



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 July 3rd...

The Florida Humanist Conference of 2010

Over 175 people from all around the state and a few other places came together for what became one of the best Conferences we have had thus far. The only flaw emerged from the fact that the meeting rooms were too small for the unexpectedly large crowd who showed up. But of course, this was also a good thing in that it showed how marked is the increase and participation in Humanism.

There was in fact a constant buzz of ideas being exchanged and challenged, along with the joy of old friendships being renewed. The leadership of many major national organizations were in the crowd as well. All in all, most found it to be a thoroughly invigorating experience; one from which we came away with many new ideas on making humanism live.

Jim Peterson

An Afternoon with Christopher Hitchens and Michael Shermer



on Video



For this summer session, we will have two of the most vigorous voices (and images) of the scientific, secular worldview. After each presentation, we will have ample time for discussion of what we have seen.

Christopher Hitchens, is the renowned English-American writer of such books as *Thomas Jefferson; Author of America* and *God is not Great, How Religion Poisons Everything*. He has been cited as among the top 100 public intellectuals by Foreign Policy Magazine.

Michael Shermer is an American science writer, historian of science, founder of [The Skeptics Society](#), and Editor in Chief of its magazine *Skeptic*, which is largely devoted to investigating pseudoscientific and supernatural claims. The Skeptics Society currently has over 55,000 members. He has written *Why People Believe Weird Things* and a number of other books tracing the history and epistemology of gullability.

Volume 19 No. 7

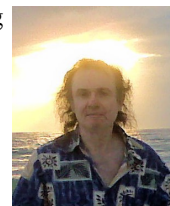
July, 2010

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,
July 3rd at
2 PM:

Clearwater East
Library
2251 Drew St.
Clearwater

Following our meet-
ing, many of us will
dine together at the

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

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!**

"Christians don't have a monopoly on goodness, nor should they claim to have one. I certainly have known many people who were not believers and yet have put me to shame by their thoughtfulness and integrity."

Billy Graham

Thanks to Frank Prahl

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>



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: **Tucson's Tex-Mex Restaurant**

on Sunday the 18th of July at 5:00PM as usual. Please make reservations with Glenn Paul by Saturday July 17th. The exact address of [Tucson's](#) is 13563 Icot Blvd just off Ulmerton Road west of 49th Street and east of US Hwy 19.

To confirm your reservation, call or write Glenn Paul at kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com or call 727-595-3347 by Saturday June 12th .

Laugh Lines More Truths For Mature Humans

"Do not machine wash or tumble dry" means I will never wash this - ever.

I hate when I just miss a call by the last ring (Hello? Hello? Damn it.), but when I immediately call back, it rings nine times and goes to voice mail. What did you do after I didn't answer? Drop the phone and run away?

I hate leaving my house confident and looking good and then not seeing anyone of importance the entire day. What a waste.

I keep some people's phone numbers in my phone just so I know not to answer when they call.

Sometimes, I'll watch a movie that I watched when I was younger and suddenly realize I had no idea what the heck was going on when I first saw it.

I would rather try to carry 10 over-loaded plastic bags in each hand than take 2 trips to bring my groceries in.

I have a hard time deciphering the fine line between boredom and hunger.

How many times is it appropriate to say "What?" before you just nod and smile because you still didn't hear or understand a word they said?

Thanks to **Connie Purdum**

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

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

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Meets Sept., December, April

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~*~*~*~*~

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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 :

No place for government meddling

Charlie Crist has never been one of my heroes, but I applaud his veto of the abortion bill. Requiring distraught, confused women to view a first-trimester fetus and listen to a detailed description of it, along with its heartbeat — does that resolve anything? And what does it say about big government, the *bete noire* of the ultraconservatives?

State Sen. Andy Gardiner's remark, "If you really wanted people to change hearts, what better way than to see a heartbeat," is at the core of the problem. Is it the government's place to "change hearts"? Is it the government's place to shame and frighten private citizens at any time, especially at moments of emotional (and physical) stress? Should the government monitor our most private sorrows and crucial decisions? Crist is absolutely right: He is against making the government more powerful than it is now by using coercion in medical matters.

Further, there is a strange lack of logic in the exceptions for those pregnancies resulting from rape, incest, etc. Those "prolife" people vociferously referring to fetuses as "unborn children" seem to ignore the fact that those resulting from rape or incest are, accordingly, "unborn children" too. Yet they may legally be aborted. Isn't this discrimination?

Ah well. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines," as Ralph Waldo Emerson said long ago. And it can be forgotten in the eager crusade to change the hearts of desperate, suffering women. Governor Crist, politician though you are, you did a splendid thing.

Abigail Ann Martin, Brandon

As published in the St. Pete Times Wednesday June 12th 2010

Ed note: We continue to be extremely pleased to have Abigail among our most active and astute members.

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

"Science is about disbelief. It accepts that all knowledge is provisional and that any theory might in principle be disproved. Some theories are better established than others: the earth is probably not flat, babies are almost certainly not brought by storks, and men and dinosaurs are unlikely to have appeared on earth within the past few thousand years. Even so, nothing is sacred. In 1905 classical physics collapsed after a seemingly trivial observation about glowing gases and the same is potentially true for all other scientific theories."

Professor Steven Jones, London

**See
New Free Thought Billboards
on [page 5](#)**

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



HFA E-NEWS

An Electronic News Update from
The Humanists of Florida Association

Evolution Institute positions itself to explore ‘quality of life’ indices

The Evolution Institute (EI) has convened scientists from multiple disciplines, universities and nations to share with their colleagues and the public what rich insights can be gained and applied to improving the quality of life by means of applying an evolutionary theoretical perspective. This largely has been done topically and in focal areas including, but not limited to, early childhood education, risky adolescents behavior, large-scale regulatory mechanisms and community building. Outcomes such as policy papers, applications of recommendations on local levels and broader recognition in terms of press and publications have been realized. Additionally, relationships have begun with organizations like the Prindle Institute, the Royal Academy of the Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce (RSA), the Equality Trust (ET) and the National Evolutionary Synthetic Center (NESCent).

The EI is unique in its evolutionary theoretical perspective by applying it to the study of humans, rigorously and systematically, based on state-of-the-art research that includes mathematical modeling. It is the only institute in the world that engages and represents scholars from highly diverse disciplines who utilize evolutionary theory in their research that pertains to humans, which regards cooperation and prosociality as feasible and consistent with nature and culture. These scholars are committed to improving the human condition through collegiality, without ideological considerations or underpinnings.

EI is able to leverage substantial resources through collaboration with others well beyond its internal resources and funding streams. Our scholars are profoundly invested in this unique opportunity because it enhances their work on many campuses around the world, and at the same time, provides access to resources not available on/in any one campus, professional association, conference or institute/center. There is considerable continuity and progression for those engaged in EI that is enhancing and catalytic. Also a topic as broad as “quality of life” requires not only the unique lens of evolutionary theory to bring new and rich insights, but also the EI mission and infrastructure to sustain such an ambitious and challenging agenda.

Why is the EI so well positioned to take the lead for giving meaning and concrete practical results to discussions of measures to gauge the quality of life? One strong reason is the relationship it has already established with the RSA and Equality Trust. The former organization has done extensive research on the brain, culminating in its recent Social Brain report. Equality Trust and the work of Richard Wilkinson and Kate Prickett published in *The Spirit Level* document the impact societies have on the quality of life. Equality Trust and RSA offer strategies to address improving the human condition. Wilkinson and Pickett make a powerful case for what the human condition is today in the most technologically advanced societies in the world within the context of public health – certainly an important aspect of quality of life in any society concerned with the survival of our species.

We have, in the combined research efforts of RSA, ET and EI, a plethora of information and resources to identify what constitutes quality of life and a foundation to grasp under what circumstances it can be nurtured and better fulfilled. We are not suggesting “one size fits all” here or any utopian or ideological pathways. However, evolutionary theory provides the basis for uncovering how culture impacts our human condition and offers insights wherever an ameliorable mismatch exists between our nature and cultural practices. RSA offers excellent research and information on the structure and function of our brain that needs to be taken into consideration as we provide tangible solutions that can improve the human condition. The ET methodology provides the foundational database, benchmarks, criteria and tools to assess whether our strategies are succeeding.
HFA cofounded the EI in 2008.)



**Humanists of Florida
Association**
Reason and Compassion in Action

David Sloan Wilson, on behalf of EI, receives contract from the University of Chicago Press

In an agreement dated June 11, the University of Chicago outlined the terms for publication of *Economics: Evolutionary Theory as a New Foundation for Economics and Public Policy*. The agreement results from the first proposal the Evolution Institute submitted to a publishing company, and it results from the groundwork of last fall’s NESCent conference at Duke University. It is also the first time royalty fees are to become a source of income for EI.



Atheists Sponsor “One Nation Indivisible” Ads

LAKELAND, Fla.—Atheists of Florida placed five new billboards in the Lakeland, Florida area on June 22, 2010, in recognition of Independence Day. The design for the patriotic ad campaign features a flag background with the words, “One Nation, Indivisible,” along with the website for the atheist non-profit organization.

John Kieffer, president of Atheists of Florida, explained, “We want to remind residents of the way the Pledge of Allegiance was recited prior to its divisive change in 1954 when ‘under God’ was added during the fear and suspicion of the McCarthy era.”

"The original phrasing does not artificially divide the country along religious lines," said Atheists of Florida Executive Director Rob Curry. "It recognizes the unity of America and the equal value of all citizens, no matter what they may or may not believe about religion."

There is a special meaning to the ad campaign for EllenBeth Wachs, the organization’s Legal Affairs Coordinator and Director for the Lakeland chapter. “It directly responds to an incident that occurred during a Lakeland City Commission meeting when, after I had made public comments on an unrelated issue, my patriotism was questioned by one of the commissioners who noted that, because of the words ‘under God,’ I had not stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Atheists of Florida will host a "Meet the Patriots" question and answer event, scheduled for Thursday, July 22, at 6:00 p.m., in the Community Room of the Lakeland Public Library on Lake Morton Drive.

Wachs will host the event with speakers to be announced shortly. This forum is free and open to the public. All are invited to participate, though seating is limited.

Lakeland was the site for the first billboard that Atheists of Florida erected in November last year. That board presented motorists with the message: “Don't believe in God? You are not alone.”

Because of the words “under God,” many regard the Pledge of Allegiance not simply as an expression of patriotism, but also as an expression of religious piety. Furthermore, it has been used by many as evidence that this is a religious nation; not simply in the sense that most people are religious, but rather that the government itself is founded upon religious (typically Christian) principles. This argument is deeply flawed. The first reason is that the Pledge of Allegiance does not date to the founding of America. Because it was not created until near the end of the 19th century, it cannot be read as saying anything about the nature of the United States as it was founded in the late 18th century. Secondly, the words “under God” are an even more recent addition. When the Pledge of Allegiance was originally written by Francis Bellamy on October 11, 1892, he did not use those words in any way, shape or form. Here is the original Pledge of Allegiance: I pledge allegiance to my Flag, and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation indivisible, With Liberty and Justice for all.



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, publisher, 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.

Gulf Oil Disaster may have a Bad Side

Because of the geologic compromises induced by BP in its drilling operations, it is possible that a large methane gas cloud will surface, killing everything it touches, and set off a supersonic tsunami with the wave traveling somewhere between 400 to 600 miles per hour.

While the entire Gulf coastline is vulnerable, the state most exposed to the fury of a supersonic wave towering 150 to 200 feet or more is Florida. The Sunshine State only averages about 100 feet above sea level with much of the coastline and lowlands and swamps near zero elevation.

But wait, there's more...

If the deposits of methane hydroxide were not for the most part imbedded in the surface of the ocean floor, the scenario described above would actually be something to worry about. Methane hydrates are a solid ice-like form of water that contains methane gas molecules "caged" in tiny cavities. They are usually stable at the sea floor at water deeper than about 500meters (1200 ft.), usually embedded in the first 500meters of sediment. Alarmist claims as those above require more investigation at the least!

JP



A Veto, and a Thank You

Thank you!

8,299 of you heard our plea to urge Gov. Crist to veto the Florida Legislature's attempt to play doctor by drastically undermining access to reproductive healthcare and dictating what types of health insurance coverage private employers may offer their employees. You emailed Governor Crist, and you made a difference.

Gov. Crist responded by vetoing HB 1143 today (PDF). This is a major victory for all Floridians and sends a clear message to legislators: write good legislation, not prescriptions. Your dedication and overwhelming response no doubt led to this success. We applaud your efforts to stop this damaging legislation and [commend Governor Crist's resolve to veto it](#). This veto is a victory for women's rights, reproductive rights, health care, privacy and personal freedom.

If you would like to thank Governor Crist for his decision to stand up for women's rights and veto HB 1143, you may email him at Charlie.Crist@myflorida.com.

"For those who are concerned about government intrusion into the most personal, private decisions that individuals face, today's decision was a victory," said Courtenay Strickland, ACLU of Florida Director of Public Policy. "Had HB 1143 become law, countless Florida women would not have been able to buy health insurance that covers abortion care, even with their own money, and even if they received no government subsidy to purchase their insurance. As a result, millions of Floridians would have lost the coverage that they currently have through the private market."

I am so proud of the steadfast commitment and activism of the thousands of ACLU supporters who made their opinions known to the Governor," added Strickland. "Together, we made a difference."