

A U S T I N

Atheist

November 2007 • Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin ACA

Volume 1 • Issue 5

INSIDE THE ACA

Starting Something New

—by Don Baker

Last month in this column, I wrote about how the ACA maintains itself over the long run with roles and apprenticeship. In addition to maintaining itself, the ACA has to grow and change with the times. This happens largely through members suggesting new programs and activities for the ACA to take on. So how does a member start something new under the umbrella of the Atheist Community of Austin?

A good thing to do is to circulate the idea and see if others like it or can improve it. Has the idea been tried before? If so, what were the results? How might we improve on the past? Genuinely good ideas have an easy time of finding support. If an idea doesn't succeed at this stage, perhaps a related idea will. Sometimes the time just isn't right for an idea based on the current character of the group.

The next thing to ask is whether the proposed activity falls under

the purview of some existing committee or structure already in place. For example, a new kind of social activity would naturally fit under the activities committee. The activities committee chair should be contacted with the idea in this case. The committee structure and chair listing appears on our Web site at <http://www.atheist-community.org/activism/committees/>. More than likely, a new idea will fall under one of the existing committees who can then act on it.

But what if the activity or program doesn't fit well under the existing committee structure? In such a case, the issue must be brought to the attention of the board. Ideally, it's best to do this through a board member who can act as a champion for the idea and potentially initiate a discussion about it among board members. Bringing up an issue at a board meeting is also fine as long as it gets on the agenda before the meeting. The board



So how does a member start something new under the umbrella of the Atheist Community of Austin?

will want to know the following things before making a decision:

- Is the program or activity compatible with the mission of the ACA and our nonprofit status? Ideally, such an activity should enhance the quality and reputation of the ACA.
- Is the activity a one-time event or something that would be ongoing? One-time events often have timeframes that require fast decisions. Ideally, the ACA should have over a month of lead-time to properly publicize it.
- What volunteer resources does the activity need? Is there someone who will lead the activity or program and who will find the necessary volunteers to make it successful? For long-running activities, is there someone who would

serve as committee head? If an activity is obviously beneficial and/or fun, it is much easier to find volunteers to make it happen.

- What financial resources does the activity or program need? Any expense will need to be budgeted for in advance and justified against the overall ACA budget. Is there a means of recouping the expenses?

While it may seem like a lot of work to bring an idea into fruition, keep in mind that you are helping to change the direction of the ACA as an organization. In return, the activity or program will garner the support of the entire ACA. You will have the support of the community. In making this change, you will have the satisfaction of making a tangible impact for atheism in Austin. ■

In This Issue

<i>Inside the ACA: Starting Something New</i> _____	Cover
<i>"Atheist Longhorns" student group formed at the University of Texas</i> _____	2
<i>Atheist Quotables</i> _____	2
<i>Happy Birthday to the Universe</i> _____	3
<i>Atheism Events in the Greater Community</i> _____	3
<i>ACA Calendar</i> _____	3
<i>Atheist Eve (Cartoon)</i> _____	4

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
Jan. _____	Dec. 1
Feb. _____	Jan. 1
March _____	Feb. 1
April _____	March 1
May _____	April 1
June _____	May 1
July _____	June 1
Aug. _____	July 1
Sept. _____	Aug. 1
Oct. _____	Sept. 1
Nov. _____	Oct. 1
Dec. _____	Nov. 1

“Atheist Longhorns” student group formed at the University of Texas

—by Sandra Jaramillo

A new campus group at the University of Texas at Austin has formed! The Atheist Longhorns had their first meeting on Friday, September 28th. Exceeding all expectations, this gathering was attended by over 50 students. Such a strong turnout illustrates the demand for an atheist outlet at UT. The primary focus of the group is to serve as a social network for campus atheists. They will work to support a positive image for atheism campus-wide through community service

projects and by lending a friendly atheist presence to campus activities. Making use of university resources and connections, the group will be able to attract various lecturers that otherwise would be difficult to get. The Atheist Longhorns hopes to participate in some ACA events as well, including the Adopt-A-Street cleanup.

While there are no official ties between the two groups, the ACA intends to do what it can to foster an atheist presence on a campus that could certainly use

it. We can help greatly by simply getting the word out through the TV and audio shows, and publicizing some of the group's endeavors such as an upcoming lecture by Dan Barker (see Atheism Events in the Greater Community, this issue).

For more information, contact Atheist Longhorns at: atheistlonghorns@gmail.com. The group can be found on the Web at <http://www.myspace.com/atheistlonghorns>. ■

Atheist Quotables...

“I cannot accept any concept of god based on the fear of life or the fear of death or blind faith. I cannot prove to you that there is no personal god, but if I were to speak of him I would be a liar.”

—Albert Einstein

“Death, the most dreaded of evils, is therefore of no concern to us; for while we exist death is not present, and when death is present we no longer exist.”

—Epicurus

“‘Faith,’ said St. Paul, ‘is the evidence of things not seen.’ We should elaborate this definition by adding that faith is the assertion of things for which there is not a particle of evidence and of things which are incredible.”

—E. Haldeman-Julius (from *The Meaning of Atheism*)

“The Church says the Earth is flat, but I know that it is round, for I have seen the shadow on the moon, and I have more faith in a shadow than in the Church.”

—Ferdinand Magellan

“I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue. But as much as I want to believe that, and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural traditions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking.”

—Carl Sagan

“No philosophy, no religion, has ever brought so glad a message to the world as this good news of Atheism.”

—Annie Wood Besant

Happy Birthday to the Universe

—by Don Baker

October 22 marks the birthday of the universe, according to James Ussher, who was Primate of All Ireland between 1625 and 1656. Based on his most famous work *Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* (*Annals of the Old Testament, deduced from the first origins of the world*), Ussher used the Hebrew version of the Bible and its chronologies to compute that the universe must have been created sometime during the evening of October 22 in 4004 BCE. Thus, the universe has just celebrated its 6,011th birthday. Happy birthday!

It is from Ussher and other Biblical scholars who have attempted to compute the age of the universe that we get the various estimates of the age of the universe espoused by the Young Earth Creationists. To them, Ussher was the last word; his estimate, based purely on his favored literary sources, is far superior to estimates based on cosmological observation, the nuclear fuel usage of our own star, geology, or radioactive decay, all of which point to the age of the universe being closer to 14 billion years.

While the scientific estimate will likely never give us an exact date and time of the big bang, we can certainly celebrate the birthday of the universe along with the Creationists. We can use the birthday to remind us of how far some of us have come in understanding the true origins of the universe and appreciate that we have much farther to go in perfecting our understanding of the cosmos. Maybe it's comforting to be a Creationist with certitude in such simple beliefs. But

unfortunately, they miss out on the wonder of the universe. The rest of us are just left to wonder about their unwillingness to appreciate it for the wonderful thing it is. ■

Atheism Events in the Greater Community

Lecture: Dr. Barbara Forrest

Friday, November 2, 7-9pm, Dr. Barbara Forrest, expert witness in the Kitzmiller v. Dover School Board Intelligent Design trial, will give a lecture titled "Creationism's Trojan Horse." CFI Austin is hosting the event at the Monarch Event Center, 6406 North IH-35 Suite 3100. Cost: \$6 to non-members. Web: <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/austin/events/>.

Lecture: Dan Barker

Friday, November 16, 5-7pm, Dan Barker, co-founder of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, will give a talk in the Geology Building, room 2.324 on the UT campus. The Atheist Longhorns are hosting the event. The lecture is free. Plan extra time for parking and navigating the campus. Maps and parking info can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu>. Web: <http://www.myspace.com/atheistlonghorns>.

ACA CALENDAR

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1

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

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2

• 7-9 p.m.: Dr. Barbara Forrest Lecture (Monarch Event Center, 6406 North IH-35 Suite 3100) Hosted by CFI Austin. Cost: \$6.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2

• 7: 30-10 p.m.: Movie Night (Mike Swift's House)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3

• 10-11 a.m.: Blood Drive (Blood & Tissue Center)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3

• 2-3: 30 p.m.: Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show (See Web site for details)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4

• 12: 15-1: 45 p.m.: ACA Lecture Series (Austin History Center). Speaker: Atheist Longhorns. Meet members of the new UT student group. Free.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4

• 3-4: 30 p.m.: Atheist Experience (Channel 10)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4

• 5 p.m.-?: Meet-up after The Atheist Experience (IHOP)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11

• 10-11 a.m.: Board Meeting (Romeo's (outside))

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11

• 11 a.m.-1 p.m.: Regular Sunday Meeting (Romeo's)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11

• 3-4: 30 p.m.: Atheist Experience (Channel 10)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11

• 5 p.m.-?: Meet-up after The Atheist Experience (IHOP)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15

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

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16

• 5-7 p.m.: Dan Barker Lecture (Geology 2.324, UT Campus) Hosted by Atheist Longhorns. Free.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17

• 11 a.m.-12 p.m.: Adopt-a-street Clean Up (Jack-in-the-Box, Burnet Rd. & Anderson Ln.)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17

• 2-3: 30 p.m.: Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show (See Web site for details)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

• 11 a.m.-1 p.m.: Regular Sunday Meeting (Romeo's)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

• 3-4: 30 p.m.: Atheist Experience (Channel 10)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

• 5 p.m.-?: Meet-up after The Atheist Experience (IHOP)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25

• 11 a.m.-1 p.m.: Regular Sunday Meeting (Romeo's)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25

• 3-4: 30 p.m.: Atheist Experience (Channel 10)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25

• 5 p.m.-?: Meet-up after The Atheist Experience (IHOP)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29

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

REGULAR LOCATIONS:

• **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.

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

• **IHOP**, 707 E. Cesar Chavez St. (at I-35) downtown.

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

• **Romeo's**, 1500 Barton Springs Rd. South of Town Lake.

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

All anyone has to do is look at the world to see that it's the handiwork of an intelligent designer. **It's perfectly suited to support human life**—and the odds of that must be one in a hundred, hundred bajillion or something. If you wanted a place for humans to live **this world couldn't be any more perfect!** Anyone can see it's **completely meant for us...**



Of course we need God's salvation. All anyone has to do is look at the world to see how **messed up** it is. When Adam sinned, we had to leave Eden, then the **perfect world we had was gone.** Now we have death, cancer and terrible natural disasters. Luckily, God has made a **much better place** for us: Heaven. **If we just believe.**

