

Manitoba Humanist

Photo Contest!

- Take the **best or most creative** photo of HAAM's atheist bus ad and be eligible to win a membership!
- See website for contest rules.



SUPER SECULAR SEPTEMBER!

**DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD?
YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

HAM Humanists, Atheists, and
Agnostics of Manitoba

www.mbHumanistsAtheists.ca

Starting the week of September 2nd, you may notice a Winnipeg Transit bus with OUR advertising on the side! It will say "Don't Believe In God? You Are Not Alone".

We're tickled that our advertising campaign is finally getting underway. We've already had some fantastic media interest, and we're sure there will be more to come. Plus, we have a couple of great events happening this month.

And, what better way to create some more fun but to announce a contest!

PHOTO CONTEST! SPOT OUR BUS AD

Be on the alert for a bus with our advertising! Spot that bus, snap a picture, and send us your best or most creative photo of our ad! (Carefully, of course. Don't do anything silly or dangerous)

We'll pick one submission, and that person will be eligible to win next year's membership for **free!** Send your awesome bus ad pics to mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com

Published by and for the Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics of Manitoba

"We are beyond belief"

HAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca



UPCOMING EVENTS

All of our upcoming events can be found on page 5 of this newsletter.



Scott Burton, our speaker for September

TALKING GOODNESS AT OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING

When I tell people I'm part of the Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba, and I share with them the philosophy behind humanism, sometimes I find that I wish I had more to say to the question "So, what does your group do?" Of course, we have meetings and parties, but I would also like to say more about what good things we do for our community.

We're a small group, however, so we don't have many regular volunteer opportunities. It's mainly up to us as individuals to do what we can.

It's nice, therefore, when someone's idea really takes off and soars!

At our September meeting, **Scott Burton** will talk to us about "Finding goodness, how a simple idea can bring a community together".

Scott had a goal to connect humanist values with real-world action. He will share how his personal challenge to run for 24 hours brought out the support of his neighbourhood and attracted the attention of Winnipeg's major media outlets—all in support of a local charity.

Don't miss this meeting! Come out and join us. Remember, you are not alone!

- Donna Harris

DYING WITH DIGNITY – SEPT. 10th

Just a reminder about our upcoming event. Dying With Dignity is a national, member-based, registered health charity. Dying With Dignity informs individuals about all end-of-life options and supports individuals at the end of their lives.

On September 10, from 7pm - 9pm at the Riverview Community Centre (90 Ashland Ave, Winnipeg), they will be hosting a presentation by renowned ethicist and Dying With Dignity supporter, Professor Arthur Schafer. The presentation is open to the public. You are warmly invited to attend and to bring your friends and family.

MORDEN WRAP-UP

"Business" was brisk at our booth at the Morden Corn & Apple Festival August 22nd to 25th. I have never been a good debater, but I thoroughly enjoyed watching and listening to fellow HAAM members do an excellent job.

I think all of us agree that we were there for the non-believers who are still in the closet. However, we are probably approached at the booth by more believers than non-believers, and so these are the people we end up talking to, and debating.



Pat Morrow deep in conversation

The non-believers ran the gamut of angry to kind. Last year there was one man so angry he was almost red in the face, looking like he wanted to punch us. I personally didn't see anybody that angry this year, but apparently there was at least one woman, who wanted to see if we could be prevented from entering the town.

One couple studied our sign, said something to each other, then studied the sign again, then walked away with the woman shaking her head and crossing herself. One man came to talk to us briefly. He said he'd read about us in the Winnipeg Free Press, then said, "For those who DO believe, I hope they treat you with respect."

Most believers who approach us don't necessarily want to debate. Most seem to think that we'll understand the error of our thinking by simply telling us how wrong we are. One senior couple warned us fervently that we simply must make amends with God/Jesus because once we die, IT'S TOO LATE! IT'S TOO LATE! While

reprimanding us the man backed off as though he didn't want to hear any response from us all the while shaking his head with disapproval saying more than once that he would pray for us. The woman stayed at the booth for a few seconds longer to try to drive her message home.

I grew up in a Mennonite family, school, community, and church and so am very familiar with the religious. But some of the people we talked with were so fanatical in their beliefs that it confounded even me. I remember always believing in evolution. I can't remember which teacher taught evolution in the school I attended, because all my teachers were Mennonites and zealous believers. But one of them did, and I never gave it a second thought. And so when I come across believers who simply don't accept evolution, as one young man did who debated with Pat at length, I'm puzzled.



Paul, Diana and Pat

This man, flanked by his three little children, one of whom called Pat stupid at one point, to which the father chuckled slightly, insisted that it has to take a lot of faith on our part to believe in evolution. A lot more faith than it takes to believe in God, he said. But when he broached the subject of Noah and the flood, and why that was a perfectly plausible cause of such wonders as the Grand Canyon and an explanation as to how the earth can be changed in a very short time (like 6,000 years), I asked him if he believed the story of the flood and he said yes. I said, "Really!" and asked him how he thinks all these animals were gathered from around the world. He said, "Faith in God".

I told this young man that I once heard two people on the radio try to draw a moral from the story of Job. God and the devil having a tete-a-tete at the top of a mountain with God telling the devil about his good and faithful servant, Job. The devil says it's no wonder Job is faithful because God has given him everything he wants and/or needs. God tells the devil he can go take things away from Job and do what he wants to him, just don't kill him, and he'll see. Job will still be faithful. The devil kills Job's entire family and his servants, takes away his wealth, and covers his body with painful sores. And don't you know it, Job is still faithful. So God won the bet.

I had never heard the story told in this way and couldn't believe that this is the way it went, so I read it for myself, and found out that that's exactly the way it goes! I asked him how anybody can draw any kind of moral from a horrific story like that. This man wasn't shocked. His comment was something like, "But do you remember what Job said in the end?" Job apparently had positive things to say because God gave him a new family and even more wealth than he had before. Pat tried to point out that God had killed Job's children and you can't replace your children with different children. (I'm paraphrasing, Pat.) The only thing this man said was, yes, he didn't know what God had in mind when he did that, but this was said from the point of view that God must have had a plan, and so it's okay.

Another fear I found that is very real in Christians is that this life may be the only one we have. This same man asked what we expect happens to us when we die. He wanted to know, do we really believe that that's it. When we said yes, he expressed his astonishment and said he thought that was so sad. The fear that this is the only life we have is one I don't remember having had at any point of my religiously affected life, and so this too surprised me. I always thought that Christians spew a lot of rhetoric, but they don't really believe what they say. I guess I was wrong. I was always afraid I'd go to hell because I never really thought I was devout enough, and He says clearly that the lukewarm He will spit out. I was never sure that I'd go to heaven like these people are. One woman said she

KNOWS she's going to heaven after she dies. I said she can't be sure about that because what if Islam is the right religion. She didn't seem to hear that at all, but simply repeated that she KNOWS she's going to heaven.

Finally, there was the 17 year old girl who talked with us for quite some time about being a non-believer in a religious home, although her parents were obviously not fundamentalists, which was good to hear. It was such a pleasure to listen to her talk and hear the intelligence coming from such a young person. And it brought home to me again that that's why we were there. To let people like her know, she's not alone.

- Helen Friesen

JOSH

On Sunday after the disapproving church crowd walked past our booth, an older man in his mid '70s came strolling up, put his hand on a chair, and asked if he could sit down. He said he was hoping to sit and talk for a while. I mentally prepared for the usual "Do you know Jesus?" or "if you just read such and such passage of the gospel it will all make sense." It wasn't going to be that kind of visit.

He said his name was Josh (changed to protect privacy). Josh started asking questions about the definitions of atheism, agnosticism, and humanism. I spoke of how humanism is really just the philosophy of being good without God, how humanists greatly value science, democracy, human empathy, compassion, and how humanists believe human problems have human answers, no gods required. He then asked me if I had ever believed. I told him I tried once in my teens, but it just didn't take.

It was then he leaned over and said, "I don't believe in God either, especially the religious stuff; but I really want to believe in God." He would go on to mention this need to believe several times in our conversation.

Josh went on to tell me a little about his life. He

was brought up in a very strict Mennonite household. Around the age of 20 he decided he wanted to see what was out there, and so he did, much to his father's dismay. He moved away, studied myriad subjects, and by the time school was finished he had lost his faith. "I guess I learned too much," he said.

"Do you ever wonder about what comes after?" he asked; "like an afterlife?" "No, not really" I replied.

I told him about when my mother died a few years ago and how it would've been really nice to think of her in a better place, but my reasoning wouldn't allow that. And that made things difficult for a time. I thought if I could remember the words of Marcus Aurelius and the verse that gave me so much peace at that time, it might help him out too.

Were the beliefs of Josh's youth coming back? Was he fearing the afterlife? Hell? After talking to a friend I think what Josh dislikes is what we all think about from time to time: the permanence of death.



Now in his '70s he's thinking of his own mortality. The 50+ years of reason are running headlong into the 20 years of religious indoctrination of his youth. The result is beginning to give him some real discomfort and pain. Maybe he is hoping for that comfort of knowing the answers that supernatural belief so often gives its practitioners. A comfort I have never experienced.

As I drove I was kicking myself for not seeing it when I was talking to him. I thought to myself, we have members who could handle something like this a lot better than I could. Maybe we could have set him up with a counsellor or someone to talk to. I really thought I was just engaging a nice man who wanted to have a chat about life and the big questions. Not a man looking for answers to ease his pain.

Josh, if you take our card out of your pocket and happen along this little article, these are the words that gave me, and give me so much comfort when I've had questions like yours. I hope you find peace, wherever that may be. I'm sorry I couldn't have been more help.

“Live a good life. If there are gods and they are just, then they will not care how devout you have been, but will welcome you based on the virtues you have lived by. If there are gods, but unjust, then you should not want to worship them. If there are no gods, then you will be gone, but will have lived a noble life that will live on in the memories of your loved ones.” - Marcus Aurelius

- Pat Morrow

PARTNERS FOR LIFE - DETAILS

If you're planning on donating blood, **Call 1 888 2DONATE** to make an appointment. HAAM is part of the Partners for Life program, so you can let them know that you wish your donation to count towards the Humanist Association of Manitoba's yearly pledge of just 10 donations. Our ID number is **HUMA008484**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, September 10th, 2013

Public Meeting – Dying with Dignity

Location: Riverview Community Centre, 90 Ashland Avenue

Time: 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Speaker: Prof. Arthur Schafer

Saturday, September 14th, 2013

Skepticamp

Winnipeg Skeptics

Location: Room 1214, Université de Saint-Boniface (200 Avenue de la Cathedrale)

Time: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Saturday, September 21st, 2013

Regular HAAM Monthly Meeting

Location: Canad Inn, 1405 St .Matthew Avenue

Time: 5:30 pm

Speaker: Scott Burton

Topic: Finding goodness, how a simple idea can bring a community together

Executive:

Donna Harris, President
Heather McDonell, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Allison Nelson, Secretary

Members at Large:

Scott Burton
Cheri Frazer
Diana Goods – HAAM Librarian
Pat Morrow – Outreach Coordinator
Jeff Olsson
Jake Peters
Grant Rogerson

Newsletter Editor:

Donna Harris
ham_librarian@yahoo.ca

We're on the Web!

See us at:

mbhumanistsatheists.ca

HA²M



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$30.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$50.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

* After July 1st, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA²M of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Humanist Association of Manitoba and mail to:
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane,
Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HA²M meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.