

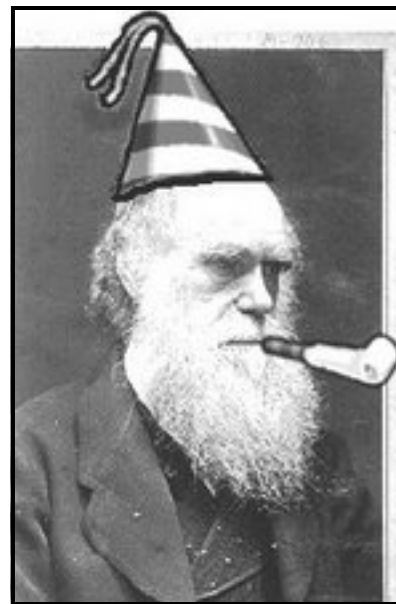
AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

February 2011

Sunday, February 13, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

14th Annual Sacramento Darwin Day Birthday Gala



Please do not go to the Sierra 2 Center for the February 2011 general AOF meeting—we will not be there! Instead, go to the La Sierra Community Center in Carmichael. There, AOF will join hands with other Sacramento-area freethought, humanist and community groups to bring you the Fourteenth Annual Sacramento Darwin Day birthday gala.

What is Darwin Day? Simply an annual worldwide celebration of science, and a party in honor of the life and work of the great Charles Darwin (b. 12 February 1809), sponsored by community and educational groups and hosted locally by the Sacramento Community of Reason. To learn more of this wonderful event, please visit

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Special Points of Interest

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AOF in March: Darien DeLu and Ellen Schwartz from Sac-WILPF



Darien DeLu (right) will speak in March

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In commemoration of **International Women's Day**, AOF proudly presents **Darien DeLu and compatriot Ellen Schwartz from Sac-WILPF**, the Sacramento-valley branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Darien and Ellen will inform & engage us about women's votes in today's political environment.

With the centennial anniversary of women winning the right to vote in California upon us, what is the value of voting in today's political world -- especially after the recent *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, which cut limits on campaign donations from corporations and other groups? What is the role of today's voter? Furthermore, women's votes in the US have consistently shown striking differences from men's votes -- what might explain these

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President's Message

By Jerry Sloan

I want to thank my colleagues on the AOF Board of Directors for their confidence in electing me as president of AOF for the year of 2011. I am both honored and humbled by that confidence.

As an organization that has been losing membership and attendance it is essential we all work hard to recruit new members and interest in AOF or make the hard decision that maybe AOF has run its course.

It was very heartening to see the excellent attendance at our January meeting but the reality is the majority of those attending were from other Community of Reason organizations.

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

The discussion centered around how the various organizations can cooperate more closely together. For the most part we all have some very common goals chiefly among them shoring up the crumbling Wall of the Separation of Church and State and promoting the acceptance of the non-believing community of the Sacramento area.

This is more than a worthy goal.

For my part I intend to try and reach out to our college and high school campuses. Several of the area colleges have Freethinker groups we need to establish contact with and we need to encourage the establishment of Freethinker groups in area high schools.

As recent polls have shown us non-believers are the fastest growing segment of our population. We outnumber Southern Baptist, the second largest religious denomination in the country.

February 13 is Darwin Day and the committee has planned a wonderful program and as usual there will be the FABULOUS birthday cakes. I hope to see you all there.

AOF Board (2011)

President: Jerry Sloan

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jillian Stanley

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

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

AOF Standing Committees

All AOF members are urged to volunteer in the organization. There are openings in every committee listed here. Please contact the chair or coordinator of any area of interest to you to learn details of getting involved. We would love to have your participation! Phone AOF 916-447-3589 or e-mail aofboard@aofonline.org for direct contact to relevant personnel.

Programs and Events Committee

Program Planning (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Meeting Matters / Logistics (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Social Activities (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Membership Committee

Members Tracking (Team Coordinator, Ken Nahigian)

"Freethought Friends" (Team Coordinator, Jillian Stanley)

Outreach / Recruiting (Team Coordinator, Steve Campbell)

Communications Committee

Beverly Church, Chair

AOF News Team (newsletter editor, events editor, public editor, postmaster, webmaster)

Education, Activism and Service Committee

Service Projects Coordinator: Don Knutson

Education/Action Coordinator: Mynga Futrell

Building / Reason House Committee

Beverly Church, Chair

Paul Geisert, Mynga Futrell, Mario Sandri

Freethought Day 2011: Date to-be-announced

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

Darwin Day 2011: February 13

Mynga Futrell and Bronda Silva, Co-Chairs

(Save the date! – It's a celebration of science and humanity)

AOF Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons

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

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

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

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

AOF News Team

Newsletter Editor: Kevin Schultz

Postmaster: Jerry Sloan

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

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Sacramento Coalition of Reason January Meeting Recap By David Flanders

January's AOF meeting featured various Sacramento secular groups in their effort to overcome hate, fear, ignorance, and indifference they encounter in America.

As the meeting progressed, one observed these groups think knowledge of the world is best derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. The best environment for that to occur seems to be in countries celebrating separation of churches and state. So, of course, these Sacramento groups favor that concept. Many in these groups feel it is about taking charge of the often lousy world around us and working to shape it into a better place, though we know that we cannot ever finish the task.

It does seem, throughout human history, there has always been a minority of atheists in the midst. That seems to be the case in Sacramento as well.

In the 1980's, the Humanist Association of the Sacramento Greater Area (HAGSA) began monthly meetings at a Unitarian meeting room. Several years ago, Bill Potts became president of HAGSA, and that is the way things are now.

In 1993, AOF (Atheists and Other Freethinkers) began monthly meetings. AOF sought not just to appeal to the head, but also to the "heart"—Don Knutson spoke of the highway cleanup (15 years), and the dinner for the needy in Davis. In 2000, Atheist Alliance International held their annual convention in Sacramento. Dave Flanders was AOF President at the time. Past president Beverly Church provided additional information about AOF for us. Mynga Futrell spoke of a group she and her husband started—the Brights, a group promoting a naturalistic worldview.

Those involved in the coalition groups do not believe in infallible authorities, and we value the messy, painstaking process of bringing a group of individuals, to an evolving, overlapping consensus. One could sense that Jerry Sloan, one of the speakers, hopes that common ground will outweigh the differences.

Rachael Harrington, Coordinator of the Sacramento Area Coalition of Reason (Sacramento COR) also spoke at the meeting. She expressed delight that SacFAN (Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers) exceeded 666 members. Ten billboards in the Sacramento area with the phrase, "Are you good without God? Millions are," increased their membership.

In the digital age we live in, one can get additional information of these groups several ways: In your computer's web browser (for example, Internet Explorer), type AOF, then click on the kindred spirits tab and additional information

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Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. It is one of 50 member societies of the **Atheist Alliance International** ("a positive voice for atheism"). AOF also maintains affiliations with the

Council for Secular Humanism, American Atheists, and the American Humanist Association.

AOF's Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the association, Atheists and Other Freethinkers, is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

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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 Soapbox Savior

By Ken Nahigian

The good doctor is gone. He died in March, 1997, leaving a sudsy empire. His son, assigns and followers now walk in his footsteps, a squeak-clean path to peppermint-oil and sweet eucalyptus salvation, free trade, industrial hemp, global love, unity brotherhood, God's Eternal Spring, All-One-Faith organic purity and Essene birth-control. But to exceptions eternally? Absolutely *none*.

The doctor left a story too. It is wonderful, wacky, poignant, visionary, inspiring and sad, a life-story backlit by a kind of manic, incandescent love. First go scrub those grubby hands, then you will be fit to hear.

He was Emanuel H. Bronner of Castile Soap fame. Not a medical doctor, he did claim a PhD equivalent in chemistry, which was good enough for customers and clients. Born Emanuel Heilbronner on Feb 1, 1908, in Heilbronn, Germany, he was the third-generation son of Jewish soap makers. He fled to the United States in 1929 as the Nazis rose to power, dropping the *Heil* from his name in protest. He pleaded with his parents to join him—they scoffed. His last contact with them was a postcard in 1938: “Dear son: You were right. ... Your loving father.”

Settling in Milwaukee, Bronner married and sired three children. He took consulting work at soap factories but hated their methods. After his wife died he sent his children to foster homes and struck out on his own. He drifted. Deep in his mind a philosophy took form, to condense like a pearl on the splinter of his grief: a doctrine for world peace and sustainability. It was idiosyncratic, nonlinear, a pastiche of Jewish, Christian, political and literary sources, counter-cultural and cheerfully apocalyptic. At the center was what Bronner was to call his “Moral ABC,” the “All-One-God-Faith.” Just what that meant was never quite clear to many. But to Bronner it was desperately clear, and he soon saw his medium as his messenger. His medium was soap.

First he tried letters, telegrams to world leaders, and public protest. Police arrested him at a University of Chicago protest in 1946. He received shock treatments at a mental hospital, but escaped six months later and made his way to Los Angeles. Working odd jobs, he saved money to begin making soap in 20-gallon drums, using the formulas he remembered. He stirred with a broom handle, bottled by hand, and on sales trips preached his ideas to whomever would listen.

The labels, the unique soap labels, evolved slowly. Just a few sentences at first, typed laboriously, they eventually grew to 3000-word rants in 20-pitch type, punctuated by exclamation points, all-cap stresses and hyphenated compound words. You must read to understand the ineffable charm: earnest screeds for One God, harangues against Communism and fluoridation, doctored quotes from Jefferson, Tom Paine, Shakespeare or Thoreau, even Broadway show tune verses. Some excerpts may help:

Absolute cleanliness is Godliness! Teach the Moral

ABC that unites all mankind free, 6 billion strong & we are All-One. “Listen Children Eternal Father Eternally one!” ... To dream the impossible dream! To reach the unreachable star! Till All-One, All-One we are! ... Replace half-true Socialist-fluoride poison & tax-slavery with full-truth, work-speech-press & profit-sharing Socialaction! All-One! ... A fire, a mist, a planet, a crystal, a cell, a jellyfish, a dinosaur, caves where cave-men dwell, then a sense for work-song-love-art-play-beauty, a face turned up from the sod! It's constructive evolution, guided by One God. ... Exceptions? NONE!

Oddly, “Dr.” Bronner's products caught on—maybe not so oddly, because the Pure Castile Soap was good, he marketed it with frenzied energy, and he had a natural electric charisma, once you got past the “nutty professor German accent,” as one has described it. (A Chicago admirer had even crucified himself in 1945 to publicize the All-One plan for world peace; he survived.) Bronner remarried, reunited his family, bought a home in Escondido, and moved his “factory” to a tiny cottage on his bucolic 3 acres. When the 1960's counter-culture discovered his product, sales shot up. Yet he never mechanized his firm, never down-toned the label rants, and continued to donate half his profits to causes such as organic standards, fair trade, industrial hemp and third-world sanitation. He was a philosopher, not a capitalist.

If his children resented the abandonment, or were uncomfortable with their eccentric father, he soon won their hearts. A son described how his anger melted at a Las Vegas health food convention in 1972, when people flocked joyfully to his father's booth, “... hugging him, telling him how wonderful his teachings are, how they changed their life.”

Selling points of Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap included biodegradability, organic oils and strength—a dollop goes a long way, and the label warns you, “Dilute! Dilute! OK!” Versatility too. Bronner touted his soaps for bathing, dish washing, cleaning clothes or dentures, deodorizing diapers, rinsing pesticides from vegetables, even brushing teeth. You can use it for shampoo, mouthwash, pet wash, after shave, deodorant or mosquito repellent. In the old days it even claimed to serve as an Essene Rabbi-approved contraceptive douche.

When Bronner died, age 89, his company was pulling revenue of \$4.7 million a year, with Bronner himself worth over \$6 million. It could have been more, but Bronner had no strong business drive, ignoring offers to buy out his brand or streamline his Wonka-esque factory. He lost invoices or often just did not bill customers. He did not advertise. He was also one of the best employers ever, offering generous bonuses, profit-sharing and health care, and sometimes even living quarters near his shop.

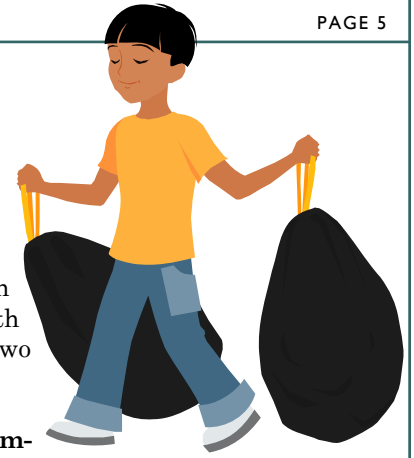
Sadly, he suffered from blindness and Parkinson's disease in his final years (he blamed the blindness on the shock therapy). But he held on to the ebullience for his work and his ideas. Today Bronner & Co. still peddles Castile Soap, and other products like floor cleaner, “tattoo balms,” shaving gel, dermatological creams,

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Sunday, February 12, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

AOF Adopt-A-Highway Event

By Don Knutson



Saturday, January 8 was an unfortunate day not only for the country with the Tucson shootings but also for AOF's Highway Cleanup event. It was simply too damn cold with a high of just 40 to be able to find hardy individuals to brave the elements! So, only two showed up which made me become philosophical.

Within a two hour timeframe, is there a better favor you could do for your immediate environment than to pick up the litter discarded intentionally or otherwise by your fellow man? Of course, planting trees might rival such an activity but I would stress that intercepting plastic before it can reach our tributaries and head for the ocean is much more beneficial. Now, a large piece of plastic may seem relatively innocuous to just leave on the side of the road but plastic when exposed over time to the sun will inevitably breakdown contaminating all the while as it heads downstream. And then when it breaks down into smaller and smaller parts, it becomes visually attractive for many forms of wildlife, principally birds, who will eat the bits remaining of that larger piece which was left on the side of the road. Ultimately, the plastic these birds consume will plug up their digestive system and they will starve to death. So, please consider pitching in to help us capture this debris on the side of the road before it can do some harm. We plan on returning to the site AOF has been cleaning up for 15 years once again **Saturday, February 12 @ 9:00 a.m.** to do another necessary cleaning. That day will mark Charles Darwin's 202nd birthday. Wet conditions or heavy fog cancels.

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the International Darwin Day Foundation (<http://darwinday.org>).

For the Sacramento celebration, doors will open at 2 o'clock; the main program begins at 2:30. Please arrive early to find a good seat. Relax and enjoy our main speaker, Dr. Barbara Forrest, Professor of Philosophy in the Department of History and Political Science at Southeastern Louisiana University, co-author (with Paul R. Gross) of *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design* (Oxford University Press, 2004; 2007, 2nd ed.), and a director of the National Center for Science Education and National Advisory Council of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Ticket price: a mere **\$7.50** if purchased before Feb 9, 2011, **\$10.00** at the door, or for students with Student ID, **\$5.00**. To purchase by mail, click here for a flyer and order form. To purchase tickets online (we will hold them at the door), or for more information, please see the main event website, <http://sacdarwinday.blogspot.com/>.

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is available for groups in the local area.

Michael Newdow provided information of one of those groups--his group F.A.C.T.S. (First Atheist Church of True Science). He has continued his efforts to get those in government to comply with the first amendment.

Liam McDaid spoke about the Sac City College Freethinkers student group, the Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT), and the Sacramento Skeptics. He said he is pleased to see younger people attending meetings.

Perhaps these groups have asked themselves why let mother nature throw the dice when we can place them on the table with the most desired number? Not every placement will be a win. Indeed, losses are a certainty. But they will be far fewer in number compared with those imposed by randomness, or faith in transcendent non randomness.

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even snack bars. Helmed by a surviving son and grandchildren, it retains the slightly-cracked, subversive labels and most of the Doctor's business policies, and each year grows by double digits.

In this sense, Bronner lives and rants. To know more, see the company website or the award-winning 2007 documentary, "Dr. Bronner's Magic Soapbox". And wash those hands.

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

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

Name(s) _____ Phone: _____

Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

E-mail address (please print!) _____

Membership Level (please circle one):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Note: Membership does not include a newsletter subscription

Newsletter subscription:

Send my printed newsletter by postal mail (\$12 extra)

Send my newsletter by email (*Free!*) – my email address is above

Additional Donation: \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association – Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter (same rate - \$12 printed, free via email).

AOF Family News In Memoriam: David Long Henderson (1929-2011) By Nadell Gayou



Editor's Note: All of us at AOF are saddened by the loss of one of our community's most active members. The following letter was written by David's companion, Nadell, and received on January 15.

David died on Wednesday, January 12, 2011. I don't use any euphemisms because he was a Humanist and an Atheist and would have probably been offended by those words. I am sorry that I have not gotten back to you sooner but it was later in the day and I have needed a couple of days to settle down to everything.

This was not as devastating as it could have been because it has been slowly coming for the last several years. His physical health seemed to be OK until just recently. It was his mental health that was failing. However his lack of mental health contributed to his physical failing. He was admitted to the hospital with a urinary tract infection, a kidney infection and a right leg that had been destroyed by a blood clot or so it was assumed since they couldn't do an angiogram because the dye would have been more than his failing kidneys could handle. If David had been functioning at a higher cognitive level he would have been capable of letting me know what was going on. Unfortunately we had to ignore his objections after seeing that he was having trouble with his leg and first make a medical appointment, then when we saw the accelerated deterioration, just put him in the car and take him to emergency straight from dinner at my daughter's house.

David did die peacefully. My daughter was at the care facility and I was returning from doing some errands when he died. She said his breathing changed and a few minutes later he took one deep breath and didn't continue. He had been unconscious for more than 24 hours and exhibiting minimal reactions to being rearranged even though we knew his leg had been a source of significant pain earlier. David did exhibit signs of advanced dementia in the hospital which rapidly progressed to where he could not communicate in the care facility for the last two days. We had a family member with him for 24 hours a day for the first few days but since there were only three of us and my two chil-

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differences? How have women's votes changed the political landscape in the US?

Darien De Lu grew up in Sacramento and continues to return to the City of the Confluence after various sojourns in other US cities and wide-ranging global travels. For most of her life she has been an activist for numerous peace, justice, and environmental issues. She has been arrested for civil disobedience actions and helped organize nonviolence "monitors" for such actions. Many who have never met her rely on "Darien's Ballot Guide" to the California ballot measures, which she researches, writes, and publishes for each election. Darien is also a long-time member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). In 1995 she traveled with some 200 other WILPFers on a chartered train from Helsinki, Finland to Beijing, China for the United Nations Women's Conference. She later served for nearly ten years on the U.S. WILPF national board - including as UIS. Co-president.

The WILPF is an international activist organization which works through over 20 "sections" in countries around the world and in the United Nations as a recognized non-governmental organization. WILPF emphasizes analysis and strategic activism. WILPF seeks to find, point out and address the connections among organizations, structures, and issues, to get at - and eliminate - the root causes of war.

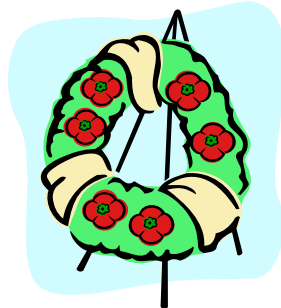
Please note: *the March General Meeting* will be in **Room 9** of the Sierra 2 Center, not the usual Room 10. The rooms are close, so no one should get lost. Just walk up to the door to Room 10 and turn around. Voila.

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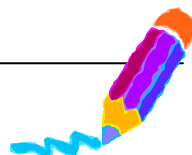
dren had to go to work I stopped staying the night and we were only with him from 7 AM to about 9 PM until the end.

I have made arrangements at Blue Oaks Crematorium and Funeral Services for his cremation and scattering (above the Sierras where he designed and led many bike rides including the Sierra Century for several years). They have a memorial web page (<http://bit.ly/davidlh>) where we will post some information about his life and we hope to arrange a memorial at the Unitarian Church in the coming weeks. All of this will take some time since David was active in many areas over the years and I only met him in his later years. We have lots of material to go through and have already spent an entire day just trying to sort things.

I would appreciate anything that you might like to contribute to post either on the memorial website (<http://bit.ly/davidlh>) or for the service. Of course you will be able to post individual remarks as well on the website but it would help if you had some significant event(s) you think would be good to put in his bio on the site.



Want to send a letter to the Editor?
E-mail newsletter@aofonline.org



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 word processing format. (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

AOF welcomes succinct and substantive letters to the editor. Note: All letters are prioritized by AOF 's publishing criteria deriving from the organization's Statement of Purpose.

Newsletter Freebie Policy

This newsletter is free by e-mail to everyone. Just send your e-mail address. If you prefer printed copy by postal mail, AOF will send one free issue on your request; after that, please subscribe at \$12 per year. For details, see the signup form on page six.



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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

February/March Calendar of Events

AOF Dinner Social: Azul Mexican Food & Tequila Bar, 1050 20th Street #140; Contact: 419-2105 or shastaseer@sbcglobal.net	Thu, Feb 3, 6:30 p.m.
AOF Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Event	Sat, Feb 12, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
14th Annual Sacramento Darwin Day Birthday Gala (In Lieu of February AOF General Meeting)	Sun, Feb 13, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
AOF General Meeting in March	Sun, Mar 13, 1:30 p.m.
AOF Davis Community Meals Event	Tue, Mar 29, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 1:30 - 4 PM at the Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10. Note: The months of February and October are exceptions, since AOF co-produces two public education events: (1) an outdoor fair in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (Oct 2011), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (Feb 2011). 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.

