may be a black magician but I’m a bloody great one.” Inevitably, he has appealed to many rock musicians. Jimmy Page owns Crowley’s mansion at Loch Ness and collects Crowley memorabilia. Marilyn Manson, Michael Jackson, Ozzy Osbourne and the Red Hot Chili Peppers have all paid tribute. Crowley’s face is one of many on the cover of Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.

He spun a strange web of connections and influences—even a vague connection to Scientology—L. Ron Hubbard referred to Crowley as “my very good friend,” but Crowley did not return the affection, calling Hubbard a “prowling swindler.” Crowley also created much of the world pseudo-history and mythology of modern Wicca.

A 2002 poll to find “the 100 Greatest Britons” listed Crowley as number 73, ahead of Robert the Bruce, James Watt, Geoffrey Chaucer and J.R.R. Tolkien. Go figure!

A Vision and Golden Calf

By Anatole Lubovich, Republished Posthumously

Anatole Lubovich's poems and character touched many AOF members during his time in Sacramento. Since his death in November 2005, Do Gentry, Anatole's partner and administrator of his estate, has published a number of his poems in local publications. With Do's permission, AOF continues selected republication of Anatole's poems. After republication, AOF will post the poem to <http://aofonline.org/resources> for public distribution—*Editor*

A Vision

Under the rafters, in the night,
A mouseling, young and carefree,
Was startled by a sudden flight
Of a bat into the belfry.

Surprised, she quickly scurried
down

To cellar from this stranger,
And breathless she whispered, "Mom,
I have just seen an angel!"

Golden Calf

And Man created God in his own image.
In his own image he created him.
Him in his own image he created.
No matter how you phrase it or how often,
It remains
That Man created God in his own image.
Male and female created he them.

No matter what you call them:
Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, or Krishna,
Horus, Osiris, Isis, or Ra,
Moloch, Baal, Astarte, or Dagon,
Odin, Loki, Freya, or Frigga,
Cronus, Zeus, Apollo, or Hera,
Jupiter, Neptune, Janus, or Vestra,

Thunderbird, Pele, or Ahura-Mazda,
Allah, Jehovah, Juju, or Mumbo,

They all were fashioned in the mind
of Man.
Each is a Golden Calf molded for
worship,
Each an insurance borne out of fear,
Wrapped in a padding of ignorance
and mystery,
Each an excuse to murder a thinker,
Each an excuse to annihilate
neighbors,
Each with absurd explanations of
life
And lies of outrageous rewards after
death.

—Previously published in *Selected
Poems of Anatole Taràs Lubovich*
(The Live Oak Press LLC, Palo Alto,
2006).

Joint AOF/HAGSA Movie Night—Friday, June 8, 7PM

By Kevin Schultz

The Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA) hosts this month's joint movie night, and they have selected the critically acclaimed feature, "**Bobby**."

This is a retelling of Robert F. Kennedy's assassination. It follows 22 people who are at LA's Ambassador Hotel for different purposes, but who share the common feelings of expectancy prior to Kennedy's arrival at the primary election night party—an event that would change their lives forever. The movie is set against the backdrop of the cultural issues gripping the country at the time, including racism, sexual inequality, and class differences.



Starring Harry Belafonte, William Macy, Lindsay Lohan, Ashton Kutcher, Helen Hunt, Anthony Hopkins, Heather Graham, Emilio Estevez, Laurence Fishburn, Sharon Stone, Demi Moore, Martin Sheen, and more!

This will be at the house of Bill and Elaine Potts, 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville. If you haven't been there before, please call Bill or Elaine at 916 773-3865 or visit <http://tinyurl.com/2zoego>.

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

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

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Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Check your preference:

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

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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

Don't Stick Your Religion In My Womb By Cleo Kocol

When I grew up, choice wasn't possible. Women had babies or they didn't. If they became pregnant and for various reasons couldn't carry a child to term, they had to find someone who would offer a back-room abortion. Alternatively, they brought the pregnancy to term and let the child be adopted.

Now, although Roe v. Wade seemingly protects a woman's right to choose, it is not always possible to obtain an abortion. To abort an embryo or a fetus conceived through rape or incest or because birth control didn't work, or passion took precedence over prudence, has become increasingly difficult in the United States. Clinics are few and women face hostility in some states and long waiting periods in many. We all know the inroads the "right to life" people have made against Roe v. Wade. But do we really see what causes these attacks on a woman's right to choose?

The people who have killed and injured clinic workers, the people who shriek invectives and intimidate women attending clinics, the people

who vote to abolish Roe are people who believe it is morally wrong to abort. They want to impose their morality on everyone else. They want you to believe as they do, and they will not stop in their fight to control women's bodies. They consist of a range of people, from those who have exceptions for rape or incest to those who believe it is morally wrong no matter how the pregnancy occurred or how old, how young, or how burdened the woman may be. They base their beliefs on their interpretation of scripture.

In a country where separation of church and state is the cornerstone of our republic, where legally no one forces anyone to have an abortion, where the choice is strictly up to the woman or girl, anything that chips away at or impedes a woman's choice is unconstitutional. Americans claim a broad range of religious beliefs, from those who have church, synagogue, or temple affiliation to those who make vague references to a deity, to those who are secularists. This blend of religious belief and non-belief is completely separate from government, and is one of the

reasons for our country's success. We do not have a state religion. Any effort to bring religion into government seriously erodes the establishment clause of the Constitution. Any effort to do away with Roe impinges on the separation of church and state. We will lose Roe if we keep silent about the underlying cause for the attacks on Roe.

Unfortunately, most of us tread lightly when it comes to criticizing religion. This is not criticizing religion, but telling fact. These people are exercising a form of religious fascism. The anti-choice people are coming from a religious base, and to insist that the rest of us believe as they do is against everything we Americans believe and cherish. No one, including the government, forces anyone to have an abortion. Nor do we force anyone to use birth control. But in the last few years some of the more zealous anti-choice people would outlaw birth control. They flout separation of church and state and attempt to force their religion on everyone else. We must speak out. Lives are at stake.

—Previously published in the May 2007 issue of *Sonoma County Women's Voices*.

(Continued from page 2)

Editor's Response: The editor regrets the inclusion of views outside the scope of organization-building under the AOF Line banner. The editor agrees with the writer that the piece represents an opinion piece better suited to another section of the newsletter. In response, the editor has invited Mr. Ezray to respond at his leisure with a separate opinion piece, and Mr. Ezray has accepted.

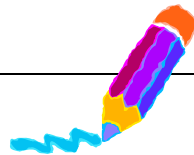
Re: Clark Adams

Clark is someone a great many people just plain won't ever be forgetting. He leaves a gaping hole in freethought activism. It's not enough to see Clark as a funny man making talks about atheism in popular culture and pleasing a crowd. Clark was someone who had a goal - a mission, and he largely achieved it. Clark was not just a jolly man. He made a real impact. Moreover, he was a friend to just "scads" of people!

Many of us who worked alongside him and shared his general philosophical bent (not the specifics, by any means) are stunned by his sudden absence from the work we all were doing in our different ways. Clark was someone who rolled up his sleeves and threw huge amounts (huge amounts!) of energy toward what he believed.

The niftiest thing about him, in my view, is that he was not particular about what labels people might use for what is so often called "nonbelief." In truth, there is nothing at all "nonbelieving" about what Clark truly believed in. He was an Enthusiastic Bright because he was immensely supportive of everyone and anyone who promoted rationality and critical thinking, by whatever label they chose.

—Mynga Futrell, Sacramento



Want the latest AOF board minutes?
E-mail aofboard@aofonline.org!

Adopt-A-Highway Event

Sunday, June 24 8AM

AOF is staging another highway cleanup on **Sunday, June 24** so join us at **8AM** and we'll be done no later than 10:30—at which point we will retire to a nearby home for socializing and light refreshments. We have been cleaning up a two-mile segment of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd for the last 13 years. There is sure to be much to collect courtesy of the California drivers and commuters who travel that stretch. Please join us. We gather at the Park & Ride on Elkhorn west of 99 @ 8AM. We only go out at that time when traffic is at its lightest. If you have further questions, you can call (916) 447-2169. Rain cancels.

HAGSA Solstice Potluck

Sunday, June 24 3PM

This will be held at the home of Bill and Elaine Potts. In addition to HAGSA members, friends of HAGSA, including members of AOF, will be most welcome.

The Potts residence is at 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville 95661. If this will be your first visit to their house, you can call at Bill or Elaine at 916 773-3865 or (preferably) click below to create driving directions. Please call, anyway, to let them know if you'll be going.

Driving Directions:
<http://tinyurl.com/2zoego>

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 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.

AOF Volunteer Job Board

The right volunteer with the right activity makes a world of difference. Send us your ideas for projects and/or volunteer using the contact info on page two. *Thanks!* Open positions:

- Archive Committee
- AOF Librarian
- Program Committee Volunteer(s)
- Caring Committee Volunteer(s)
- Publicity Volunteer
- Freethought Day/Darwin Day

Contact 916-447-3589 for more info!

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

June Calendar of Events

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| AOF/HAGSA Joint Movie Night— “Bobby” (page 5) | Friday, June 8, 7 - 9 PM |
| AOF General Meeting (page 1) | Sunday, June 10, 1:30 - 4 PM |
| AOF Board meeting | Sunday, June 17, 9:30 AM |
| AOF Adopt-A-Highway (page 5) | Sunday, June 24, 8 - 10 AM |
| AOF Davis Community Meals Event | Tuesday, July 24, 4-6:15PM |
| HAGSA Solstice Potluck (see page 7 or http://hagsa.org) | Sunday, June 24, 3-5 PM |
| SORT Monthly Meeting (http://home.surewest.net/kitray) | Tuesday, June 26, 7:30-9 PM |

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” (2007-10-07), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento’s “Darwin Day Educational Gala” (2008-02-10). 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.

