

A U S T I N

Atheist

May-June 2008 • Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin **ACA**

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2008–2009 ACA Board of Directors

—by Matt Dillahunty

On Sunday, May 1, the ACA held its annual elections to decide the 2008–9 board of directors. As this was the first Sunday of the month, we made use of our standing reservation (normally reserved for our monthly lecture series) at the Austin History Center. Members began arriving at around noon, and the election began at around 12:30 p.m.

Current ACA Secretary Mark Loewe oversaw the proceedings while current Membership Committee Chair Mike Swift assisted, by ensuring that candidates were eligible and that members were presented with ballots.

Matt Dillahunty was re-elected as ACA president and Don Rhoades is the newly-elected vice president. Don has served the board for years, as director, co-chair, treasurer and chair for several committees. He is an excellent choice to fill this vital position. He'll be taking over for Don Baker, who

has done a stellar job as ACA vice president for the past two years.

The remaining seven directors positions were filled by returning ACA directors; Mike Swift, Mark Loewe and Don Baker as well as newly elected directors; Lisa Mais, Shelley Roberts, Sandra Sythe and John Iacoletti.

Four of the current directors will not be returning to serve on this year's board, though they'll all likely continue working with the ACA as time permits. We should all take a moment and thank Steven Elliott, Joe Rhodes, Ashley Perrien and Shilling Sythe for their contributions to the ACA over the past year (some of them have served for several years).

Shilling organized the first "Godless Pub Crawl" (arguably our most successful event of the year) as well as our recent demonstration at the Capitol for the National Day of Reason. Ashley Perrien has served the board on several



ACA 2008-2009 board. Front row: Mark Loewe, Shelley Roberts, Lisa Mais, John Iacoletti. Back Row: Don Rhoades (vice president), Matt Dillahunty (president), Sandra Sythe, Mike Swift (treasurer), Don Baker (secretary).

different occasions, in addition to his role as host and co-host of the *Atheist Experience*. Steve and Joe have been producing the television program for many years, in addition to their responsibilities on the board—including administration (along with Don Baker) of the ACA Web site. Steve is a former co-chair and Joe is a former treasurer. They'll both be continuing with the television program, along with new producers Shelley Roberts and Frank Paschal.

I'm honored to return as the president of the ACA. It's been a privilege serving with the 2007–8 Board and I'm very excited about the newly elected board of directors. As a volunteer organization, we live and die based on those who are willing to devote time to

service—and I'm extremely grateful for those who are willing, able and capable of doing so.

Finally, as always, if you have suggestions, concerns, recommendations for the organization or any other business that requires the board's attention, feel free to contact me directly at: president@atheist-community.org. ■

[During the May 11, 2008, board meeting, the offices of secretary and treasurer were appointed from within the board. Mike Swift was appointed treasurer and Don Baker was appointed secretary. These appointees will be confirmed by an election of the membership at the June 1 (lecture) meeting.]

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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 Dillahunt

Vice President

Don Rhoades

Treasurer

Michael Swift

Secretary

Don Baker

Directors

John Iacoletti

Mark Loewe

Lisa Mais

Shelley Roberts

Sandra Sythe

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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

National Day of Reason Rally

—By Don Baker

On May 1, the ACA held a small lunchtime rally at the Texas State Capitol in support of the National Day of Reason. The National Day of Reason, held on the first Thursday of May, is a free thought event in response to the National Day of Prayer. The National Day of Prayer is a congressionally recognized event that has its origins in the red scare that also gave us our national motto of “In God we Trust” and its mandated appearance on our currency, the addition of “under God” in the pledge, and other symbolic ways of distinguishing ourselves from those evil “godless communists.” Ironically, it is the “godless atheists” who have enough patriotism to challenge these efforts on Constitutional grounds. These government-sponsored religious efforts are clearly an establishment of religion prohibited by the First Amendment.

The National Day of Prayer has been co-opted by James and Shirley Dobson and is largely used to conflate the state with their narrow form of conservative Christianity. The national group has spawned many different local groups across the country. In Austin, local groups have held prayer rallies in parks and at the State Capitol. We support individuals and groups using public spaces for prayer, which is Constitutionally-protected free speech, also protected by the First Amendment. Where such events might run into trouble is if there is excessive government involvement in them. In Austin, this has not been a problem, so we have generally not attempted to interfere with or protest the events there. If anyone is aware of violations of church-state separation in Austin, we would like to know about them, and we will respond appropriately.

In recent years, the National Day of Reason (www.nationaldayofreason.org) has become a free thought response to the National Day of



Above: “The south side of the Capitol, where we hold our rallies.”

Right: The National Day of Prayer event in the “shark tank” at the Capitol.



Prayer with a positive message. The Day of Reason is, in part, “to inspire the secular community to be visible and active on this day to set the right example for how to effect positive change.” The National Day of Reason has promoted blood drives and other community service activities.

For a number of years, the ACA has used the National Day of Prayer day as a good excuse to exercise our own free speech rights in favor of reason and to promote church-state separation. We have held rallies on the south side of the Capitol. Generally, we hold up signs, wave at cars, and chat with the pedestrians. This year, we adopted a National Day of Reason theme to our rally. The rally was organized by Shilling Sythe. Due

to its last minute publicity, the event only drew about seven ACA members. While our effort was small this year, it did have an impact. ACA members had a brief interaction with Governor Rick Perry, though it’s not clear whether our message got across. This year, a relatively small prayer event occurred in the “shark tank” on the north side of the Capitol. The prayer event seems to get smaller every year, which perhaps is related to people better community understanding of how events like this are sometimes used to violate the separation of church and state. We will likely continue to do a rally on the first Thursday in May for the foreseeable future as it is a great way to advance our mission in a uniquely patriotic way. ■

Committee Head Changes

—By Don Baker

ACA has a somewhat complicated procedure for changing the guard from one board to the next. For a brief time, both boards are active, which provides an ideal time for the board to re-assess the volunteers who chair top-level committees. As you recall, subcommittees are largely under the purview of top-level committees, so there will likely be a trickling down of changes over the next few weeks.

At the May 11, 2008, board meeting, the following top-level committee heads where designated:

- The **Activism Committee** will continue to be headed by Shilling Sythe.
- The **Activities Committee** will now be headed by Sandra Sythe. Thanks to Shelley Roberts for her service as head of this committee.
- Joe Rhodes will continue as **Archivist**.
- Don Rhoades will also continue as the **Building Committee** head.
- Matt Dillahunt will serve as the new head of the **Communications Committee**. Thanks to Don Baker for his prior service in that role.
- Mike Swift will continue as head of the **Membership Committee**.

The list of committees, subcommittees and committee heads is available on the ACA Web site at www.atheist-community.org/activism/committees/. If you have suggestions or you would like to help out with any of the committees, you can contact the appropriate person at the previously mentioned Web page. ■

Special Events for June

The ACA Lecture Series will host State Representative Donna Howard on June 1, 12:15 p.m. at the Austin History Center. She will talk about how the legislature has been clogged with religious-based bills.

On June 14, ACA will have a booth at the **Gay and Lesbian Pride Festival**. The event runs from noon to 7 p.m. and volunteers are requested. Contact Don Baker.

Mike Swift will host the **ACA Summer Solstice Party** at his home from 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. on June 21. Please RSVP and see the Web site for more information.

Atheist Quotables... ””

“We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes.”

—Gene Roddenberry (1921–1991)

“Creationists make it sound like a ‘theory’ is something you dreamt up after being drunk all night.”

—Isaac Asimov (1920–1992)

“Why should I allow that same God to tell me how to raise my kids, who had to drown His own?”

—Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899)

““

ACA CALENDAR

SUNDAY, JUNE 1

• **12:15-1:45 p.m.:** *ACA Lecture Series* (Austin History Center)
Representative Donna Howard on Religion and the Texas Legislature; Free

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

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

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

SUNDAY, JUNE 8

• **10:30-11:30 a.m.:** *Board Meeting* (Romeo's (outside))

• **11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.:** *Regular Sunday Meeting* (Romeo's)

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

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 12

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

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

• **12-7 p.m.:** *ACA Booth at Pride Festival* (Auditorium Shores)

SUNDAY, JUNE 15

• **11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.:** *Regular Sunday Meeting* (Romeo's)

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

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

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

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

• **3-12 p.m.:** *Summer Solstice Party* (Mike Swift's House)
Please RSVP. See Web site.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

• **11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.:** *Regular Sunday Meeting* (Romeo's)

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

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 26

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

SUNDAY, JUNE 29

• **11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.:** *Regular Sunday Meeting* (Romeo's)

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

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

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.

• **El Arroyo**, 1624 W. 5th near Mopac (look for the blue bus)

• **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 <www.atheist-community.org/calendar> for last minute changes.



Atheist Community of Austin

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Austin, TX 78764

www.atheist-community.org

ATHEIST EVE

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"God talks to me all the time through a still small voice. I hear him talk to me about my kids..."
--christianblogs.christianet.com, posted 10/10/07

"Laney told authorities that God told her to kill her children."
--cnn.com, 5/13/2003

"Walters says the reason why did she not stop [during a Sheriff's pursuit] was that she felt the presence of God telling her to keep driving."
--www.wftv.com, 4/12/2006

"The most obvious symptoms of a psychotic disorder are hallucinations and delusions. Hallucinations are sensory perceptions of things that aren't actually present, such as hearing voices... Delusions are false beliefs that the person refuses to give up, even in the face of contradictory facts. Schizophrenia is an example of a psychotic disorder."
--www.clevelandclinic.org

"...brain scans show that areas of the brain that process sound and store memories appear more active during auditory hallucinations, as if previous experiences were being replayed."
--In Your Head: Hearing Voices, William Lee Adams, Psychology Today Magazine, Jan/Feb 2007

"...benevolent voices would lead to elation and engagement."
"...the experiences were too real to be symptoms for her. Muller-Lyer illusion was used to explain how ordinary people could be misled by their minds and something that looked real might not be real (normalising strategy)."
"...she was also asked to record the voices she heard with a tape-recorder. She recorded nothing and started to realise that the voices she heard did not really exist."
--Cognitive-behavioural Therapy of Psychosis: an Overview and 3 Case Studies From Hong Kong, RMK Ng, M Cheung, L Suen

I'm just sayin'...

