Hi folks and welcome to the newsletter! As a new member of the board of directors, I was asked to write a bit about some of the new things that are happening and some of the changes coming from this new board.

So, what does the ACA board of directors actually do?

I know- I wondered the same thing before I became a board member. The short answer is the board guides the organization. We handle the “big picture” stuff to chart the course of the organization for the foreseeable future. We also deal with some of the less exciting aspects of running a non-profit such as approving budgets, entertaining motions and voting on initiatives.

One such initiative was for the board to keep the its meetings under 90 minutes with an actual target of 60 minutes (or less!). This makes serving on the board less onerous for the hard-working volunteers. President Jamie Boone has been doing a great job so far of keeping the meetings moving while paying close attention to the rules of order.

So what have we done for us lately?

At the first meeting of the new board, we were able to settle on a number of new initiatives to cement our focus on building community. One of the first things we did was move our two part-time employees (Mark Vandebrake and Eric Murphy) to full time. This was done for a number of reasons. For starters, having full time employees allows us to keep the building open 7 days a week. This allows us to be more available for visitors and for community activities. The two employees are also key to building our fund-raising activities by producing and monetizing more content and simultaneously working to more fully engage our fan base.

Eric Murphy was assigned the role of Director of Communications where he is building a team of folks to maximize fan interaction and to implement a policy of compassionate atheist experiences (not an easy job in the world of social media!). Additionally, we have empowered the heads of committees to spend their allotted...
We've also used some of our new the time! better, getting better all volunteers and employees- and in work opportunities for both a bunch of new content, and a favorite hosts. This is both creating These new programs have come will hosted by new personalities and Godless Bitches, but we also Prophets, The Preaching Humanist, Not only do we continue to produce Everybody gets a new show! productions. new and generous donations from community aspect of the group and organization to refocus our efforts that were otherwise stopping purchases of supplies and upgrades that may not sound like a big deal, but it has cleared the way to allow simple day-to-day purchases of supplies and upgrades that were otherwise stopping progress. This board is also taking advantage of the increased interest in the creation and supporting the support the cause. Much of this has been made possible by the new and generous donations from members and patrons of our various productions.

YOU get a new show...! And YOU get a new show! Everybody gets a new show!

Not only do we continue to produce and improve the flagship programs The Atheist Experience, The Non-Nonhists, The Preaching Humanist, and Godless Bitches, but we also have 3 shows in production which will hosted by new personalities and give added exposure for some of your long-time favorite hosts. These new programs have come with a slew of new faces and added exposure for some of your long-time favorite hosts. This is both creating a bunch of new content, and a correspondingly huge increase in work opportunities for both volunteers and employees- and everyone is really pitching in!

Have to admit it's getting better, getting better all the time!

We’ve also used some of our new show-related income to improve the studio itself. We replaced our outdated network system with a new state-of-the-art system that incorporates a guest WiFi system, gigabit Ethernet for all the computers used for production, and a commercial-class Internet router. We recently added fiber-optic Internet service and setup our cable-modem service as a secondary “fallback” system so we are less likely to be knocked off the air by a temporary Internet outage. Additionally, we’ve ordered a new 4K camera and expect to soon be producing some Hi-DEF content from our studios.

No such thing as a free lunch, but there is a free dinner!

Another new change is we are now having show dinners in the building directly following the shows. This free-flowing environment has allowed folks to mingle with hosts and crew while having a chance to browse the library and get tours of the studio. Also, the dinners are provided free of charge (though donations are accepted and appreciated).

Wrap it up!

So, that, in a nutshell, is what’s going on. Hopefully you will enjoy the new initiative and continue to support the work of the ACA now and in the future. Please feel free to write in with comments and feedback. I can be reached at vern@atheist-community.org. Thanks and hope to see you soon at the ACA!

by Phil Session

Ramp project

Holy ramps, Batman!! A scorching Saturday, June 2nd saw the ACA team of Dick, Ernest, Corey, Heather, John David, and Chris roll up at the home of John and Karen Moore for the latest ramp project. We teamed up with British Aerospace to make a custom wedge and 36 foot ramp.

Even with sunblock, ice cold water, snacks and a little shade, it was a tough 6 hours, but we got it done! A delighted John and Karen sent us the following message:

“"The following message: “We were greeted Saturday morning with a group of great workers who spent a very hot day putting up a ramp so John could get his oxygen bottles in and out of the house easier! We had planned to take a photo at the end of the day and say thank you for all the hard work but everyone got away before we realized you were finishing up! I am taking this time to say how grateful we are for good people like you! Thank you so much for all the work in very hot weather! A special thanks to the person who pulled up weeds around the ramp, porch, and from around my little trees. You went out of your way to do even more than anyone expected. I will be saying a special prayer for each of you to receive special blessing of your own in the future. You do not know how much this helps until you get into a place in your life where the money is gone and your health is failing and you can no longer do it yourself. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you. Each of you hold a special place in our heart. This world would be a better place if we all would go by the example you are setting.

Job well done. Thank You from the bottom of our hearts. John is already enjoying the ramp and it will also be a huge help to me on grocery buying days.

Our love to all,
John and Karen Moore”

Austin AHH Giveaway

22 volunteers came out to make the giveaway happen on Saturday, July 1st. We served about 200 people in 45 minutes!!! It was hot and very muggy, making everyone sweat copiously so almost every bottled water was dished out.

Kudos to Foundation Beyond Belief on several fronts: for the grant allowing us to purchase additional backpacks for our community and for the new t-shirts, emblazoned with our name on the back of it.

We took some requests to heart this time around by including additional measures such as Vaseline and hair grease. It was a very helpful thing to so many.

We had donations from all over the place. I picked up a bag of clothes and also some umbrellas, flip-flops, wet wipes and other toiletries from the Atheist Community of Austin library. In addition, the ACA donated very helpful items like deodorant and toothpaste that aided us immensely. Thanks to all the donations through the wishlist and directly; every small portion counts!

Although they didn’t personally make it this time, we had ample feminine hygiene products to distribute thanks to Support the Girls - Austin. They should be out with us in August once again to hand out items.

Our next giveaway will be August 5th @ 9:15am.

Central Texas Food Bank
Saturday, June 23rd: Thanks to John, Sam and Ernest for coming out to the food bank today. All 3 will be receiving ACA shirts for regularly attending volunteer events. We, along with about 75 others, helped to move 12,480 pounds of frozen meat, equating to 10,400 meals for Travis County and 21 surrounding counties. That is an area twice the size of Massachusetts!!!
TRANNIES AND SHEMALES AND WORDS, OH MY!


Terms a lot of people have heard regarding transsexual people. And guess where they come from?

Porn.

Now, this particular essay isn’t going to be specifically about porn, though I may do one later on. This is going to be about the terms used in porn and how they’ve emigrated to the general populace.

When someone hears ‘transgender’ or ‘transsexual’, far too often, they think of the words above. Of trans sex workers. Hookers. Prostitutes. And they’re completely to blame. The media too often portrays us as such.

And when it’s not portraying Cindy-Used-To-Be-George as a hooker, almost always it’s a tragic end (Boys Don’t Cry, Used-To-Be-George as a hooker, almost always it’s a tragic end (Boys Don’t Cry, Almost Always it’s a Tragic End (Boys Don’t Cry, Used-To-Be-George as a hooker, almost always it’s a tragic end (Boys Don’t Cry,

Nothing is fine as long as

The terms are derogatory, just like whore, cunt, slut, hooker, etc and are generally used in that same vein. Hollywood has a long history of treating the LGBT community like crap in its scripts, while using them as actors, screenwriters, producers or crew members. Anything is fine as long as the movie/tv show doesn’t portray us as ‘normal’, as ‘part of America’ to Joe SixPack and Josephine Muffintop. But we ARE part of America. We are doctors, lawyers, cops, judges, teachers, singers, entertainers, photographers, construction workers, painters, welders, tech gurus, even writers like yours truly! We’re also mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, even grandparents, in my case, as well as that of many others.

What we are not, is a group of people that is easily categorized, diminished, marginalized by a group of terms made up out of imaginary whole cloth by the porn industry.

So next time you use a term like “shemale”, try to think of the impact.

And here’s my final thought: where did YOU hear the term from?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erin Rose Greene is a loud-mouthed liberal transwoman stuck in the rural hinterlands of northern Michigan. She writes mostly short stories in the horror/suspense genre, which can include steampunk, fantasy or science fiction with a horror base. She does write novels and is currently working on a hard science fiction novel called _The Colour of Thought_. You can support her writing and her lavish lifestyle of thrift shop shopping by going to her Patreon page and becoming a Patron for her.

By John David Balla

If you’re not directly impacted by one form of addiction or another, chances are you know someone who is. It’s that ubiquitous. And as more people tick off the none category when responding to matters of religious identification, markets eventually do respond, just not as efficiently as Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” foretells. Add AA’s virtual monopoly on addiction support groups, and you can begin to understand why secular addiction recovery programs are being starved of oxygen.

When I was doing time in AA (over three decades), I was presented with two black-and-white choices. AA or die. Non-binary alternatives consisted of joining a church, doing yoga or meditation, or anything that posed no existential threat to AA. (In many important ways, my recovery indoctrination parallels the AA. (In many important ways, my recovery indoctrination parallels the AA.

Today, the addiction recovery landscape is changing quickly. In particular, many atheists are flocking to SMART (Self-Maintenance And Recovery Training), a secular, science-based addiction recovery program. In fact, a whopping 50 percent of SMART membership are self-identified AA refugees, according to data received by SMART central office. In my own SMART experience, the AA refugee contingent is typically the largest of any SMART sub-group in any meeting, and often the most vocal.

When I went back to AA after relapsing I was told: you are not using your sponsor, you are not working the steps, you are not going to enough meetings, you are thinking too much, you are one of those people who are constitutionally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which requires rigorous honesty and that my chances were less than average. I believed that also. I also continued to drink because AA told me it was my fault. According to SMART’s central office, the top two reasons cited for leaving AA are: 1) religiosity, and 2) autocracy. Moreover, AA refugees tend to be the most enthusiastic about SMART’s emphasis on rational thought, evidence-based tools and studies, and a secular moral philosophy. Without question, anti-AA passions within SMART can run very high for reasons you

Dr. Joe Gerstein, Co-founder of SMART Recovery, facilitates a SMART Recovery meeting.

Continued on page 6
The Law Is On Your Side

7 US Circuit Courts of Appeals decisions (in 6 venues) and 3 State Supreme Court decisions, all agreed that 12-Step programs are "pervasively religious," as such cannot be mandated for non-theists.

In the last case, $1,000,000 was awarded to the plaintiff from the State of California and $900,000 from the contracting agency which refused to find or pay for a secular treatment program.

SMART History.

SMART’s roots stretch back to the 1950s and the seminal work of Dr. Albert Ellis in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), more commonly recognized today as the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) paradigm. SMART also adheres to the Motivational Interviewing (MI) technique for its ability to get clients to begin to change their beliefs and behavior. These models (and others) manifest in SMART as specific tools such as…

The believing in our beliefs tautology.

SMART contends that addiction is fundamentally a belief or thought problem. In other words, we really believe our beliefs and act on them whether true or not. So, if we believe that we are a worthless human being, we will act out in a way that confirms that belief. Similarly, if we believe that we have had a really rough day and deserve a few drinks, guess what we’ll do?

Disputing irrational beliefs and replacing them with rational ones. By identifying irrational beliefs, and replacing them with rational ones, SMART aligns with a skeptical/ rational worldview and as such, can be very helpful to anyone who aspires to believe as many true things as possible and as few false things as possible. Sound familiar?

The primary tool for identifying, disputing, and ultimately changing beliefs, is what SMART calls the ABCs. See ABC crash course.

SMART Facts:

- Almost 3,000 free weekly SMART meetings in 24 countries on 6 continents.
- The SMART Handbook has been translated into 11 languages plus a special edition for Australian Aboriginals.
- Translations now in progress: Russian, Japanese and Korean.
- The SMART Recovery Inside-Out Program is in use in over 250 prisons worldwide.
- Over 100 published research articles and studies on SMART Recovery efficacy.
- Virtual online meetings are also available at SmartRecovery.org.

Unlike AA, SMART appeals to no supernatural power, maintains that people are not “powerless”, and whose content and tools do not aspire for doctrinal or ideological recognition. The reason for this is straightforward. As a scientific discipline SMART merely explains what methods, modals, and tools produce the most reliable results for people who use them. For these reasons, SMART is not subservient to any “revealed truths” and as such, is simply a new freedom that awaits you and become the person you have always dreamed of being.

About John David Balla

John is a former member of AA who has attended over 1,500 AA meetings spanning three decades. He currently is a certified SMART Recovery meeting facilitator. John is also a member of the Atheist Community of Austin (ACA) and is passionate about critical thinking, philosophy, skepticism and secular humanism. For his day job, John is a freelance business consultant and digital marketer. He resides in Chicago. He can be reached at jballa@msn.com.

Letters from the Editor

Thinking Allowed
by Eric Murphy

On June 24th, we hit a huge milestone for our flagship show, The Atheist Experience. Celebrating our 1,000th episode, Matt Dillahunty and first-time guest to the show, Seth Andrews, took calls. For those who don’t know, Seth Andrews is a celebrated atheist speaker and communicator, author of several books and host of the long-running podcast, The Thinking Atheist. While displaying a deep knowledge base of Christian biblical historicity and current religious social attitudes, they answered questions and pushed back on theological propositions. Speaking to fellow nonbelievers, they stressed the importance of creating community and need to be an activist with whatever skills you may have. While the show was both successful and memorable, we didn’t imagine the turnout that was coming our way.

Audience members walked, hitched, drove, and flew out to our tiny studio in Austin, Texas to see the event. Our building couldn’t even handle the turnout! After packing the live studio audience area with chairs, we filled up the back room and even the kitchen with excited celebrants. While past and present staff filled the production room, fans sat at tables in the parking lot behind the building to listen to the live show take place. All in all, our largest turn out to date capped out at over 70 people.

After the show, we gathered at tables in the parking lot to eat together. Music, drinks and good company was the name of the game. After our president Jamie Boone finished a short speech, Matt and Seth laughed as we presented a celebratory cake for them to cut. Finally, we all gathered outside to take group pictures.

On behalf of the Atheist Community of Austin, thank you for making this episode so special. Without your support, we would have never made it this far. The next day, I was shocked to see the outpouring of love that we had received online from viewers and volunteers across the globe. Here is to another 1000 episodes of thought provoking, empathetic, angry, and sometimes hilarious calls!

Volunteer Spotlight is a regular feature where we get a chance to learn more about some of the amazing folks who make ACA what it is. If there is someone you would like to see on this page, please drop us a line to: newsletter@atheist-community.org.

Something to share?
If there is something you would like to see on these pages in the future, we would love to hear from you.

Send your ideas for articles, features etc to:

newsletter@atheist-community.org
SOCIAL MEDIA

by Janet Reyes

Human nature is adapted for community life having evolved from tight-knit communities who were face-to-face and inter-generational. These communities provided an essential network of social support as a resource for their members. As a community member, others would care deeply about your welfare, and you could depend on them when times were hard. Likewise, they could depend on you. You would gather to commemorate life’s most meaningful events, such as births, deaths, and age-related milestones sharing food, knowledge, and responsibilities.

It is my opinion that religion has one advantage over secular living, and that is community. They meet regularly, enjoy meals together, support each other, etc. Many atheists live in an area where it is highly religious and have little, or no, access to a secular group of friends or family.

The Atheist Community of Austin recognizes the value of community...the importance of support. The ACA mission is to promote compassionate atheism through community outreach, events, and service.

To address the need for communication and discussion in areas of interest related to the show, atheism or areas of religious influence, there are several facebook groups you can join. These include:
- The Atheist Experience
- Talk Heathen,
- The Non-Prophehts,
- The Preaching Humanist.

There is also a group for locals (and those interested) for the Atheist Community of Austin itself. In these groups, our goal is to foster a safe and welcoming environment that allows for interesting and stimulating conversation.

If you find yourself needing a community or feel that you’d like to have a place to converse with other fans of the various shows, please consider joining the groups. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please be aware that these groups are public so anyone can read the posts, even if not a member, and comments you make in the group may appear on your feed. If it is not safe for you to join, you may create a second account and reach out to let us know that you created it for safety concerns.

Ultimately, we want to put fellowship first and open those lines of community so all feel welcome. We want to appeal to everyone; even atheists are welcome as long as they are respectful. We want to endorse the positivity of secular living and positive atheist culture. And finally, we want to make members feel part of a larger force for doing good in the world. We hope you visit the group and join in the conversations.

We recently changed our group rules to concentrate on having conversations that are respectful and productive. You can find the new rules here:

If you were a member in the past and would like to rejoin or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us at socialmedia@atheist-community.org

And finally...

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Jamie Boone

Now is an exciting time for the Atheist Community of Austin. In the Freethought Library you can almost feel the energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers and staff.

As the new President, I’m pleased to say that this new chapter in our community’s story is off to an excellent start.

With freshly launched and relaunched shows, new show launches just around the corner, relocating our Sunday dinners to the Freethought Library and making them free, opening the library seven days a week, and sponsoring our humanist outreach program there are a lot of new things to be excited about.

For a place to hangout with other members of your community, I encourage you to stop by and see what all the fuss is about.

If you are a visitor and want to know what I have been talking about for the last four paragraphs let me say: come visit and enjoy your stay.

If you are a member of the community that has been by the library recently, then you have seen some of the recent changes and I say to you: hold on to the godless hats ‘cuz you ain’t seen nuthin’ yet.

If you are a long time member of the community that has not been around in a while, let me say: come see how much we have grown.

And, if you are a new member or just have not been to the library yet, then let me have the privilege of being the first to say: welcome to the Community.

I will leave you with this final note: Whatever your situation, please know that our volunteers and staff are working hard to build and maintain a home for our community, a home where you are always welcome.

The ACA promotes compassionate atheism and secular government: globally, through the production of media that is accessible, informative, and entertaining; and locally, through community outreach, events, and service.

Blinky & Sal by J.Burello

And, you can still enjoy the old favorites: live broadcast shows every Sunday and periodically throughout the month, the Sunday brunch, the annual bat cruise, and our speaker series which will be starting up again in October.

So, whether you want to watch one of our live shows or you are looking for a place to hangout with other members of your community, I encourage you to stop by and see what all the fuss is about.

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