

# Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 8 Number 6 • June 2002

## Our June Meeting

The June 9 AFS meeting will feature AFS member **Ried Crowe**, speaking on "Anecdotes of a Budding Activist." Ried will talk about his experiences during the recent Montgomery counterdemonstration against Roy Moore, his activities with Blair Scott's Freethinker's Letter-Writing Cooperative (FLWC), his new Georgia-FLWC endeavor, and his desire to motivate others to get more involved in these types of First Amendment activities.

The **AFS Center** is at Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there, take I-400 north from Atlanta past I-285 by 8 miles to Exit 7B, which is GA-140. Take GA-140 (Holcomb Bridge Road) west about 1 mile and turn left at Grimes Bridge Road. Go 0.2 miles to 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, which is on the right.

## Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the AFS Center at 12:30 on Sunday, June 23. The meeting will include a discussion on the meaning of Humanism.

## SOS Meets at AFS Center

The Secular Organizations for Sobriety meets at the AFS Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30 PM. SOS is the secular replacement for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

## Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** will meet at 12:30 PM on July 7 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Highway in Atlanta. For details, see [www.kindreason.com](http://www.kindreason.com).

To join the AFS Forum email list, send a blank message to [afs-forum-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:afs-forum-subscribe@yahogroups.com).

To receive only AFS announcements, send a blank email to [AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahogroups.com).

To join the new Georgia Freethinkers' Letter-Writing Cooperative; [FLWC-GA-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:FLWC-GA-subscribe@yahogroups.com).

## Meetings and Activities

- June 9: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.
- June 14: AFS Social, Athens Pizza House, 7:00 PM.
- June 16: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.
- June 21: AFS Activity Night at AFS Center, 7:00 PM.
- June 23: AFS Board Meeting at AFS Center, 11:00 AM.
- June 23: Humanists of Georgia at AFS Center, 12:30 PM.
- July 7: Fellowship of Reason meets at NUUC, 12:30 PM.
- July 13: AFS Hike, Tallulah Gorge State Park, 10:00 AM.

## AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, June 16, from 4 to 6 PM at the AFS Center.

The **AFS Activity Night** will be on Friday, June 21 at 7:00 PM. This activity is now more than just games! It may include discussion, a movie, dinner out, or games.

For details on the above activities, call Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

The **AFS Hike** will be on Saturday, July 13. Meet at the AFS Center at 10:00 AM. We will carpool to Tallulah Gorge State Park, which is about a 1 hour drive to the northeast corner of Georgia. The spectacular gorge is 2 miles long, 1000 feet deep and very scenic. Bring a camera and lunch. Lew will provide soft drinks. It will be easier to plan with a head count. Phone Lew Southern at 770-509-8272.

## The Tuesday Lunch Bunch

A group of AFS members meets every Tuesday at 12:00 at Panahar Restaurant. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company. For more information, call Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

## The AFS Social

The June **AFS Social** will be at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History on Friday, June 14, at 7:00 PM. This is Fernbank's Friday night *Martinis & IMAX* event, which features specialty martinis and cocktails, à la carte dinner options, live music and viewing of an IMAX one-hour movie. The IMAX shows will be *Kilimanjaro* at 7:00 and 9:00, *Australia* at 8:00 and *Fires of Kuwait* at 10:00. The event costs \$10, which covers entry and viewing of a one-hour movie. Dinner ranges from \$7 to \$24. To ensure pre-purchase of tickets, please RSVP to Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

Directions: Fernbank Museum is at 767 Clifton Road NE. From I-75/85 in Atlanta, take exit 248C, which is Freedom Parkway (GA 10 East). Go 1.7 miles to Ponce De Leon Ave. and turn right. Go 1.7 miles to Clifton Road and turn left. Go 0.1 mile to the Museum entrance and turn right.

For more information, see [www.fernbank.edu/museum](http://www.fernbank.edu/museum).

Save money on long distance and help AFS! There is no monthly fee; calls are 40 cents for up to 10 minutes, and 4 cents per minute thereafter. Dial **10-15-335-1**-area code-number. At the prompt, enter the AFS code: **215152**.



## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AFS Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

June 9: AFS member and prolific letter-to-the-editor writer Ried Crowe will speak on "Anecdotes of a Budding Activist."

July 14: Ross Sloan will speak on "The Psychological Foundations of Religion."

Aug 11: (tentative) Reggie Finley will present his seminar on Critical Thinking.

Sept 8: (tentative) Sam Chupp will speak on "Fantasy Witch Hunts." The subject has to do with how some short-sighted individuals characterize fantasy literature and its popular offshoots as "Occult", and what you can do about it.

Oct 13: Clark Adams, Public Relations Director for The Internet Infidels, will speak on current Internet Infidels projects. (cadams@infidels.org)

Nov 10: Dr. Scott Lillienfeld of Emory University will speak on false memories.

Join the AFS Forum e-mail list by sending a blank message to [afs-forum-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:afs-forum-subscribe@yahoo.com). Join the AFS Announcements list by sending a blank message to [afs-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:afs-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com). To unsubscribe, send a blank email to [afs-forum-unsubscribe](mailto:afs-forum-unsubscribe) or [afs-announce-unsubscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:afs-announce-unsubscribe@yahoo.com).

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the advantages of living life free of religious dogma through speeches, debates, discussions, protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or, especially, lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion, primarily through having a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs and by maintaining and using our own extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

**Atlanta Freethought News**  
an AFS publication

**Editor**

Steve Yothment

**How to Contact the Editor**

Send correspondence to AFS at:  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500  
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**The Atlanta Freethought News**

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For membership and subscription  
information, contact AFS at:  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite  
500, Roswell, GA 30075-3905

Membership in AFS is \$25 / year for in-  
dividuals, \$35 for households, and \$10  
for students/low income/under 21. Sus-  
taining members (individual) \$100 and  
sustaining members (households) \$125.  
Subscriptions alone are \$20 for 12 issues,  
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**Visit our World Wide Web site at**  
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**AFS Webmaster:** Ken Cummings  
Call the AFS Infoline: 770-641-2903

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# The GFLWC is Formed

The Georgia Freethinkers' Letter-Writing Cooperative is a new letter-writing email group started by Ried Crowe. Here are the details from Ried Crowe on what it does and how to join.

**D**uring the May AFS meeting, the idea of creating a Georgia-based letter writing initiative was discussed at length and had ardent support. Thus, I'm proud and happy to announce the formation of the Georgia Freethinkers' Letter-Writing Cooperative, or GFLWC!

As many of you already know, I am a very active member in Blair Scott's Freethinkers' Letter-Writing Cooperative (FLWC). This is a group of geographically diverse people (members are from states as far away as California and New York) that receive e-mails from Blair that include textual copies of SOCAS-related letters to the editor (LTEs) that have been published in various Southeastern newspapers. (Currently, Blair concentrates almost exclusively on Alabama newspapers since that state has such incredible issues in dealing with the antics of Judge Roy Moore.) FLWC

members are then given instructions about how to submit rebuttal LTEs via e-mail), and have so far enjoyed phenomenal success in getting these published.

I propose that the GFLWC be modeled very closely after the FLWC, except that our focus will involve exclusively Georgia newspapers. I plan to begin monitoring many major Georgia newspapers (such as the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and those from Athens and Macon) for LTEs with SOCAS content. I will then post copies of them on the GFLWC e-mail forum for GFLWC members to read and, ultimately, submit rebuttals.

I know that, like me, many of you have had no luck getting your letters published in papers like the AJC before. I am confident that this can change if we approach this as a team effort. I envision a method of timing our LTE submittals in such a way that

newspapers receive rebuttals to various issues in bunches. That way, they are more likely to see higher community support for our positions on these issues. Additionally, there are other methods that we can use, such as ghostwriting and editor inquiries, to increase our chances of publication. Details on this will come to you later.

The tool that will be used for all of the GFLWC's communications will be the GFLWC e-mail forum. This forum is virtually identical to the "AFS Forum" that AFS members currently enjoy. (One of the goals of the GFLWC is to remove some of the letter-based traffic that currently bogs down the AFS Forum.)

If you would like to join, please email me at [riedpamc@bellsouth.net](mailto:riedpamc@bellsouth.net). Send me your full name for my records. I can promise you that writing LTEs is easy (you can do it from your computer), rewarding, and very fun!

To join the GFLWC email list, send a blank email to [FLWC-GA-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:FLWC-GA-subscribe@yahoo.com). (You can unsubscribe any time by sending a blank email to [FLWC-GA-unsubscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:FLWC-GA-unsubscribe@yahoo.com).) You can also join via the web by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FLWC-GA/join>. The list owner (Ried Crowe) can be contacted at [FLWC-GA-owner@yahoo.com](mailto:FLWC-GA-owner@yahoo.com).

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"It is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty.

This is what agnosticism asserts."

-- Thomas Huxley, in a letter to Charles Kingsley

"The deepest sin against the human mind is to believe things without evidence. Science is simply common sense at its best — that is, rigidly accurate in observation, and merciless to fallacy in logic."

-- Thomas Huxley, from *Evolution and Ethics*

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Congratulations to Mirza on the excellent half-page review of his Panahar Restaurant in the May 24 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, page Q1.



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# Letters to the Editor from AFS members

Ried Crowe's letter (below left) was in the *Florence Times Daily* on May 13.  
Tony King's letter (at right) was in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* on May 9.

## Study history, civics

In Michael Krause's April 23rd letter ("On downhill slide"), he insinuates that church/state separatists (such as the late Madelyn Murray O'Hair) try to take our country's founding principles out of public schools by seeking to remove coercive religious practices. Nothing could be further from the truth.

America's founding principles include tolerance of others (and their various religions, or lack thereof) and a First Amendment mandate that has been consistently interpreted for more than 200 years to mean that no governmental entity can support one religion over another (or religion over non-religion).

Thus, church/state separatists are simply trying to ensure that public schools live up to these most basic of American principles.

Krause makes the claim that "(since) the early 1950s, the United States has been on a steady decline in morality and spirituality."

What a coincidence — "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, and the congressional mandate to stamp all U.S. currency with "In God We Trust" was passed in 1955!

Coercive group prayer wasn't removed from public schools until 1963, so I'd like to know what Krause blames this moral decline on.

Finally, Krause whines that by "taking God out of the public institutions, we will fall from within just like Rome." As I recall, Rome was in its heyday during its pagan era and collapsed only after it adopted Christianity.

It is telling that Krause seems to have no grasp of history or civics. To the majority of Americans that value education and diversity, this makes it even easier to quickly identify him as a Bible-thumping zealot that wants nothing more than to bully his religion into the lives of the rest of us.

Ried Crowe  
Powder Springs, GA

## Demeaning nonbelievers demeans nation

Thank you for publishing a positive statement about what we atheists and free thinkers are going through in this country. Many religious people make the ludicrous assumption that because we do not believe in their Christian God that we must be evil people. That is sheer and total nonsense! Many of us lead very productive lives that benefit the community.

What our castigators do not completely understand is that when they demean us they also demean themselves, and, by extension, our democracy and republic.

WILLIAM A. KING  
Toccoa

To the (Creative Loafing) Editor:

I would like to thank Kevin Griffis for writing such an excellent piece on what is exactly going on in the debate between science and religio-politics in our public schools. Many thanks and kudos also to Creative Loafing for having the guts to publish it. In a time when the general press is not saying much, let alone understands, the dumbing of America, it is a breath of fresh air to have read this article (It was so good that I e-mailed it to everyone on my list!). When fundamentalist wolves disguised in sophisticated sheeps clothing win out in our education system, our children and society are the only losers. You have laid your finger on exactly what is motivating the current debates between those who understand science and those who do not. Keep up the good work!

William A. King

Tony King's letter (above) was sent to *Creative Loafing* in response to their excellent article on the Cobb County Evolution issue. (Cobb County decided to put a disclaimer in their new biology schoolbooks saying that Evolution is "only a theory".)

Dear (AFNews) Editor:

(Received May 25, 2002.)

On Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, I participated in the 4 pm discussion group at the AFS Center. One of the issues discussed was "What should you do when the school that your child attends exposes him/her to religious activities without parental consultation or permission?"

An interesting discussion followed in which it was suggested that a parent should think very seriously before he or she uses his or her child in a "social experiment", i.e., confront the principal directly and demand an end to overtly religious practices. A child should be protected as much as possible from social ostracism resulting from a parent's political and/or religious views. It shouldn't be that way, but, unfortunately, that's the way it is; a child's healthy psychological development must always be the priority. Remember what happened to Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue".

A suggestion was made that freethinking parents, when confronted with a dilemma of this sort, contact the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). I have done this successfully in New Jersey when a public school Principal invited a Priest to give an invocation at my son's graduation. The ACLU wrote a letter to the Superintendent and the invocation was cancelled. No one knew who was responsible for ensuring that church and state were kept separate in this particular case.

But later, when I re-thought the issue, I began to develop an awareness of one of the basic problems that confronts freethought groups such as ours; we don't offer the degree of "group support" found in most traditional religious groups. And issues involving our constitutional rights should not be ones that we should expect individual parents to deal with on their own.

The ACLU has the legal expertise that most of us either lack or find too expensive to use every time a church/state issue arises. Therefore, I think that as many members of the AFS as possible should also become members of the ACLU; then every time a church/state issue (such as religion in schools) is brought to the AFS's attention, the ACLU would be alerted. The more members of the AFS we have as members of the ACLU, the more we can count on that organization to pursue our constitutional church/state concerns.

I recommend that a representative of the ACLU be invited to address the AFS membership. If this has been done recently, do it again. And after the ACLU presentation, all of us should get behind and support any members of the AFS who find their rights encroached upon by religious intolerance. Such collective group effort will enhance AFS's value to each of us, and help ensure the success of AFS in any church/state issue.

William Dusenberry  
Mt. Pleasant, SC

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# The Lake Hypatia July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration

Every year, freethinkers from across the country travel to attend the Alabama Freethought Association's annual Independence Day Celebration, which takes place in July at beautiful Lake Hypatia, Alabama. Let me tell you a little bit about our celebration and cordially invite you to our 2002 program.

## Like None Other

Called the "Lollapalooza of Freethought" by fans of its informal style, the Alabama Freethought Association Independence Day Celebration is best described as a conference and vacation all rolled into one. Free time to enjoy the lake and socialize with fellow freethinkers is built into the schedule, so you don't have to skip parts of the program in order to enjoy the local scenery and visit with your friends.

You won't just be sitting around listening to boring lectures, either. Each day there are ample opportunities to take part in fun, interactive programs not traditionally found at other conferences, such as our freethought trivia game, the annual "Atheists vs. Agnostics" softball game, open-mike poetry readings, bonfires, and more.

And who said lectures have to be boring, anyway? Each year, we work hard to fill our program with great speakers.

## This Year's Program

The schedule for our 2002 celebration is looking like it will be our best ever! Speakers this year will include:

- Scientist and activist Massimo Pigliucci, PhD, professor of biology at the University of Tennessee
- Columnist Ricky Thomason
- Activist and social worker Jen Hallman
- Naturalist Bob Truett

## Hotel Accommodations

There are several reasonably priced hotels in the area. The following hotels are within 10 miles of Lake Hypatia:

### Super 8 Motel

2200 Haynes Street  
Talladega, Alabama  
256-315-9511

### Holiday Inn Express

Exit 168, Hwy 77  
Lincoln, Alabama  
256-763-9777

### Budget Inn

65600 Hwy 77 North  
Talladega, Alabama  
256-362-0900

### Days Inn

Exit 168, Hwy 77  
Lincoln, Alabama  
256-763-8080

## Camping

Lake Hypatia is happy to provide areas for primitive camping and RVs/campers at no charge. Showers and bathrooms are available for campers; however, there are no electricity or water connections available for RVs. If you do plan to camp, please check the appropriate box on your registration form. (See next page.)

As a freethinker, I have been extremely fortunate to take part in numerous Lake Hypatia Independence Day Celebrations. Each year I enjoy the unique opportunities to meet fellow freethinkers, to speak my mind freely and without fear of discrimination, and to relax in Lake Hypatia's serene natural setting. I hope this year you will join me in making our 2002 celebration the best one yet. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

In freethought,  
Pat Cleveland, President  
Alabama Freethought Association

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## Schedule - Lake Hypatia Celebration

### Friday July 5

- 11:00 a.m. Registration - Fearn Park  
Noon - Lunch - Big Salad Bar - Lakeside Pavillion  
1:00 p.m. Welcome - Pat Cleveland, AFA President  
1:30 p.m. Speaker - Ricky Thomason - Newspaper Columnist "When Moore is Less"  
2:30 p.m. "I think, therefore I am, a Philosophical Mindwalk" group activity led by Massimo Pigliucci PhD  
3:30 p.m. Softball Game - Bring your talent and your gloves if you got 'em!!  
5:00 p.m. Dinner - Spaghetti Supper - Lakeside Pavillion  
6:30 p.m. Speaker - Bob Truett - "Flowers that Fly" - for kids and the young at heart  
8:00 p.m. Speaker - Jennifer Hallman - "The Cloaks of Child Abuse"  
9:30 p.m. Bonfire and Marshmallow Roast - Lower Campground

### Saturday July 6

- 8:00 a.m. Guided Nature Hike on the Chinnabee Trail - Meet at Flagpole at Hypatia Hall  
Noon - Lunch - Hot dogs & fixins - Lakeside Pavilion  
1:00 p.m. Activist Workshop Forum - Auditorium  
2:30 p.m. Poetry in the Auditorium with Ilene Sparks - Bring your poem(s)  
3:30 p.m. Freethought Trivia Game - Led by Adam Butler - Auditorium  
5:00 p.m. Dinner- BBQ Feast - Lakeside Pavilion  
7:00 p.m. Speaker - John Frandsen PhD  
9:30 p.m. Young Adult Activities

### Sunday July 7

- 11:00 a.m. Non-Prayer Brunch - Lakeside Pavilion  
1:00 p.m. Speaker - Massimo Pigliucci - "Science & Religion - Friends, Foes or Apples and Oranges"  
2:00 p.m. Wrap-up and Farewell - Pat Cleveland, AFA President

## Directions to Lake Hypatia:

From Atlanta, take I-20 West towards Birmingham. Go 90 miles to the Anniston/Oxford Exit #185. Turn left onto Hwy 21 South and go 14 miles to County Road 321. Turn left and go 4 miles to the second stop sign. Turn left onto Woolfolk Road, which is also County Road 303. Go ½ mile to the Lake Hypatia sign. Turn right into the driveway and follow it to the Freethought Hall.

## So Who Was Hypatia?

Lake Hypatia is named for Hypatia, a 5<sup>th</sup> century mathematician at the world-famous Library of Alexandria, who was martyred for her commitment to reason and education.

The article below (from the book *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan) gives a brief biography of Hypatia.

Here's an application form for the Lake Hypatia Freethought Celebration.  
For more information, please see [www.alfreethought.org](http://www.alfreethought.org).

### LAKE HYPATIA FREETHOUGHT CELEBRATION

255 Lake Joan Circle  
Munford, Alabama 36268  
Telephone: 256-362-7590/256-362-8729  
Friday, July 5<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, July 7, 2002

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR PHONE OR EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ FFRF MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$25/PERSON \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ NON-MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$30/PERSON \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ STUDENT MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$15/ " \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ FRIDAY LUNCH @ \$6 PER ADULT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ FRIDAY LUNCH @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ FRIDAY DINNER @ \$6 PER ADULT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ FRIDAY DINNER @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SATURDAY LUNCH @ \$6 PER ADULT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SATURDAY LUNCH @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SATURDAY DINNER @ \$6 PER ADULT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SATURDAY DINNER @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SUNDAY BRUNCH @ \$6 PER ADULT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ SUNDAY BRUNCH @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CHECK HERE \_\_\_\_\_ IF YOU PLAN TO CAMP AT LAKE HYPATIA.

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: AFA  
P.O. BOX 571  
TALLADEGA, AL 35161

#### NOTE:

LATE REGISTRATION MUST BE DONE AT THE DOOR.  
THERE IS A LATE FEE OF \$5.00 PER PERSON AFTER JUNE 17, 2001.  
NO MEAL ORDERS WILL BE TAKEN AFTER JUNE 16<sup>TH</sup>.  
REGISTRATION CANNOT BE DONE VIA PHONE OR E-MAIL.

### The Story of Hypatia

The last scientist who worked in the Alexandrian Library was a mathematician, astronomer, physicist, and the head of the Neoplatonic school of philosophy—an extraordinary range of accomplishments for any individual in any age. Her name was Hypatia. She was born in Alexandria in 370. At a time in which women had few options and were treated as property, Hypatia moved freely and unselfconsciously through traditional male domains. By all accounts she was a great beauty. She had many suitors, but rejected all offers of marriage. The Alexandria of Hypatia's time--by then long under Roman rule--was a city under grave strain. Slavery had sapped classical civilization of its vitality. The growing Christian Church was consolidating its power and attempting to eradicate pagan influence and culture. Hypatia stood at the epicenter of these mighty social forces. Cyril, the Archbishop of Alexandria, despised her because of her close friendship with the Roman governor, and because she was a symbol of learning and science, which were largely identified by the early Church with paganism. In great personal danger, she continued to teach and publish, until, in the year 415, on her way to work, she was set upon by a fanatical mob of Cyril's parishioners. They dragged her from her chariot, tore off her clothes, and, armed with abalone shells, flayed her flesh from her bones. Her remains were burned, her works obliterated, her name forgotten. Cyril was made a saint.

The glory of the Alexandrian Library is a dim memory. Its last remnants were destroyed soon after Hypatia's death. It was as if the entire civilization had undergone some self-inflicted brain surgery, and most of its memories, discoveries, ideas and passions were extinguished irrevocably. The loss was incalculable.

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# Freethought News

## ROY MOORE PROTEST WENT WELL

On Saturday, May 11, about 200 Christians stood on the Montgomery, AL Capitol steps in a support rally for Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore. But also having a separate rally were about 200 Atheist, gay and other people who derided Moore as a tyrant who abuses the power of law.

It was Judge Moore who sneaked a washing machine-sized monument of the Ten Commandments into the Alabama Supreme Court Building and recently called homosexuality "inherently evil" in a court opinion.

"We are here to honor a modern-day hero," said Kelly McGinley, chairwoman of the We The People rally and a radio talk show host from Mobile. "We live in a time where everything is turned upside down. ... The world freaks out" over Moore.

Across the street, Atheists, gay-rights groups and other religions said Moore should be removed from office because he routinely violates the doctrine of separation of church and state. They said Moore spreads bigotry and intolerance by promoting Christianity over all other religions.

"We can't have anyone go out and single out a group of people – we don't want another Hitler," said Derrick Harrington, 20, of the Birmingham area Gay, Straight and Lesbian Youth. "I don't think he needs to be using the Bible to do his job – he needs to use the law."

The events were peaceful except for a few shouting matches. The only time the groups spoke in unison was during the Pledge of Allegiance, but that too caused disagreement. Moore's supporters emphasized "One nation under God," but his opponents shouted "With liberty and justice for all."

Signposts carried during the anti-Moore marches around the Capitol said "Church and state – keep them separate," "More love, not Moore hate" and "No higher law than the U.S. Constitution."

The most common pro-Moore sign said, "Support Chief Justice Roy Moore for upholding the moral foundation of our law and in keeping our Ten Commandments monument."

At one point, Robert Reed of Victory Baptist Church in Mobile confronted local chapters of American Atheists but he was shouted down with chants of "Evil, evil, evil."

The Southern Poverty Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State have sued Moore for placing the monument in the Alabama Supreme Court Building.

"Let the Christians call all the events they can, but we are still a democracy here," said AFS member Ray Knisley of Atlanta, who was wearing a sign that said, "Say 'no' to Judge Moore's fascism."

AFS member Ried Crowe expressed his views about Judge Moore to a WSFA TV reporter, saying, "His use of biblical references in court opinions goes strictly against the ideas of the American Atheists and people like myself."

[From multiple sources, including GayMontgomery.com, WSFA.com and the May 12<sup>th</sup> *Anniston Star*.]

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## ABSTINENCE-ONLY PROGRAM CHALLENGED

In a New Orleans federal court, the ACLU is challenging the use of federal tax dollars to fund abstinence-only education programs that use religious messages.

The Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence, funded by government money, has proclaimed that "It's time to restore our Judeo-Christian heritage in America." It has also made thousands of dollars in grants to programs that, among other things, presented "Christ-centered" theater skits and produced radio shows that "share abstinence as part of the gospel message."

The federal government currently provides more than \$100 million a

year in taxpayer funds to abstinence-only programs. In contrast, programs that emphasize abstinence but also teach about contraception and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases are not eligible for the money.

The ACLU's case is the first challenge brought against an abstinence-only education program funded through the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which is up for reauthorization this year.

In an online newsletter, the ACLU said that abstinence-only programs violate freedom of expression, and are also dangerously irresponsible; the programs deny young people vital information on preventing pregnancy and protecting themselves from sexually transmitted diseases.

[From the May 20<sup>th</sup> ACLU Online Newsletter, [ACLUOnline@aclu.org](mailto:ACLUOnline@aclu.org).]

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## PAUL KURTZ ON STEPHEN JAY GOULD

In the Council for Secular Humanism e-newsletter for May 24, Paul Kurtz spoke well of Stephen Jay Gould, who died on May 20. He noted that "Gould played a vital role throughout his life as an influential public intellectual, constantly appearing in debates at Universities and in the media. At a time when the dumbing down of American culture seemed particularly strong, and spiritualist, pseudo-scientific, and fundamentalist religion pervaded the public square, he forthrightly defended scientific naturalism. A versatile author and lecturer, Gould participated in many conferences sponsored by the Council for Secular Humanism and CSICOP. Gould was a charter Humanist Laureate (elected in 1983) of the International Academy of Humanism, the youngest recipient of that honor."

"Gould was an outstanding secular humanist. He thought that the most reliable form of knowledge is that derived from the sciences, for the rigorous methods of replication and peer review enabled us to corroborate

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# Freethought News (*continued*)

or disconfirm hypotheses and theories. As a professor of zoology at Harvard, Gould was one of the leading exponents of the Darwinian outlook, a defender of evolution, especially against creationists, a latter-day Huxley. Gould proposed a rather controversial theory in evolutionary biology – along with Niles Eldredge he introduced the concept of punctuated equilibrium, the idea that evolution is not simply a gradual process, but proceeds by spurts intermittently as new species arise. He spelled this out most recently in his latest 1433 page treatise, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, published two months before his death. In recent years he has engaged in heated controversy with other evolutionary theorists about it.”

“Gould was a rather heroic figure, contributing mightily to the public’s understanding of the sciences. Afflicted with cancer, the disease which he had battled over the years finally got the best of him. His obituary in the New York Times quotes him as saying ‘When my skein runs out, I hope to face the end calmly and in my own way...Death is the ultimate enemy--and I find nothing reproachable in those who rage mightily against the dying of the light.’”

“We regret the dying of the light that was Stephen Jay Gould, a brilliant exponent of the Enlightenment.”

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## GODLESS AMERICANS MARCH

American Atheists announced on May 26 that it will organize a “Godless American March on Washington”. On Saturday, November 2, 2002, “Godless Americans” – individuals and representatives of the nation’s diverse community of non-religious people – will make history and march on Washington, DC. All Americans who have no religious beliefs – Atheists, Freethinkers, Secular Humanists, Rationalists, whatever the label – are invited to come to Washington to be part of this important event.

The march will occur from approximately 11 AM to 2-3 PM.

American theists is negotiating with the National Park Service for a march down the Mall from 14 St. (near the Washington Monument) to an area on the west side of the Capitol Building.

They also plan to have many speakers and entertainment. The rally will include representatives of various Atheist, Freethought, Secular Humanist and other like-minded national, regional and local organizations.

There will also be a pre-march press conference and a social event on Friday, November 1, 2002.

See [www.godlessamericans.org](http://www.godlessamericans.org) for background and updates on The Godless Americans March on Washington. The site has links to visitor and other resources, as well as links you can download to promote the march on another web site.

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## NO ACCREDITATION FOR VA COLLEGE

Patrick Henry College, the Purcellville, Virginia-based Christian college founded two years ago primarily for formerly home-schooled students, has been denied accreditation by a national group because it requires professors to sign a statement of faith including that they will teach creationism.

The college of about 150 students, which will graduate its first class this month, is appealing the decision by the American Academy for Liberal Education, a private group approved by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit liberal arts colleges.

At issue is the school’s Statement of Biblical Worldview, in which professors agree that all courses will be taught with the understanding that God created the world in six 24-hour days. In a letter, academy President Jeffrey D. Wallin told Patrick Henry College that the statement conflicts with the requirement that “liberty of thought and freedom of speech are supported and protected, bound only by such rules of civility and order as to facilitate intellectual inquiry and the search for truth.”

Accreditation is a lengthy, multi-layered and formal process through which private colleges and universities recognize one another as quality institutions. Colleges are licensed to enroll and graduate students by state agencies, and Patrick Henry passed the final stage of Virginia’s approval process in November.

Many private colleges and universities then pursue further accreditation by one of dozens of private agencies approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Only students at schools that are privately accredited can receive federal financial aid, and many graduate schools look to accreditation as a sign that a student has a legitimate undergraduate degree.

Patrick Henry does not accept federal money, and Farris said several students have been accepted at graduate schools. But the school plans to challenge the academy’s decision while pursuing accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the leading group that accredits schools in Virginia.

“I think any institution that imposes an ideological test on faculty is going to have a certain difficulty with accreditation, perhaps a substantial difficulty,” said Michael B. Goldstein, a lawyer who heads the higher education practice at the Washington law firm Dow, Lohnes & Albertson. “Can you say you believe in the fundamentalist approach? The answer is, sure. But can you restrict a faculty member in pursuit of his or her academic area? The answer is, that you’re not supposed to.”

[From a May 11 *Washington Post* article by staff writer Rosalind Helderman.]



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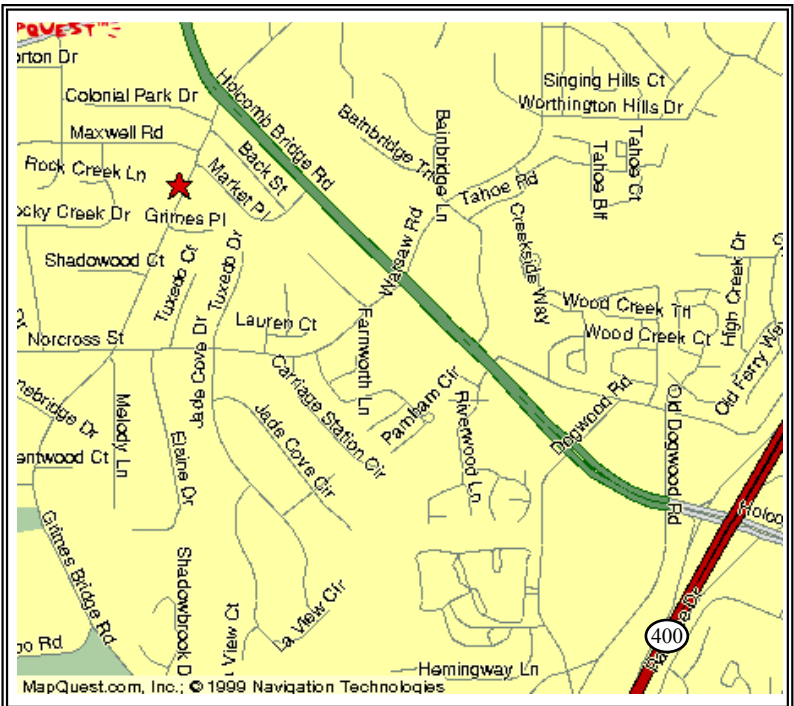
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**The June Meeting:  
Sunday, June 9  
1:00 PM at the AFS Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Ried Crowe**



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