

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

October 2007

Special Points of Interest

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Sunday, October 7, 12-5PM Freethought Day 2007: Reason...Think...Act...**BOLDLY!**

Note: There will be NO AOF GENERAL MEETING ON OCTOBER 14 IN LIEU OF FREETHOUGHT DAY.

Freethought Day 2007--A Celebration of Reason, Freethought, and Church / State Separation

The 2008 theme is: **Question...Reason...Act - BOLDLY!**

The event (our sixth annual) is a community opportunity to celebrate values and actions once seen as radical but which are honored today, and to commemorate the bold and independent thinkers who brought our nation to the forefront and led to its policy of governmental neutrality toward ultimate beliefs of citizens.

It's free!

(Continued on page 3)



Standard Fare

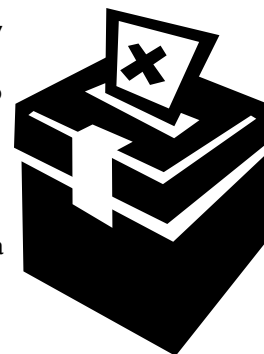
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November General Meeting:

Annual Elections and Panel on Topic: New Atheism: Harmful or Helpful?

Won't you help direct AOF's activities and programs as a community resource by running for the 2008 board? We have two open seats going into next year, and so far no one from the general membership has stepped forward to assist with the leadership activities. October 28 represents the nominations deadline. The AOF News & Views will print candidate statements in the November newsletter.

In addition to the November elections, in November AOF will host a panel discussion on the topic of *New Atheism*, a label for aggressive works challenging mainstream religious thinking. The panel will discuss works by authors such as Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and others, and investigate opinions on whether these attitudes are helpful or harmful to *gaining a seat at the table* for atheists.



Viva La Casa De Razón!

AOF Line

By Don Knutson

Several years ago, the AOF Board assembled a committee to study the idea of the secular community of Sacramento founding a **Reason House** where local naturalist groups could store their materials with sufficient space for meetings. I recall we made a couple of fundraising efforts and even visited a couple of area sites. Ultimately, land prices discouraged us and the committee was dissolved. There is still a fund of several hundred dollars sitting in a bank waiting for us to pick up the ball and run with it.

I think it is time for us to resume this effort.

I was reminded of the need for something like "Reason House" when Gordy Slack, the Bay Area journalist, spoke at AOF's June meeting. He said the chasm that exists between those of a naturalist orientation and those who dwell in delusion of everlasting life is incredibly expansive. It is amazing that we can relate at all though I do not personally favor persecution of those steeped in supernaturalism. But we need a place for ourselves consecrated upon understanding the

empirical world free of mysticism and the supernatural.

I have been involved in the annual Sacramento Earth Day celebration in April since we resumed it five years ago. To me, it is a matter of civic pride that the area have such an important occasion. Similarly, that same pride should apply and be shared by the local secular community for a common property.

I have just heard recently of a functioning Secular House in Atlanta and another in the final planning stages in Austin, Texas.

I will recommend at the next Board meeting that we revive the Reason House committee and begin anew.

This brings to mind the AOF elections scheduled for November. If you would like to get involved in this effort and you are an AOF member in good standing, I urge you to consider running for the Board. Candidate Statements will be due for publication in the November newsletter. That deadline is October 28.

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

Editor's Note on November Elections

AOF renews itself each year through general membership elections and this year is no different. Of the nine board members, seven have chosen to remain, so we need no fewer than two members to run at the time this issue goes to press!

AOF operates as a *working board*, which means that if you get elected, you'll have opportunities to help shape AOF in this all-important strategic planning year. Make your opinions heard! There's really no better time to run than for the 2008 board.

To nominate yourself or someone you know, e-mail newsletter@aofonline.org, or call the AOF voice-mail at 916-447-3589. Your support is truly appreciated.

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 Ikelman, 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: 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

ISSN: 1936-4229

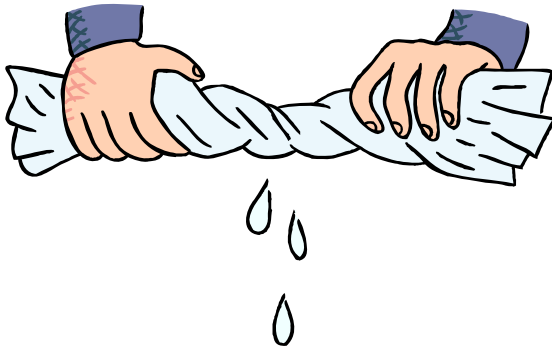
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Straightening Them Out

By Cleo Fellers Kocol

Her tomboy image
made people smile
until puberty descended.
My god, can't you make
her wear a dress, look like
a girl should look?

had straightened him out.
Put him in the lord's hands,
in a military school, followed
by theological seminary.
And now he's been born
again. There's no problem



Her parents took her
to psychiatrists and psychologists
and then to the preacher man
who knew a boy who had
played with dolls, and he

that can't be erased with
a prayer-filled, god-filled,
god-fearing life, the preacher
man says.

AOF Program Continuation

(Continued from page 1)

It's fun!

Speakers, Entertainment, & Live Music
Sunday, October 7, 2007
Noon - 5 PM
Waterfront Park, Front & L Streets, Old
Sac

Freethought Day 2007 Planning
Committee Chair: Beverly Church;
Program: Mynga Futrell; Exposition: Tom
Ikelman; Publicity: Carla Corbett
Finance: Kay Dickey; Entertainment: Ken
Nahigian; Event Day: Brian Jones;
Outreach, Kevin Schultz.

More information:

Phone: 916-447-3589 or 916-359-
5423

Web: <http://freethoughtday.org>

See you there!

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.

32 Flavors and Then Some One Cheer For Faith

By Ken Nahigian

A change wind is blowing, is blowing—do you feel it? It is bringing to us a new zeitgeist. Suddenly, atheism is almost mainstream. Look:

- Militant atheist authors on best-seller lists and talk shows: Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins.
- Atheist comedians on major network media: Julia Sweeney, George Carlin.
- Popular atheist TV characters: Lisa Simpson, Dr. Perry Cox on *Scrubs*.

Even atheist politicians: the late California Assemblyman B.T. Collins, Rep. Pete Stark. And now, amazingly, atheist comic book superheroes: Booster Gold, Mr. Terrific, the Midnighter, Quasar!

A few decades ago this would have been near to unthinkable. And it may signal a new openness to religious doubt, a kind of theological *glasnost*.

But don't get cocky, kid. We've seen it before—for example, in the French Enlightenment, before all that reign-of-terror nastiness, and again in the 1880s when crowds flocked to hear and cheer old Robert Green Ingersoll. Waves of rationalism, only beaten back later by revivals of religious mania.

That's religious faith for you. It tends to rise from the grave no matter how many ten-penny nails we pound into the coffin lid. Mao tried and Pol Pot tried. The Soviet Union used libraries of propaganda and decades of grinding repression. When their efforts abated, religion returned as naturally, as easily, as seawater filling a depression in the sand.

If you're old enough, you'll remember 1966, when poet Anthony

Towne declared that God is dead, penning a satirical obituary in *Time* magazine. Just two years later, the Jesus Movement came in like a steamroller.

Our new atheists have a bold, powerful rhetoric, a white-hot laser focus of words, bright as pinwheel sparkles on Independence Day. I enjoy and admire them. But their best zingers seem to be steel-jacketed bullets shot through fog (not my metaphor, but a great one

even

so).



More than one anthropologist has suggested that a proclivity for faith is wired in our brain, written in our bones and blood. Perhaps. But does it matter? For my part, I long ago surrendered hope of abolishing religion. In fact I am not sure I ever wanted that, really—this freethinker, for one, simply lacks the hubris to think he is right about everything.

What I *do* want, and want passionately, is mutual respect; a civil dia-

log; understanding, plurality; a free market of ideas. And above all, a government that stays the hell out of all of it.

If we are wise, we can all get behind that, believers and non. And then emergent history will find its own course.

My gut sentiment is that a balance of power is the best way to get to that place. Variety in faith means many forces in stalemate, naturally compelling an atmosphere of official neutrality, mutual freedom, and *détente*. After all, what good-old-boy Southern Baptist will call for a faith-based government if he thinks the Mormons or the Muslims might be the ones to define it? Remember, in Jefferson's day, when Baptists were in the minority, it was they who demanded a strict separation of church and state.

So one cheer, a big one, for religious faith when it takes a natural diversity of flavors. And when some minority religious faction wins a point or makes an inroad somewhere, be it Sufi or Vodoun, Wicca or Scientology or Eckankar, or even the Watchtower Society, outwardly I will roll my eyes, but deep in my heart something exalts—knowing how it must give pause to the big church-statists, and trickle an ice-drop of fear down their centrist, theocratic spines.

Because the enemy of mine enemy is also my friend.

We are free minds after all. Each new voice, false or true, shakes out a bit more dust, brings a new harmonic into the chorus of human thought. And then ultimately we are all better; yes, even skeptics and freethinkers. Because we are also still singing.

Get Real

By Anatole Lubovich, Republished Posthumously

Note: With regret we note that this month marks the final poem in this series.

Liubov, in Ukrainian, means *love*. 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

Get Real

Whoever told you that your life is sacred?
You are but one of some six billion ants.
Drink a full cup, then exit nobly naked
Without anthropocentric arrogance.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Anatole Taràs Lubovich was born on March 9, 1937, in Rivne, Ukraine. During World War II, Anatole and his family were interned in a labor camp and following the war lived in refugee camps in Germany. By the time the family emigrated to the United States in 1950, Anatole had become fluent in several languages and had developed his lifelong love of words. He studied 14 languages, but had a particular passion for English which he spoke and wrote with precision, wit and elegance. He loved literature, particularly poetry and the plays of Shakespeare. He received a degree in musical theater from San Francisco State University. Anatole acted in numerous theatrical and musical productions in the Bay Area and also directed several plays. He was a great lover of opera, especially the works of Verdi and Donizetti.

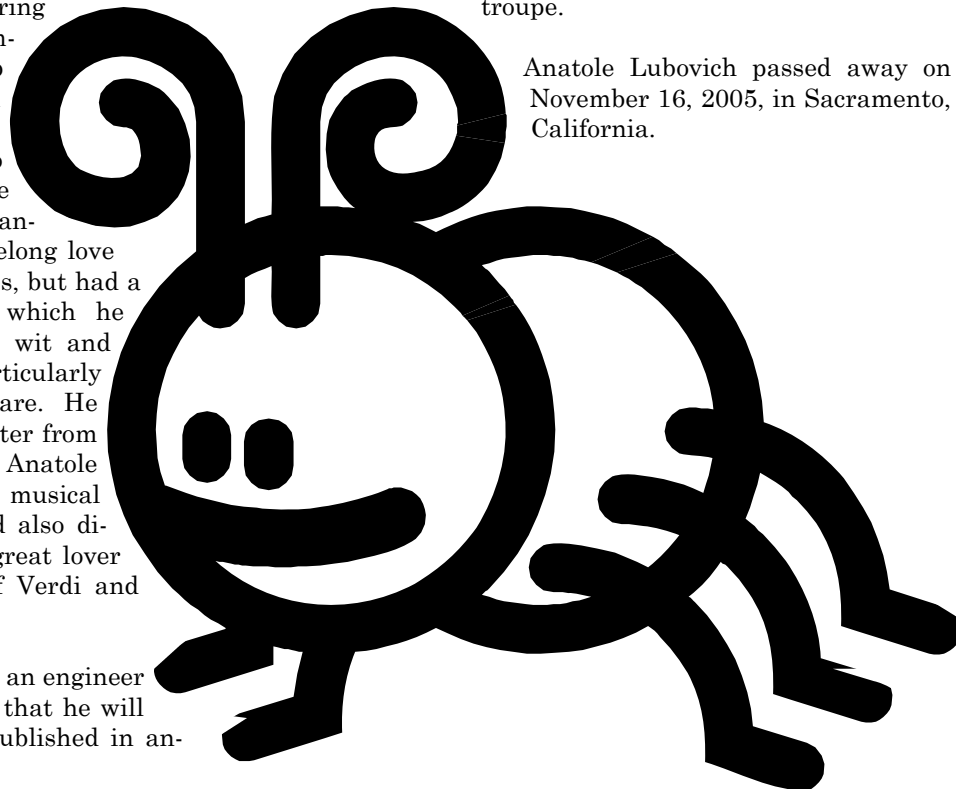
Anatole worked for many years as an engineer and a teacher, but it is as a poet that he will most be remembered. He was published in an-

thologies and journals, was featured at readings, and won several awards, including both first prize in poetry and first prize in music in the World Esperanto Association Worldwide Art and Literature Competition in 2002. Anatole translated poetry into English from Ukrainian and other languages. He also invented a new metric form he called the undula.

In 1995, Anatole founded the Not-Yet-Dead Poets' Society in Redwood City. The NYDPS continues to sponsor weekly poetry readings. He was a member Waverly Writers in the Bay Area, the Sacramento Poetry Center, Chaparral Poets, and the Foothill Bibliophile Society. His large library contained many volumes related to the works of Shakespeare.

In addition to his literary and theatrical affiliations, Anatole was active in the Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area. He was a member of the Esperanto League of North America, past president of the Sunnyvale Stamp Society, a member of the Royal Philatelic Society (London), and a life member of Friends of the Western Philatelic Library. Anatole was an Eagle Scout and for many years acted in the capacity of Scoutmaster and Commissioner. While in the U.S. Army, he was a member of a Cossack dance troupe.

Anatole Lubovich passed away on November 16, 2005, in Sacramento, California.



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

Tidbits, News, and Events of Interest

AOF Family News

- Congratulations-❤❤
to AOF Board members **Kay Dickey** and **Beverly Church** on the recent births of their grandchildren!
- Our condolences go out to AOF Board Member **Mynga Futrell** and family on the news of her sister's recent passing. Wishing her grace and peace during this stressful time.
- Rumor has it that Sacramento-area resident **Mike Newdow** and Madison-area co-leader of the FFRF **Dan Barker** plan to collaborate on an upcoming musical CD due out this winter solstice. *Stay tuned!*
- **Sierra 2 Community Center** communicated a rate increase of 25% year-over-year to the AOF



board this month—bringing the total cost of each meeting to \$150 for three hours (was \$120/meeting in 2007). The rate goes into effect in January of 2008. AOF paid \$28/hour in 2003.

- October birthdays:

- Bronda Silva
- Mynga Futrell
- Margo Gunnerson



Do you have any info that you'd like to share with the AOF membership? Please submit items to: newsletter@aofonline.org and specify in the e-mail that you'd like to announce the information in the Family News section. Thanks!

Happy Halloween!



Community Events of Interest to AOF Members

- **AOF/HAGSA Joint Movie Night, Friday, October 12, 7-9PM:** to-be-announced. Home of HAGSA President Bill Potts, 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville. More info: 916 773-3865.
- **Humanists of Sun City, Sunday, Oct 7, 1-4PM:** Monthly meeting. Sierra Pines Recreational Center, 7050 Del Webb Blvd, Roseville. More info: healthphys@hotmail.com
- **FACTS, Thursday, Oct 11, 7-9PM:** General Meeting. Home of AOF board member Bev Church, 120 Eastbrook Circle, Sacramento. More info: <http://www.restorethepledge.com/FACTS/>
- **HAGSA, Sunday, Oct 21, 3-5PM:** *Scotland's Use of Ranked Voting: Why Proportional Representation?* Fahs Room, Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento (UUSS), at 2425 Sierra Boulevard, Sacramento. More info: <http://hagsa.org>
- **SORT, Tuesday, Oct 30, 7:30-9PM:** Monthly meeting. Room 800, La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael. More info: <http://home.surewest.net/kitray/>

Our Fathers Of Old By Rudyard Kipling

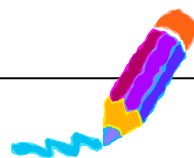
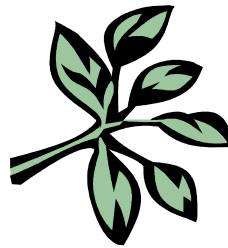
EXCELLENT herbs had our fathers of old—
Excellent herbs to ease their pain—
Alexanders and Marigold,
Eyebright, Orris, and Elecampane.
Basil, Rocket, Valerian, Rue,
(Almost singing themselves they run)
Vervain, Dittany, Call-me-to-you—
Cowslip, Melilot, Rose of the Sun.
Anything green that grew out of the mould
Was an excellent herb to our fathers of old.

Wonderful tales had our fathers of old
Wonderful tales of the herbs and the stars—
The Sun was Lord of the Marigold,
Basil and Rocket belonged to Mars.
Pat as a sum in division it goes—
(Every herb had a planet bespoke)—
Who but Venus should govern the Rose?
Who but Jupiter own the Oak?
Simply and gravely the facts are told
In the wonderful books of our fathers of old.

Wonderful little, when all is said,
Wonderful little our fathers knew.
Half their remedies cured you dead—
Most of their teaching was quite untrue—
“Look at the stars when a patient is ill,
(Dirt has nothing to do with disease,)
Bleed and blister as much as you will,
Blister and bleed him as oft as you please.”
Whence enormous and manifold
Errors were made by our fathers of old.

Yet when the sickness was sore in the land,
And neither planets nor herbs assuaged,
They took their lives in their lancet-hand
And, oh, what a wonderful war they waged!
Yes, when the crosses were chalked on the door—
(Yes, when the terrible dead-cart rolled,)
Excellent courage our fathers bore—
Excellent heart had our fathers of old.
None too learned, but nobly bold
Into the fight went our fathers of old.

If it be certain, as Galen says—
And sage Hippocrates holds as much—
“That those afflicted by doubts and dismsays
Are mightily helped by a dead man’s touch,”
Then, be good to us, stars above!
Then, be good to us, herbs below!
We are afflicted by what we can prove,
We are distracted by what we know—
So—ah, so!
Down from your heaven or up from your mould,
Send us the hearts of our fathers of old!
—Suggested by Ken Nahigian (thanks!)



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 Opportunities

Calling all volunteers! Send us your ideas for projects and/or volunteer using the contact info on page two. Open positions:

- *Post-meeting lunch coordinator*
- *Archive Committee*
- *AOF Librarian*
- *Program Committee Volunteer(s)*
- *Caring Committee Volunteer(s)*
- *Publicity Volunteer*
- *Freethought Day/Darwin Day*

Interested? Call 916-447-3589!

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!

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



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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

October Calendar of Events

Freethought Day (No October AOF General Meeting)	Sunday, October 7, 12 - 5 PM
AOF/HAGSA Joint Movie Night	Friday, October 12, 7 - 9 PM
AOF Board meeting	Sunday, October 21, 9:30 - 12 PM
AOF Adopt-A-Highway Event	Sunday, October 28, 8 - 10 AM
AOF Davis Community Meals Charity Event	Tuesday, October 30, 4 - 7 PM
HAGSA Semi-Monthly Meeting (hagsa.org)	Sunday, October 21, 3-5 PM
SORT Monthly Meeting (http://home.surewest.net/kitray)	Tuesday, October 30, 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.

