The ACA will be chartering a cruise boat on Town Lake on Saturday, September 23rd, 2006, 6-8pm. We’ll have the boat to ourselves to chat, picnic, and watch the bats emerge from the Congress Avenue bridge. The event is organized by Joe Zamecki and Marla Repka. More info is on page 4. On this front page however, we feature a photo of the boat, “The Silent Star.” To see a larger, in color photo, go to: www.capitalcruises.com.

In this issue we feature several interesting things, like a recent item about a news report that was posted on the website of Focus on the Family. Apparently someone wrote a very religious flag-folding ceremony to be read aloud at Air Force memorial ceremonies, funerals, and other events at which the flag is folded. Somehow, that very religious text of the flag-folding ceremony got out to the internet and some rather religious people thought it meant that the US Air Force is in the business of endorsing and promoting Christianity in this way. It turns out that they’re not, and the religious flag-folding text was written by some very creative Christians. Anyway, Focus on the Family and a couple of other well known Christian groups are saying that this is more of the “secularization” of our otherwise Christian culture. They’re steamed. We’ll explore why, and we’ll also take a look at Christianity run amok on the US Air Force. In this case, we have Jewish Americans as our allies. Read about that on page 10.

I made an error in reporting in our last issue, and it was on the front page, so I’ll post the correction here on the front page as well. We do our blood drives at the Blood and Tissue Center of Central Texas, 4300 North Lamar Boulevard, Austin, TX 78756, 512-206-1266, and I reported that we get credits on an account for the ACA, for each pint donated. That’s the old way. The new way is for them to give a coupon to each donor for each pint they give, and each coupon is worth $10 towards uninsured transfusion. They help people for up to $5,000 per patient per year. They cover 10 counties, at 32 hospitals. They can also help people out of the country to the amount of $500. Sometimes a complete blood transfusion can be very expensive. Individual members can donate and keep the coupons for themselves, to use as they see fit, or bring them to a meeting of the ACA, to donate to the group as a whole. If no members of our group need that help in a six month period, we could have it automatically donated to someone outside our group who does need it. For more info on this program: Call the Center at: (512) 206-1266.

Remember that Bible in the case in Houston with the neon lighting? What an old mess that thing was, despite being supported by so many public officials in Harris County. Well a federal appeals court has ruled that the old Bible in case display there in Houston is unconstitutional. This supports that 2004 decision in district court. It’s another sign that many government officials are “seeing the light,” and realizing that such exaggerated displays aren’t jewels of society to be preserved at all costs, but rather are illegal attempts to slowly ruin our secular government, by replacing it with theocracy. More information about all this is on page 6.

In this issue as well, we present an article about one of the more active local Atheist groups and their building. Atheists for Human Rights is based in Michigan, and has a building called the Hub of Atheism. Read all about it on page 9. Here at Atheist Community News, we’re still working on the ranking of active local Atheist groups. It’s a larger challenge of an article than we thought. We’re also patiently waiting on responses from most local Atheist groups we sent questionnaires to. We’d like to feature more about groups that have buildings like Atheists for Human Rights in Minnesota, and the Alabama Freethought Association, with their Hypatia Hall, and the Atheist Station in Pennsylvania.

Stand-up comedian Jim Gaffigan a Catholic, on Catholic mass: “Catholic mass seems like an eternity. Wrap it up now! I’ve got some sinning to do!”

Separation Victory in Houston!
Atheist Eve is a Freethinker’s favorite cartoon. You can see all the other Atheist Eve cartoons by going to the ACA website and clicking on “Atheist Eve.” The artist is Tracie Harris, a member of the ACA.

The Atheist Community of Austin is a local non-profit educational 501(c)3 organization founded in 1996, and is affiliated with American Atheists Incorporated, the American Humanist Association, and the Council for Secular Humanism, and is a member group of the Atheist Alliance International. The ACA is a democratically run organization. Board meetings are held every second Sunday of the month, and all members are welcome to attend, but only board members may vote at board meetings. Board elections are held every year in May. Regular membership in the ACA costs just $24 per year, and the membership year begins in March. You can join anytime though. We also offer student, family, senior, and life memberships.

Your Newsletter Staff: Editor - Joe Zamecki, joezamecki@hotmail.com, Co-Editor - Marla Repka, marlarepka@hotmail.com. Your ACA Board of Directors: President: Matt Dillahunty, Vice-President: Don Baker, Treasurer: Joe Rhodes, Secretary: Steve Elliott, Directors: Don Baker, Keith Berka, Charles Clark, Matt Dillahunty, Steve Elliott, Mark Loewe, Don Rhoades, Joe Rhodes & Joe Zamecki

The ACA hosts a monthly lecture at the Austin History Center at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. This is a community service, and a means of disseminating information and ideas of interest to Atheists and the greater Austin community. Lecture topics usually focus on core areas of Atheist interest such as science, skepticism, the impact of religion, philosophy, church-state separation, and community activism. Lectures are scheduled on the 3rd Sunday of every month starting at 12:30 pm in the “Reception Room.” Admission is always free. This month’s lecture is being replaced by the Town Lake Bat Cruise on Saturday, September 23.

Atheist Community News is mailed free to paid members of the Atheist Community of Austin as an official publication of the ACA. But of course there is a cost to send it in the mail, so if you’d like to save us that postage, we’ll be glad to take you off of our mailing list, and then you can just pick up your copy at the regular meetings. We’ll try to make sure that there are plenty of copies available at each regular meeting. Just e-mail your editor at joezamecki@hotmail.com or call at (512)382-9283, and we’ll make it so.

We’re also looking for volunteers to help us distribute this newsletter to public places. It’s easy and free, and helps us get our friendly faces out there under the banner of our proud Atheism. To help in that, e-mail your editor. :o)
Editorial...

We are fun-loving people!

The ACA will be chartering a cruise boat on Town Lake on Saturday, September 23rd, 2006, 6-8pm. We’ll have the boat to ourselves to chat, picnic, and watch the bats emerge from the Congress Avenue bridge. The event is being organized by Joe Zamecki, and Marla Repka, and Joe Rhodes.

The boat we’ll be taking is the Capital Cruise’s Silent Star. It’s 60 feet long and covered. It has a bathroom and tables for our use. We can bring food and drinks, but not in any glass containers. Plan on bringing some food and drink. The event should be a relaxing cruise on the lake.

In order to get the boat, we’re going to need to collect money in advance for the event. The price is $17.85 per person. Please pay with exact change (preferably in an envelope) or with a check made out to “ACA”. Mark the check or envelope with the name(s) of the participant(s). Give your payment to an ACA board member at any meeting or ACA event. If the event is canceled, we’ll return your money. As of press time, we have payments from more than half of our passengers.

On the day of the event, meet at 5:30pm at Capital Cruises’ dock, on the river, behind the Hyatt Regency Hotel, on the South side of the river. That’s between the Congress Ave. bridge and the 1st St. bridge, on the South shore. The number for Capital Cruises is (512)480-9264, if you need last minute help, or see their web site. www.capitalcruises.com

We recommend parking at the Austin American-Statesman parking lot, just East of Congress Ave. on the South side of the river. Parking there is free for bat watchers. Alternatively, you can find a metered parking spot on Congress Ave. either South or North of the bridge. Coins shouldn’t be necessary at that time of day, but it’s a further walk.

For more information about the bats, see Bat Conservation International and their web page about the Congress Avenue bat colony: www.batcon.org

Hey check out our beautiful city flag. It’s a bit fuzzy here, but if you look at the top of the center of the shield, you’ll see a small Christian cross. American Atheists Inc. spent years trying to get the City of Austin to drop this religious iconography. It didn’t succeed, so we still have religion in our city flag. Other than that, it’s a nice flag. :o)

It’s amazing to think that in such a culturally diverse city as ours, Christianity still appears on our city seal, like someone’s gang tag graffiti. Does this satisfy evangelical Christians? Of course not. Imagine if our city flag sported the ACA logo in the same spot. We wouldn’t need that, but wouldn’t it be a bit of good for the fundie Christians in our state and local governments? Well they’d never allow it, and would consider it an attack against their religion and culture. It’s a good thing that we Atheists are so docile, friendly and tolerant. Yes, it’s a good thing that Atheists aren’t a significant problem in America. We set a good example of a moral group of people.

One church near Austin has even gone so far as to accept one of our own into their official membership roles. And they’re catching flack for it.

The Austin Atheist Robert Jensen has been attending services at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in North Austin for several months now. Dr. Jensen is also a professor at the University of Texas, and even spoke at an ACA lecture recently.

Dr. Jensen wants to be a member of a Christian church as an Atheist, out of the closet. His motivation seems to be to show by example that Atheists are good people with moral agreements that could amount to him being a secular Christian. The idea of what Christians are, that Atheists are not, has come into discussion. He’s said that he follows the secular teachings of Jesus like love your neighbor and do unto others...all without believing in any actual literal supernatural anything. For most of the congregation and the pastor of St. Andrew’s, this is perfectly sufficient. They’re ok with him being a member.

So in come the higher-ups in the Presbyterian church. The “mission Presbytery,” which is their church governing body, has balked at the proposed membership, calling it “out of order and therefore void.” Obviously they disagree with what many would call the Secular Jesus. (Jesus of Nazareth, as he’s called by his friends at www.atheistsforjesus.com) We wish Dr. Jensen success. JRZ

Now onto a message from Shelley Roberts, an ACA member:

Hey, any ‘swingers’ out there? How ‘bout some softball? Yes, softball. That crazy little game with the vastly oversized baseball. We could sign up for league play for softball and actually compete against all those xians.... We don’t need uniforms, just some basic equipment, and the desire to have fun. We could practice at any time. We just need some regular people. Athleticism and skill not required, but having fun is mandatory. Seasonal play occurs 5 times a year and is about $400 dollars a season. Traditionally paid for by the players. Uniforms are optional, but team colors of purple (freethought) and black (in your face) have been suggested. A team name is a good idea, and can be corporate, (ACA) or original (Heathen Strikers). Being in shape is not necessary, but helpful. League play is in the evening, and Sunday through Friday. However, we can practice on some Saturday nights. (or whenever the temperature is bearable.) The do have tournament play, but that is usually reserved for first place teams in each division. The leagues are novice/recreational, intermediate, high, and extreme. We would start at the novice/recreational (D) league and can stay there indefinitely. I would like to make this a regular event. Call or e-mail Shelley @ 512.921.9085/SROBERTS1976@austin.rr.com.
At the Austin History Center, at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. They start at 12:30pm in the "Reception Room." Admission is always free, and it's open to the public. This month's lecture is being replaced by our Bat Cruise, Sept. 23, 6-8pm.

---Board Meetings We hold our board meetings on the second Sunday of the month at Romeo's just after the regular meeting that day. All members are welcome, but only board members may vote at board meetings. The board needs your input!

---Happy Hour! We meet for Happy Hour at Ninfa's on 183/Anderson which is just west of I-35 by about a block. It's on the northbound side of 183. If you're coming north on I-35, be sure to take the 183/St. Johns exit, go through St. Johns, and then left onto 183 northbound, under the overpass. Ninfa's is famous for their Tex Mex and Margaritas, aka Ninfaritas.

---Regular Weekly Meetings Sundays at 11:30am at Romeo's Italian Restaurant on Barton Springs Rd. just West of South Lamar. Currently, there is the possibility that we'll be moving our regular meetings to Ventana Del Soul, 1834 East Oltorf St. Let us know what you think.

---TV Show The Atheist Experience is our TV show. It airs on Time-Warner Cable, public access channel 10, from 4:30pm - 6:00pm every Sunday. It's a live call-in talk show, so feel free to call in with comments and questions for the show and their audience. Members of the ACA are also invited to visit the TV studio during the show, as live studio audience members. This show is also repeated, taped, on Tuesdays at 4:30pm on Channel 10. We also need volunteer help on the show from time to time, so if you’re interested in helping out, or if you think you’d like to be a guest on the show, please e-mail: tv@atheist-community.org

---Online Radio Show The Non-Prophets, our online radio show no longer broadcasts through Freethought Radio. We will be a podcast only show for upcoming episodes, and we will continue to discuss whether we wish to relocate to another station soon. In the meantime, please feel free to tune in live at http://nonprophets.gotdns.org and visit our archive to hear recent episodes.

---Public Demonstrations Once in a while, we grab picket signs and cameras and hit the pavement in public on issues of importance to us. Usually these can't be scheduled far in advance, so announcements about demonstrations will likely only be heard at regular membership meetings.

---Outings We like to go places as a group, and see some wonderful things, like a field trip. On Saturday, September 23, 2006, from 6pm-8pm, we’re going to take a Capitol Cruise on Town Lake, and watch the bats in the Congress Ave. bridge emerge. Call the voicemail for more info.

---Blood Drives Once every month and a half or so, we like to give blood. We think the best place in Austin to give is the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center on North Lamar. It’s a big facility, so you usually won’t have to wait long. www.giveblood.org (512) 206-1266

The Atheist Community of Austin
PO Box 3798 Austin TX 78764 Voicemail: (512)371-2911 Website: www.atheist-community.org
The 2006 national convention for the Atheist Alliance was held in Kansas City, Missouri. No word yet on where their 2007 convention will be held. www.atheistalliance.org or:

1-866-HERETIC

From the American Atheists website:  www.atheists.org/convention:

AACON XXXIII – The 33rd Annual National Convention of AMERICAN ATHEISTS

April 6-8, 2007, Seattle, Washington

For more info: (908)276-7300

Speakers include: Phillip Paulson, Atheist Activist and Luigi Cascioli, former candidate for the Catholic priesthood.

The American Humanist Association’s next national conference will be June 7-10, 2007 in Portland, Oregon. We’ll get you more info about that when we get it. The American Humanist Association’s Washington DC office: (800) 837-3792 or: www.americanhumanist.org

In Council for Secular Humanism news, the Center for Inquiry just had a convention on a cruise ship! Is that an awesome idea or what? No news yet on their 2007 conference. www.secularhumanism.org

The Center For Inquiry also has a new online radio show and podcast. Check it out at:

www.pointofinquiry.org
Margie Gerow was once a Catholic nun who went through all the rigors of becoming a nun, and survived the challenges to her logical thinking, and rational living. She’s written books about youth in school learning about the facts and fiction of everyday life. Her “School of Hard Knocks” series gets mentioned at the end of this book, and appears prominently on her website “In the Name of Religion, Handled with Humor” is Margie’s tell-all description of her time as a nun in the Catholic church, and it is definitely based on fact. From brutal physical punishments such as kneeling for hours at a time instead of eating, to the bizarre regulations about avoiding physical contact with other nuns, this is an eye-opening account of old-school Catholic clergy abuse and control. Yes, they abuse their own clergy members, in case you didn’t know.

Margie also tells of corruption she witnessed that we hear about more often, like the adulterous priestly visit when the husband was at work. The good news is that she also witnessed the husband come home early, and much hilarity ensued! She also delves into Catholic Church history and reminds the reader of some well-known but often forgotten hair-raising items of interest in the church. For example it was over a thousand years ago when the church decided to push the altar back, further away from the people, and the priest held mass with his back turned to everyone. The effect was to make the congregation feel even more inferior. To create a Biblical basis for this, where one did not yet exist, they simply changed the Bible. Margie makes it clear to the reader, in a subtle manner, that she’s still quite theistic. She’s into alternative medicine, transcendental meditation, and metaphysics, not to mention what seems to this Atheistic reviewer to be light deism. All in all, “In the Name of Religion, Handled with Humor” is delightful, enlightening, humorous, and personal. The only reason I can’t give this book four stars is that it’s too short. JRZ

Americans United Hails Decision For Upholding Government Neutrality Toward Religion

A federal appeals court has held that a Bible display outside a Texas county courthouse violates the separation of church and state. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled yesterday that a religious memorial outside the Harris County Civil Courthouse violates the First Amendment principle of church-state separation. The ruling in Staley v. Harris County upholds a 2004 district court decision that the display, which prominently features an open Bible illuminated by neon lighting, runs afoul of the Constitution. Americans United for Separation of Church and State argued before the 5th Circuit that the district judge’s ruling should be upheld against an appeal by Harris County officials. “A courthouse should welcome citizens of all religious perspectives and none,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. “This display sent the clear message that Christianity was the government-preferred faith and other Americans are second-class citizens. In a diverse country, that’s unacceptable.”

The display was erected in 1956 by a Christian charity to honor William S. Mosher, a Houston businessman and philanthropist. The memorial includes a glass-topped case housing an open Bible. The monument, as the 5th Circuit noted, faces the main entrance to the Harris County courthouse and is therefore visible to “attorneys, litigants, jurors, witnesses and other visitors to the Courthouse.” In the late 1980s, the memorial was vandalized and the Bible removed. The Bible was later restored to the display by a local official who was elected to office on a platform of melding religion and government. In 1995, Judge John Devine and his court reporter, Karen Friend, solicited private donations to refurbish the memorial and return a Bible to the display. A ceremony commemorating the revived display included Christian ministers offering prayer.

Kay Staley, a citizen of Harris County and an attorney who did business in the courthouse, challenged the display in federal court as blatant constitutional violation. Americans United represented her in the litigation before the appeals court. In its 2-1 ruling, the 5th Circuit concluded that the memorial, because of the actions of Harris County officials, such as Judge Devine, is a government endorsement of Christianity instead of a memorial. The “reasonable observer would conclude,” the Circuit majority wrote, “that the monument, with the Bible outlined in red neon lighting, had evolved into a predominantly religious symbol.” Americans United Legal Director Ayesha N. Khan argued before the 5th Circuit panel last year to uphold the district court’s finding that the display violated the First Amendment principle of church-state separation. “This decision faithfully applies precedent on government-sponsored religious displays,” Khan said. “Harris County officials have unwisely supported a display that long ago turned into a vehicle to promote Christianity.” Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947.

Book Review

“In the Name of Religion
Handled with Humor”

By Margie Gerow, Cover Design: Linda Klimek

ISBN: 1-4259-3578-8

Copyright 2006 Margie Gerow, AuthorHouse Books

79 Pages, Printed in the United States on acid-free paper

Reviewed by Joe Zamecki

Margie Gerow was once a Catholic nun who went through all the rigors of becoming a nun, and survived the challenges to her logical thinking, and rational living. She’s written books about youth in school learning about the facts and fiction of everyday life. Her “School of Hard Knocks” series gets mentioned at the end of this book, and appears prominently on her website www.margiegerow.com

“In the Name of Religion, Handled with Humor” is Margie’s tell-all description of her time as a nun in the Catholic church, and it is definitely based on fact. From brutal physical punishments such as kneeling for hours at a time instead of eating, to the bizarre regulations about avoiding physical contact with other nuns, this is an eye-opening account of old-school Catholic clergy abuse and control. Yes, they abuse their own clergy members, in case you didn’t know.

Margie makes it clear to the reader, in a subtle manner, that she’s still quite theistic. She’s into alternative medicine, transcendental meditation, and metaphysics, not to mention what seems to this Atheistic reviewer to be light deism. All in all, “In the Name of Religion, Handled with Humor” is delightful, enlightening, humorous, and personal. The only reason I can’t give this book four stars is that it’s too short. JRZ
Update on the Abuse that the Virgin Mary Watched Over

Last month we reported that five Texas monks at a monastery in Blanco County, Texas have been charged in a child sex case. We have a bit more information about the case now, and a photo of the supposed crying Mary apparition.

We start by quoting from Austin Cline’s article at About.com:

“This monastery, by the way, is not Catholic — they are a nonprofit organization founded by "Ecumenical Monks Inc" they follow Eastern Orthodox traditions. They aren't actually part of the Eastern Orthodox church though, and don't answer to any other religious institutions. The police want to seize the monastery itself as "contraband" and without a larger institution to help them, the police might succeed”

And now to quote from mysanantonio.com:

The hilltop sanctuary once housed about a dozen monks and drew thousands of pilgrims weekly, but now is largely deserted. Its main drawing card, a painting of the Virgin Mary that was said to cry tears of oil starting in 1985, was seized when dozens of law officers with warrants swarmed the monastery before dawn July 25, 2006.

Getting his first look at the monastery that day, prosecutor Oatman expressed surprise at its state of disrepair and said, via cell phone from there, "How anyone would bring their children up here to get involved with these people is beyond me."

The raid arose from a probation officer’s interview with Samuel A. Greene Jr., founder of the monastery, last year in which Greene reportedly admitted molesting children since the 1970s and said the weeping icon was fake, said Blanco County Sheriff Bill Elsbury.

Tom Flower, an Anglican priest who’s long supported Greene and vouched for the icon’s legitimacy, is still reeling from Greene’s admission that the icon is fake. "I confronted him. I said I want to know the truth, were the tears real or phony? And he said they were phony," a dejected Flower said. "I believed it all these years. I really did. I believed it firmly in my heart. I can't tell you how upset I am."

Investigator W. T. Smith, Sgt. at the Blanco County Sheriff’s Department told Atheist Community News that we can expect new indictments against certain monks at that monastery in the next few years, which will include charges of mail fraud and money laundering. Mail fraud because they’ve spent the last several years snail-mailing appeals for donations based on the Virgin Mary icon that they themselves have declared to be fraudulent. They’re also probably going to be charged with money-laundering because of the illegal things they did with the donations after they received them.

Sgt. Smith also said that the Mary apparition painting is locked up in an evidence locker at the sheriff’s department. He would not comment on how the monks faked the crying, however. He was quoted as saying “It’s just a shame that they [the monks] look at the public like that, and represent God and Christianity that way.”

The five indicted are monastery founder Samuel Alexander Greene, 61; Walter Paul Christley, 44; Hugh Brian Fallon, 40; Jonathan Irving Hitt, 45; and William Edward Hughes, 55. The sheriff’s department said three of them are still incarcerated. The other two have posted bond.

According to investigators some children were sent to this monastery by their parents, others came from similar faith based facilities around the country. According to detectives at least two of the four monks arrested at the monastery fought back when approached. The injuries they sustained are visible in their mug shots.

If convicted the men all face five to 99 years to life in prison.

This Virgin Mary apparition isn’t particularly unique among such apparitions. Here at ACN, we feel that this is a glaring reason why we need to have experts and authorities investigate all religious apparitions. Especially the ones that become highly profitable. Open skepticism can shine the light of truth upon religion, and the real fraud began with “In the beginning...”
Book Review by David Kent

The Plausibility of Life: Resolving Darwin's Dilemma

By Marc W. Kirshner and John C. Gerhart

(Yale University; paperback available Nov 2006; Amazon.com for $12.24

xiii+314 pp., illus., glossary, notes, index

One hundred seventy years ago, the young Charles Robert Darwin was abroad, collecting materials which would produce the most explosive idea of his generation--a verifiable hypothesis of evolution. Two parts of his theory were soon proved beyond a doubt: the theory of heredity and the theory of natural selection. But until recently, phenotypic variability has inspired heated debate.

In this book, Marc W. Kirshner, chair of Harvard Medical School's Department of Systems Biology, and John C. Gerhart, professor in the Graduate School, U-California Berkeley, present clearly and convincingly their theory of facilitated variability. The abundant evidence supporting it, arising only in the last decade, places so-called Neo-Darwinism on a solid basis.

An atheist reader will perhaps relish most the section entitled, "Creationism and Intelligent Design" (pp. 264-71), in which the authors neatly disprove the theses of P. E. Johnson's Darwin on Trial (1993), M. J. Behe's Darwin's Black Box (1996), and J. Wells' Icons of Evolution (2000). The book is an informed, logical, and compelling one. If you read on a high school level, though, The Plausibility of Life will leave you reading on a college level.

The authors present an "account of the dependence of phenotypic variation on genotypic variation, indicating that novelty mostly draws on what is already present in the phenotype, and further indicating the role of conserved components and processes in innovation." To bring the point vividly home, the authors suggest an imaginary meeting between William Paley, of brass watch fame, and his 21st century descendant, who brings an education in modern biology, including genetics, cell and developmental biology, and evolution. After discussion of the question, she would reveal one great and simple truth. "You could never have imagined it," she might say, "but when we finally discovered how life was constructed, it turned out to be nothing like a brass watch or a divine creation beyond human comprehension. The secret lay in understanding the organism on its own terms." I highly recommend this book for your personal library.

--David L. Kent

It’s Choco-Mary! The Latest Virgin Mary Apparition is So Sweet!

At the Bodega Chocolates factory in Fountain Valley, California, Ms. Cruz Jacinto discovered a little pile of dried and hardened chocolate that had leaked out of a vat of chocolate. She picked it up and looked at it. With a little imagination, and a previously held faith in the Virgin Mary, that little blob of waste chocolate has come to life, so to speak.

It’s about two inches high, and Ms. Jacinto, who is an employee at the chocolate shop, says it appears to be Mary holding Baby Jesus in her arms. Wouldn’t you just love to bite the head off of that? Now the discoverer of “Choco-Mary” Ms. Jacinto says her discovery has helped strengthen her faith, at a time when she was about to lose it. She’s quoted as saying “I have big problems right now, personally, and lately I’ve been saying that God doesn’t exist. This has given me renewed faith.” Well we can certainly see how! A glob of oddly-shaped chocolate is just what our world needs right now, what with religious wars scarring our planet and species. Thanks for the help, Choco-Mary! JRZ

A Press Release from Jews for Jesus:

Jews for Jesus and Jackie Mason

August 25, 2006, Ph: 415-864-2600 X 136, e-mail: sueperlman@jewsforjesus.org

Jackie Mason, the comedian, is suing Jews for Jesus over one of their evangelistic pamphlets which features his likeness. The pamphlet, entitled, “Jackie Mason, a Jew for Jesus!?“ is a good natured look at how anyone, Jew or Gentile, can become a follower of Jesus. Mason, in his lawsuit, says that the pamphlet gives the impression that he is a proponent of Jews for Jesus. Jews for Jesus denies this. The pamphlet is satirical in style and intended to point out that even someone as Jewish as Jackie Mason can come to faith in Jesus. Mason describes himself “as Jewish as a matzoh ball or kosher salami. . . “ Jews for Jesus executive director, David Brickner, responded, “Jackie may be as Jewish as a matzoh ball, but Jesus is as Jewish as chicken soup. It is our hope that this issue will not have to go through the courts, [the case has been removed from the Supreme Court of the State of New York to Federal Court] but this is a matter of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We are not claiming Jackie Mason to be a Jew for Jesus. Of course, if he's interested, we're sure Jesus would welcome him as a follower.” Jews for Jesus has hand distributed more than sixty million religious pamphlets on the streets of major cities around the world. Many of the titles deal with contemporary pop culture and personalities. They are distributed for free and invite a response from those who are interested to know more. Jews for Jesus, 60 Haight Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.
Your newsletter staff is intent on discovering everything that sports the label “Atheist,” and here’s one now. That’s right, a death metal band named Atheist. They’re from Sarasota, Florida and they’ve been around for over 20 years, but these days they’re touring mostly in Europe. They’re very popular there. One of the albums is called “Unquestionable Presence.” The cover is below.

Formed by Kelly Shaefer in Sarasota in the mid-eighties, they went through a few name changes over the years. They went from calling themselves “Oblivion” to R.A.V.A.G.E., which stands for “Raging Atheists Vowing A Gory End,” and then eventually “Atheist.” I asked Kelly if they were actually Atheists, thinking that it wasn’t just a clever name. He said yes, they’re Atheists. They recently played in Europe at the “Evolution Fest.” Here’s something else that’s pretty impressive. They’re currently a quartet, but over the years a total of 15 people have been members of the band. They’re now with Starr Factory Records, and doing great! Long Live the Mighty Atheist! www.officialatheist.com Thanks to Kelly for permission to show pics.

Here are some pictures of the Hub of Atheism, which is owned by Atheists for Human Rights in Minnesota. The Hub of Atheism was donated to that group by its current president Marie Castle. It’s a geodesic dome large enough to have a loft upstairs, plenty of room for group meetings downstairs, and plenty of parking as well.

Guest speakers are often invited and discussions tend to go on until after 11 p.m. The library alcove is behind the photographer's position. The library alcove has a comfortable couch, reading lamp, rocker and table with free literature. The coffee pot is always on. The Atheists For Human Rights banner hangs on the second-level loft wall above the meeting room. There are 30 stackable chairs stored near the front door so they can have seating for a good sized group. The wall over the food table has a display of Atheist quotations, Marie Castle is shown placing one of them.

The Hub of Atheism is located at 5146 Newton Ave. N., Minneapolis MN 55430 - (612)529-1200 or 1-866-ATHEIST. Thanks to Marie Castle for assistance and permission to use AFHR’s photos.

Atheists in the Music Scene

Yes Virginia, there is a death metal band called “Atheist.”

Your newsletter staff is intent on discovering everything that sports the label “Atheist,” and here’s one now. That’s right, a death metal band named Atheist. They’re from Sarasota, Florida and they’ve been around for over 20 years, but these days they’re touring mostly in Europe. They’re very popular there. One of the albums is called “Unquestionable Presence.” The cover is below.

Formed by Kelly Shaefer in Sarasota in the mid-eighties, they went through a few name changes over the years. They went from calling themselves “Oblivion” to R.A.V.A.G.E., which stands for “Raging Atheists Vowing A Gory End,” and then eventually “Atheist.” I asked Kelly if they were actually Atheists, thinking that it wasn’t just a clever name. He said yes, they’re Atheists. They recently played in Europe at the “Evolution Fest.” Here’s something else that’s pretty impressive. They’re currently a quartet, but over the years a total of 15 people have been members of the band. They’re now with Starr Factory Records, and doing great! Long Live the Mighty Atheist! www.officialatheist.com Thanks to Kelly for permission to show pics.
Religion in Today’s

One issue is about the text of a flag-folding ceremony.
The text IS religious, VERY religious, but it’s also unofficial.

According to Jason Torpy, President of Military Association of Atheists, and Freethinkers, Focus on the Family is mistaken when they claim that MAAF succeeded in getting the United States Air Force to re-write its flag-folding ceremony. FOTF says on their website (http://www.family.org/cforum/fnif/news/a0041471.cfm) that MAAF somehow convinced the US Air Force to change the text of its flag-folding ceremony to become secular. The incorrect part is that the Air Force ever officially carried this religious text in the first place. It was UNOFFICIAL though. It was actually “a text” erroneously attributed to the Air Force by uninformed Christian individuals.

Even Snopes.com has chimed in on the mistake, which is now a bit of a manufactured mistake. Here’s where you can read about it from them: http://www.snopes.com/military/flagfold.htm

We’d also like to quote from a letter from MAAF Member Chris Anderson regarding flag folding ceremonies, written in November of ’03.

“After researching numerous military regulations and directives as well as U.S. code, I am unable to find any official meaning to the individual folds as stated in this ceremony. Sources of the information regarding this ceremony refer to the United States Air Force Academy web page. I contacted the USAFA protocol office in December 2002 concerning this very ceremony. After months of research and internet correspondence, the USAFA replied that this is not an official ceremony and that its origin is unknown. The USAFA has now removed this version of the ceremony from its web site.”

Here is the unofficial religious version, which the Air Force never actually promoted as official.

1. The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

2. The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.

3. The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world.

4. The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance.

5. The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, “Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong.”

6. The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

7. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

8. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered in to the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on Mother’s Day.

9. The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

10. The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.

11. The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

12. The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, “In God we Trust.” Continued on page 12.
United States Air Force

The other issue is for real, and is very important.

Legal battle to end religious discrimination in United States Air Force

Reprinted with permission from the website of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

The suit seeks to counter attempts, which have persisted for more than a decade, to impose Evangelical beliefs throughout the Air Force. The violations include pressuring non-Evangelical Christian Cadets to listen to proselytizing efforts to forcing them to participate against their will in Evangelical Christian prayers.

The Foundation has offered to withdraw the lawsuit in exchange for the Academy enforcing a ban on the illegal proselytizing and coercion. However, the Air Force has declined to reach a settlement, choosing instead to waste taxpayer dollars on defending its position.

Reverse the Air Force’s Revised Rules on Religious Expression

The Air Force, bowing to political pressure from the Religious Right and its Congressional supporters, recently instituted revised guidelines that allows superior officers to emphasize their religious beliefs to subordinates in a sectarian manner while on duty.

For example, the revised guidelines allow superior officers and chaplains to now offer a public prayer “in Jesus’ name.” This amounts to blatant coercion, as subordinates who do not ascribe to this belief will be forced to acquiesce to prayers they do not believe in or risk running afoul of their commanding officers.

This latest institutional offense against the constitutional safeguards against the exalting of a particular religious faith over others underscores the seriousness of the Religious Right’s undue influence in the United States Armed Forces, as well as its disregard for the rights of others.

End the appointment of religious activists to positions of authority in the United States military.

When persons in position of authority aggressively push a sectarian religious point of view, the message is clear to subordinates: embrace the higher-up’s religious viewpoint or suffer professionally. This has been the case at the United States Air Force Academy in particular violation of this unconstitutional activity.

Military officials hold enormous power over subordinates, who are committed to following the specified chain of command to a degree largely missing from the private sector. Morale suffers when religious coercion occurs that is damaging to the military command structure.

From the Pentagon on down, the military hierarchy must be free of illegal religious proselytizing if the Armed Forces are to function at their optimum, and in accordance with the Constitution.

End the illegal religious coercion of Jewish and other non-Evangelical Christian members of the United States military and military academies.

At the United States Air Force Academy, faculty members have introduced themselves as Evangelical Christians and have encouraged Cadets who are not “born again” to become so. In addition to this being illegal, it is profoundly insulting to individuals who may hold differing deeply felt religious beliefs.

The United States is a nation rooted in respect for religious pluralism, a cherished principle that springs from our democratic ideals. As the United States becomes increasingly religiously diverse, respect for minority beliefs take on even greater importance to the nation’s ability to withstand assaults on our freedom launched by religious totalitarians.

Secure the rights of the “unchurched.” Religious freedom involves more than the right to worship as one pleases. It also includes the freedom to not worship at all. Or to believe.

United States Air Force policy has allowed chaplains and others to continue to engage in the evangelization of the so-called “unchurched” – that is, to seek to convince those that subscribe to no religious group that they should become Evangelical Christians.

But atheists, agnostics, as well as those who believe in some concept of God but prefer not to join an organized faith, are entitled to the same Constitutional protections as the most committed of believers and public worshippers. They are not fair game for religious activists.
Flag Folding Ceremony (The OFFICIAL US Air Force Script)

For more than 200 years, the American flag has been the symbol of our nation's unity, as well as a source of pride and inspiration for millions of citizens.

Born on June 14, 1777, the Second Continental Congress determined that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternating between seven red and six white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation. (1)

Between 1777 and 1960, the shape and design of the flag evolved into the flag presented before you today. The 13 horizontal stripes represent the original 13 colonies, while the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardness and valor; white signifies purity and innocence; and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice. (1)

Traditionally, a symbol of liberty, the American flag has carried the message of freedom, and inspired Americans, both at home and abroad.

In 1814, Francis Scott Key was so moved at seeing the Stars and Stripes waving after the British shelling of Baltimore's Fort McHenry that he wrote the words to The Star Spangled Banner. (3)

In 1892 the flag inspired Francis Bellamy to write the "Pledge of Allegiance," our most famous flag salute and patriotic oath. (3)

In July 1969 the American flag was "flown" in space when Neil Armstrong planted it on the surface of the moon. (3)

Today, our flag flies on constellations of Air Force satellites that circle our globe, and on the fin flash of our aircraft in harms way in every corner of the world. Indeed, it flies in the heart of every Airman who serves our great Nation. The sun never sets on our US Air Force, nor on the flag we so proudly cherish. (3)

Since 1776 no generation of Americans has been spared the responsibility of defending freedom... Today's Airmen remain committed to preserving the freedom that others won for us, for generations to come.

By displaying the flag and giving it a distinctive fold we show respect to the flag, and express our gratitude to those individuals who fought, and continue to fight for freedom, at home and abroad. Since the dawn of the 20th century, Airmen have proudly flown the flag in every major conflict on lands and skies around the world. It is their responsibility ... our responsibility ... to continue to protect and preserve the rights, privileges and freedoms that we, as Americans, enjoy today.

The United States flag represents who we are. It stands for the freedom we all share and the pride and patriotism we feel for our country. We cherish its legacy, as a beacon of hope to one and all. Long may it wave.

(1) From a report Secretary of Congress Robert Thompson wrote to define the Seal of our Nation (1777). (2) Text from President Woodrow Wilson's Flag Day message (1917). (3) Based upon historical facts.

According to WTOV9.com:

Church Forced To Close?

POSTED: 5:08 pm EDT August 10, 2006

Bellaire, OHIO - Residents of Noble Street in Bellaire said what's being called a church it isn't a place of worship at all, but a furniture store operating under a church name.

The Power of Prayer Ministry said their mission is clear, they sell furniture to raise money so they can give away food and things like school supplies and clothing to the needy.

Despite the need in the area, the council said Power of Prayer Ministry isn't operating like a church. Village officials said they've asked the Power of Prayer several times to only sell furniture before and after church services but they've refused the request.

Village leaders said their only recourse is to ask them to shut the doors completely. Power of Prayer members said its simply not right when they just want to help people.

Last month village leaders unanimously passed an ordinance that states the portion of the village Power of Prayer sits on is strictly residential and not to be used for charitable or religious institutions.

Neighbors of Power of Prayer told NEWS9 Thursday that they agree with the ordinance and believe the power of prayer is abusing a church name in order to operate as a business.

The Power of Prayer said even though they are being forced by law to get out, they will fight for what they believe in until they are locked up in jail for it.

ATHEISTS FILE CIVIL RIGHTS SUIT IN "OKLAHOMA OUTRAGE" - SMALKOWSKI PRAYER BULLYING CASE

Web Posted: August 12, 2006

American Atheists filed suit in federal court Friday in a case involving charges of "prayer bullying" and conspiracy to violate the civil rights of an Atheist family.

In November, 2004, Nicole Smalkowski -- a student at Hardesty Oklahoma High School and member of the female basketball squad -- was ordered by her coach to participate in a game-time recitation of the "Lord's Prayer." Ms. Smalkowski, an Atheist, refused and was then banished to the locker room. Days later, following a meeting of school officials, she was punished by being removed from the team.

The suit charges that Nicole and the rest of her family were then made the victims of false accusations and "subjected to public humiliation and distress." Her father, Chester Smalkowski, tried to meet with the School Principal who "struck Plaintiff Chester Smalkowski repeatedly without warning or provocation." Incredibly, a warrant was filed against Mr. Smalkowski who was arrested and scheduled for trial. Officials with the District Attorney's Office in Texas County, Oklahoma then offered a deal where charges would be dropped if the Smalkowski family agreed to leave the jurisdiction. He refused the buckle under to the intimidation.

Represented by attorneys Tom Gungoll and American Atheists National Legal Director Edwin Kagin, Smalkowski endured a five-day trial that included a grilling of the school district superintendent. Mr. Kagin patiently explained to the jurors what Atheism was. Many of the prospective jurors opined that they could not believe the word of an Atheist over that of a god-fearing Christian, and were struck for cause. Some, including the wives of two local ministers, admitted that they were incapable of being fair to an Atheist in such a situation.

Attorney Tim Gungoll told the jury panel that he was a Roman Catholic, but that the facts of the case -- not the religion of any of the parties -- were of primary importance.

Chester Smalkowski was acquitted unanimously.

The federal suit, filed Friday in US District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma names a battery of defendants including school officials, the Texas County Sheriff's Department, County officers and the Town of Hardesty, Oklahoma. It charges that the family's constitutional rights were violated under, but not limited to, the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments. It also charges that school officials "unlawfully and unconstitutionally met in conspiracy to violate (the) Plaintiff's constitutional rights."

In addition, it is charged that members of the District Attorney's staff "conspired ... to punish Plaintiff Chester Smalkowski for his religious views by prosecuting a criminal case against him" that they knew "to be grounded on false statements and perjury."

The suit notes that a year after the first incident involving Ms. Smalkowski, she once again tried to participate in the girl's basketball team. Again, Coach Ernest Cook "attempted to force Plaintiff N.S. to recite the "Lord's Prayer." Ms Smalkowski instead "chose to recite the Pledge of Allegiance." This time, the suit charges, Nicole Smalkowski was punished by school officials who falsely accused her of "threatening another student." She was suspended "without a Due Process hearing or notice, as is required by Oklahoma Statutes." Eventually, she was suspended and denied her statutory right to a hearing.

A school board member and her husband, a Texas County Deputy Sheriff are identified and charged in the lawsuit as conspirators who "attempted to coerce the bail bondsman to withhold bail without charges."

Another charge focuses on a Deputy Sheriff who ostensibly ordered the submission of falsified policy reports and attempting under false pretext to have Mr. Smalkowski re-arrested. Other allegations listed include:

- Attempts to coerce to the giving of false testimony.
- Improper meetings and private conferences involving local officials.
- Attempts to coerce the bail bondsman to withhold bail without charges.
- Efforts to coerce the filing of a "groundless restraining order" against Mr. Smalkowski.
- Efforts to obtain false statements from students "in order to create a false cause for arrest."
- Harassment
- Efforts to coerce the giving of false testimony.

Copyright © 2006 American Atheists, Inc. All rights reserved. We’ll bring you more on this case as it develops.
Would you spend 30 days with a Christian family?

That's exactly what one atheist did for the F/X network's program, “30 Days”. The program was created by Morgan Spurlock, whose Oscar-nominated documentary film “Super Size Me” chronicles the health issues he endured while eating nothing but McDonald’s fast food for thirty days. The program places someone in an environment which is antithetical to their upbringing, religious or social views for 30 days and documents the interaction.

In the August 9th episode, Brenda Frei, an atheist from Lawrence, Kansas, spent 30 days living with a conservative Christian family in Frisco, Texas. She was required to attend church and regular Bible studies while living with her hosts, Michael and Tracy Shores. Brenda has a doctorate in clinical psychology but gave up her practice to be a stay-at-home mother to her four children. She was raised as an evangelical Christian but gradually gave up her beliefs stating that her experience was, “…not one where you have an un-born again experience, this is a process of thinking and studying over years.”

In addition to documenting the interactions between Frei and the Shores, Morgan Spurlock provided commentary and cited a recent poll which ranks atheists as the least trusted social group. While this episode didn’t adequately address all of the issues surrounding the debate between theists and atheists, it did seem to fairly represent the people involved and Brenda Frei may have been the perfect choice to represent atheism to the general public.

Well-spoken, reasonable and respectful, she managed to present a few good answers to theists’ questions, lodge a few objections to their claims and formed a bond with her Christian host, Tracy. As mothers, they found that they had much in common and Tracy seemed willing to ‘agree to disagree’ on matters of religion while focusing on mutual respect and tolerance.

Tracy’s husband, Michael, had a difficult time understanding how anyone could reject the supernatural and live an ethical and meaningful life without relying on the Bible. During a visit to a coffee shop to interact with other atheists, the subject of how atheists are ostracized and feel that their rights are often disregarded in this predominantly Christian country, Michael valiantly objects to Christians who do such things – only to do that very thing later in the discussion. After steadfastly and repeatedly refusing to answer how he’d feel if ‘There is no God’ was printed on U.S. currency, instead of “In God We Trust”, he remarked that ‘this is America’ and if the atheists didn’t like it, they could move.

Michael clearly had difficulty reconciling his preconceived notions about atheists when presented with an intelligent, loving, normal mother who rejected the superstitious dogma that controls his every action. When faced with reasonable, though hypothetical questions, he was unable to express anything more than a knee-jerk insult.

The show demonstrated the hypocrisy of many believers who consider themselves tolerant while also demonstrating that tolerance is possible for others even within the same family. While the program may not have changed anyone’s mind, it was, overall, a positive representation of atheists that was, in the words of Brenda Frei, “a good first step.”

A last minute press release

Atheist Alliance Inc. Election Results - New President - Margaret Downey

Atheist Alliance International (AAI), which has forty-four member societies in the United States and ten in other countries, announced on August 27, 2006 that its board has unanimously elected a new president, Margaret Downey, from Pocopson, Pennsylvania. She replaces Bobbie Kirkhart, who had served as president since 2002. Downey has been a First Amendment activist for over twenty years. She is founder and president of the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia and the Atheist Anti-Discrimination Support Network, a national watchdog committee that works to protect freedom of conscience.

In assuming the presidency of AAI, Downey said her goal is to help build a strong coalition of Freethought organizations into an effective national voice for an inclusive society. “This nation was founded with the hope and expectation of creating one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” Downey said. “That goal can be realized only if all citizens are treated equally before the law, with no governmental preference shown for skin color, national origin, age, gender or religious opinion,” Downey stated.

Downey has a long record of advocacy as well as litigation to establish the civil rights and civil liberties of nontheist citizens. She has been most persistent in opposing government support for the Boy Scouts of America, due to its discriminatory exclusion of Atheists and gays from membership, and has been a continuing voice in defending the First Amendment against government promotion of religious phrases, mottos and icons. She has served as an Atheist community expert for two conferences of the United Nations Freedom of Religion or Belief Committee.

Atheist Alliance Inc., founded in 1991, is an umbrella organization for local, autonomous, religion-free groups, as well as individual members. Its purposes are to help establish and strengthen the religion-free community at the grassroots level and to achieve visibility and acceptance for Atheists as respected contributors to discussions of public policy. For questions and interviews, please contact: Margaret Downey P. O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366, Phone: (610) 793-2737, Fax: (610) 793-2569, Email: downey1@downey1.cnc.net, Websites: www.atheistalliance.org, www.secular-celebrations.com, www.friggatriskaidekaphobia.com

Atheist Alliance International

The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheistic Societies, www.atheistalliance.org
Here’s an announcement from an Atheist Activist in San Antonio, Texas, about an idea he has.

THE ALL AMERICAN MARCH

On May 3, 2007 all citizens who support America as a secular nation will march to show the government that fundamentalist Christians do not own our country.

Fundamentalist Christians have taken control of the National Day of Prayer and claimed our country as a "Christian" nation. Our country is not Christian. It is a secular country which we love for ALL people, and it is a SECULAR Nation. It is for Christians, Jews, Mormons, Unitarian Universalists, Buddhists, atheists agnostics, humanists and everyone else. The founding fathers exerted great effort to keep it this way.

On May 3, 2007 we will announce to the nation, and our government, that we ALL share this country. Not just fundamentalists Christians. All those who are interested will march on state capitol grounds and around the City Hall in one of the larger cities of each state. The March will take place simultaneously across the country at the specified time. Each states groups will contact their respective television, radio and newspapers.

Organizer: Patrick Greene of San Antonio, TX   Website: http://www.allamericanmarch.com

E-mail: peewee_91762@yahoo.com

A Friendly Disclaimer

The Atheist Community of Austin has not yet discussed this idea at length. It’s a fairly new idea, and Mr. Greene is a “free agent” activist, not immediately affiliated with any group. So as a disclaimer, we must say that the ACA has not endorsed this idea or event.

Typing personally now, I’d love to see another march for state/church separation and/or in support of the civil rights of people who live a secular lifestyle. I think we should have planned an annual Atheist March of some kind ten years ago. A march every year! Hey, they’re fun.

Studies show that Atheists are some of the most hated people in America, and for what? We know that we’re good people. If no other effort succeeds in desensitizing other Americans to us Atheists, then I say just let them see us more often. Let them see the good people we are as often as our good taste and social caution will allow. We’re already a very quiet minority, and that isn’t helping us.

The more people see how we’re fine, up-standing citizens, the more they’ll accept us. But a phantom group is quickly misunderstood. JRZ

Did you know that you can read back issues of Atheist Community News at the Atheist Community of Austin website? That’s right. You can see back issues going back to the first ACA newsletters in 1997. Editing, proofreading, research and other work put into the publication of our newsletter has always been done by some of our members on a voluntary basis. If you’d like to help the ACA in your own way, remember, these successful efforts that local Atheist groups make usually result from one or two members just taking the initiative.

Marquee sign at Northview Harvest Ministries:

“Staying in bed, shouting oh God does not constitute going to church.”

In our next issue...

----A Report on the ACA Bat Cruise on Town Lake
----Another Atheistic Book Review
----Hell House! and Other Silliness, Plus a Lot More!
philosophical diversity that exists in our beautiful city, Austin, Texas.

side of things. You can thank the very valuable cultural and
to hold in your hand an example of the atheist
that’s a large enough minority group in America, that it deserves to
4% of the population, and
religious Americans make up about 1.4%
liberty to include a real existence of freedom FROM religion. Non-
government and religion, and a free and open level of religious
better. We advocate a rational and necessary separation between
Athens in the Austin area, and to help the public understand us
social organization, founded in 1996, to help Atheists meet other

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