

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

August 2011

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Sunday, August 14, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

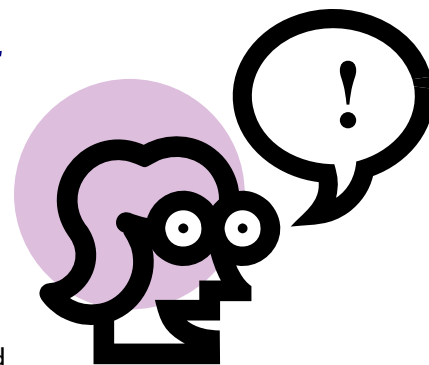
AOF Summer Sizzler: Potluck and Oratory

This is it, the annual AOF Summer Sizzler event, to feed both body and brain! Come hear forceful mini-speeches as AOF friends and members rant and unload on whatever is topmost in their minds. The oratory may be a bit HOT at times, as speakers must impart their ideas within a time-frame (no exceptions!). But that's no problem because there will be COOL food too—a lavish potluck of salads, beverages and desserts! You will find all this plus jovial camaraderie at AOF's August meeting.

Something "COOL"

Rather than the usual chip-&-dip refreshments of our regular snack table, the ideal for the August Sizzler is a full summer meal for all. AOF officers will supply cold beverages, ice and tableware. For your part, please bring a favorite enticing salad, cool side-dish or dessert. When it comes to deciding what to bring, think COOL and supply your

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AOF in September

Lola Acosta on, "How Women Won the Vote in California"

In celebration of the Centennial of California women gaining the right to vote, AOF welcomes Lola Acosta, President of the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County. Proposition 4 of 1911 (a.k.a. Senate Constitutional Amendment #8) guaranteed voting rights to women in this state fully nine years ahead of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It was a close and difficult vote, a story larger than life, full of high drama, and Lola will tell us just how it happened!



Born in Avalon, Catalina Island, Lola Acosta traces her roots through her maternal grandparents, who emigrated from Mexico to the United States. She attended public schools in Los Angeles, earning a BSN at California State University Los Angeles, and an MSN at the University of California Los Angeles. Her professional career began in nursing capacities, including as team leader at Orthopedic Hospital of Los Angeles and

(Continued on page 7)

Freethought Day 2011 Announced! Oct 22, with "Coming Out" Theme By the 2011 Freethought Day Committee

Hey everyone—we have decided upon the date and theme for Freethought Day 2011.

Mark your calendars: **October 22 (Saturday), 2011**

The theme: **Come Out and Celebrate Reason**

This year's event will be about "**coming out**". As free-thinkers, we recognize the need to stand up, speak out, and be a catalyst for change. This special event will feature speakers and activities that center around this theme. So, mark your calendars and **Come Out and Celebrate with us!**

The image below is an early mock-up of our theme (turn your issue sideways!).

The Freethought Day Committee consciously selected Oct 22 for this year's event to celebrate survival of the predicted Armageddon on October 21. They report, "If you are not raptured to heaven or swallowed up by hell on Friday, come party with us on Saturday."

Continue to visit <http://freethoughtday.org> to view more details as they are posted, including speakers, activities, sponsorship information, and more.



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.

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 2012: Date to-be-announced

Mynga Futrell and Bronda Silva, Co-Chairs

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

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

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/>

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AOF Community Projects

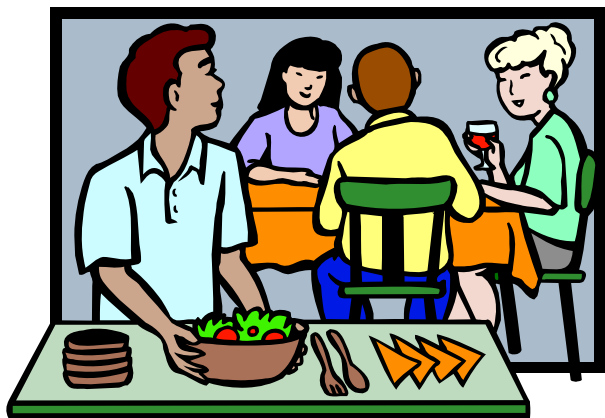
Feed the Hungry (and Yourself!): AOF Davis Community Meals Event, Aug 30, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

By Don Knutson

Compassionate Davis citizens have developed a secular solution to the problem of hunger—but they need our help! Join us in an effort to feed the poor, the hungry, the outcast. Your reward will be the opportunity to meet new minds and socialize with your freethinker friends, a likely free meal, and the warm hearts-glow of benevolence. The Davis Community Meals Project core staff will perform all food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, put things away at the end, and clean a bit. Extra points if you can arrive for setup, but if you can't, that is OK, any help is good help! For details, see Davis Community Meals (<http://daviscommunitymeals.org>). For a map to the site, see: Martin's Episcopal Church (<http://j.mp/qW6ehV>).

Location: St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, CA
Contact: 916-447-3589 (voice-mail) or aofboard@aofonline.org.

Carpooling may be available—please contact AOF for info (see page two).



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favorite dish (for hot weather) in sufficient quantity to share, so that several (besides yourself) can enjoy it.

Something "HOT"

We invite you to prepare and present a small speech or verbal contribution to the day. This will be an "open mike" event. But each speaker must get across his/her point(s) before the clock runs out.

Time strictures are strict, so it is best to practice your mini-speech in advance so NOT to exceed its declared time limit. One can commit to either a brief sound-bite (2 minutes maximum) or to an actual short speech (5 minutes max). Follow that "advance preparation rule" and abide by your time limit, and you will qualify for the event's grand prize!

Have LOTS on your mind? Okay, then you may prepare talks for both the less-than-2 minute and the 2-to-5 minute categories. However, keep one talk clearly in your back pocket, because a second round will occur only if available time after each person who wishes has had a shot at edifying the audience of one topic.

This is a potluck and an open mike event. Bring something light & summerish for the food table, something free-thoughtful for our minds.

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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Print subscription \$12 per year, e-mail subscription free to all on request.

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

Elizabeth Clare Prophet

By Ken Nahigian

The Church Universal and Triumphant was (still is) indefatigably, peculiarly an American sect. With astral visions and visitations, evil aliens, auras, light rays, channeled messages, reincarnation, apocalypse panics, mind control, fairy sprites and spirit teachers, all wrapped in a dazzling, ever-unfolding, jeweled cosmology—and admit it, a great name—who could ever want more?

Its leader was born in 1939 in Red Bank, New Jersey. Elizabeth Wulf was intelligent and pretty. Despite occasional absence seizures (a form of epilepsy), she graduated second in her high school class, then went on to Antioch College and Boston University to get a political science degree in 1961.

As a child she had bounced from faith to faith but, drawn by the hope of healing, settled on Christian Science. Her goal was to be a Practitioner. In 1960 she was teaching at the Christian Science Church in Boston. She married; the marriage lasted ten months.

Then in 1961 her church invited a speaker. Mark Prophet claimed to represent a spirit-collective including Buddha, Enoch, Confucius, Socrates, Mary and Jesus. These were the “Ascended Masters,” an idea popular in fringe-occult groups such as the Theosophists and Rosicrucians. Mark had set up a small new-age society, the Summit Lighthouse, to spread their channeled teachings. Impressed, Elizabeth asked Mark to train her to be a messenger too.

They fell in love (though Mark was 21 years the elder), wed in 1963 and had four children. Elizabeth Prophet began to receive spiritual “dictations.” As they relocated, first to Virginia, then Colorado Springs, she helped Mark administer his growing society. They picked up new Ascended Masters on the way, until the coterie included Hercules, Shiva, a Pope or two, and more—in fact over 35 entities, a “Great White Brotherhood” grooming us for a new, enlightened age.

As if to polish their credentials, Elizabeth began to claim past lives for her and Mark, including royalty and

saints. She had been Guinevere of Camelot, Marie Antoinette, Nefertiti, and even (once) a common prostitute. He had been the Pharaoh Ikhnaton, Lancelot du Lac, Origen of Alexandria, Bodhidharma (the Zen founder), Noah and Longfellow. Awed devotees called Elizabeth the “World Mother.”

The theology had a jigsaw of sources, Rosicrucianism and Theosophy with echoes from the St. Germaine Foundation,

“New Thought” and even alchemy (in fact, Mark had been a Rosicrucian). At its core was *karma yoga*, a duty to amend evil acts committed in this and prior lives, with mantras and prayer to seek oneness with God. This could take many lifetimes—you had to cure at least 51% of the bad baggage—but the Violet Flame, a spiritual light that transmutes bad karma into good, could help balance your spiritual “bank account.” How to invoke the Flame? Mark and Elizabeth must guide you.

Tools included ceremonial knightings, dictations from the Masters, the “ascension chair” (you sat as Mark Prophet read your karmic balance), and an ambient air of ongoing crisis. One ex-devotee wrote, “Life in the organization, as in all cults, was a roller coaster ride with incredible highs and fearful lows. There is never a dull moment, never a let-down of emotional tension.” In 1972, portending an

apocalypse, the Lighthouse pushed members to stock up on survival equipment, gold, silver and guns. For “Operation Christ Command,” it sold the products at 40% to 50% above retail.

Mark Prophet died of a stroke in 1973. Within months Elizabeth remarried (a young staff member), moved the sect to Santa Barbara, and renamed it the Church Universal and Triumphant—a nod to the Catholic (Universal) Church, which she believed it rightfully supplanted. The “Summit Lighthouse” remained as its publishing arm. A period of fervent outreach and expansion began, with foreign conferences, meetings with world leaders, TV appearances, land purchases, and the new Summit University (a 12-week study course in the theology). In 1980 the third marriage imploded in an ugly divorce. Exiled from the

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Elizabeth Clare Prophet

Secular Holidays

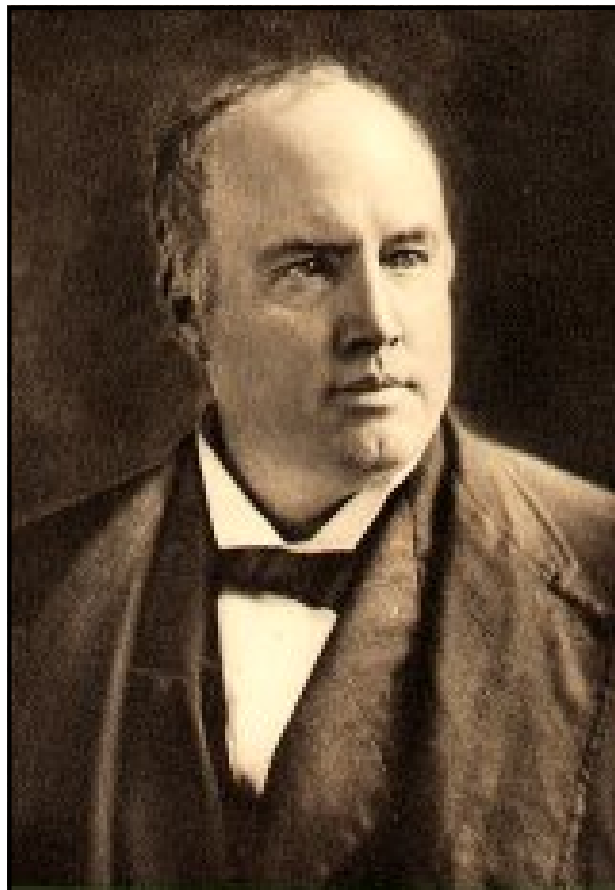
August 11: Recognizing Ingersoll Day

Ingersoll Day, August 11, celebrates the birthday of **Robert Green Ingersoll** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_G._Ingersoll), honoring the life and work of one of the most famed freethinkers in US history. Ingersoll was also the most successful orator in nineteenth century America, heard by more Americans than any human before the advent of motion pictures and radio. A leading political figure, he campaigned against slavery and for the rights of women and minorities. Called the "Great Agnostic," he attracted huge crowds to lectures that criticized religion and promoted freethought. Walt Whitman and Mark Twain greatly admired him.

Celebrate Ingersoll Day with a visit to the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum (<http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=ingersoll&page=museum>), or by reading excerpts from the Complete Works of Ingersoll (http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/).

"When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free -- free to think, to express my thoughts -- free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself . . . I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds."

-- Robert Green Ingersoll, "Why I Am An Agnostic"



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church, her ex-husband sued for abuse and involuntary servitude—and settled out of court.

Elizabeth married yet again. In 1985/1986 she moved the headquarters to Corwin Springs, Montana. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, she retired in 1997/1998; entered nursing care; and died on October 15, 2009, age 70.

The Church returned to its original, more modest name. A triumvirate Board now runs the Summit Lighthouse, with several hundred staff members in Montana, and commitments and branches worldwide. Adherents number 5,000 to 15,000—no surprise, the numbers are hard to pin.

What of the Prophet children, Sean, Erin, Moira and Tatiana? All left, disillusioned to different degrees. First to speak out was Moira Prophet, on the Oprah Winfrey Show in 1989. Sean, a creative director in Los Angeles, branded the Ascended Masters a fraud, recounting his mom's admissions of power abuse. He now runs an atheist website, the Black Sun Journal (<http://blacksunjournal.com>). Erin published a memoir, *Prophet's Daughter*. Tatiana is a journalist in Los Angeles. A grandson, Chris Prophet, was a drummer for the post-hardcore punk band HORSE.

They may have slipped from her particular gyre of power, but like *karma yoga*, the shadow of Elizabeth Prophet yet rises over them and falls between them, with deeds unamended, stories still to tell.

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

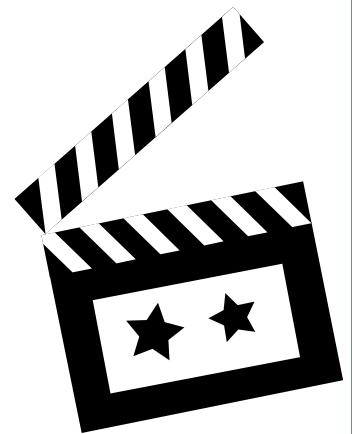
Additional Donation: \$ _____

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).

Entertainment

Lights! Camera! Action! The Atheist Film Festival is Coming: San Francisco, Aug 21



It's show time again—the **third annual Atheist Film Festival** is coming back to the historic **Roxie Theater** on **Sunday, August 21st**. Each year, the world's first and oldest film festival for atheists has grown; last year several screenings were standing room only.

This year the lineup is bigger than ever. Highlighting the festival is **The Ledge**, a new thriller touted as the first drama in Hollywood history to feature an openly atheist hero in a story about religious conflict. **Writer/director Matthew Chapman**, who **will be attending the festival in person**, has impeccable atheist credentials—he is the great-great-grandson of Charles Darwin. The film was nominated for Best US Drama at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and boasts an impressive cast of A-list stars: Charlie Hunnam (*Sons of Anarchy*), Liv Tyler (*Lord of the Rings*), Tony/E Emmy/Golden Globe nominee Patrick Wilson (*Watchmen*), and Oscar nominee Terrence Howard (*Crash*, *Iron Man*).

Other features in this year's festival include **The Nature of Existence**, director Roger Nygard's (*Trekkies*) fascinating documentary that poses the big questions of life, the universe, and everything to a remarkable cross-section of humanity, ranging from scientists like Richard Dawkins and Stanford physicist Leonard Susskind (co-discoverer of string theory), to modern druids, a 24th generation Chinese Taoist Master, and the founder of Ultimate Christian Wrestling. Like Chapman, **director Roger Nygard will be in attendance** at the Festival, which also screens Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora*, the widely acclaimed 2009 biopic of the 4th century female mathematician and astronomer Hypatia of Alexandria, starring Rachel Weisz. Our third special guest, historian **Dr. Richard Carrier**, will be available for Q&A afterward to discuss the real history behind the film.

Breaking news -- we now have a **THIRD** director who has agreed to come to the festival! Award winning filmmaker **Ondi Timoner** is coming and bringing her powerful documentary film **Join Us**, which tells the story of a family's escape from an abusive church and a searing look at cults in America.

Rounding out the program will be the debut of two collections of live and animated shorts entitled **2011: Year of the Rapture**, and **The First Atheist Musical**. Tickets and special discount festival passes will be available soon. For more details, see the official website at <http://sfatheistfilmfestival.org> and don't forget to 'friend' our page on Facebook. We're counting on you to spread the word to your friends and neighbors, too!

Entertainment

Atheist Comedian Keith Lowell Jensen and Harvard's Humanist Chaplain Headline San Diego Conference, Sep 16-18

Atheist comedian **Keith Lowell Jensen** will be the featured entertainment at the Saturday night banquet for the "Toward a Reasonable World" conference to be held in **San Diego, California, September 16-18, 2011**, the first academic conference to focus on the development of Unbelief in the contemporary West. Also added to the program is a Saturday morning conversation with Greg Epstein, the award-winning Humanist chaplain at Harvard University and author of the best-selling *Good without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe*.

Jensen, a popular comic based in Los Angeles, has toured the country as an outspoken atheist, most notably and recently on "The Coexist? Comedy Tour." He regularly performs with some of the most well-known fellow comedians such as Robin Williams, Doug Stanhope, Will Durst, and Norm Macdonald. He has released several CD's, and his feature length documentary film *Why Lie—I Need a Drink*, is now available on DVD.

Greg Epstein was ordained as a Humanist Rabbi in 2005 and subsequently attended Harvard Divinity School from which he received his Master of Theological Studies degree in 2007. He was then named the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University and now not only serves the student body but reaches a national audience with insights derived from his unique position as a nonreligious secular Humanist holding a position traditionally defined as religious. Attendees at "Towards a Reasonable World" will have the opportunity to engage Epstein in an informal Q&A session about the meaning of being a Secular Humanist in today's complex world.

"Toward a Reasonable World: The Western Heritage of Humanism, Skepticism, and Freethought," is an international conference that will for the first time bring together more than a dozen scholars to examine the how's and why's of the emergence of unbelief in the modern world. The conference is hosted by San Diego State University, and will be held September 16-18, 2011, at the Town and Country Resort in San Diego. Complete information on the conference and registration can be found at its Internet site, <http://reason.sdsu.edu/>.

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.

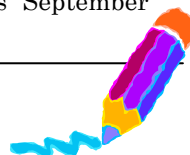
(Continued from page 1)

as a public health nurse in the inner city. She also volunteered on community health advisory boards, advocating for access to health services for poor women and children. After some years of practicing nursing, Lola became a tenured Associate Professor of Nursing at Rio Hondo College in Whittier. In 1977 she moved to Sacramento with her husband Mike and one-month old son, Miguel David. There she worked in various state government positions involving policy, program development and administration. In 1980, her daughter Francisca joined the family. In addition to working and rearing two children, she co-founded Madrinias, a charitable organization which raised funds and offered scholarships to inner city college bound students.

Lola joined the League of Women Voters (LWV) in 1999. Approaching retirement in 2006, Lola fully involved herself in LWV activities. After leading the League's immigration study, Lola was nominated to serve on the Board of Directors. In 2009 the LWV of Sacramento County elected her as President. During her presidential tenure, she has focused on expanding voter election education to a more geographically and culturally diverse Sacramento, raising funds to support continuing League activities, and inviting new members to build the Sacramento League.

How could you miss a speaker like this? Come to AOF's September meeting!

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





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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

August/September Calendar of Events

August Freethought Dinner Social: Ernesto's, 1901 16th St.;
Contact: Suzanne @ 419-2105 or shastaseer@sbcglobal.net **Thu, Aug 4, 6:30 p.m.**

AOF Meeting in August: AOF Summer Sizzler **Sun, Aug 14, 1:30-4:00 p.m.**

AOF Davis Community Meals Event—Feed the Hungry **Tue, Aug 30, 4:00-7:00 p.m.**

AOF Board Of Directors Meeting **Tue, Sep 6, 6:00-8:00 p.m.**

AOF Meeting in September: How Women Won the Vote in California **Sun, Sep 11, 1:30-4:00 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 2012). 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.

