

A U S T I N

Atheist

July 2007 • Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin ACA

Volume 1 • Issue 1

New Newsletter

—by Matt Dillahunty

During the past year, we've made a number of modifications to the size and style of the newsletter. Some of those changes were directly tied to budget concerns while others reflected the practical limitations of having one individual attempt to produce a large newsletter every month. There was also considerable discussion about whether or not we need to continue to produce a printed newsletter in this era of broadband and blogs. Those of you who rely on the newsletter will be happy to know that we're currently committed to continuing the printed edition, though we've made some additional changes.

The original plan was to produce 11 monthly issues from July through May, leaving the month of June open to allow for the new board of directors to transition responsibilities and make any needed changes. Unfortunately, the previous

editor accepted a position with American Atheists and, due to a communication failure, the May edition was never produced. We regret the inconvenience, but we're back on track and we hope that this edition meets with your approval.

Some of the changes are obvious; we've changed the name, the layout and the default size. Tracie Harris, one of the co-hosts of *The Atheist Experience* and the artist behind *Atheist Eve*, has completely reworked the design and worked very hard to ensure that we can consistently and efficiently deliver information to all members.

Matt Dillahunty and Don Baker (president and vice president of the ACA) are currently serving as co-editors, but we'd like to encourage all members to submit items for the newsletter. We're looking for book reviews, movie reviews, opinion pieces, testimonials, humor, news,



The ACA 2007–2008 board of directors (L to R): front row: Steven Elliott, Vice President Don Baker, President Matt Dillahunty, Treasurer Michael Swift; center row: Ashley Perrien, Don Rhoades, Secretary Mark Loewe; back row: Shilling Cadena and Joe Rhodes.

announcements and art—anything that you'd like to share. The default size of each issue is a single-sheet, but we aren't setting that as a strict limit. If budget and time allow, we can expand any edition to include the best content we receive.

The deadline for normal submissions will be the 1st of the

month. Exceptions may be made for time-critical announcements and we cannot guarantee that all submissions will be included in the newsletter—but we're hoping that this system will give us the opportunity to make the newsletter a true reflection of the ACA, a newsletter for, and by, our community. ■

In This Issue

Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes: *The Atheist Community of Austin elected a new board of directors (pictured on this issue's cover) in May, and that always brings a few changes. In this issue, we'll take a look at some of those changes. We sincerely hope they are viewed as welcome improvements and that the ACA will continue to find better ways to meet its goals of supporting the atheist community.*

New Newsletter _____	Cover
ACA Shows Its Pride _____	2
Inside the ACA: The Board and Committees _____	3
Atheist Eve (Cartoon) _____	4

ACA CALENDAR

SUNDAY, JULY 1

• **12:15–1:45 p.m.:** *Lecture Series (Austin History Cntr): Members of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program. Topic: "From advocacy to reason and back again"*

• **3–4:30 p.m.:** Atheist Experience TV Show (Ch 10)

THURSDAY, JULY 5

• **7 p.m.–?:** *Happy Hour (Dog & Duck Pub)*

FRIDAY, JULY 6

• **7:30–10 p.m.:** *Movie Night (Mike Swift's house) (ACA members only)*

SATURDAY, JULY 7

• **10–11 a.m.:** *Blood Drive, (Blood & Tissue Center of Central Texas)*

SUNDAY, JULY 8

• **10–11 a.m.:** *Board Mtg (Ventana del Soul)*

• **11 a.m.–1 p.m.:** *Sunday Mtg, (Ventana del Soul)*

• **3–4:30 p.m.:** *Atheist Experience TV Show (Ch 10)*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11

• **7–11:30 p.m.:** *Game Night with CFI Austin (Thor's Hammer)*

THURSDAY, JULY 12

• **7 p.m.–?:** *Happy Hour (Dog & Duck Pub)*

SATURDAY, JULY 14

• **2–3:30 p.m.:** *Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show, see Web site for details*

Continued on page 3

About ACA

ACA provides opportunities for socializing and friendship, promotes atheistic viewpoints, encourages positive atheist culture, defends the First Amendment principle of state/church separation, opposes discrimination against atheists, provides outreach to atheists in the greater Austin area, and works with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

ACA produces a live cable access TV show and Internet radio show, presents a monthly lecture series, maintains a library of Freethought books, protests in support of civil liberties, and participates in various community service activities.

ACA operates in an open and democratic manner to provide a community of like-minded people for social interaction and support.

ACA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational corporation made up of volunteers. The membership is restricted to atheists, but does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, or disability.

ACA Board of Directors

President

Matt Dillahunty

Vice President

Don Baker

Treasurer

Michael Swift

Secretary

Mark Loewe

Directors

Shilling Cadena

Steven Elliott

Ashley Perrien

Don Rhoades

Joe Rhodes

Contact

Atheist Community of Austin

P. O. Box 3798

Austin, TX 78764

512.371.2911 (voice mail)

www.atheist-community.org

info@atheist-community.org

Austin Atheist Newsletter

Editors: Matt Dillahunty, Don Baker

Design/Production: Tracie Harris

editor@atheist-community.org

Submission Deadlines

Issue	Deadline
Aug. _____	July 1
Sept. _____	Aug. 1
Oct. _____	Sept. 1
Nov. _____	Oct. 1
Dec. _____	Nov. 1

ACA Shows Its Pride

Austin Pride Festival, June 9, 2007

—by Don Baker

The ACA had a booth at the 12th annual (gay and lesbian) Pride Festival on June 9. The festival was an all-day event at Waterloo Park near the Capitol featuring entertaining performers and some great people watching. We were among over 100 groups with booths at the event. We were there to show our support of diversity, human rights, and promote positive atheism to a largely receptive audience. This is the fourth year we've exhibited at this event.

Ten ACA volunteers helped set up the booth, staff it, and tear it down at the end of a very hot day. We passed out membership information, a flier about why atheists care about gay rights, the ACA newsletter, various tracts, bumper stickers, and a number of other promotional items. Most importantly, we were there as living, breathing atheists with whom people could interact on a personal level. We had about 50 people drop by our booth and at least pick up fliers. Many of those said "hello" and chatted a bit. Some were people we got to know a bit last year. We hope that the booth will bring in new members and help make people more aware of atheism as a valid and sensible viewpoint. Our volunteers included Don Baker (the organizer), Chuck Clark, Matt Dillahunty, Steven Elliott, Leon Harvey, John Iacoletti, Marla Repka, Shelley Roberts, Mike Swift, and Joe Zamecki. Please pat these people on the back for their efforts. For a few of our volunteers, this was their first "coming out" as atheists in such a public setting.

ACA's involvement in the Pride Festival usually brings up the question of whether we should promote gay rights as much as

we do. There are several ways to answer that question. With respect to the Pride Festival, it's an event where ACA's participation can bring some attention to our cause and make people aware of our efforts. We have done other such events in the past, such as march in the Martin Luther King Day parade. To do more of these kinds of activities, we only need volunteers to champion the cause. We have a lot of members who enjoy helping and

participating, so doing more of these events isn't a big hurdle for the ACA. The other reason we support gay rights is that we view gay rights as a natural human right. We see gay rights, such as same-sex marriage, as an issue of church-state separation, an integral part of ACA's mission. The ACA has issued press releases in support of same-sex marriage and we have supported gay rights in our TV and radio programs and our writings over the years. We will continue to do so. Being in the Pride Festival is a small part of ACA's participation in the greater community, something that all mature groups must do to succeed in their mission. ■



Above: Early shift volunteers Chuck, Matt, Shelley, and Mike.



Above: Late shift volunteers Don, Leon, Marla, John, and Joe.

The Board and Committees

—by Don Baker

In this monthly column, we'll explore the inner workings of the ACA, so members can participate and get the most out of their involvement. This month, I'd like to give an overview of the two main power structures of the group, the board of directors and the committees.

When you come to an ACA meeting, you might not be aware these things exist or how things get done. Much of it is hidden from view, which is good and bad. It's good in that the group largely runs without a lot of in-your-face decision making. We're able to have fun and good discussion at our meetings and social events. The downside is members don't always realize the complexity of the machinery that makes the ACA purr.

The board of directors is the ACA's main decision-making body. The board has both *officer* and *at large* positions. The board has offices of president (Matt Dillahunty), vice president (Don Baker), secretary (Mark Loewe), and treasurer (Mike Swift).

As a rule, the president acts as the "public face" of the group, while the vice president is focused on the day-to-day mechanics of meetings, maintaining the calendar, and such. The secretary deals with official record keeping and running elections. And the treasurer keeps track of our funds.

Those who serve on the board in the at large positions, Steven Elliott, Ashley Perrien, Don Rhoades, Joe Rhodes, and Shilling Cadena, serve in ad hoc roles as needs arise. All board members have one vote in board decisions. To contact the board and associate faces with names, go to <[community.org/activism/board.php>. Alternately, go to the ACA Web site, click on "ACA Members," then "Board of Directors" in the submenu.](http://www.atheist-</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

If you're an ACA member interested in getting involved with running the group, there are a number of options. First, if you have an idea or suggestion for board consideration, pass the idea to a board member, who can put it on the board meeting agenda. We encourage members to submit ideas and suggestions to improve the association.

ACA members are welcome to attend the monthly board meeting, on the second Sunday of each month. The board meeting starts an hour before the regular Sunday meeting for the week. Check the Web site or calendar for specifics, which may change. During board meetings, members may participate in discussions but may not vote. Items for board consideration must be submitted in advance. Finally, you request admission to the "atheist-board" Yahoo e-mail list where the board discusses items between meetings. To be invited, ask a board member for an invitation.

While the board primarily makes decisions about the ACA, the committees do the hard work. Not surprisingly, there is a strong overlap between the board and the committee heads. These are people dedicated to the ACA and its operation.

The ACA has an elaborate committee structure, viewable at <www.atheist-community.org/activism/committees>. Alternately, go to the ACA Web site, click on "ACA Members," then "Committees" in the submenu. You'll see a handful of "top-

level" committees with subcommittees under most of them.

The chair for each committee is identified. To contact the committee, click the envelope icon next to the committee name. This is a great way to contact the appropriate person with questions about a particular aspect of the ACA or to get involved.

If there is no name next to a committee, there is currently no committee head. Perhaps you'd like to jump in and be that person? If so, contact the top-level committee chairperson to express your interest. Even if you think a committee is running smoothly, consider volunteering anyway. It's beneficial to the group to have multiple people familiar with the duties of a particular role. We are a volunteer organization, and people come and go as their time allows. If we have a number of individuals cross-training for various positions, we can make transitions more easily. Change is constant, and it doesn't take long to become fully integrated. Being a volunteer is also a good way to distinguish yourself to the membership, which will help you if you'd like to run for the board of directors in the May election. Like any organization, it helps to pay your dues.

The top-level committees include Activities (Shelley Roberts), Archivist (Joe Rhodes), Building (Don Rhodes), Communication (Don Baker), and Membership (Mike Swift). These committees are special in that these committee heads have power to appoint subcommittee chairs and create new subcommittees as the need arises. We'll focus on some of the committees in later installments of this column. ■

Continued from page 1

SUNDAY, JULY 15

• **11 a.m.–1 pm.:** *Sunday Mtg (Ventana del Soul)*

• **3–4:30 p.m.:** *Atheist Experience TV Show (Ch 10)*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18

• **7 p.m.:** *Bowling Night (300 Austin Lanes)*

THURSDAY, JULY 19

• **7 p.m.–?:** *Happy Hour (Dog & Duck Pub)*

SATURDAY, JULY 21

• **11 a.m.–noon:** *Adopt-a-street Clean Up (Jack-in-the-Box, Burnet Rd. & Anderson Ln.)*

SUNDAY, JULY 22

• **11 a.m.–1 p.m.:** *Sunday Mtg (Ventana del Soul)*

• **3–4:30 p.m.:** *Atheist Experience TV Show (Ch 10)*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25

• **7–9 p.m.:** *Billiards Night (Side Pocket Billiards)*

THURSDAY, JULY 26

• **7 p.m.–?:** *Happy Hour (Dog & Duck Pub)*

SATURDAY, JULY 28

• **9 a.m.:** *Schlitterbahn waterpark outing, see Web site for details*

• **2–3:30 p.m.:** *Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show, see Web site for details*

SUNDAY, JULY 29

• **11 a.m.–1 p.m.:** *Sunday Mtg (Ventana del Soul)*

• **3–4:30 p.m.:** *Atheist Experience TV Show (Ch 10)*

REGULAR LOCATIONS:

• **Ventana del Soul**, 1834 East Oltorf St. at Burseson Rd., 512.707.7447.

• **Dog & Duck Pub**, North of the Capitol, 406 W. 17th at Guadalupe, 512.479.0598. *Informal gathering; food available.*

• **Austin History Center**, 9th and Guadalupe. *Building opens at noon. Lectures are free and open to the public.*

• **Blood and Tissue Center of Central Texas**, 4300 North Lamar Boulevard, 512.206.1266.

• **Thor's Hammer**, 8650 Spicewood Springs #114 (at 183), 512.326.4332.

• **300 Austin Lanes**, 9504 N IH 35, Southbound feeder, just North of Rundberg, 512.834.7733.

• **Side Pocket Billiards**, 10701 N Lamar Blvd., between Rundberg and Braker, 512.834.2742.

• **Mike Swift's house**, log in to the ACA Web site for details.

Unless otherwise indicated, events are open to all atheist and atheist friendly people, regardless of ACA membership status. Check the calendar on the Web site <<http://www.atheist-community.org/calendar>> for last minute changes.



Atheist Community of Austin
 P. O. Box 3798
 Austin, TX 78764
 www.atheist-community.org

ATHEIST EVE

TH DESIGN ©2007

The LOST Atheist...

You look a little fuzzy.

I'm not sure if I believe in god.

So, you're an atheist.

No. I'm not sure what I believe.

Believing means having confidence in a claim. If I'm unsure I believe you're honest—then I don't **Believe** you're honest.

Well...yeah. But you don't believe I'm lying, either.

Irrelevant. An atheist is just someone who doesn't believe a god exists. If you can't say you believe, you're an atheist.

Whatever else you may or may not believe is totally irrelevant.

But what if I still think a god might exist?

It's still irrelevant.

Maintaining the possibility that there **could be** a god doesn't negate the fact that **you can't say you believe** there is a god. And that last part is all that defines an atheist.

So, if I can't say I know there is no god—I'm still an atheist if I **can't say** I believe there **IS** a god?

It's that simple.

THANKS!!! I feel a lot more clear!