

Mid Ohio Atheists

A Newsletter for Atheists in the Mansfield Area

EIGHTEENTH ISSUE

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Highway Cleanup

The Mid Ohio Atheists Adopt-a-Highway program was a success this year. We had our fourth & final cleanup Saturday, October 22nd. We met in the parking lot of the Ohio State Highway Patrol post on South Main Street.



Five people came to the pickup. We were able to have one driver and two teams of two people each. Although this was the smallest turnout we ever had, we were able to pick up 11 bags of trash in the span of just 2 hours. The crews said there was very little litter to pick up. This just shows how well the crews picked up the last time.

I want to thank all the people who participated in this effort during the year. It's thanks to people like you that will make our organization successful.

The next cleanup will be sometime late in April of next year.

- Ron Stephens

November Meetup

We will be meeting at the Ocean Buffet again for November's Sunday morning meetup. The meetup will be on November 20th at 11:00 AM. We have met here several times before and have always had a good time.

We will be discussing the billboard campaign and fund raising for that campaign. We will also be talking about becoming a nonprofit organization. This is something we have decided to do to further the aims of our group.

Michael Adams, Drenn Workman, and myself have volunteered to be the directors for the group. We will be filing the paperwork with the State of Ohio in order to become incorporated and will be writing the constitution and bylaws for the group. We want to get this done by the end of the year. The name of the group will be changed to Mid Ohio Atheists Incorporated.

We plan to start having membership dues. The amount of the dues are not settled yet but they will not be very much. Dues for students and people with a financial hardship will be discounted.

We will also be discussing a food drive for the holidays with the proceeds going to a secular food pantry in the area. So many people emphasize toys at this time of year without remembering children need food as well. Grant Totman will be organizing the food drive.

- Ron Stephens

Holiday Party

For our December monthly meeting, we will meet at noon on the 18th for a celebration of the season, family, and friendship at Michael & Brenda Adams' home in Shelby for a pot-luck lunch.

Bring a covered dish and whatever you wish to drink. Turkey and ham will be provided. Just ask one of the members if you need directions.



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Billboard Campaign Coming Soon!

The billboard campaign that was first just a dream for all of us is finally becoming reality. The billboard designs have been finalized and sent to the printer. They will be put on display around Mansfield starting the week of November 28th. They are scheduled to be up through most of the month of December, coming down just before Christmas. We are also very proud that American Atheists (AA) has joined with Mid Ohio Atheists in erecting the three billboards in the Mansfield area.



The first billboard is a reply to the McElroy Road Church of Christ billboards that were put up last summer. These billboards became notorious because they made two statements that atheists would agree with also. The first statement, "There is no God", and the second, "Don't believe everything you hear", are certainly statements that our members claim are true.

This billboard, which is sponsored by American Atheists, will present the same two statements but will have American Athe-

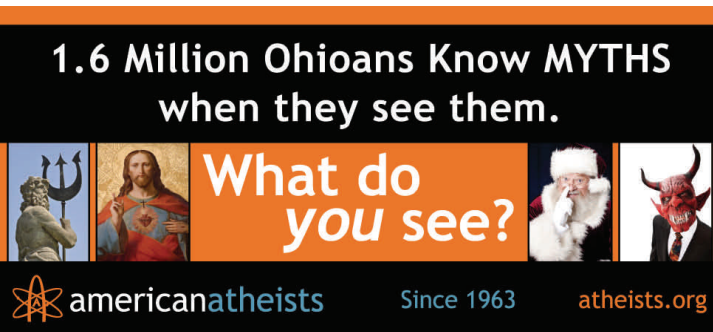


ists' and Mid Ohio Atheists' websites and logos at the bottom.

The second billboard will be one of our own design. This billboard will say "Don't believe in god? Neither do we!" It will also have our web address. We are hoping to reach many other atheists in our area with this billboard. We know they are out there as has already been proven by the number of people who contact us when we appear in the newspaper.

The third billboard will be the American Atheists' Christmas billboard. AA specially modified the billboard for Ohio. Their original billboard will be displayed at the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel in New York City for a second year in a row.

We are grateful to have received the billboard design from David Silverman, president of American Atheists, who is allowing us to put this up in Mansfield.



Our billboards are already receiving national attention even before they are physically display through the [Friendly Atheist blog](#) by Hemant Mehta.

Mid Ohio Atheists wishes to thank all the people who have contributed ideas, money, or both to this effort. Most of the money has come from our membership but we have had online donors from as far away as Germany. Without all of you this wouldn't be possible.

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The Spiritual but not Religious Person

By Scott McPeak

"I'm not really a religious person but I am a spiritual person."

I always cringe when I hear this phrase because it usually means the conversation is about to turn to miracles, butterflies, fairies, Angels and a whole load of pseudo religious or new-age nonsense.

As freethinkers our primary goal should be to educate our community for the benefit of all mankind.

Lately I have changed my point of view.

According to Wikipedia:

Spiritual is - concerning matters of the spirit.

Spirit is - 'well, any number of things depending on which definition you choose," Breath, Soul, Emotion.

The definition I like from Wikipedia is "The spirit of a living thing usually refers to or explains its consciousness."

Consciousness is a great place to start a rational conversation. We can work with this.

With most people you will not get this quality of definition. Their eyes will glaze over and you will get something along the lines of "there may be something out there but I don't know what it is and I don't think anybody else does either".

To me this represents the "light beer" sales approach. You know the phrase, "Great taste less filling." It allows all the warm fuzzy angel-wing feelings of religion without all the "Lucifer will burn the flesh off your body" or "kill every man woman and child in the city", feeling.

On the surface it seems that these people have just thrown out belief in the standard dogma, for something new age. But,, is this a first step towards something more meaningful? I personally believe that this is the first step to a rational outlook. They have compartmentalized their belief (not rare) to the point where they can believe in the wonders of miracles without having to accept the acts of violence, intolerance, and hatred that religion entails. They have realized that the sales patter can't possibly be right so the conscious mind rebels at embracing it.

Remember when your Mother told you, "You can catch more flies with Honey than Vinegar?" This is where we need to reassure them that they are on the right path to wisdom. This is where we as friends need to engage them in the wonders that science holds. This is where we need to reassure them that they are not losing anything by following the rational course, but instead are gaining a whole new understanding of the Universe.

Which is more enthralling, the myth of creation where god magically made the earth the sky and all the animals in one week, or ten minutes spent browsing Carl Sagan's Cosmos series. You can't observe the open maw of an active volcano, the true size of the expanding universe, or the birth and development

of a fellow primate without experiencing a sense of wonder.

Instead of making them uncomfortable with a berating of their confused beliefs, we should seize this as an opportunity to usher them into the 21st Century of science and wonder. After all, didn't they agree to meet us half way when they gave up the dogma? Shouldn't we as rational people do our part to help them replace what they have left behind?

As freethinkers our primary goal should be to educate our community for the benefit of all mankind. We may never find rationalism with a fundamentalist

I will at least try to plant the seeds of scientific thought in someone who just may be ready to accept it

minister but when a non religious "spiritual" person is asking our opinion, our goals should be clear.

Perhaps in the future when someone says, "I am not religious, but I am spiritual," instead of jamming a pencil in my ear and bracing my psyche for the fairies and unicorns, I will use this as an opening to explore what they really mean. And more to the point, how I can help.

I will at least try to plant the seeds of scientific thought in someone who just may be ready to accept it.

The Plastic Façade

By Drenn Workman

Façade: *An artificial or deceptive front.*

Plastic: *Marked by artificiality or superficiality; synthetic*

The Artificial or Synthetic Front.

I am very familiar with the plastic front, the plastic smile, I wore it for many years as a worker in the retail sector. I served customers with a smile, greeting them day after day, finding this or that product. Even the most rude customer had to be treated with a friendly demeanor as the motto says "The customer is always right." Sometimes it was so trying that your face felt like it might crack from the strain of maintaining the façade.

Your face was not the only part of you that was strained. Your psyche ...

Psyche: *The mind functioning as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body's responses to the social and physical environment.*

... suffered as well.

Pent up anger, agitation, ignored when

maintaining the plastic front, built up, failing expression. There were times when you felt like reaching out and

Expressing anger is a necessary release of emotion.

grabbing the insolent agitator by the collar and shaking them, while demanding an answer to the question "Who the hell do you think you are talking to me like that?!" But you couldn't, not and keep working there.

Expressing anger is a necessary release of emotion. It is part of the maintenance of a healthy psyche. Expressing it appropriately is an art, an art most people do not possess.

The religious must maintain an exuberant countenance in their efforts to lure prospects for indoctrination. This, I know from experience, is a source of great strain. "Living in the spirit" it is

called. Staying focused on the promises of religion while at the same time dealing with the stresses of daily living is extremely difficult. Yet, the façade must be continued, as to lose control would not serve the cause. Anger builds, agitation grows, but it must be closeted, restrained, remain unexpressed.

Where I now work there is such a person. She comes in to work fairly beaming her faith. An eternal smile, a jovial nature, she seems to

float down the aisles. Many have expressed the desire to slap that smile off her face, as they realize it is but plastic, forced to support the cause. As the day progresses there are signs that betray the artificial façade. As desperate as she is to maintain the false front it is nevertheless expressed by small changes in her behavior. For one, do not cross her path as she proceeds down the aisle, for she is like a juggernaut, and will knock you to the floor rather than go around you. I fear someday she will finally explode, expressing pent up anger and agitation in an instant, instead of steadily as we all must.

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You can't be happy all the time. There are ups and downs to every life during a busy day. Anyone who denies this is only attempting to fool themselves. I have to wonder what kind of home life these people must have, for at some time during the day, emotions such as anger must be released. Do they go home and bark at family? Does the spouse pay? Do their pillows suffer repeated beatings at night? Anguish and frustration can tear a person apart. A breaking point will eventually be approached. A high price is paid for maintaining a public façade.



So, now God ain't mad at us anymore?