



THE HUMANIST CONNECTION

March/April 2010

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 13 at 4:30 p.m.

Book Discussion Group: *Small Is Beautiful; Economics as if People Mattered* (Schumacher). New members are encouraged to join. Meet at Angelo's Pizza.

Saturday, March 20 at 1:30 p.m.

Peace March. This date marks the 7th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Meet in the JC Penney parking lot facing Canby.

Sunday, March 28 at 2:00 p.m.

Film: *Letting Go of God.* A humorous monologue by comedian Julia Sweeney chronicling her search for God. She discovers that to accept the truth leads to surprising revelations. Redding Library.

Sunday, April 4 at 2:00 p.m.

Group Discussion: *How We Believe.* Discussion moderated and led by Shelly Godfroy. Because of the Easter holiday, we will meet at a local restaurant. Check the calendar online or call 472-1617 to find out more.

Sunday, April 11 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Sewing Bee – Cut, iron, and sew shopping bags for our fundraiser at the Whole Earth Festival. No sewing experience needed. *Many hands make light work*, as grandma used to say! Meet at the Mitchells' house.

Saturday, April 17 at 4:30 p.m.

Book Discussion: *Tao Te Ching.* Meet at Angelo's Pizza.

Saturday, April 24, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Whole Earth Festival

We'll be participating for the second year in this wonderful festival to raise awareness of local and global environmental issues. Volunteer to work a shift in the booth or just stop by to say "hi" and buy a raffle ticket for our basket of organic goodies.

Schedule is subject to change. Check our website at <http://www.humanistpeacesociety.org> for the most current information on programs, dates and times.

Filling Empty Bowls

The Humanist Society has begun work on an exciting new fundraising project. Called "Empty Bowls," the purpose of this fundraiser is to fight hunger.

The premise is simple. Participating artists create and donate bowls for a fundraising event. Contributing artists - from school children to seasoned professionals - may donate as many or few bowls as they wish.

At the event, guests choose a handmade bowl to keep as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world. In exchange for the bowl and a simple meal of soup and bread or salad, guests contribute a suggested minimum donation.



100% of the event's proceeds are donated to hunger-fighting organizations. Our fundraiser will benefit

People of Progress as well as an international charity, yet to be determined.

We Need Co-Sponsors

To make this program a reality and a success, we need help. Co-sponsors can donate time or money toward putting on the event. In addition to coordinating the event, we will need people to help work on the day of the event, to cook, supervise bowl and ticket sales, set-up and clean-up, and more.

Our first organizational meeting will be held Sunday, March 21 at 1:00 p.m. at the Redding Library. If filling the world's Empty Bowls is a project you'd like to get involved with, join us at the meeting or email us at steadman@humanistpeacesociety.org.

Canned Food Drive

Our group will be collecting canned goods for the People of Progress on an ongoing basis. Bring your contributions to any meeting for collection.

There is No "Planet B"

Spring officially begins on March 20, and all around us the Earth is beginning to bloom. The change of the seasons always rekindles an appreciation for the beauty and marvel of the Earth and the cycle of life. And of course, it's also time to start growing things.

Humanism is a philosophy that embraces the Earth. We are a group of unabashed tree-huggers. And the reason behind that is simple: without the Earth, there is no human life - there is no "Planet B" we can move to.

Right now, so much of modern society is not only out of touch but completely at odds with the natural world. Our American way of life threatens our very survival. It must - and will - change. The question before us is whether we will assist in the change or resist until it is too late to maintain human life. So much of the way we currently feed ourselves and others depends on unsustainable practices such as the overuse of petroleum products and energy, environmental depredation, overuse of pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, synthetic hormones and so on.

What we can do right here and now to affect this is to change our own behavior. **Stop participating in industrial agribusiness.** It really is that simple.

Plant a garden in your yard. Feeding yourself from your own home-grown produce is satisfying on many levels. First, you are opting out of the industrial food supply. Second, you are getting fresh air and exercise. And third, you are on the path to self-sufficiency. It takes time to master the art of growing produce in your unique micro-climate. The time to start on this road is now.

Buy whatever produce you don't grow at a farmer's market. Redding has several. Go to <http://www.shastagrowersassociation.com/> for more information.

Alternately, sign up with a CSA - Community Sponsored Agriculture. With these arrangements, you pay a set fee each month in return for a box of seasonal, local

organic produce. See <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

Look for locally-raised meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs. These can be more challenging to find. Some may be found at farmers' markets, and there is a list of farmers and ranchers at http://www.healthyshasta.org/healthy_eating.php

Some people complain about the higher cost of locally-grown, organic food. What we need to recognize is the hidden costs of big agribusiness. These corporations are funded by taxpayer subsidies and they use tremendous amounts of fossil fuels while destroying the environment. And the foods they raise have been demonstrated to be significantly less healthful and nutritious than organic alternatives. Cheap food is a bad bargain, and bad for the Earth.

Whole Earth Festival

The Humanist Society will once again have a booth at the Whole Earth Festival. We plan to have fabric shopping bags for sale this year.

Our goal is to cut the use of plastic bags for groceries and other shopping trips. Right now, there is a huge mass of plastic floating in the Pacific Ocean. Plastic debris causes the deaths of more than a million seabirds every year, as well as more than 100,000 marine mammals. And a 2009 study has found that as plastics break down in the sea they release potentially toxic substances not found in nature and which could affect the growth and development of marine organisms.

In addition to donations of fabric (1/2 yard or more, preferably) we need volunteers for:

- Cutting fabric
- Pinning and ironing
- Sewing bags
- Set up and/or take down the booth, answer questions about humanism, or sell bags.

For more information or to volunteer, contact President Elisabeth Steadman at steadman@humanistpeacesociety.org.

Separation of Church and State Weakened by Court Decisions

Atheist and church-state separationist Michael Newdow brought two lawsuits – one challenging the use of “under God” in the pledge and the second objecting to the words “In God We Trust” on US currency.

In a 2-1 decision in *Newdow v. Rio Linda Union School District*, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld against an Establishment Clause challenge the Pledge of Allegiance, including its reference to God, and the statutorily authorized practice of teachers leading students in the pledge each day. The majority, in a 60 -page opinion, said:

We hold that the Pledge of Allegiance does not violate the Establishment Clause because Congress' ostensible and predominant purpose was to inspire patriotism and that the context of the Pledge—its wording as a whole, the preamble to the statute, and this nation's history—demonstrate that it is a predominantly patriotic exercise. For these reasons, the phrase "one Nation under God" does not turn this patriotic exercise into a religious activity

Accordingly, we hold that California's statute requiring school districts to begin the school day with an "appropriate patriotic exercise" does not violate the Establishment Clause even though it permits teachers to lead students in recitation of the Pledge.

In 2002, the 9th Circuit in another case invalidated on Establishment Clause grounds a different school's pledge-recitation policy. Ultimately that holding was reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court on standing grounds. In reaction to the 9th Circuit's opinion, Congress reenacted the Pledge with findings detailing secular reasons for it. (P.L. 107-293). The

majority pointed to this history to distinguish its earlier holding.

Judge Reinhardt filed a strongly-worded 133-page dissent. He said in part:

[N]o judge familiar with the history of the Pledge could in good conscience believe, as today's majority purports to do, that the words "under God" were inserted into the Pledge for any purpose other than an explicitly and predominantly religious one.... Nor could any judge ... seriously deny that carrying out such an indoctrination in a public school classroom unconstitutionally forces many young children either to profess a religious belief antithetical to their personal views or to declare themselves through their silence or nonparticipation to be protesting nonbelievers, thereby subjecting themselves to hostility and ridicule.



It is equally clear that no judge ... could legitimately rely on a 2002 "reaffirmation" to justify the incorporation of the words "under God" into the Pledge ... as if the finite act in 1954 of transforming a purely secular patriotic pledge into a vehicle to promote religion, and to indoctrinate public schoolchildren with a belief in God, had never occurred.... In doing so [in 1954], we abandoned our historic principle that secular matters were for the state and matters of faith were for the church. The majority does so again today, sadly, by twisting, distorting, and misrepresenting the law, as well as the issues that are before us.

Today's majority opinion will undoubtedly be celebrated, at least publicly, by almost all political figures, and by many citizens as well, without regard for the constitutional principles it violates and without regard for the judicial precedents it defies and distorts.... [T]o the joy or relief ... of the two members of the majority, this court's willingness to

abandon its constitutional responsibilities will be praised as patriotic and may even burnish the court's reputation among those who believe that it adheres too strictly to the dictates of the Constitution or that it values excessively the mandate of the Bill of Rights.

If a majority of the populace comes to believe in a patriotism that requires the abdication of judicial responsibility, if it comes to accept that we can only honor our nation by ignoring its basic values, if it comes to embrace a practice of bringing together the many by forfeiting the rights of the few, then we clearly will have imposed an untenable burden not only on our nation in general but on the judiciary in particular.... I do not doubt that many Americans feel bound together by their faith in God, but whatever beliefs may be shared by a majority of our citizens, it is respect for the rights of minorities and for the Constitution itself that must bind us all.

The court also rejected an Establishment Clause challenge to the inscription of "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins and currency. It relied on a 1970 decision by the 9th Circuit that held the motto is patriotic or ceremonial, not theological or ritualistic. The court also rejected a challenge under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The court rejected on standing grounds plaintiff Michael Newdow's broader claim that the mere adoption of "In God We Trust" as the national motto was unconstitutional. Judge Reinhardt concurred only in the result.

Newdow said he plans to appeal to an expanded 11-judge panel of the appeals court and then to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary. For information or to help, visit <http://www.restorethepledge.org>.

Humanist CafePress Store

Buy humanist t-shirts, mugs, and other goodies...your purchases support the Humanist Society. Check out our store at <http://www.cafepress.com/humanists>.

Join the Humanist Society Now!

Your support is needed. We rely you to help us put on our regular programs such as films, and create a presence at community events. Your membership dollars helps defray our printing costs, too.

If you are not already a member, we invite you to join. Annual membership is just \$24 per person. Membership benefits include:

- Members may receive a printed newsletter (at your discretion)
- Members are invited to attend special events
- Members can vote on Society matters
- Members are eligible to hold Office

Donation and Membership Application Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/ZIP _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Enclosed is my check payable to the Humanist Society, which I am enclosing for the following:

- \$24 Annual Membership
- \$48 Family Membership
- \$100 Sustaining Member
- I am sending a donation of \$_____

Mail to: P.O. Box 93, Shasta Lake, CA 96019