



The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.
Member organization of the [Humanists of Florida](#), the [AHA](#), [COR](#), and [CSH](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Our program for August 7th...

Board Meeting

A board meeting is scheduled for September; the date and time has still to be chosen.

At this meeting the board will consider the present state and future potential of our organization. In particular, I believe we should focus on methods to expand the Humanist presence in the Tampa Bay area. Our ideas, philosophy, and outlook are on the ascendant, and critical for the survival of our society. We have certain resources at our disposal; we must use them wisely to realize our potential.



Above this paragraph floats the logo of an organization known as Equality Florida. Its mission is to work for the equality of gay citizens in their treatment before the law, and generally in our society. Most progressively minded people regard this as fine, even noble objective. However we are not concerned with this organization.

Our purpose in this meeting is to question the meaning of the concept of equality. In 1789, the French revolution was fought to achieve Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Is this achievable in practice? As is plainly apparent in everyday life, not many phenomena in this epoch of human history can be said to be equal in weight, import or description, least of all people. But apart from promoting non-discriminatory behavior, what does the struggle for equality mean to us as individuals and organizations? As with freedom, are there limits? What have we learned since the French revolution to justify the struggle to achieve equality, among other values?

Jim Peterson We will discuss these ideas at our next meeting. Please join us.



Don't Forget...

**Tampa
Bay
Harvest
Please...**

Bring as many boxed and canned food items as you can to this meeting.

With the important help of Glenn Paul and Tampa Bay Harvest, we can do our part to help relieve significant human suffering in our area. **It's the Humanist thing to do!**

Our Suncoast Humanist group has donated an estimated 315 LBS of canned and boxed food to Grace House in Clearwater - a home for abused women and children. This estimated food poundage is for the calendar year 2010—January through mid July. Thanks to all who have given, TBH certainly appreciates it!
Glenn Paul

Ed note: Let's try to bring this years total up to at least 600 pounds. It's the Humanist way!

Our Website All newsletters from the past two years are there, as well as pictures of some of us. (We need more!) <http://suncoasthumanist.com>

Volume 19 No. 8

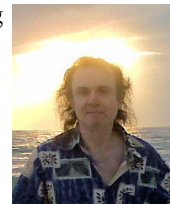
August, 2010

**Now, Find the
Humanist Society
on [Facebook!](#)**

Be a Friend!

Thanks to Bob Byrch!

A big **Thank you** to board member and publisher, **Jim Butler** for securing our meeting space, and for work publishing this newsletter.



**Please join us
for this
free and open
discussion.**

**On Saturday,
August 7th
at 2 PM:
Clearwater East
Library
2251 Drew St.
Clearwater**

Following our meeting, many of us will dine together at the

**Farmer Boy
Restaurant**
at 2129 Drew St. just 2
blocks west of
Library.



Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of social policy.

What do Humanists Want?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

Our monthly social dinner, The Moveable Feast for July will be at: **Salt Rock Grill**

on Sunday August 22nd at 5:00PM.

This fine restaurant is located at 19325 Gulf Blvd in Indian Shores between where Walsingham and Park Blvd intersect with Gulf. They are featuring early dinners this Summer for \$10.05 each with a wide variety of seafood, beef and chicken dinners with a small dessert included plus low priced drinks at this hour. Note: We must be seated before 5:30PM for these early dinner and drink prices! Please call Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or email him at kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com for reservations.

Laugh Lines Yet More Truths For Mature Humans!

I love the sense of camaraderie when an entire line of cars team up to prevent a jerk from cutting in at the front. Stay strong, brothers and sisters!

Shirts get dirty. Underwear gets dirty. Pants? Pants never get dirty, and you can wear them forever.

Is it just me or do high school kids get dumber & dumber every year?

There's no worse feeling than that millisecond you're sure you are going to die after leaning your chair back just a little too far.

As a driver I hate pedestrians, and as a pedestrian I hate drivers, but no matter what the mode of transportation, I always hate bicyclists.

Sometimes I'll look down at my watch three consecutive times and still not know what time it is.

Even under ideal conditions people have trouble locating their car keys in a pocket, finding their cell phone, and Pinning the Tail on the Donkey - but I'd bet my last dime that everyone can find and push the snooze button from 3 feet away, in about 1.7 seconds, eyes closed, first time, every time!

Thanks to **Connie Purdum**

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.
the Association of Secular Humanist Societies

Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

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~*~*~*~*~

Jim Butler Publisher.
Jim Peterson, Editor
Have an Idea, opinion or essay
you want to share?

E-Mail us at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

*Join us in our effort to ignite
critical thinking, and embrace
reason, & compassion in life.*

~ Join or Renew ~

**The Humanist Society
of the Suncoast.**

- ☞ Trial -3 month- free news
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Send to: Glenn Paul, Treasurer
Suncoast Humanist Society
2507 First St. #E
Indian Rocks Beach
33785-3010

PUBLISHED HUMANIST LETTERS :

a letter to Menoeceus from Epicurus (255BCE) :

“Let no one be slow to seek wisdom when he is young nor weary in the search of it when he has grown old. For no age is too early or too late for the health of the soul. And to say that the season for studying philosophy has not yet come, or that it is past and gone, is like saying that the season for happiness is not yet or that it is now no more. Therefore, both old and young alike ought to seek wisdom, the former in order that, as age comes over him, he may be young in good things because of the grace of what has been, and the latter in order that, while he is young, he may at the same time be old, because he has no fear of the things which are to come. So we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed towards attaining it.”

Epicurus is credited with being one of the first great Humanist thinkers. His social philosophy emphasized the importance of simple human decency in all relationships and embraced the idea of moderation in pleasures and acting to diminish pain where possible. He held no belief in the supernatural as a force in human life. He embraced life and wished others would overcome their fear to do the same. *“Do not fear death: life is feeling or sensation; when life ends, there is no feeling. Death does not hurt.”* Despite the efforts of early Christians to eradicate what they saw as a competing worldview some of his writings survived and continue to exert influence today. JP

Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.

Let me know if you would like to recommend a person, idea, or organization.

Call Jim at (813) 531-8138 or

E-mail me at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Share your favorite restaurant.

Glenn Paul wants to improve the selection of restaurants in which we have our monthly social dinners. Our main criteria for selection is:

1. Location—center county preferred
2. Cost—low to moderate accommodates everybody.
3. Room—to accommodate up to 25
4. Ambience—not too noisy at 5PM.
5. Food—good.

Contact Glenn at:

kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com
or call 727-595-3347



Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Florida Humanist Journal, Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

Humanist Quotes

"In my youth, I was told, "One should not talk about religion and politics in public." On the contrary, these are the two subjects that should be talked about often in public because they affect our lives the most. This saying must have been started, and supported over time, by clergy and politicians...lest they be found out! "

Frank Prahl

Have an opinion, idea, or essay that needs to get vented? This newsletter is your space.

For editorial consideration for the next issue, contact Jim Peterson at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Read
Steve Brown's thoughts
on [page 5](#)



HFA E-NEWS

An Electronic News Update from
The Humanists of Florida Association

HFA participates in C-3 Table strategic planning session

Following the discussion at May's conference in Sarasota, HFA president Jerry Lieberman recently participated in a two-day strategic planning session at St. Petersburg College as HFA's representative to develop a political action plan with representatives from over 35 statewide organizations. This plan is sensitive to IRS limitations imposed on 501(c)(3) organizations as it ensures there will be full compliance while also taking full advantage of activities that are appropriate for a non-profit in support of its legitimate mission, goals and bylaws. The C-3 Table plan identifies how statewide progressive organizations can collaborate to make a difference in areas of vital mutual interest like separation of church and state, high quality (secular) public education, civil liberties and human rights. The C-3 Table is the most broadly representative and progressive collaborative organization in the state's history with a combined membership in excess of 700,000. It has its own staff and funding but works to achieve the plans that have emanated and been approved through the planning process. HFA is pleased to be an integral part of the Table in helping to shape its direction and by representing secular and Humanist interests in the process. HFA will be working closely with its 26 affiliate groups to gain members' input and involve them so they're well represented.

Lakeland school featured in recent WSJ as 'A school prays for help'

Gary Stilwell, president of CFI-Tallahassee, wrote of the article, "This is great missionary work. Move in to help the poor with material goods while bringing Jesus along. It's hard to say no to an organization that is helping you. This scheme has always worked well in third-world countries and ours is rapidly getting there. Perhaps Humanist and freethinker groups should sponsor some schools."

To read the story, follow this link:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704875604575280422614633564.html?KEYWORDS=a+school+prays+for+help>

Podcasts from conference available

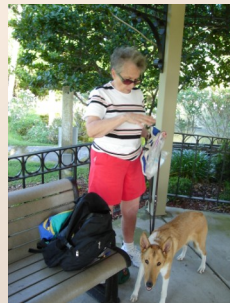
We thank Alex Gacic for volunteering to tape speakers at the conference and Jennifer Hancock for uploading the tapes to the HFA Web site! To listen, please follow this link:

http://floridahumanist.org/memberscms/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=56&Itemid=94

Thanks for your Contributions

Jackie Jordan's efforts to provide a trained seeing eye dog for the blind has met with great success. With some modest assistance from members, Jackie took on the task of raising and training a helper dog for the blind. The dog she raised is now situated with a young man in north Georgia. Jackie did this to honor the memory of her son who died several years ago in Afghanistan. She is a highly regarded member of our community.

We are saddened by the burden of grief she carries, but heartened by the dignity, humor, and creativity in the way she lives her life. We thank her for sharing it with us.



No More Excuses: Climate Action Now - UCS

Last week, the Senate decided to delay taking up comprehensive climate and energy legislation at least until after Congress returns from August recess. Some senators have indicated that they will continue to work on climate and energy issues in September. **Please tell your senators that inaction is absolutely not an option.** Unless they hear from their constituents now, the Senate will be very hard-pressed to pass such legislation before the year ends.

The first six months of this year have been the hottest on record; and the past 10 years were the hottest decade on record. **The science is clear—we cannot afford any more delays.** Your senators need to hear from you that despite the tight legislative calendar, inaction is not an option.

Call your senators today and let them know that we have waited long enough for action, you are tired of their excuses, and that they must take action to pass comprehensive climate and energy legislation this year.

Take Action Today!

From the Union of Concerned Scientists

ON THE WAY TO GRAMMAR'S HOUSE

By *Steve Brown*



Reality.
It's such a fiction.

Recently there was a serious article at, I believe, thewashingtonpost.com on "the human side of Gen. Petraeus' testimony" at the hearing on his new Afghan assignment. I beseech each and every one of you, if you can, to let me know what was not human in his testimony or about him in general (no pun intended).

Similarly, we've often been teased, as at least one-time television viewers, that we were about to view the "human side" of the news. The rest of the news, apparently, was filled with surreal emanations from some substitute form of life.

And how often do we hear the whimper that someone was "only human" in performing some dismally disappointing act or demonstrating a dismally disappointing moral stance or other view. This is stunning, since humans, in what was long a prevailing view in our pseudo-Christian culture, have been thought to be made in the image of "God." There seems to be a sliding scale of disappointment with ourselves, so that at a certain point we become not "only human" but "beasts," "animals" and even "monsters."

And then there are us Human-Ists. There doesn't seem to be a lot of reverence for the "human" in us in what I've just written about. Indeed, what it is to be human seems to be at least parenthetical to what we're really about (in the case of Petraeus and whatever is the "human" side of the news), and downright regrettable for the rest of it.

So where do we get our "Ist?" Is it from the grand sweeps of evolution and of history? It can't be, can it, simply that we're less scaly, feathery and furry than our relatives. Okay, we seem to be brighter, but are we less bestial? We build bigger dams, more complex societies than beavers, ants, bees and wolves and add science and advanced technology to the kinds of societies that our closest primate relatives structure. But do we fight for dominance less or more than our many mammalian relatives, battle less over "territory," ideological as well as geographical? Are we "with" nature, or "above" it? How "permanent" are we anyway, waiting for the next meteorite or virulent epidemic or melodramatic climate change, or (less likely for now) suicidal warfare.

I guess it's "faith." I've got faith, you've got faith, and we'll all dance to it in the light of a full moon, that the goodness in humans will prevail, and we'll develop a shared definition of goodness so that we won't need to destroy those who disagree with us in order to be good.

On another hand, the "human side" seems to imply the revelation of emotion, of feeling, not the I think therefore I gotta be me from Descartes-before-the-horses. In this case we seem to be blessing the hormonal, the limbic, the symbolic heart as something uniquely human, which seems arguable.

And when we apologize for being human, what exactly are we regretting and apparently wishing to reform.

And, consequently, how can "Humanists," in place of apologizing for being human, want to become even more "human" and make society more "human-istic."

Is that merely a euphemism for the mores and goals of liberals and progressives about social justice: sharing the wealth of the planet with all in an equitable manner, and sustaining the planet's riches instead of depleting them. I'm for that. But wouldn't it be equally "human" to go on fighting with each other and despoiling the planet? Christopher Hitchens is fond of calling people he doesn't like, the current Pope for example, "mammals." We're all mammals.

I've remarked more than once that I'm a humanist, but I wish I knew what that was. Truthfully, I think the term originated and has lived on as an alternative simply to supernaturalism. That's basically how I've thought of myself as a "humanist." I've also found myself politically well to the left. I haven't conflated the two.

Maybe we should be "Morethanhuman--ists."

Am I wrong? Do I have to subscribe to a Humanist Manifesto, or a series of Manifesti, much like the now-you-see-it now-you-don't development of the "Bible?" Do I have to listen to dogmas howling in the night?

The best of Humanism as I've experienced it is when the flowering of each individual is valued as highly as the overall betterment of society. If we're not to apologize for being "only human," at the same time we try to make society more "humanistic," we need to spend more time on that first-mentioned project in this paragraph.

That's my reality.

Is it, too, fiction?

Want to be a more active Humanist?

Being an active agent of social change in many ways defines the practical meaning of Humanism. Despite the vast numbers of us on this planet, all too few actually are involved in making life better for all of us. Especially if you are retired, or have leisure, you should consider expanding the range of your positive involvement in the lives of others.

Glenn Paul has been a stalwart of social/political activism in behalf a great many causes. He could sure use some help in his capacity as Social planning director, treasurer, and all around doer of good deeds. If you have the time, interest, and a small amount of energy to devote to any of the forgoing, please contact Glenn and offer your help. He wants to continue as treasurer, but even here he could use a little help.

Contact Glenn at:
kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com or by phone at 727-595-3347.

Science in Action



This summer: Demand Energy Independence

About half of the electricity generated in the United States comes from coal. Of all our sources of energy, coal is the dirtiest and it is America's single biggest source of global warming emissions. Fortunately, we have an abundance of home-grown, clean energy sources that we can tap into—we just have to make the transition off dirty coal to cleaner energy. Who has the power to make this happen? Your senators do, and they happen to be at home in your state right now!

[Take action today to make sure they hear loud and clear that what you want for Independence Day is cleaner energy.](#)



Traveling to Arizona?

The ACLU of Florida is warning Florida residents of potential threats to the constitutional rights and civil liberties of individuals planning to travel or stay in Arizona.

In light of the recently enacted racial profiling law, SB 1070, we would like to inform Floridians of their rights in the State of Arizona. Although the law is not scheduled to go into effect until July 29, 2010, a history of rampant racial profiling by law enforcement officials in Maricopa County, Arizona (which includes the cities of Phoenix, Glendale, Mesa, and Scottsdale) and a stated policy of “attrition through enforcement” adopted by lawmakers in the state give credible reason to be concerned even before the date SB 1070 is supposed to go into effect.

The law will require police officers to demand papers proving U.S. citizenship or immigration status from any individual whom they stop, detain, or arrest, based on an undefined “reasonable suspicion” that the individual is in the country unlawfully. It invites discrimination against, and pretextual stops and arrests of, Latinos, other racial minorities, and individuals believed to look or sound “foreign,” based on their race, ethnicity, or national origin. The law expressly provides that even suspected infractions of city or town ordinances such as jaywalking, excessive noise, or having an overgrown or untidy lawn can and should lead to immigration questioning. If individuals are unable to prove to the police officer that they are permitted to be in the United States, they may be subject to warrantless arrest without any probable cause that they have committed a crime.